

# JMG Program Evaluation: Telling Your Story for Impact

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- When I go into my garden with a spade, and dig a bed, I feel such an exhilaration and health that I discover that I have been defrauding myself what all this time in letting others do for me what I should have done with my own hands.

– Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Man the Reformer* (1849)



## Key Research Areas in Youth Gardening

- Academics
  - ALL subjects, esp. STEM
- Health and Nutrition, including Fitness
- Life Skills
  - Team work, communication, responsibility, critical thinking, etc.
- Connection to Nature
- Knowledge of Food Systems
- Community Engagement, Parental Involvement



## What IS Evaluation Anyway?

- Evaluation is a tool that involves measuring and reporting on the results and impacts of programs and/or projects which serves the function of accountability.
  - “evaluation as a systematic collection and analysis of information about the characteristics and outcomes of a program or project as a basis of judgment to improve its effectiveness and/or to inform decisions about current or future programming” (USAID, 2016)
- Evaluation vs. Research



## Why program evaluation is important

- Evidence-based programs such as JMG, lend themselves to program evaluation
  - Grounded in missions of Extension and Ag Education
- Accountability
- Broader impacts – across states, regions, national
  - Want to get to a place where we have collective JMG Best Practices to share



## Reasons why evaluation can help:

- determine “what works” and “what does not work.”
- showcase the effectiveness of a program to the stakeholders, community and funders.
- improve educational and delivery practice.
- increase capacity for self assessment and future planning.
- build knowledge for the broader youth gardening field.

**GOAL is to TELL YOUR STORY .... based on data!**



2007\_10\_01\_RB\_WhyProgEval.pdf

[https://cyfar.org/sites/default/files/Child\\_Trends-](https://cyfar.org/sites/default/files/Child_Trends-)

## Effective Practices in Evaluation

- Evaluations should involve the instrumental use of results
  - Where a decision or action follows, at least in part, from the evaluation
- Evaluations therefore should be:
- Useful:
  - focused on “intended use by intended users”
- Feasible
  - procedures should be practical
- Proper and Accurate
  - Reliable and valid instrument, data, and justified results



## Outcomes and Logic Models

- Why include outcomes?
  - Outcomes and Logic Model help with structure, planning and evaluation

### Outcomes organized into an logic model



<http://www.jae-online.org/attachments/article/2148/2018-02-09%20Diaz.pdf>  
 Journal of Agricultural Education, 59(2), 143-165 <https://doi.org/10.5032/jae.2018.02143>

Long Term Outcomes	Intermediate	Immediate
Improved quality of outdoor school environment	Students engage in nature through outdoor activities	Increased knowledge and awareness of where food comes from (foods systems)
Increased access to fresh fruits and vegetables	Students are more engaged (participate, listen and pay attention to lesson)	Students exhibit an increase in knowledge of healthy eating habits
Sustainable school gardens (sustained for multiple years)	Students share knowledge about gardening	Fosters love of gardening among students that increases their enthusiasm for learning
Students are connected to nature and their food	Adults positively engage with students in garden	Students exhibit increased knowledge about nutrition and understand the importance of eating healthy to promote wellness
Healthier garden participants (physical and mental health)	Students, parents and teachers make healthier food choices (i.e. eating more fruits and vegetables, trying new healthy foods/drinks)	Increased life skills including leadership, accountability, teamwork/cooperation, social skills, responsibility, focus and patience.
Increase in the number of school, community and home gardens	Teachers incorporate nutrition education into garden instruction	Students exhibit an increased willingness to eat more nutritious foods (i.e. fresh fruits and vegetables)

## Opportunities Related to Evaluation

- How can we work together?
- How to get started?
- Your program is impactful, now what?
- **Working more efficiently to move everyone forward**
  - **Common Instruments!**
  - **Shared Instruments!**
  - **Collaboration!**



## Closing Questions

- What is the one key factor or element that has helped your program (mine, and yours...) to find success?
- Brainstorm ideas!
- What questions do you have for me or JMG team?

