National Evaluation of the ‘Annie’s Project’ Course for Farm and Ranch Women

**PURPOSE**

This evaluation was conducted to determine changes in knowledge of participants in Annie’s Project; a course designed to empower women and strengthen their understanding of their farm and ranch enterprises. The goal was to show improved understanding of the financial, legal, human resources, marketing, and production aspects of agriculture as well as strategies to reduce risk to their enterprises in these areas.

**BACKGROUND**

- Annie’s Project is an 18-hour course designed to give participants a better understanding of farm and ranch operation.
- More than 40% of participants in Annie’s Project courses have been farming for less than 10 years.
- More than 400 women participated in Annie’s Project, in 8 different states throughout the US.

**METHODS**

- Participants were given pre and post course evaluations either completed on line or on a printed copy.
  - RISE staff members entered all paper survey data to ensure quality control of results.
  - Surveys contain items about knowledge and actions taken regarding the five constructs of the course. Respondents rated their knowledge on a four-point scale.
  - Participants were given random ID codes prior to the survey to ensure anonymity.

**RESULTS**

Knowledge Gains by Construct

- Results of the Annie’s Project course evaluations show a significant increase in knowledge in each construct.
  - A matched paired t-test was used to determine significant differences in knowledge from pre- to post-course surveys.
  - Aggregated national data were analyzed by construct with pre- and post-course comparisons.
  - Results discussed here are the aggregated national data from 2014.

**DISCUSSION**

Out of more than 16 topics covered in Annie’s Project, 62% of participants identified the 6 topics above to be most important.

At the end of Annie’s Project course, participants set goals for applying what was learned, including:
- writing business plans
- preparing legal documents such as wills and estate plans
- better record keeping
- using online resources for decision making
- learning more about the topics covered in the class.

Educating farm and ranch women lead to greater involvement and empowered women to become better business partners.

The results of this evaluation indicate that Annie’s Project was successful in achieving its goal of educating women in a broad range of agribusiness topics, motivating them to take steps to improve their business enterprises, and creating a desire to continue learning how they improve their operations.