

Evaluation: Identifying Best Practices & Program Gaps

November 2016

21ST CENTURY MANAGEMENT: *Enhancing Educational Programs for Women Farmers & Ranchers*

Overview

The project Evaluation Team serves as a cross-cutting “consulting” team, supporting all the other content teams. This team is reviewing existing evaluation data to ascertain whether evidence suggests programs are likely to succeed across different geographic regions, production systems, ethnic and cultural populations, literacy levels and resource bases. This information will feed into a typology of programs along with suggestions for ways the programs might be adjusted for use with additional audiences.

The evaluation team also works with the content teams to develop evaluation tools to be used with new and improved curricula developed in response to program gaps.

What We've Learned So Far

Our first task has been to review existing programs and curricula that may benefit beginning farm and ranch women (BFRW) with the purpose of identifying gaps and best practices. Later on in the project, we will be assisting with development of survey instruments and evaluation protocols for BFRW programs created through this BFRDP project.

The Evaluation team will help train other educators to use these tools through face-to-face workshops and through the Women in Ag Learning

Network on eXtension. The team will post findings, reports and instruments on the Farm Answers website, the online library for sharing BFRDP projects.

Together with members of all the other project teams, we identified nearly 40 programs that may benefit BFRW. These included programs currently being offered to men and women. Educational settings include conferences, multi-session classes, workshops, peer groups, and online learning.

With the help of the BFRDP project members, we selected the most developed and most relevant programs to study further. Our team discovered many of these programs do not have impact reports, evaluation tools or data readily available.

Now we are talking with program leaders to see what additional materials they can provide. Our next step is to provide team members with the report on detailed program analysis, program gaps and best practices which we are planning to complete in January 2017.

One of the gaps we are seeing so far is a lack of written or standardized curricula for many of the programs. This means programs may have great benefit to BFRW, but are not easily replicated by other educators. Another gap is a lack of impact reporting for some of the programs. While these programs may look helpful for BFRW, we have little

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anecdotal or numerical evidence of program effectiveness. These preliminary findings suggest the work the BFRDP project team will do on curricula development and practical evaluation and reporting guidance may be critical to the overall goal of serving educators who can benefit BFRW.

Opportunities to Contribute

The Evaluation team would like everyone to continue to send us programs of interest. If you see impact reports of interest as you go about your work, please share those with us as well. We recognize specific grant projects or localized projects may have great value for BFRW, if we know about them. We will add them to the matrices so others can review the basic program

information. We will also consider evaluating additional programs in detail in order to add to the body of knowledge on best practices for training BFRW.

As the Evaluation team reviews impact reports and evaluation data in detail, it is important for the topical teams (Leadership and Management, Business Scale and Profitability, Land Access, Transfer and Stewardship, Farm Safety, Ergonomics and Mechanization, and Legal Issues) to research and evaluate the curricula associated with the programs. Be aware that in some cases, the program gaps we are looking for and aim to fill, may not lead to entirely new ideas, but rather, in crafting the curricula needed to share the good ideas that are already out there.



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