



## Six Tips for Writing Your BFRDP Proposal Evaluation Plan

### February 14, 2022

The [GREW Project](#), a BFRDP funded project to support organizations to do evaluation, would like to share some ideas for developing evaluation plans for your BFRDP. We've come up with some key points to think about when working on your evaluation plan.

1. **Follow the RFA instructions.** This is key. Always refer to official materials first. Begin by reviewing the [BFRDP RFA](#) and the [BFRDP Outcomes Based Reporting Guide](#).
2. **Think big - this is your chance.** Evaluation costs money – which can be hard to come by. A BFRDP grant is a chance to look at your results in a more comprehensive and holistic way. The RFA encourages [summative, formative and participatory](#) evaluation. All these things can help you document your overall success and improve what you do. For example:
  - o Consider crafting outcomes and questions that are important to the organization's long-term development.
  - o Create evaluation processes that help you to continually assess, learn and improve what you do.
  - o Explore how your program activities foster diversity, equity and inclusion.
  - o Consider hiring a professional evaluator (it's encouraged in the RFA). A few suggestions: You can find evaluators by using the [American Evaluation Association website](#), contacting Extension staff at [land grant universities](#), general web searchers, or asking peers for suggestions. We also have a [list of evaluators](#) who have worked on farmer education related evaluation, shared to the GREW listserv by BFR training organization staff.

#### More information:

- o **See our webinar – [Evaluation 101](#).** It outlines the elements that go into writing an evaluation plan – and provides some links to other useful "how to" documents.
3. **Be realistic.** Create an evaluation plan that is focused on what's most important to measure and learn.
    - o Assess your organization's resources and capacity to plan and implement a sound evaluation. Create an evaluation that is doable and focused on what's really important to learn and assess.
    - o Get clear about who and how the information you collect will be used. This strategy will help you focus on the most important information – less can be more.
    - o Look for information that has already been collected by your organization or other sources.
    - o Make sure your budget includes staff time for evaluation activities (data collection, analysis, survey writing, etc.).

3. **Engage farmers and ranchers in defining success.** Participatory evaluation is an approach that can help better meet the needs of those you serve. It involves including stakeholders in any stage of the evaluation – from evaluation design, through data collection, analysis and making shared meaning.

Participatory evaluation is encouraged in the BFRDP RFA. A simple way to increase participation is to ask the farmers or ranchers you serve a few questions (you can do this when collecting information from farmers on program needs – which is needed for the proposal). For example, you can ask:

- o What’s most important to learn from this evaluation? What big questions or issues should be at the core of our evaluation?
- o How would we know if this program is successful at meeting its goals?
- o What do participants want to achieve as part of this program? What significant differences do you want this program to make?

**More information:**

- o **Example resources on participatory evaluation.** [These documents](#) can help you learn more about using participatory methods in evaluation.

5. **Use available tools to identify key outcomes.** The RFA asks applicants to identify at least two outcomes in the outcome-based reporting section of the proposal. To help you clarify your project’s outcomes, the GREW Project has created several tools: an [outcomes list](#), [outcome diagrams](#) and a [webinar](#) with more guidance for identifying outcomes. These tools offer ideas which you can modify to fit the specifics of your program. They look at common outcomes for BFR projects, as well as items more specifically for measuring both movement towards “starting to farm” and “farming success.” You can also find examples of outcomes other BFRDP funded projects have used by exploring project information and reporting on the [FarmAnswers.org website](#).

6. **Get more help.** Even more tools are available to provide ideas and lessons to help develop your evaluation, and your proposal in general. Here are a few:

- o [GREW Evaluation Resource Library](#) – There are massive amounts of resources available to help organizations do their own evaluation. We cataloged many of these items in the GREW Evaluation Resource Library. You can search general listings, or look for specific topics like culturally responsive evaluation, logic models, reporting, etc. You will also find documents made by other BFR serving organizations, such as their surveys, logic models, reports, etc.
- o [GREW Listserv](#) – keep up with new announcements for webinars, tools, and learning community sessions.
- o [GREW Website](#) – see slides and video from previous webinars and learning community sessions, as well as our tools.
- o [2017 BFRDP Evaluation Report](#) – conducted by the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. It summarized the outcomes identified by projects funded through 2015.



This work is supported by the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, grant no. 2018-70017-28606, from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.