



First Steps in Evaluating a Newsletter: Likely Objectives

How do I begin an evaluation for my extension newsletter?

1. Review the objectives you created for your newsletter. Can't find them? Never had them? Then reconstruct a list of specific objectives which you *think* have been the basis of the newsletter. Keep this list in front of you as you create one or two editions of your newsletter. Putting together such objectives or refining old ones will sharpen your evaluation AS WELL AS stimulate thinking about future newsletters. Here are different types of objectives you can develop for a newsletter:

Type 1. Overall satisfaction (a softy, but most important for you to know!)

Objective 1: After receiving the newsletter twice, readers will report they look forward (or, are very eager) to receiving the newsletter.

Type 2. News in the newsletter

Objective 2: Readers will believe the news is up to date (or relevant or received in time) to make plans for themselves and announce to members with whom they work.

Type 3. Educational impact

Depending on how you cast them, these objectives relate to your readers' intention or behavior:

Objective 3A: As a result of reading three issues of the newsletter, readers will select four of seven parliamentary skills discussed in three columns (Nov.-Jan.) that they plan to incorporate in their teaching within the next four months.

Objective 3B: Readers will use one new communication technique among the three reviewed in the newsletter each month at their next monthly meeting.

Note these educational impact objectives have a target audience (readers), a performance with criteria included (e.g., select four skills and use one communication technique) and usually, a time frame (e.g., within four months or at the next meeting).

Type 4. Accountability

Objective 4: County commissioners (or advisory committee members or your RD) will believe that your 4-H leaders are kept informed of important trends in 4-H AND receive expert counseling/training/advising through the newsletter.

2. Once you have delineated the objectives, it should be easy for you to brainstorm:
 - How to Collect Data for an Evaluation
 - The Most Appropriate Time to Collect Data for Particular Objectives
 - How to Collect Baseline Data for Some Objectives
 - Questions to Evaluate Each Objective

You can draft an evaluation strategy fairly quickly once you have taken this first step. KNOW the objectives of your newsletter.

Nancy Ellen Kiernan, Ph.D., Program Evaluator, nekiernan@psu.edu.

The reference citation for this Tipsheet is: Kiernan, Nancy Ellen (2001). First Steps in Evaluating a Newsletter: Likely Objectives: Tipsheet #43, University Park, PA: Penn State Cooperative Extension.

Available at: <http://www.extension.psu.edu/evaluation/pdf/TS43.pdf>

This Web site is copyrighted by The Pennsylvania State University. The information may be used for educational purposes but not sold for profit.