

**Program Evaluation Research and Support (PERS) Working Group
Inaugural Meeting: CALS Faculty Conference 2006
August 15, 2006**

Working Group Members:

- Sharon Hoelscher Day (FCS Agent, Health & Nutrition)
*Jack Elliot (Department Head and Professor, Agricultural Education)
*Al Fournier (IPM Program Manager, Maricopa Agricultural Center),
Darcy Dixon (FCS Agent, Pinal Co.)
Rick Gibson (Agriculture Agent/Director, Pinal Co.)
Dawn Gouge (Entomologist, Maricopa Ag Center)
*Victor Jimenez (4H Agent, Maricopa Ag Center)
Lisa Lauxman (Assistant Director, 4-H)
Matt Livingston (Navajo Co., Hopi Reservation)
*Cathy Martinez (Associate Agent, 4-H, Pinal co.)
Dan McDonald (Research Specialist, EFNEP, Pima Co.)
*Patty Merk (FCS Agent, Maricopa, Mojave, Yavapai Co.)
Sabrina Tuttle (Assistant Agent, Agriculture/4-H, Gila, San Carlos Apache Indian Reserv.)
*Kai Umeda, (ANR/Turf Area Agent, Maricopa County)
*Monica Pastor (Agent, Ag Literacy, Maricopa Co.)
*Kurt Nolte (Area Agriculture Agent, Yuma Co.)
*Jim Chamie (Managing Director, Int'l Arid Lands Consortium, Office of Arid Land Studies)
*Amir Ajami (Associate Director, International Agriculture Programs)
*Deborah Young (Associate Director, Cooperative Extension)

*Indicates they were present at today's meeting.

Welcome & Introductions

Background (Fournier)

Al provided some background information about the formation of this working group. In his role as IPM Program Manager part of his responsibilities include developing tools and methods for evaluation of CALS pest management programs statewide. The rationale for this working group (cited from CALS working group proposal):

Program evaluation (PE) is central to effective program planning, improvement and documentation of program outcomes and impacts. Ability to track and communicate program impacts (e.g., on APRs) also affects faculty member's professional success. Many grant applications require an effective "plan for evaluation" and the ability to identify and measurable (quantitative and qualitative) indicators of program success. However, most extension specialists and county agents are subject experts, and few have training or expertise in effective PE research methods. Furthermore, with limited program resources available, faculty may find it difficult to dedicate sufficient time and money into evaluation processes. Currently, there is no full-time specialist in evaluation at

CALS. There is a need for some level of faculty support to help improve program evaluation practices. A core group of existing faculty with research experience and interest in program evaluation will begin to address these issues through the formation of a multidisciplinary Program Evaluation Research and Support working group.

In late April, Al met with a few other faculty members (Lisa, Jack, Sabrina and Cathy) that shared this interest, in a conference call to develop a CALS WG proposal to address these needs, bringing in some other interested faculty along the way. We requested \$3,000 to conduct an initial college-wide assessment of current faculty program evaluation practices and needs. We were funded for \$1,000. The purpose of today's meeting is to lay a framework for how we will proceed.

Expected outcomes (from proposal, for year 1)

- Conduct at least 2 working group meetings; initial face-to-face meeting; some meetings may be via conference technology. Email and telephone communications to support WG activities.
- Develop and implement an assessment of extension faculty PE needs.
- Analyze data from the PE assessment and develop a work plan identifying short-term (first year) and long-term (3-5 year) working group goals.
- Develop and deliver at least one product or educational opportunity that will serve a broad group of faculty across disciplines, counties and departments.
- Work to increase faculty awareness of the benefits of effective PE practices. Create awareness of the working group as a faculty resource to provide assistance and input on program evaluation instruments.
- Communicate and partner with Professional Development Working Group as needed to ensure complimentary function and no duplication of efforts.

Been There, Done That: Report on FCS-4H Initiative (Merk)

Several years back, 4H and FCS had a Program Enhancement grant to develop some Program Evaluation (PE) instruments for county faculty statewide. They conducted a needs assessment by email; a subcommittee came up with the questions, which were reviewed by the full committee. They asked questions about the types of programs faculty conducted, the types of data they collected, and what kinds of help they wanted to improve their evaluation practices. The target audience for these efforts was FCS and 4H county faculty statewide. The needs assessment was used to prioritize potential tools. Outputs from these efforts included:

- Some trainings for faculty, which were well attended. People said they were valuable.
 - Full day program on survey development
 - 2-day program, where logic model was presented
 - Computer lab training
- **Mori** [*is this right? I'm not sure who this is*] did an evaluation notebook
- Purchased print resources on PE and distributed them to faculty in each county

Patty thinks she can find the needs assessment instrument and results on her computer, and plans to send these to AI for review. This past effort is very similar to the proposed goals of the current working group. It would be nice to build on what the FCS-4H group did previously.

Discussion: Assessment of Faculty Program Evaluation Practices and Needs (all)

The heart of the meeting was a very active discussion on the direction of the working group and various suggestions and comments from all participants. **[NOTE: *I have tried to capture many of the ideas and suggestions that were raised during the meeting discussion, but I may have missed some things. Please review this section carefully and provide comments/edits. I want to make sure everyone's input is accurately represented!*]**

- Sherry Betts has an extensive background in evaluation. She was a resource person on the FCS-4H Initiative project. She might be a resource for us as well. AI will contact her about working with the group.
- Needs assessment for this project:
 - Build on what FCS did. Get information from Patty and review it.
 - Our survey will include specialists as well as county agents and will be college wide.
 - Ask about types of programs (format for the program—short or long term outcomes focus)
 - Ask about types of data: what is your question? Allison Titcomb works for private firm. Good at helping people figure out their question.
- Kurt Nolte commented that his assessment efforts focus on his program as a whole, not on a single workshop, etc. His goal is to build the larger program based on advisory group input. He commented that evaluating individual “programs” was not what he thought would be the focus of this group. Some others echoed his comments. AI acknowledged that the needs assessment component of program development is essential, and that what Kurt described fits the extension cycle of: assess the needs → develop and implement the program → evaluate the outcomes. The efforts of this working group will be focused on developing tools and providing support to faculty for evaluating the outcomes and impacts of their programs, and documenting these.
- Amir clarified the distinction between two issues: Individual assessment of faculty and the evaluation of program future direction versus measuring program adoption. (1) how can a person improve their performance and delivery of their programs (self evaluation)? (2) How can one measure adoption of their programs (diffusion model, etc.)? Both are important. Both require the collection of data from clientele. Both are forms of assessment. This working group should help people to some extent with both forms of assessment by helping people to determine what to measure and how to measure it based on what their questions are. An evaluation has to very specific and focused.
 - What is the problem or question?
 - Who is the target group?
 - What are the indicators of success?
- A Key Question to faculty on the needs assessment will be: What do YOU need to be successful (in measuring programs)?

- Kai, having served on peer review committees, thinks an important focus of this group should be helping people to measure and to describe impacts and outcomes of their work. It is important to help people figure out the “front end” (clientele need assessment) so that they can address the “back end” (measurement of meeting those needs). People have to know what to measure and how to write it up. We need to be able to help our colleagues to assess how they got to where they are. (This was listed as an outcome on our proposal.)
- Jim: It’s always important to keep a perspective on what you are trying to get done in the long run. Follow-up surveys are the only way to measure long-term impacts of our work and our programs on changing peoples behavior or improving their lives. People need to understand that. Unless we are willing to “follow” people for some time after an event or training, etc., long-term outcomes are very difficult to document.
- USDA has an evaluation guideline: 10% of project funds should be spent on evaluation
- The new goal is to measure substantive outcomes that are measurable. We need to work as a group to improve outcomes and make them more measurable and concrete.
- We should make the faculty survey specific.
- Cathy does consulting on PE. When her clients have some knowledge of PE, she is better able to work with them. She used to teach program planning. People need to relate planning to outcomes. We should shoot for giving people a knowledge base on PE practices.
- Individual training for professional development versus outcomes for APR
- Build a community of learners (WG). Be a resource to one another. Based on the Needs assessment we will determine where people need to go.
- Cathy: It is not the case that everything you do that needs be evaluated via survey. There are many different methods, types of measures, etc. Also, needs can be developed based on observation, not only clientele input (for example, that’s how this working group was formed, by observing a need).
- Concerns were raised that even among people in this group, there are different ideas about what “program evaluation” is. The goals of this working group need to be focused and clear. Let’s make sure that faculty understand exactly what we are trying to get done and the purpose of the faculty survey.
- There is a marketing component to this: how do we get agents interested, get them to respond, attend trainings, etc.?
- In Maricopa Co., Patty did a program on PE that was very successful. It was based on adult learning principles: providing information that people can use in a practical way

Brief Discussion of potential outputs

The products and approaches we develop will be based on the analysis of faculty needs as determined by the faculty survey. But we had a brief discussion of some potential outputs of this working group.

- Establish a community of learners. For example, if a majority of people want to learn how to formulate evaluation questions, we could review people’s survey questions and provide input through a website.

- Workshops trainings
- Focus group training
- A product or training to educate people about IRB requirements
- Online survey development: how to develop an online survey
- Interactive CD/websites
- Compilation of program evaluation instruments
- PE, outcomes measurement or survey writing could be a potential topic for next year's annual conference.
- Train the trainer approach. Maybe one leader in each county goes through intensive training and can pass along the knowledge to peers
- Provide primers that focus on basic skills
- PE should become a natural part of the planning process. Develop program planning tools that emphasize this.
- Establish a website with links to online tools and resources related to program evaluation

Next Steps

- We organized a survey instrument development subcommittee. Al Fournier will get information from the previous FCS-4H survey from Patty Merk and come up with a draft instrument for this subcommittee to review. They will develop a draft that will be shared with the broader group. We will also need to decide how the survey will be implemented (online, email, etc.) as part of the development process.
 - Al Fournier
 - Cathy Martinez
 - Patty Merk
 - Jack Elliot
 - Lisa Lauxman
- Once we have the near final survey we will conduct a pilot test before finalizing it.
- Next Meeting TBD. We should convene our next meeting once the results of the faculty survey are available. At that point we will discuss and prioritize faculty PE needs and develop a plan for implementing at least one educational product before the end of the grant cycle (6/30/07).