

NOAA California B-WET Program Project Evaluation Report Review 2007-2008

Overview

We have been working with California B-WET grant recipients to build their capacity to understand what program evaluation is and how to facilitate the evaluation of their projects. We've taken this approach because of the variety of goals, audiences and educational approaches represented by California B-WET projects.

This is the first year that recipients have submitted evaluation reports. We reviewed their reports and provided them with feedback. We have also summarized them in a matrix that follows. Grant recipients are not professional evaluators, nor do they have such a resource on staff (although we encouraged the hiring of such expertise). As expected, a few of the reports are excellent and many of them have issues. Some issues are related to the evaluation design, its execution, the analysis of data or the report itself. We view this process as a learning opportunity for grant recipients, as well as the B-WET program.

A single reviewer (Chris Parsons of Word Craft) read through all 30 of the submitted evaluation reports and commented directly on them so the comments could be returned to those who submitted reports. The matrix is a summary of the evaluation reports and the reviewer's comments. The reviewer did not use a rubric or other tool to formally assess the reports. She used her judgment based on current evaluation practice and experience conducting similar evaluations for the past 25 years. (We may consider developing a rubric for formal review in the future.)

Summaries of the most complete and useful reports are listed first in this matrix (pages 2 to 5). They are followed by summaries of the remaining reports in alphabetical order by project name. In the matrix, double question marks (??) indicate what the reviewer believes to be correct, but was unsure of because the evaluation report wasn't clear, i.e., they conducted a focus group(??) or they received 30?? post surveys. Also, comments in [brackets] are those of the reviewer and are used primarily when offering side notes on methods or findings.

Summary of Results

Nearly all (93%) of the evaluations focused on collecting content/knowledge data and more than half (60%) collected attitude data, mostly satisfaction with the project experience(s). A few (23%) collected data on behaviors or actions, including teachers use of materials, store clearks use of pesticide information and students' conservation actions. About 13% asked about students' interests in related careers and two programs assessed students' skills, one observed planting skills and the other tour-guiding skills.

Based on reports that used statistical tests for significant changes on paired pre/post-test (and some that only provide percentage changes), California B-WET programs in 2006-2007 produced statistically significant increases in students' knowledge about local watersheds and marine sanctuaries and in students' enjoyment in learning about the ocean and protecting the ocean. Analysis of data did not show statistically significant changes in students' conservation actions/behaviors.

Based on reports that provided paired pre/post-test changes (but did not use statistical tests), California B-WET programs showed increases in students' and teachers' ability to identify the ways watersheds and the ocean become polluted and ways to prevent their pollution.

Most reports indicated that program participants (students, teachers and other community members) were satisfied with the B-WET program that they received.