

forum

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Why Resist Evaluation? As Extension educators, we're catalysts for change. To bring about this change, we must know what educational programs are wanted and needed by our clientele and what teaching methods will effectively bring about the intended change. Evaluation is the only way we have to determine if our programs fill the need.

Staying in Tune

Staying in tune with the people we serve is one of the most important parts of our job as Extension professionals. Assessing needs and evaluating the results of programs are two stages in a continual cycle of staying in tune with people.

The people we serve usually are glad to tell us their problems and how we can help them. The more we use their suggestions, the more likely they are to get involved in local programs.

But what about after program participation? The rub comes when we find things aren't quite right. People didn't change the way we anticipated. That may be hard to accept, but knowing what's really happening is better than hoping something good is happening. Discovering negative aspects about our programs helps us improve them.

Getting our clientele to make constructive suggestions can be hard. They must realize we want their suggestions; we won't be upset even if they suggest we're doing something inappropriate.

Finding the Time

Finding the time to do all that needs to be done is a problem for all Extension professionals. Finding the time to evaluate our programs is no different.

It's easy to justify not properly using evaluations by saying that time spent in evaluation is time taken away from what we perceive to be our basic task. If our basic task is to provide our clientele with needed educational programs, how are we to know what's needed? And once we deliver programs, how are we to know they were effective? The only way is by giving our clientele the opportunity to evaluate what we're doing.

By evaluating, hopefully we'll eliminate working on programs of limited value. We'll have more time for new and proven programs that will be beneficial to those we serve.

Summary

As Extension professionals we should be providing educational programs that are wanted and needed by the people we serve. Evaluation can help us find out what's wanted, needed, and useful to the people we serve.

So why resist?