

EVALUATION FOR IMPROVING PROGRAMS

Jean Haley, Haley Consulting Services

SOME GENERAL EVALUATION TIPS:

There are lots of evaluation methods to choose from:

- Surveys
(written, online, telephone interview, face-to-face interview)
- Focus groups
- Network analysis
- Secondary data collection
(research other people already did for you)
- Case studies
- Economic analysis

Don't select your method before you know what your evaluation question is (i.e., not every evaluation = survey)

Do a needs assessment answering the questions: What? Who? Why? When? Budget?

Select your method and design your data collection instrument(s) to fit your evaluation question(s)

If you're drowning, seek professional help (there are lots of evaluators out there who can help)

SURVEY TIPS

Figure out what you want to know and how you'll use the information before you start writing questions

Identify your specific audience before you start writing questions

Always pilot test your survey with people from your target audience (if it's farmers, don't ask a researcher to take the survey for you!). This is calibrating your instrument. Make sure your question means what you think it means to the person reading it.

QUESTION WRITING TIPS

Understand what type of information will best answer your evaluation question(s) before you start writing (attitudes, beliefs, behavior, attributes)

Questions should be written for a specific population and for a specific purpose

Only ask one question at a time—no double-barreled questions! If your question contains "and" or "or" that's a big red flag

Make it a close-ended question if you can – it's the cleanest and easiest to analyze

Always end your survey with "Is there anything else you'd like to share with us about XYZ?" – if they just spent a bunch of time answering your questions but didn't get to say the one thing they really wanted to share, give them that opportunity.

NDSU does not discriminate in its programs and activities on the basis of age, color, gender expression/identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, participation in lawful off-campus activity, physical or mental disability, pregnancy, public assistance status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, spousal relationship to current employee, or veteran status, as applicable. Direct inquiries to Vice Provost, Title IX/ADA Coordinator, Old Main 201, (701) 231-7708, ndsueoaa@ndsu.edu.