Program Delivery – Best Practices

Recruitment

- Determine **who** your audience is and **what** is their skill set? Ask **how** can we help you?
- **Word of mouth** is a good approach for small farms.
- **Collaboration** with other orgs and our own office departments. Know which partners to collaborate with that already have established relationships. Get foot in door and offer services. You are there to serve your audience. Find where to find your audience. Leverage tools you already have or others have already created. Brainstorm and/or find innovative approaches to meet a prospective audience, figure out where the gaps are and how to address, then be consistent and/or maintain an approach.
- **Online recruitment**: Have an attractive landing page, use blog posts. Be clear on expectations and what they will learn. Find out who is listening to your podcasts or reading your online materials.
- **Virtual vs in person**: Need to be able to pivot – sometimes planning education around growing times – other might include off cycle offerings. Think about networking potential. Challenge to return to in person after Covid which has required a hybrid approach in order to reach the most people. Electronic communication is beneficial in this regard. Find out when it's most convenient to reach producers that can result in a good turnout. Assess what is working and how to improve upon that. It's a balance of figuring out how to be inclusive of everyone and with the right timing.
- **Texting** is a great way to reach out to farmers.
- **Ongoing offerings** for different niche audiences. Busy times vary, so implement a combination of a general offering where anyone can join and a more specialized one based around timing for certain audiences.
- **Agency Involvement:** Build connections and partner with NRCS, FSA, RMA etc. who can help with recruitment and involvement.

Program Delivery

- **Gain trust**. Get farmers to present. Humanize yourself to better identify with people.
- **Involve ranchers or farmers** that utilized a tool or implemented a practice; ask them to demonstrate versus you. Use games to get people involved. Ex: web tools

are challenging in striking a balance between simplicity and ability to use the tool. Colorado farmers experienced hesitation in use of a complicated peach tool, so project team simplified it to gain interest from farmers.

- **Tap into the local community** you are dealing with and involve them. Extension, foresters, and loggers all provide multiple perspectives within the community which makes it more engaging and provides peer networking opportunities over time. Recognize the value you bring to your producers and know what they are looking for from you. Producers may know about available resources but may want to talk to a real person in terms of what they actually need to know. Info overload is real so need to tailor to individual needs. Our goal is to translate multiple resources and knowledge and narrow it down to a few specific things they need to know.
- **Modular Resources**. In person and virtual trainings necessitate outreach materials that are both digital and manual as not all engage in one or the other.
- **Iterative curriculum development**. Take feedback and questions to build and adjust curriculum moving forward. Not just 1 on 1, but 2 on 1 and 3 on 1 as a way to bring people back and keep them engaged. Inspire them to get involved by tailoring to their specific objectives.
- **One on one farm visits**, tailor suggestions to their specific environment. Growers show interest in pest mgmt. for coffee; use that training opportunity to incorporate crop insurance knowledge, etc. Offer combination electronic and printable pdf's as well as YouTube presentations producers can tune in to.
- **Festive events** make people more willing and able to learn.
- **Utilize relevant events** already in the area.
- **Needs assessment** to fine tune and identify audience, as clientele and interest level for farmers are quite diverse. Tailor programs and messages to clientele group you know and can identify.
- **Meet farmers where they are.**
- **Build rapport.**
- **Look around the neighborhood – with crop selection,** what currently exists and build from there.

Urban farmers and food production: Programming for those who don't realize they are an ag producer and with different reasons for establishing a farm.

Growers vs farmers. Everyone is a grower.

- Forestry – meeting people where they are at language wise. Stewards vs producers or farmers.

- o Find a farmer who already solved a problem and take everyone to them and let them talk.
- o "I'm not really a grower and you don't really have anything that pertains to me." Get them engaged and they see how their part plays into the big picture. They really are a grower.

<u>Evaluation</u>

- o **Logic model**: Use to measure short, medium, long-term impacts which lead to societal change. Knowledge is power.
- o **Phones**: In a data driven world, a phone can be a valuable tool for calling, texting and to capture pictures and videos which can show what it looks like leading up to societal change.
- o **External evaluators**: If using external evaluators, provide them with a logic model that shows issues being addressed, target audience, and how the project team intends to address the issue and what the anticipated outcomes are for participants. Keep the external evaluator(s) engaged throughout the project.
- o **Role of Project Team and Collaborators:** Bring together teams to develop change in communities.   Develop content that adult learners will want to engage with and with outcomes that they will want to accomplish.
- o **Build Trust:** Build long term relationships with your target audience and with collaborators – especially with agencies and other stakeholders. Get basic demographic or needs assessment info early on and have an assigned or designated person to get that info.
- o **Set Aside Time for Evaluation:** Dedicate time in your workshops and trainings for evaluation. Build it in so that participants have time to give thoughtful responses. Allow enough time for you or your project team to oversee the process.
  - o Pre-Tests: Established or known audiences can respond well to pre-tests that ask about levels of knowledge on topics that they are familiar with or that are being addressed with ongoing training or education.
  - o Homework assignments can help to engage participants; i.e. developing an enterprise budget or a business plan. These may be difficult to do with one-off workshops.
  - o Two-day workshops – on beginning of second day ask them to go back and evaluate the previous day's models. Then at the end of the second day provide incentives for them to fill out a final survey.
  - o Interviews can be the most effective and illuminating to receive the best responses. In person type interview opportunities can be especially productive

depending on delivery, for follow through and asking how and what they are doing with the info learned.

- Incentives can be a valuable tool in getting people to respond; as well as not letting them leave a presentation or workshop until they have filled out an evaluation. May be more difficult to provide incentives with online surveys.
    - Use certificates as an incentive.
    - Withhold links to continuing education credits until they complete their evaluation.
    - QR Codes. Qualtrics surveys. Make it fun for people to be engaged. Include prizes for first or correct answer. Collect different information at different times instead of all at the end.
- Timeline for Evaluation: Think through clearly when designing your program and follow through with some type of metric to measure outcomes and impacts. Decide when the right time is to measure progress in terms of weeks, months etc. How is the knowledge being applied and can you give specific examples?
- Farm Visits a year later to see how they are using or implementing what they learned and/or skills that were adopted.

- **Challenges**
    - Online surveys often have the lowest and most incomplete response rates and especially when they are asked to complete a survey after the conclusion of an online training session. Only very motivated folks respond to these types of surveys (see Two-day workshops above).
    - Social Media has value but also can pose a challenge because you may get so involved with digital impacts that you overlook personal contact.
    - AI and other fraud – How do you distinguish between AI and an actual farmer? Recommend working with your IT department behind the scenes to click or unclick check boxes and how specifically to protect QR Codes.
    - Long Term Outcomes and Impacts – getting long term info when capacity doesn't exist to be able to do so.

- **General –** Evaluation is a learning process. You can ask anything, but you just can't ask everything. Try to get enough info, but not probe too much. You have to know your audience and it's important to get feedback right up front and not putting evaluation off or waiting to conduct a survey or test. Determine how you will measure success whether quantitative or qualitative or both. Trust is extremely important – how well you know your audience and where you stand with them.

Program Evaluation and Reporting Best Practices – Amulya Rao

o Don't start with a method – start with a plan!
  o Use a logic model so that you can see where you are going and what you will need to be able to accomplish the teams' objectives in helping participants achieve the desired outcomes.
o Start early.
o Embed performance measures into your project.
  o Integrate evaluation into your program activities.
o Direct or Indirect methods? – Determine the rigor of each method and which method may be more robust in terms of demonstrating behavior change.
o Evaluate your and your project team's strengths – are you good at talking to farmers? Be a pro-active communicator.
o Evaluation Journal – Consider an evaluation journal as a way to track informal conversations. You may be able to get good feedback that may replace having to do a survey.
o Only collect data that you will use.
o Implement (long term outcomes and impacts) – Because an 18 month period of performance may not be long enough to observe or receive feedback for evidence of long term change, you may only be able to measure their intention to implement.
o Interviews – Ask why and how; i.e. why is this making a difference and how is it changing your operation or the way you are doing business?