



## MEASURING IMPACTS IN EXTENSION AGRICULTURAL POLICY PROGRAMS

---

Larry D. Sanders  
James Novak  
July 2007

AAAEA--Portland



### Random comment from one survey respondent

---

"The typical users/audiences for ag policy extension education are most interested in the issues and the impacts of policy choices and programs. The goal of the programming is to deliver on these expectations while also developing the ability and aptitude in the users to observe, understand and apply policy principles to future issues and conditions.

"The academic community and the administration is concerned with how well we measure on the second point. The users won't attend meetings or participate in educational efforts long enough to measure performance on the second point if we don't deliver the program focused on the first. ..."



## Background

---

- Personal and Electronic survey of Extension and Outreach Land Grant University faculty in US
  - Conducted June-July 2007
  - Responses from 14 states
  - Total number of respondents 17
  - Respondents generally a mix of ag policy extension specialists and extension commodity economists with policy component in programs

3



## Respondent States

---

- Alabama
- Arkansas
- Florida
- Kentucky
- Georgia
- Michigan
- Mississippi
- Nebraska
- New Jersey
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- Texas
- Virginia

4



## Respondent Ag Program Focus Areas

---

- Natural Resources/Conservation—14
- Commodities—13
- Trade policy—10
- Energy—10
- Rural/community development—9
- Health—2
- Other—Immigration, Local govt finance, Tax policy, Macroeconomics, Decision making process

5



## Measuring Program Impacts

---

- Evaluation by target audience—16
- Specialist estimates own —10
- Administration conducts evaluation—4
- Other— 4
  - Formal system reporting, colleagues, etc.

6




## Evaluation Indicators of Program Success

---

- Participant knowledge improved—16
- Participant behavior changes—10
- Participant increases extension use—10
- Participant increases understanding of economy & political system—10
- Participant takes relevant action—7
- Participant has income gains—4
- Local/state economy improved—2
- Other—1

7



## Most Useful Evaluation Indicators of Program Success (rank-ordered by mean rank, 1-most, 2-next most important, etc.)

---

- Participant knowledge improved—1.6
- Participant behavior changes—2.9
- Participant takes relevant action—2.9
- Participant increases understanding of economy & political system--3.5
- Participant increases extension use—3.7
- Participant has income gains—4.1
- Local/state economy improved—4.3

8



## Respondent Satisfaction with Measurement Methods

---

- Very satisfied—2
- Somewhat satisfied—9
- Little/not satisfied—6

9




## Primary Evaluation Concerns

---

- Short term impacts—8
- Long term impacts—8

10




## The Importance of Impact Measurement to Respondents (mean & median scores; scale 1-highest; 3-least)

---

Importance of Measure	Mean	Median
Enhance quality of programs	1.6	1
Increases Objectivity and Scholarship	1.7	2
Increases reputation & marketability among users	2.5	3

11



## Respondent Research to Support Extension Programs

---

- Do own research—32.3%
- Research by other faculty in own dept—25.8%
- Research done by others outside dept—24.8%

12



## Respondent Reliance on Evaluation Sources

---

- Self evaluation—38%
- Evaluation by participants—55%
- Evaluation by other professionals—21%

13



## Respondent Comments

---

- Very difficult but very important topic; continue dialogue
- Short term assessment is a numbers game w/little positive benefit to programs; longer term evaluation of team effort more useful & valid
- Least prepared/trained for evaluation; tend to design evaluation after the fact; consider county agents' model (where evaluation is built into programming)

14



## Respondent Comments

---

- The challenge: document how programs develop ability/aptitude in users to observe, understand & apply policy principles to future issues/conditions without dominating agenda to point of alienating users

15



## Respondent Comments

---

- My institution does a very good job in evaluating programs; short run assessments of behavior are largely irrelevant; longer run assessments are likely inaccurate; assessments of economic impact are suspect
- Because I'm often part of someone else's meeting, it is very difficult to do and awkward to ask
- There's a "reputation factor": those doing a good job (with programs) asked to do more; what about dept program reviews and their judgments about programs?

16





## Summary Conclusions

---

- Most respondents rely on some form of program evaluation
- Few are very satisfied about how to measure impacts
- Improving the knowledge of participants is the most useful indicator for most respondents
- Direct evaluation of target audience is the most common technique
- Most respondents were from Southern states

17



## Special Thanks

---

- To Craig Infanger, UK, for providing us the opportunity to engage in this discussion at the professional meetings

18