



## Educational Design and Delivery

# Program Evaluation Methods

VRKC: Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency Taxonomy

### Intended Audience:

4-H volunteers

### Learning Outcomes:

- Volunteers will describe the purpose of program evaluation.
- Volunteers will be able to describe program evaluation methods.
- Volunteers will describe benefits of participating in program evaluation.

### Time:

20 – 30 minutes

### Supplies Needed:

- Purchase four different brands of chocolate chip cookies
- Paper plates and napkins
- Pencils and paper
- Markers and flip chart paper
- Power Point, Computer and LCD Projector
- Handouts and Evaluations

### Do Ahead:

- Prepare cookie bags by breaking cookies into bite size portions. Make one bag of each brand of cookie pieces for each potential group.
- Prepare handouts.

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### Volunteerism for the Next Generation:

<http://nextgeneration.4h.org/volunteerism/>

### 4-H National Headquarters:

<http://www.national4-h.org/headquarters.gov/>

## INTRODUCTION

Positive youth development is the cornerstone of the 4-H program. The creation of a positive learning environment for youth and the hands-on, experiential approach to discovering new subject matter through projects are the tools that volunteers and staff use to promote positive youth development. Program evaluation can help us understand how we can sharpen those tools. (Power Point Slide 1)

Volunteers and staff bring many different experiences and understandings of program evaluation to 4-H Youth Development programs. All of us can and need to play a role in this important investment of our resources by asking questions, supporting these efforts, and seeking to understand the results. This way we can work together to make changes and be proud of the differences 4-H Youth Development can make for youth.

## WHAT TO DO

(Power Point Slide 2) Program evaluation methods are the tools we use to obtain information about how to improve what we have accomplished. “Methods” can include many different ways of collecting information. Some of the methods that are familiar to 4-H and could be used in evaluation include gleaning information from project records, judging events, contests, conducting surveys, interviews, assessing portfolios, or looking for characteristics of youth projects. A *program evaluation method* stands out from other ways that we collect information in 4-H because it is tied to a process that is deliberately designed to measure effectiveness and/or to guide program improvement.

### Activity 1: Chocolate Chip Cookie Evaluation

In this activity, participants take a normal, everyday experience (eating chocolate chip cookies) and learn what it means to make evaluative criteria, standards, and judgments explicit. Divide into groups of 4 or 5. Provide each group with four cookie bags (labeled A, B, C and D; each group now has four bags with a different brand of cookie in each bag). Give each group napkins and paper plates on which to put their cookies when they are ready for the taste test. Ask participants to keep notes on their process, the decisions they make, and any challenges they experience on the back of Handout 1. Tell participants that if they do not wish to eat the cookies (due to health, diet, or other reasons), they do not have to do so. Ask them to be participant observers. Explain that they are to first discuss and complete the first two columns on the handout—the criteria for which chocolate chip cookies should be judged and the standards that should be used to judge a chocolate chip cookie. Then they should



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**VRKC: Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency Taxonomy for 4-H Youth Development:**

<http://www.national4-h.org/headquarters.gov/comm/vrkc.pdf>

**VRKC Research and Design**

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**References for this lesson:**

- Camino, L & Zeldin, S. (2006). Bridging research and community practice in the field of youth development through university outreach. In Clary, E.G. & Rhodes, J.E., (Eds.), *Mobilizing adults for positive youth development: Strategies for closing the gap between beliefs and behaviors* (pp.177-192). Springer Science + Business Media, New York.
- Mattessich, P.W., Hendricks, S., Roholt, R.V. (2007). *Information gold mine: Innovative uses of evaluation*. Fieldstone Alliance, Minnesota.
- Preskill, H. & Russ-Eft, D. (2005). *Building Evaluation Capacity; 72 Activities for Teaching and Training*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

sample the cookies and work on their own to rate them in the other two columns. When the groups have completed the activity, bring them back together to respond to the following questions:

1. How would you describe your experience in establishing criteria for evaluating the cookies? Was it difficult? What were some of the things you discussed in your group?
2. How did you determine what standards to use? Were you all in agreement on these standards? How did you reconcile your differences?
3. How comfortable were you with your final judgment about which cookie was best and which you would recommend?
4. For those of you who did not taste the cookies, what role did you play in this evaluative process? What did you observe about your group's behavior? What impact did you have on your group's evaluative judgment and recommendation?

Some volunteers may assume that program evaluation is a job for the University Extension staff. This is a shared role. Besides discovering that learning has taken place, we must also find out if the program is meeting local needs. (Power Point Slide 3) There are other benefits to involving volunteer staff in program evaluation efforts, including (Camino & Zeldin, 2006):

- Volunteers learn about the impact of strong, mediocre, and weak youth development practices and policies.
- Volunteers have even greater local ownership of the results for their local efforts and can see how these results relate to the whole.
- Volunteers offer valuable interpretations of the results that other staff may not have.
- Volunteers are key spokespersons who can communicate the results to others who care about the program.

4-H Youth Development is largely fueled and implemented by volunteers. Involving 4-H volunteer staff in program evaluation methods contributes an even greater understanding of the difference these volunteer-provided contributions make for youth.

Activity 2: Are Club Meetings and Activities Working?

Tell participants that they will be designing a method to evaluate the quality of club learning environments. Explain that this is an exercise in applying what they learned in the last activity to a real-life situation related to being a 4-H volunteer staff member. Ask participants to get

into the same groups of four or five people. Ask participants to work through Handout 2 and to keep notes on their process, the decisions they make, and any challenges they experience. Tell participants that if they have never attended, led, or observed a club meeting, they can take the role of observer. Explain that they are to first discuss and complete the first two columns on the handout—the criteria for which positive learning environments in 4-H clubs should be judged and the standards that should be used to judge a club. Tell participants to then work on their own to complete the third and fourth columns on the handout based on their memories of the last club meeting they attended.



Bring the total group together to discuss the following:

- Was your group able to identify criteria? What aspect of this was difficult? What aspect of identifying criteria was easier to complete? Were some criteria more widely accepted and understood than others?
- What are some of the challenges in selecting standards for a club meeting that are not faced when selecting standards for a cookie?
- What did the observers in the group see and note?
- What can participants use from this experience in their future 4-H involvement as volunteers?

### **Conclusion:**

4-H clubs, projects, and activities are focused on providing positive learning environments for youth ranging from 5-19 years of age. Volunteers need to know how to measure whether learning is happening and if there is a difference in the members as a result of the experience. This work helps to “make the best better.” (Power Point Slides 4, 5)

### **TALK IT OVER**

#### **Reflect:**

- What are the benefits of program evaluation?
- Why should volunteers be involved in program evaluation?

#### **Apply:**

- How can criteria be developed for deciding if learning is happening or an event is successful?
- Describe how to implement program evaluation for an upcoming 4-H activity.

### **EVALUATION**

Ask each participant to complete the evaluation tool (Handout 3).

### **ENHANCE or SIMPLIFY**

Provide a completed program evaluation tool from a recent activity or event. Discuss how to improve the program to increase the learning for youth based on the results of the evaluation.

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Handout 1

## Evaluating Chocolate Chip Cookies Using Evaluation Logic

<b><i>Establishing Criteria</i></b>	<b><i>Constructing Standards</i></b>	<b><i>Measuring Performance and Comparing with Standards</i></b>	<b><i>Synthesizing and Integrating Evidence into Judgment of Worth</i></b>
What are the criteria on which a chocolate chip cookie should be judged? (e.g., type of chocolate, texture, color, aroma)	How well should the cookie perform on each of the dimensions (what are your standards)? Develop a rating system.	Based on your criteria for a good cookie, how well does each cookie measure up against the standards you set?	Which cookie is worth buying?

Which cookie would you recommend? Why?

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## Handout 2

**Evaluating Quality in a 4-H Club Meeting**

<b><i>Establishing Criteria</i></b>	<b><i>Constructing Standards</i></b>	<b><i>Measuring Performance and Comparing with Standards</i></b>	<b><i>Synthesizing and Integrating Evidence into Judgment of Worth</i></b>
What are the dimensions or criteria on which a 4-H club meeting or activity should be judged (e.g., youth-led, welcoming new youth, clear ground rules for participants, flexible plan, cross-age teams)?	How well should the club meeting perform on each of the dimensions (what are your standards)? Develop a rating system.	Based on your criteria for a good club meeting, how well does the most recent club meeting you observed or were a part of measure up against the standards you set?	In retrospect, was the club meeting worth participating in from a youth perspective? From an adult perspective? Is there a difference in how youth and adults would rate the meeting? How would you know?

Adapted from *Building Evaluation Capacity; 72 Activities for Teaching and Training* by Hallie Preskill and Darlene Russ-Eft. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, [www.sagepub.com](http://www.sagepub.com).



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## Handout 3

## Evaluation

Please complete the following evaluation. The results of the evaluation will be shared with those who work with the program. Your participation in this evaluation is voluntary. Your responses will be combined with the responses of all other participants and you will not be individually identified on any report prepared.

Please answer the questions by circling the number that indicates your level of understanding of the topics listed before and after the training.

1 = Very little understanding

2 = Understand somewhat

3 = Clear understanding

	NOW – After the training			THEN – Before the training		
1. I can describe the purpose of program evaluation.	1	2	3	1	2	3
2. I am able to describe program evaluation methods and how to develop criteria for evaluation.	1	2	3	1	2	3
3. I can describe benefits for volunteers to participate in program evaluation.	1	2	3	1	2	3

- Please list at least two ideas or skills that you learned as a result of this presentation.
- How will you use what you learned in this presentation?

