Lights, Camera, Action!

Utilizing Video and Digital Technologies to Document Program Impacts

Amy Harder
Graduate Assistant
Department of Agricultural Education
Texas A&M University
TAMU Mail Stop 2116
228C Scoates Hall
College Station, TX 77843-2116
Cell: 970-691-5533
Fax: 979-458-2698
e-mail: aharder@tamu.edu

Jeanie Long
Texas A&M University

Gary J. Wingenbach
Texas A&M University

James R. Lindner
Texas A&M University

Introduction
In agricultural and extension education, it is a rare research project that does not require some level of financial support, whether for small items like stamps or major items such as salary. Fortunately, there are a variety of funding agencies that offer grant support to researchers conducting projects compatible with the funding agencies’ goals. The receipt of grant monies is not a license to spend freely. Rather, funding agencies expect researchers to be accountable and submit formal evaluations. These evaluations can be used by funding agencies to verify that their monetary support is creating desirable impacts. In addition, a well-done evaluation can inspire an agency to commit to future support of a project, while a poorly conducted evaluation may cause the immediate cessation of funding.

Agricultural and extension education reaps many benefits from outside funding and it behooves the profession to excel in accountability. Taylor’s (1998) statement about Cooperative Extension addresses this urgent need: “We must manage accountability and regain the role of being the most severe judge of our own programs to remain viable as individual agents and as an organization” (par. 2). Towards this end, researchers must utilize best practices in conducting and reporting evaluation efforts. It is now possible to supplement written evaluations in more creative, visual, and possibly more effective ways by taking advantage of the widespread availability of technology.
Purpose
The purpose of this poster is to illustrate creative uses of video and digital technologies to document program impacts and supplement written reports.

Information to be Shared
The poster features a collaborative international project between researchers at Texas A&M University, USA and the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, Mexico. As a publicly funded project, evaluation is an important component. The poster illustrates how video and digital technologies have been integrated into the project’s evaluation process.

Conclusions
Accountability efforts are critical to continued funding from outside sources. The integration of video and digital technologies into the evaluation process is one solution for improving accountability efforts. Further, these technologies may be useful tools for sharing program impacts with stakeholders, as pictures and video convey messages free from professional acronyms and jargon. Finally, data collected with these technologies can be compiled into digital archives, creating valuable resources for future research and programming efforts.

Educational Importance
This poster draws attention to using 21st century technologies to supplement written documentation of program impacts. It serves as a reminder of the importance of accountability in the agricultural and extension education profession and may inspire members of the profession to analyze their own accountability efforts.

Keywords: Accountability, technology