The Importance of Evaluation and Federal Reporting Trends

Why Do Data Matter?

Toija Riggins, Ph.D.
National Program Leader
Division of Family & Consumer Sciences
National Institute of Food and Agriculture
USDA

AFCPE Cooperative Extension Pre-Symposium
San Diego, CA
November 15, 2017
Why are data important?

• You cannot manage what you do not measure.

• Data give us information to make decisions.

• We need the best information available so we can make the best decisions, fast.

• Here’s what happens when we have to make fast decisions from incomplete or poor quality data:
  • Family Feud
  • Election Exit Polls
  • Everyday statistics you see in the news – e.g., stocks, weather
Why are data important? cont.

Each of us must make different kinds of decisions germane to our roles. Here are a few examples:

• Program planning
• Continuous program improvement
• Grant writing
• Performance management (supervisors managing employee performance)
• Audit/Compliance reviews
• Accomplishment reporting for funders
• Others?
Why are data important? cont.

• NIFA is part of USDA, a federal government agency. We have special legal responsibilities and reporting requirements.
  • The law (GPRAMA) says we must report to our Principals how well we spend taxpayer dollars:
    • NIFA Director
    • Secretary of Agriculture
    • President’s Office of Management and Budget
    • U.S. Congress
  • All of these policymakers use the information NIFA provides to make budget (funding) and policy decisions.
What benefits do taxpayers receive for their money?
Why are data important? cont.

• More good reasons to collect high quality data:
  • NIFA provides grant funding to partners (including Land-Grant Universities) to support their work.
  • Taxpayers want to know the value of the programs they fund with tax dollars.
  • For NIFA to report convincingly on the public value of funds we provide to our partners, high quality, national data are required.
    • What makes data “high quality?”
How do we define “high quality data?”

The President’s Office of Management and Budget (OMB) requirements for ANY federal data collection are:

• Rigor
• Relevance
• Credibility and Independence
• Transparency
• Ethics
Ingredients of a Good Data Collection

What Goes In Is What Comes Out...

- **Reliability**: Does your measure produce the same thing each time?
- **Validity**: Are you measuring the intended thing(s)?
- **Generalizability**: Do your data represent the population?
- **Uniformity/Consistency**: Are you collecting data in the same way?
- **Accuracy**: Are your data entered and monitored appropriately?

Requires **commitment** of resources and an **investment** in performance measurement

**DATA’S TRUE VALUE**
# Performance Measurement and Evaluation Basics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement Effort</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Questions Answered</th>
<th>Grounded in/Aligned with</th>
<th>Types/Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Performance Measurement  | Management’s ongoing monitoring and reporting of progress towards pre-established goals. | 1. Did a program achieve its objectives?  
2. What value does that have for the American public? (“So what?”) | Strategic Plan: pre-stated goals, objectives, activities | Process Outputs Outcomes                       |
| Evaluation               | Individual, systematic studies that tell how well a program is working. | 1. Which interventions work?  
2. Why do they work?  
3. How do they work? | Academic literature and/or policy                                       | 1. Process or implementation  
2. Outcome  
3. Impact  
4. Cost-benefit |
So what can we do to “move the needle” on better evidence?

• Begin with the end in mind.
  • Ask “What does success of this project look like?”
  • Work backward from your end goal.
    • What data do you need?
      • Performance Measurement vs. Evaluation
    • How will you report progress/outcomes when asked?
    • What is the public value of your project?

• PLAN, PLAN, PLAN

• Act locally, think nationally
NIFA Reporting Questions?

Feel free to contact NIFA’s Planning, Accountability and Reporting Staff (PARS)

https://nifa.usda.gov/office/planning-accountability-and-reporting-staff
NIFA Resources

- https://nifa.usda.gov/program/financial-capability
- https://nifa.usda.gov/impacts
Questions?

Thank you!

Toija Riggins, Ph.D.
National Program Leader
Division of Family & Consumer Sciences
Rural Sociology, Behavioral Economics/Family Resource Management, Impact Measurement

Toija.riggins@nifa.usda.gov