



Measuring Barriers to Change

Can I evaluate *beyond program objectives*?

Within Cooperative Extension nationally, there is a strong emphasis on the need to evaluate the impact of a program relative to its educational objectives. However, evaluation can go beyond objectives.

To improve a program, you want to find out the changes people did *not* make in their behavior and *why* they didn't change. Finding out the barriers to change will give you an opportunity to integrate into your next program, how participants might deal with those barriers. Helping participants at a program to anticipate some barriers they will face can eliminate stress for them and bring about change. Take these steps.

1. Build into your next evaluation some close ended or open ended questions about barriers to change. Here are examples of both types of questions you can adapt to your program:

Close-Ended Question:

Many people may not have had an opportunity to make any changes since the program. If you are one of these, please indicate why by circling the most important reasons from the following list. (Circle all that apply)

- 1 NOT REALLY INTERESTED IN DOING ANYTHING
- 2 PROGRAM DID NOT MOTIVATE ME TO GET STARTED
- 3 HAVE NOT HAD ENOUGH TIME TO GET STARTED
- 4 HAVE NOT HAD THE EXTRA MONEY TO PURCHASE THE SUPPLIES NEEDED TO DO THE JOB
- 5 FOUND THE DIRECTIONS TOO CONFUSING TO ATTEMPT
- 6 AM NOT A "HANDY PERSON" AND THEREFORE CAN NOT DO ANYTHING WITHOUT HELP
- 7 DON'T BELIEVE IT HAS ANY EFFECT
- 8 OTHER REASON: _____

Open-Ended Questions:

In your opinion, why is it that more people here in XYZ County don't (practice the behavior)?

What could be done to make it easier for people around here to (practice the behavior)?

2. Gather the data and introduce the barriers at your next program *along with* suggestions as to how to deal with them.

Your evaluation will lead to program improvement and demonstrate to county commissioners and extension directors that you are interested in the *long term* impact of your program.

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

The reference citation for this Tipsheet is: Kiernan, Nancy Ellen (2001). Measuring Barriers to Change: Tipsheet #27, University Park, PA: Penn State Cooperative Extension.

Available at: <http://www.extension.psu.edu/evaluation/pdf/TS27.pdf>

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