

Building an Evaluation Framework for Assessing the Impact of Watershed Interventions and Programs in Kansas

Linda Thurston, Christa Smith, and Bill Hargrove
Kansas State University

2009 National Water Conference
February 8 – 11, 2009
St. Louis, MO

Evaluation Questions

- What are the biophysical and social outcomes of watershed program activities?
- What is the impact of watershed programs on short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes?
- How can stakeholders judge the value of watershed program investments?

Project Partners

- The Office of Educational Innovation and Evaluation (OEIE)
- Kansas Center for Agricultural Resources and the Environment (KCARE)
- The Kansas Department of Health and the Environment

Characteristics of Evaluation Framework

- utilizes a comprehensive approach,
- includes assessment of both physical and behavioral impacts,
- is participatory and involves all stakeholders,
- builds capacity at the local, state, and national level, and
- provides data for science-based decision-making and management practices.

Purpose

to increase the evaluation capacity of professionals, volunteers, and other stakeholders working on water quality program in Kansas watershed districts

Goal

to develop and test an electronic Kansas Watershed Program Evaluation Toolkit, based on measuring biophysical and social indicators of success

Activities

Develop toolkit to build local evaluation capacity

Gain buy-in (awareness of the importance of evaluation of watershed programs) at ALL levels

Provide training and ongoing technical assistance

Inputs

Toolkit and training materials

Focus group and survey results (stakeholder input)

Collaboration with partners in water quality restoration

Immediate Outcomes

Increase in frontline evaluation skills and knowledge related to watershed programs

Increase in use of evaluation at program levels

Intermediate Outcomes

Best practices utilized and ineffective practices improved

Efficiency in financial decisions

Improved restoration plans and local decision-making

Long-term Outcomes

Increased accountability

Improved water quality and/quantity in Kansas

Cultural shift to recognize the value of evaluation