

tools of the trade

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Issues and Problems

Current Issues/Problems in Evaluating Cooperative Extension Programs. M. F. Smith, ed. Gainesville: University of Florida, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, 1981. 130 pp. Contact editor for single copies.

A symposium in Orlando, Florida, in 1981, provided the basis for this book. A nationwide needs assessment of over 40 individuals interested in evaluation of Cooperative Extension programs identified the 6 problems/issues discussed at the symposium: (1) federal, state, and county evaluation needs presented by Michael Brazzel, ES/USDA; (2) needs assessment by K. E. Pigg, Kentucky; (3) use of evaluation in management decisions, Sara M. Steele, Wisconsin; (4) criteria and standards, James R. Sanders, Michigan; (5) Extension programs as treatments, Howard Ladewig, Ohio (now at Texas); and (6) increasing competency for evaluation at the local level, M. F. Smith, Florida.

Relative to the six problems/issues, the book includes limited literature reviews, presenters' papers, summaries of symposium discussions, and preliminary questions submitted by participants. Also included is a section on the setting for evaluation in Extension with a paper by Michael Brazzel on "Evaluation in the Organization and the Organization of Evaluation" and the keynote address by James Sanders on "Evaluation as a Negative Force."

This book is important in developing a philosophy of evaluation for Cooperative Extension. It discusses problems

and concerns rather than giving answers. Background leading to the currently implemented accountability/evaluation system emerges from the presentations.

The section on federal, state, and county needs is especially good. Other sections have points worth considering. The editor summarized the discussion and captured the sense of the participants well, concluding with 17 group recommendations worthy of consideration.

Because of the nature of the book, as a report of an in-depth discussion of issues, it's not easy to read and indexing would have improved its value as a reference. The issues discussed tend to be of greater interest to the evaluation specialist than to Extension program staff, but the book is of value to anyone concerned with evaluation in Cooperative Extension.

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