What difference does it make?
A Guide to Doing Your Own Evaluation

What Is Evaluation?

- Emerging from social sciences
- Focus on collecting and analyzing information on
  - Context
  - Project activities
  - Outputs (publications, websites, research results, etc.)
  - Outcomes (knowledge and behavior change)
  - Impacts (long-term outcomes or systems change)

Why Do Evaluation?

- Accountability
  - Funders
  - Partners
- Decision making
  - Making adjustments
- Leveraging future support
  - Financial resources
  - Partners
How Can I Do Evaluation?

- Document how your work and Leopold Center investments are making a difference on Iowa
  - Farmers
  - Communities
  - Landscapes

How Can I Do Evaluation?

- Measure outcomes of your work
  - Outcomes are short/medium term changes
    - Occur 1-3 years after project start
  - Short-term outcomes
    - Changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and confidence
      - Who is changing besides yourself?
      - How do you know?
      - What evidence do you have?

How Can I Do Evaluation?

- Measure outcomes of your work (cont.)
  - Medium-term outcomes
    - Changes in behaviors, customs, and practices
      - Whose behaviors are changing besides your own?
      - How do you know?
      - What evidence do you have?
How Can I Do Evaluation?

- Summary of questions to consider when measuring outcomes
  - Am I the only who is changing?
  - Are target groups changing?
  - Who else is changing? Are partners or other organizations, agencies, institutions, or groups changing as a result of the work you are doing?

How Can I Do Evaluation?

- Measure long-term changes or impacts of your work
  - Usually not apparent until several years after work begins
    - Are biological systems changing?
    - Is the landscape changing beyond your experimental plot?
    - Are socioeconomic systems changing?
    - Are institutional, organizational, or public policies changing?
    - How do you know change is happening?

Evidence of Change

- Because people say they’ve changed
  - Survey results, focus group, learning circle, and interview results
- Because you or others have observed change
  - Scientific studies of environmental, biological, or social change
  - Secondary data sources (census data, satellite imagery, business records, tax statements, etc.)
Common Evaluation Traps

- Confusing outputs with outcomes
  - Outcomes are evidence of change
  - Outputs are products generated by your project
    - Research results (presentations, abstracts, papers, and other publications)
    - Website pages and hits
    - Training curricula
    - Number of people attending project events
  - Outputs are NOT evidence of change

Logic Model Basics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision/Goal</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Inputs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A desired condition or state of being</td>
<td>Long-term outcomes (Impacts) Changed in systems</td>
<td>Labor, Money, Equipment, Software, Hardware, Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-term outcomes</td>
<td>Changed in behaviors</td>
<td>Meetings, Conferences, Workshops, Field days, Demonstrations, Conference calls, Setting up record-keeping systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term outcomes</td>
<td>Changes in awareness, knowledge, skills, attitudes</td>
<td>Contacting and engaging partners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activities

- Research results
  - Data (secondary or primary)
  - Publications
  - Presentations
  - Websites
  - Trusts
  - Educational materials
  - Contact lists
  - Fellowship funds
  - Equipment

Outputs

- Training curricula
- Number of people attending project events

Inputs

- Research results
- Data (secondary or primary)
- Publications
- Presentations
- Websites
- Trusts
- Educational materials
- Contact lists
- Fellowship funds
- Equipment
- Labor
- Money
- Equipment
- Software
- Hardware
- Research

Final Thoughts

- Consider how you will evaluate your project from the start
- Integrate evaluation data collection into project activities
- Measure what you can realistically influence
- Focus on a few key indicators
- Collect data that is easy to access
- Collect data that is useful
- Report the data
Logic Model Basics

Vision/Goal
A desired condition or state of being

Outcomes

Long-term outcomes (Impacts)
Changes in systems

Medium-term outcomes
Changes in behaviors

Short-term outcomes
Changes in awareness, knowledge, skills, attitudes

Outputs

Research results
Data (secondary or primary)
Publications
Presentations
Websites
Tools
Educational curricula
Contact lists
Attendance lists
Proceedings
Other products

Activities

Contacting and engaging partners
Meetings
Conferences
Workshops
Field days
Demonstrations
Conference calls
Setting up record-keeping systems

Inputs

Labor
Money
Equipment
Software
Hardware
Research