

Program Evaluation Research and Support (PERS) Working Group
FY 08 – 09 Report on Activities and Outputs
June 30, 2009

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 measure (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 experience and interest in program evaluation formed a working group in 2006 to begin to address these issues.

2008 – 2009 Activities and Outputs

- April 1-2, 2008. Coordinated with Professional Development working group to organize in-service program on Teaching and Assessment held in Tucson April 1 – 2. PERS work group members were responsible for developing assessment topics, based on last year's online program evaluation needs assessment of faculty, and for overall evaluation of the in-service program, which was overwhelming positive. This session was attended by about 25-30 faculty members.
- May 21, 2008. PERS WG conference call. This was a planning session to review an early draft version of the program evaluation website.
- August 13, 2008. PERS WG / RREA Committee joint meeting in Tucson, to discuss mutual interests and goals for development of online program evaluation tools and resources for all Extension faculty. Members of our working group were called in to consult with the Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA) committee, which has a goal of developing templates for evaluation across Natural Resources extension programming, and has some funds dedicated to this. An outcome of this meeting was the idea that whatever resources are developed should be made available to all of Extension faculty and designed in a way to be of use to all. PERS WG members also participated in follow-up RREA Evaluation WG meeting in Tucson on August 19.
- August 19, 2008. PERS WG meeting at CALS Faculty Conference. This well-attended meeting provided an opportunity for broad review and input into revised draft of program evaluation website.
- September 30, 2008. PERS WG working session. A subcommittee of our working group, including members of RREA, had a productive working session in which we developed a detailed plan for a revised version of the program evaluation website, now to be hosted on the CE website.
- December 17, 2008. Dan McDonald & Lisa Lauxman coordinated a Human Subjects Webinar on the topic "Introduction to IRB and the Application Process." This was put on by then-director of the IRB, Rebecca Dahl. About a dozen faculty members participated in the session. A secondary goal of this program was to develop a relationship with IRB.

The IRB department has recently been reorganized. There are no plans in the near future for a follow-up training, but will probably pursue this at a later time.

- December 2008. RREA commits \$3,000 to partially fund Drupal programmer to develop the program evaluation website. A similar commitment from CE Administration is made in January 2009.
- March 5, 2009. Dan McDonald & Al Fournier met to work on content for IRB portion of the website and developed a plan and timeline for completion in April, 2009.
- April 1, 2009. Human Subjects / IRB page is added to the draft Program Evaluation website. The page includes basic information and links to IRB resources and forms. In addition, we reviewed and marked up with comments three previously approved IRB proposal review forms in the areas of agricultural research, youth development and FCS. Mariett Marsh in Human Subjects reviewed these marked-up proposals and provided corrections and expansions on our comments before posting to the website. Our goal was to guide people who have not been through the process before.
- April 2, 2009. Al Fournier, Barb Hutchinson and Alyssa Rosemartin. met to discuss website development options. We decided to contact Rose Hessmiller, a private consultant out of Albuquerque, to get a quote and timeline for development of the PE site.
- April 14, 2009. PERS Working Group meeting, Pima County Extension Office.
- Spring, 2009. Dan McDonald and Sheila Merrigan joined the UA Collaborative for Engagement and Outreach. The topic of evaluating community programs came up in discussion. The Collaborative is interested in the resources our WG is putting online. They are also planning to organize a 3-part training session on evaluation of outreach programs. Members of our working group may help with the planning. The Collaborate has put together a website that is a second-level page off of the University's main webpage called "Outreach & Extension." They have a Ning, a social networking tool, where an evaluation subcommittee of this group is linking up. We plan to keep lines of communication and cooperation open between our two groups.
- June 3, 2009. PERS WG working session to further develop website and translate existing content into Drupal-ready information. Al Fournier, Susan Pater, Barb Hutchinson and Sheila Merrigan participated.
- June 30, 2009: Current Website Status: We have launched a beta-version of the program evaluation website on the Arizona Pest Management Center site at <http://cals.arizona.edu/apmc/evaluation.html>. All the basic tools are in place. We are in the process of working with a contractor to convert our existing content into a Drupal-based website that will at that point be migrated to the main Cooperative Extension website.