



The Power of Early Evaluation

I want to evaluate a program but I never feel the program is good enough. And, I am always making changes. How long should I wait?

Ironically, one of the most opportune times to evaluate a program is when a program is in its fledgling stage. Evaluating a program early can:

BRING you professional satisfaction from the successful segments of the program.

GIVE you time to improve the program.

IMPRESS both administrators and extension committees. Early evaluation provides a mechanism to keep administrators or committee members informed about your programming efforts.

COMPRISE a form of accountability. No matter the specific results, the very process of evaluating demonstrates that you are committed to the best use of extension dollars.

OFFER you more choices of what to evaluate. If you evaluate at the end of the program, you are limited to assessing participant outcomes. If you evaluate early you can also discover:

- if enough people participated as a result of your marketing strategy.
- if most participants represent the target audience. It is not efficient to have most of the dairy producers coming to a reproduction program, *already* using AI with heifers, or most of the persons coming to a cholesterol reduction program with cholesterol under 200 mg.
- if the participants need more hands-on work to learn certain skills (such as using financial records).
- if the participants find the video or other materials effective.

PROVIDE data for grants in time to maintain or expand the program.

CREATE a reputation for you: You are a mature professional; you don't fear knowing what participants think. This message can be more important in creating your reputation than the specific data of an evaluation.

ALLOW you to modify your PJOs next year.

If you have a relatively new program, consider the **power of evaluation** if conducted early in the program.

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

The reference citation for this Tipsheet is: Kiernan, Nancy Ellen (2001). The Power of Early Evaluation: Tipsheet #32, University Park, PA: Penn State Cooperative Extension.

Available at: <http://www.extension.psu.edu/evaluation/pdf/TS32.pdf>

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