

Recent Developments: Multi-state capacity building in program evaluation

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Family and consumer scientists have recently concentrated capacity building efforts in program evaluation (Arnold 2002, Bailey and Deen 2002, Mayeske and Lambur 2001) and multi-state programming (CSREES 2000). Accountability and efficient use of resources without duplication of effort have prompted these initiatives. Cooperative Extension in the 13 states in the Western Region of the United States adopted the logic model for program development and evaluation. Several meetings and one major training session were held to build capacity of administrators, county educators, and campus faculty. Each state established an evaluation team to be trained and to train others.

These developments provided an opportunity for family and consumer scientists from two states to renew a working relationship that began a few years earlier through work on evaluations of Children, Youth and Families At Risk (CYFAR) projects. This renewed relationship has resulted in a multi-state collaboration that has grown to the benefit of the individuals involved and of the programs, state Extension systems, and region in which they work.

The collaborators share a common goal of culturally respectful evaluation with native and immigrant populations. They have worked together through e-mail, conferences, and use of sabbatical-leave visits. During these collaborative sessions, they have shared literature, given and received feedback on survey development, conducted focus groups with clientele, observed program implementation, and conducted national interactive trainings through the CYFERnet system. The benefits include

- insight into common issues involved in working with different native and immigrant populations
- program improvement through more relevant feedback to stakeholders

- increased energy, enthusiasm, and motivation to explore cultural aspects of evaluation efforts
- exchange of innovative ideas and skills
- recognition of the contribution of family and consumer sciences to program evaluation
- contribution of family and consumer sciences to multi-state programming requirements
- stronger personal and professional relationships with colleagues in the region

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