The Polish American Extension Project: An Evaluation of the Long Term Impacts on the Youth Development and Economic Development Program Components

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Introduction

In collaboration with the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service’s (CSREES) Planning and Accountability Office and selected university partners, a research team from Penn State University is conducting an evaluation of the Polish American Extension Project (PAEP) to measure its long-term impact on the youth development and economic development programs in Poland.

The need for this evaluation project is two-fold. First, this will be the first evaluation of the PAEP that takes into account the impact of the project on non-U.S. participants. Second this will be the only evaluation that looks at specific components (youth and economic development) of international programming.

Method

A three member evaluation team composed of two Penn State Cooperative Extension specialists and the Penn State University College of Agricultural Sciences International Programs officer will review project reports conducted by previous evaluation teams. In doing so, the team gains an understanding of the work already completed and will develop benchmarks by which current data will be measured. Upon completion of the review of reports, document analysis will be employed to begin the development of evaluation protocols. US project participants will be interviewed to understand their perspectives of the project.

The team will interview Ministry of Agriculture officials, extension personnel, community leaders and extension clientele in Warsaw and selected provinces in Poland to measure professional growth of extension staff, clientele satisfaction, and changes in knowledge. Other evaluation activities aimed at seeking impacts attributable to the project will include an economic analysis using suitable quantitative procedures and a document analysis to review educational materials currently in use.

Major Points/Information to be Shared

At the conference, members of the research team will share the steps that have been taken leading up to conducting this evaluation and elements of this project including protocols, preliminary research reports, and initial findings.

Conclusions/Lessons Learned

Cultural norms related to video taping and recording of research participants has been an issue with which members of the US research team have had to become familiar. Language barriers related to discussing emotions and impacts has also been a challenge that the research team is still overcoming as interview protocols are developed and refined.

Educational Importance

The implications of the project are great, not only for the project in Poland, but for all of extension’s intervention programs abroad. Knowing the impact of our extension programs on participants on both sides (Us and international) and our specific program components will allow extension field staff, specialists, and administrators to capitalize on positive program elements and address program challenges. In doing so, extension will have the opportunity to improve international programming at all levels of participation and programmatic content.