USDA GRANT CASE STUDY: THE MULTIFACETED BENEFITS OF FARMING OUT EVALUATIONS
KEITH SCHNEIDER, FOOD SCIENCE AND HUMAN NUTRITION

Integration of Research and Extension in Federal Grants
How to remove the burden of justification and accountability through formal incorporation of project evaluation that also enhances the visibility of programs and supports the scholarship of Extension.
INTRODUCTION

- Who is this guy?
- Why are we talking Extension at a Research symposium?
- Most of what I’m saying, you already know, mostly…
- Lastly, I’m going to offer you some good advice
USDA GRANTS (NIFA)

NIFA Food Safety Programs

- Award $50 million each year
- Average of 90 awards
- Awards range from $35,000 to $5M
- Conference grants - $50,000
- Encourage partnerships
- International collaborators
- Integrate social sciences
The Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) is America’s flagship competitive grants program that provides funding for fundamental and applied research, education, and extension projects in the food and agricultural sciences. In this RFA, NIFA requests applications for six AFRI priority areas through the Foundational Program for FY 2017. The goal of this program is to invest in agricultural production research, education, and extension projects for more sustainable, productive and economically viable plant and animal production systems.
United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

And there are many more programs

The AFRI portfolio includes Coordinated Agricultural Projects (CAP) and Food and Agricultural Science Enhancement (FASE) grants. CAP grants are large, multi-million dollar projects that involve multiple institutions.

Special Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) addresses the critical needs of the specialty crop industry by awarding grants to support research and extension that address key challenges of national, regional, and multi-state importance in sustaining all components of food and agriculture, including conventional and organic food production systems.
Evaluation and assessment are absolutely critical for any successful NIFA-funded project.

“Clearly, we absolutely depend on the accurate and timely assessments”

“Impacts, impacts, impacts…”

Impact-focused programs. Plan for outcomes.
WHAT DO PROGRAM LEADERS LOOK FOR?

- Tools for program evaluation
- Assessing and reporting impacts
- Why does NIFA require program assessments and what does NIFA do with them?
HOW NIFA USES DATA

- Evidence of Performance in:
  - The Annual Budget Requests
  - USDA Annual Performance Report
  - Congressional Inquiries
  - GAO and OIG inquiries
  - Other USDA Departmental Inquiries
  - Portfolio Reviews

Courtesy of USDA
OTHER WAYS NIFA USES DATA AND IMPACTS

- Farm Bill Publication
- Annual NIFA Impact Publication
- Legislative briefings
- NIFA Web Pages
- Searchable databases (REEIS & LMD)
- Speeches
- Fact sheets, displays, posters, newsletters

Courtesy of USDA
OUR SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

- Where we succeeded:
  USDA-SCRI - The University of Florida has conducted approximately 20 regional Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) workshop in the last two years and has trained approximately 1,000 individuals.

- USDA-CAP - Southern Center for Training Education, Extension, Outreach, and Technical Assistance to Enhance Produce Safety

- Where we failed:
  USDA-AFRI “Need specific Extension objective, outlining additional outreach components, such as webinars, videos, etc.”

- What made the difference?
  Evaluation and data analysis, planned in advanced
SOUTHERN CENTER
FOR TRAINING EDUCATION, EXTENSION, OUTREACH, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ENHANCE PRODUCE SAFETY

Southern Center
for Training, Education, Extension, Outreach, and Technical Assistance to Enhance Produce Safety

USDA NIFA AWARD NUMBER 2015-70020-24397
A logic model for PSA and FSPCA Trainings

Pre/Post-assessment

An attendance questionnaire in both English and Spanish

Program: FSPCA: Logic Model
Situation: FSPCA workshops

FSPCA TRAINING: SOUTHERN CENTER (SC)

Inputs
- Staff Trainers, FIDs, Collaborators
- Money, FDA grant
- Partnerships: SC, private corporations
- Resources for supplemental educational material
- Teaching tools, equipment, facilities

Outputs
- Sell Train-the-Trainer (TTT) educational workshops
- SC Website: communication platform, networking
- Online content, technical assistance database, FAQs
- Evidence-based practices, supplemental materials, add-on training
- Commodity group associations
- FSPCA standardized curriculum, standardized add-on materials
- Local food hubs

External Factors: Changes in FSPCA standardized curriculum

Activity
- Representatives, State and local regulatory agencies
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Commodity group associations

Participation
- Increased participant’s knowledge of FSPCA and HACCP.
- Positive change in participant attitudes of food safety rules.
- Participant develop competency to provide FSPCA training to stakeholders.
- Increase in processors’ knowledge of FSPCA.
- Increased participant’s willingness to provide FSPCA training to stakeholders.

Assumptions: Accomplishment of short and medium term outcomes lead to long term improvements in food safety practices and ensures processor compliance with FSPCA rules.

Evaluation

INFORMACIÓN DE REGISTRO DEL PARTICIPANTE

1. Hora y fecha de su programa de entrenamiento:

2. Nombre:

3. Número primario de teléfono:

4. Dirección primaria de correo electrónico:

5. Estado y condado:

6. Nombre de su operación (si aplica):

7. Su ocupación principal:

8. Área de especialización relacionada a su trabajo:

9. Naturaleza de su operación:
   - Agentes de extensión
   - Especialistas
   - Consultor
   - Producers of the finca (Activities principales include: planting of crops, harvesting or corn for animal feed)
   - Manufacture or processing of products (Activities principales include: production or processing of products for human consumption)
   - Otro (por favor especificar):
SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

Knowledge gains:

- A directional dependent samples $t$-test was used to determine if there was a significant increase in knowledge after completion of the PSA training ($n = 921$) and FSPCA training ($n = 163$).

- PSA training results showed post-test scores (21.38) were significantly higher than pre-test scores (16.75; $p < 0.001$), indicating a significant increase in knowledge after participation in the training (out of 25 points).

- FSPCA training results indicated post-test scores (9.94) were significantly higher than pre-test scores (8.10; $p < 0.001$; out of 15 points).
MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES

Practices Adopted:

- Three months after attending a training, all participants are emailed to participate in a qualitative follow-up survey.
  - What have you done with the information you learned from the training?
- To date, 145 participants responded to the three-month follow-up survey.
  - Provided food safety trainings to their respective organizations.
  - Write food safety plans and manuals for their organization.
  - Fine-tune existing plans and implement food safety plans.
  - Consult with clients on compliance and work with suppliers to become compliant.
  - Assist colleagues with understanding the requirements, and share information with growers.
- Many attendees also stated they recommended the training to other stakeholders.
PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRES

Target population:
1. Growers, packers, wholesalers or retailers
2. Completed PSA training conducted by the SC
3. Resided within the SC boundaries

Sample size from target population (n): 795

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry type</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growers/Harvesters</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Packers</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wholesale/Retailers</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Perceived Challenges to FSMA Compliance</td>
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<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Costs of compliance for producers (changes in operating costs, profits)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Producers' current knowledge of the FSMA</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Producers' perception and attitudes of the FSMA</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The amount of training that will be needed by producers</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Producers’ participation in training the FSMA</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Availability of information on the FSMA</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Extension's ability to provide training on the FSMA</td>
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IF YOU’RE NOT GOOD AT A TASK, HIRE A PRO

NAILED IT.
Many grants now require extensive evaluation
Integrated grants are becoming commonplace
The days when the Extension portions of grants are ‘tacked’ on in the waning days of a grant are over.
Plan for evaluations and think about impacts
Think about the “So What” (J. Dusky)