

Types of Evaluation Surveys

There are several different approaches you can take when conducting evaluation surveys. Choosing the right ones for your programming requires a careful assessment of your programming design, evaluation and data needs, and the time and energy of your outreach audiences. Balancing these considerations is key to effective evaluation. This fact sheet provides guidance on different survey designs to help you select approaches that meet your programming needs.

Event Evaluation Form

The most straight-forward approach to evaluating the effectiveness and outcomes of your events is to ask participants to complete a survey at the event. Most typically, these surveys are done at the end of your event before participants depart, but it may be more effective to incorporate these into the event programming as a way to increase survey response rate.

Pre-Post Evaluation Survey

This approach involves applying a questionnaire at the beginning, or prior to, an event and then re-surveying participants at the end of the event or later following the event. This method is best for assessing specific changes in the audience as a result of your event, such as increases in knowledge, or shifts in attitudes or social norms. Because of the burden of asking participants to fill out two questionnaires in a short period of time, it is best to keep these short and focused on a few key elements.

Exit Ticket

Rather than using a traditional questionnaire filling a page or two, it may be easier for participants to complete a few key questions. An exit ticket is usually a partial sheet of paper that includes just one or two questions, which participants can quickly complete as they leave an event. It might be effective to use these

like a raffle or meal ticket, where participants receive something in exchange for turning in completed questionnaires.

Plus-Delta

Assessing the effectiveness of your event is often one of the most important forms of evaluation. This format asks participants to provide some positive takeaways (plusses) from the event while also providing some (hopefully) constructive feedback (deltas). It is most helpful if you focus participants on providing 'deltas' that give suggestions for future programs or topics that would be helpful.

Group Reflection Survey

Rather than focusing on individual feedback, there may be situations where you want to receive feedback from the entire group of participants. Potential formats include whiteboard brainstorming, where you solicit input on a topic from the group; group reference boards, where you allow participants to vote with stickers among a set of topics or concepts; or group plus-deltas. This approach serves a dual function of providing participant feedback while also serving as a form of programming, norm development, and participant networking.

Ranked Choice Survey

In this approach, participants are asked to rank a number of options or concepts. You can use this to identify potential future programming topics, knowledge areas of interest to your audience, or concepts that reflect audience attitudes or values. For example, you might use this approach to assess the perceived barriers or challenges to soil health practice adoption. This approach requires a bit more mental work for participants, so it is best to keep these focused on one or two key concepts, with perhaps a few participant characteristics. This survey type is also more difficult to analyze and interpret.

Survey Elements

This fact sheet provides some basic guidance on what sections you might want to consider when creating an evaluation survey. The goal for these surveys is to collect the most relevant data in the shortest time to minimize the burden on your participants. You may not want to include every section in your surveys. Always keep in mind: what are you trying to achieve with this survey? Is it program evaluation (how effective were the activities at your event)? Changes in behavior by your audience? Ideas about future programming?

Program Assessment

This section assesses participants' overall perception of your event and how valuable they believe it was. These overall assessment questions should be a high priority in your evaluation questionnaire. Often, you will see a few questions at the top of an evaluation that ask what participants thought of the event, whether they thought it was valuable, or whether they would attend a similar event in the future.

Example:

Overall, how useful was this event for helping you achieve your farming goals?
(check all that apply)

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not that useful

Participant Characteristics

It is often important to understand who your participants are, so you may want to ask questions about them and their audience. These demographic questions can include the types of crops or livestock raised, acreage, location, or experience. While there are many characteristics you can collect to better understand your audience, this interest has to be balanced with survey length and privacy considerations. You should focus on key characteristics that will allow you to more clearly identify sub-audiences that you are seeking to target in your outreach.

Example:

Which best describes you?
(check all that apply)

- Farmer/operator
- Landowner
- Advisor/consultant

Survey Elements

Current Practices

As part of understanding your audience, you likely want to ask about their current use of conservation or other production practices. You can ask these in a 'check all that apply' question that lists practices, detailed questions about certain practices you may be interested in, or an open-ended format that allows participants to use their own words about their current practices. You may also want to include questions about how long they have used these practices or their perceptions of how beneficial these practices have been.

Awareness, Knowledge, and Attitude Changes

You have certain goals and expected outcomes that you are trying to achieve with your outreach events. Asking participants what they learned or what perceptions changed as a result of your event serves as an important data point. Again, it is important to balance survey length so focus on asking a small number (1-5) of clear and concise questions that focus on key outcomes for that particular event.

Anticipated Changes

You may also be aiming to see changes in practice use, whether adoption of new practices or increase in intensity or complexity of the practice. As with knowledge, awareness, and attitude changes, it is important to focus on the key anticipated outcomes for that particular event. You may want to ask whether participants anticipate adopting new practices, increasing or changing the number of acres in a practice, or other changes to production systems. You should also consider other changes that can indicate the producer is willing to make changes in the future, including seeking out new information, exploring cost-share programs, or engaging in other programs. It is important to recognize that these questions indicate participant intentions to change behavior; a lot of factors can interfere with good intentions, so take these anticipated changes for what they are.

Example:

What types of practices are you currently doing on your farm?
(check all that apply)

- No till/strip till
- Rotational grazing
- Nutrient management
- Cover crops
- Extended crop rotation
- No conservation practices

Example:

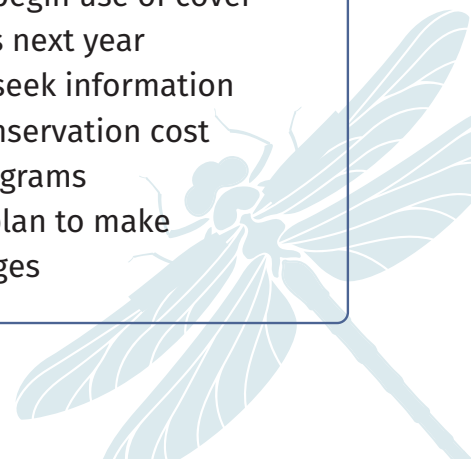
I am aware of neighbors and other farmers in my area using cover crops.

- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree

Example:

What changes do you anticipate making as a result of today's event?

- I plan to begin use of cover crops this next year
- I plan to seek information about conservation cost share programs
- I do not plan to make any changes





Things we like and/or want to keep the same...



Things we want to see changed/
improved...