

**An Evaluation of Attendees' Satisfaction with Topics Presented at an Educational  
Water Conservation Event**

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### **Introduction/need for research**

The Texas Alliance for Water Conservation (TAWC) is a non-profit, agriculture focused organization with the purpose of educating West Texas farmers and ranchers about the most effective and efficient water management techniques and ultimately initiate a behavioral change in how these agriculturalists use their water. To accomplish its purpose, TAWC conducts research on a variety of water management techniques and then communicates with West Texas farmers and ranchers about the most effective water conservation techniques (TAWC, 2016). The TAWC uses a variety of communication and educational outlets to inform their target audience about water conservation. These activities include Field Days, Field Walks, board meetings, agricultural conferences, and educational tools and information (TAWC, 2016). However, the most popular and largest TAWC event of the year is the Water College. The goal of the TAWC Water College is to provide a positive learning experience that is conducive to facilitating a change in farmer's and rancher's behavior toward water conservation practices in hopes of increasing conservation technology adoption rates.

### **Conceptual framework**

This study is based on Leagans' concept of needs, which states effective programs are developed by identifying individual and group needs and interests and arranging action that helps meet those needs (1964). In non-formal education, people are motivated to participate when they feel a need for the information or training provided, and if this need is not met satisfactorily, participation will diminish or cease (Richardson, n.d.). In agricultural and extension education, a needs assessment should be part of program planning, development, and evaluation (Etuk, n.d.). Recognizing and following steps of a structured needs assessment can enable more meaningful programs to serve the desired audience and meet their needs, and can often foster positive and meaningful changes to the way agricultural and extension education programs are developed (Etuk, n.d.).

### **Methodology**

This study used descriptive survey research methodology with a one-time questionnaire distributed at the 2017 TAWC Water College. The target population for this study was all attendees at the 2017 TAWC Water College, and convenience sampling was used. The questionnaire was optional to fill out, and asked respondents to stay anonymous. Respondents were asked to indicate their satisfaction with the content presented by the guest speakers at the event using a 4-point Likert-type scale where 1= *Poor*, 2= *Fair*, 3= *Good*, and 4= *Excellent*. Data were then recoded to create two groups with *Poor* and *Excellent*, where those who indicated *Poor* and *Fair* in one group, *Unsatisfactory*, and *Good* and *Excellent* in another, *Satisfactory*. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS® version 12.1 for Mac. A total of 51 responses were collected from a population of 196.

## Results/findings

The most well-received presentation was over upcoming weather trends and patterns, with all respondents ( $N = 51$ ) identifying it as *Excellent*. The second most well-received presentation was over water use techniques for cotton production, with almost all respondents ( $n = 49$ ) identifying it as *Satisfactory*. The third best received presentation topic was on a comparison of LEPA, LESA, and PDMI irrigation technologies, with almost all ( $n = 48$ ) respondents identifying it as *Satisfactory*. The least popular presentations were the topics of implications for cattle ranchers, with a higher number of respondents ( $n = 9$ ) indicating it as *Unsatisfactory*, and the presentations given by representatives of Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Texas Water Development Board (TWDB), with a higher number of respondents ( $n = 9, 13$ ) indicating these as *Unsatisfactory*.

Table 1.  
*Water College Attendee's Satisfaction of Presentation Topics*

Topic	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Upcoming Weather Trends and Patterns	0	51
Water Usage Techniques in Cotton Production	0	49
Comparison of LEPA, LESA, and PMDI Technology	1	48
Implications for Cattle Ranchers	9	40
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Update	9	36
Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) Update	13	36

$N = 51$

## Conclusions

Based on the results from the questionnaire, attendees of the Water College preferred the topics of weather, water usage in cotton production, and the comparison of different irrigation technologies over other topics. This may be due in part to the demographics of these attendees and the fact almost all of them are cotton or other row crop farmers who would have more interest in these topics. The lack of satisfaction in the topics of implications for cattle ranchers and the updates from NRCS and the TWDB could be because they were more informative than educational. This study has shown the needs of the target audience of the TAWC as being focused on more educational and practical topics toward water management and conservation.

## Implications/recommendations

Future studies of satisfaction with presentation topics would be more effectively assessed with the distribution of a pre and post-test to see what attendees learned or remembered most after the event. Extension educators can conduct a similar program evaluation as an opportunity to find

out what event participants want to learn in future extension programs and to help them tailor their program planning (Kiernan, 2008).

### References

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