



Water Program EVALUATION Checklist

Most educators are familiar with evaluating immediate or short term results: students read some information and we ask them a question to find out whether they retained the main idea. This Evaluation Checklist seeks to answer the broad program question: do the activities as a whole help participants **improve water quality or quantity in their community**, or is it simply a collection of science or recreation activities?

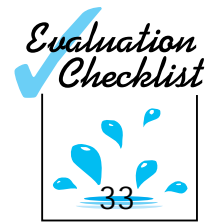
With youth programs, this particular objective may be difficult or impossible to evaluate. Most are so short (one day, one week, one semester) that they alone won't have an impact on the resource. However, taken together, community youth programs about water which are held over several years may show a measurable improvement to the resource. A critical element of success at this level, therefore, is making a continuing connection with the community.

This Evaluation Checklist will also help you to **examine specific elements of the program's structure and operation** and to carefully scrutinize its successes and its needs for improvement. It will help you determine if program resources are being used effectively and if you have met your own and others' expectations. It also addresses the performance of leaders and teachers. Other evaluation techniques and systems are available which can help you evaluate specific impacts on participants. See the Resource section for ideas and references.

Evaluation can help you twice: once during the program and again in planning for the new program. During the program you may want to emphasize evaluation of program processes and organization. After the program you may want to emphasize program impacts and analyze which program components contributed to those impacts.

This detailed checklist is based on information gathered from a review of environmental education literature and of program evaluation tools, and investigation of youth water education program strategies. It represents the best advice of over 40 outstanding youth water program managers and more than 30 published program descriptions. It has been reviewed at a national symposium of water education program managers and tested at specific program sites.⁸

8. See endnote 6 on page 10.



There are seven parts in this checklist which are generally comparable to the eight sections of the Water Program Planning Checklist.

1. Looking at your results—overview/summary
2. Organization mission
3. Why do this program?
4. Program support, partners and networks
5. Program goals, design and access
6. Program delivery
7. Evaluation

Who should use this checklist?

Initially, the program manager can use this checklist to help plan the evaluation process. Forming an evaluation committee is a good idea, however. It could include representatives of community groups, natural resource agencies, college or university specialists, schools, individuals who work directly with the youth, and the youth themselves. The committee will need to decide when to evaluate, how to evaluate, and how to use the evaluation results.

How to use this checklist

Use the checklist as a worksheet. If you are working with a committee or team, reflect individually on your answers to the evaluation sections then get together to summarize results.

Begin with section 1, Looking at your results—Overview/Summary. This helps you gather and summarize your impressions. Each of the other checklist sections begins with a brief explanation followed by general questions and then some detailed planning questions. It concludes with summary questions. Once you have completed the evaluation process, return to section 1 and note any new or revised answers to the questions there.

Skip, emphasize or combine questions as appropriate for your specific program. In addition to the information you developed using the Planning Checklist, the information in the Resources section of this book and in other guidebooks in this series may also be helpful.

People conducting a program evaluation sometimes face problems which may prevent them from gaining the benefits of evaluation. Don't let these problems scare you. Go ahead and do the best you can at evaluating the program, and take advantage of the results to plan for the next time. Some common barriers to evaluation include:

- not enough time to conduct an evaluation
- lack of participant knowledge about need for the program, causing participants to evaluate the program negatively
- difficulty in determining whether the water experience was educational
- lack of willingness to change, so evaluation results do not get used
- discovering that the program did not effectively relate activities to larger water resources or ecological concerns



NO BETTER WELL

Start with each section's general questions.

Then look at the detailed planning evaluation questions which follow. Make notes and check

- NO, what you didn't do;
- BETTER, what you could have done better; and
- WELL, what you did well.

Then summarize what you learned in the summary question.

You can use this information to enhance your responses to questions in Program Evaluation section 1 and to enrich the evaluation team's discussions.



Looking at your results—overview/summary

In working through the Evaluation Checklist, you will have to consider many aspects of your program. This section helps you put things together in one place. Begin by reviewing these summary questions to help provide perspective. Make copies of this section for you and your team. Jot down your thoughts on the copy.

Return to this page after you have completed the checklist sections relevant to your program. If you are working with a committee, reflect individually on your answers to each question here and to the questions in each evaluation checklist section, then bring the group together to summarize results.

1. *What makes your program successful?*

2. *What are your program's strengths in each of the following areas?*

■ *Program goals (What did you want your program to accomplish? Did it help youth relate to identified community water resource issues or needs?)*

■ *Program support by organization, networks and partners*

■ *Program design (What efforts did you make to design your program around program goals? Did your program strategy take advantage of water's special qualities and variety of locations?)*

■ *Access to the program (Who was your program designed to reach? Were there any barriers to their participation?)*

■ *Program delivery (What made your program successful? How did you define success?)*

■ *Program evaluation (What aspects of your program did you evaluate? How did you incorporate the results into your program?)*

3. Which areas have the potential for development or change?

4. Are there any unexpected outcomes? How will these figure into future plans?

5. What are the major areas of agreement among individual responses from evaluation committee participants?

6. What are the key differences in committee members' perceptions? Why are they different?

7. What can the evaluation team do to improve the program?

8. What are the barriers to change? What can the team do about them?

9. How does the support of your organization figure into your ability to respond to program feedback?

10. Review your program goals (section 1, Program planning overview/review, from the Planning Checklist). How do your conclusions mesh with your goals?



2 Organization mission

Organizations have a mission which they seek to carry out. Often the organizational support that is helpful in providing water education program continuity and stability grows out of a good match between the organization's mission and the program's goals. Use this section to reflect on this issue.

Success elements addressed (see p. 6)

7

Organizational support

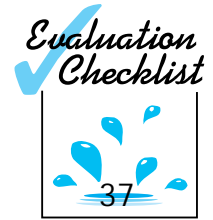
Why is your organization(s) involved in youth water education?

How might your organization's mission and reputation enable you to respond to changes recommended through the evaluation process?

Have you determined how your organization is viewed by the community and by program participants? What were the results?

Go on to any other section of the Evaluation Checklist. Answers to these questions will help you expand on your answers to questions 1, 2, 9 and 10 of Evaluation Checklist section 1. Work with the evaluation team to recommend any needed program modifications.

3 Why do this program?



Communities experience and manage local water issues. An effective water education program helps youth relate to identified community or regional needs. What knowledge and skills do youth in your community need to enable them to help improve water quantity or quality? What did you want your program to do?

Describe briefly the needs your program met.

Success element addressed (see p. 6)

2

Community water issues

4

Youth needs

How did you identify those needs?

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Specifically, what needs did the program meet?

■ *A water education need expressed in the youth's community*

■ *A gap in the youths' education about water*

■ *Community social concerns such as drug use prevention*

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Who was the target audience? Was it clearly identified?

Section 3, Why do this program?

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