



Improving Recruitment and Retention of Teams to the Great Lakes Bowl

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Program Profile	
Program Description:	The Great Lakes Bowl is a one-day annual regional competition among high school teams (grades 9-12) in the Great Lakes region. The winning team advances to the National Ocean Science Bowl (NOSB), where the winners from each of the 25 regions participate. The Great Lakes Bowl tests students' math and science skills as applied to topics on Great Lakes biology, chemistry, geology, physics, technology, history, and economics, in a quiz bowl format. Scholarships, internships, and other programs are available to participating students. Professional development opportunities are offered for coaches, who are each high school teachers from the team's school.
Program Goals:	The NOSB's mission is to "enrich science teaching and learning across the United States through a high-profile national competition that increases high school students' knowledge of the oceans and enhances public understanding and stewardship of the oceans." The program's major objectives are to expose students to the latest research and job opportunities in the fields of Great Lakes and ocean science, use oceans to teach in a cross-disciplinary fashion, and to reach out to minorities.
Program Funding:	Consortium for Ocean Leadership, CILER, and NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory
Program Links:	Great Lakes Bowl: http://www.glerl.noaa.gov/pr/nosb/cur/ National Ocean Science Bowl: http://www.oceanleadership.org/education/national-ocean-sciences-bowl/
Evaluation Profile	
Evaluation Goals & Questions:	The intention of this evaluation was to "demonstrate continued interest and demand for the program." The program coordinator wanted to improve "recruitment and retention" of participants. Questions were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What motivates teachers to participate in NOSB? • What factors are important for continued participation in NOSB? • What factors would prevent teams from returning to NOSB? • What do NOSB teachers think are effective ways of advertising NOSB? • What can the role of current NOSB teachers be in recruiting new teams?
Evaluation Methods:	Data collection methods included a focus group and a follow-up survey with teacher participants (N=14). The focus group (n=7) provided qualitative data and occurred the day before the competition. The surveys (n=10) produced both quantitative and qualitative data and were completed after teachers returned to their hometowns. Education materials were raffled off to teachers who completed surveys. 13 out of 14 teachers either participated in the focus group or returned their survey. Content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data, and 4-6 major themes were developed from the responses to each question, with supporting quotes. Descriptive statistics (counts, frequencies, percentages, mean, median, mode, and variability) were calculated on an Excel spreadsheet, and used to describe quantitative data when necessary. Quotes from surveys and focus groups were used in the report to support quantitative statistics.

Instruments:	No instruments are available at this time, but should be in the near future.
How were results used?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When asked what would keep teams from participating, one major theme was a change from the “current location”. This was useful information, because the coordinator was considering relocating the competition from its traditional location on the University of Michigan’s campus to NOAA’s brand new building south of Ann Arbor. Because of the evaluation, this change was not made. • Efforts to recruit more teams were modified in the 2009-2010 school year based on the results, which showed that teachers were willing to help market the program. • The results of this evaluation will be used in conjunction with an evaluation of the 2010 program to determine the efficacy of the adjustments. This evaluation was presented at annual conferences for the International Association for Great Lakes Research and the North American Association for Environmental Education.
Evaluation Cost:	Between \$1,600 and \$2,700 (80-90 hrs combined staff time at \$20-30/hr)
Evaluation Insights:	<p>What worked well?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using MEERA’s eight-step guide streamlined the evaluation process. Since the coordinator was a novice evaluator, MEERA was especially useful. • The data collection phase went very well. Teachers were eager to talk during the focus group and gave detailed and complete answers on the survey. The results indicated that they “are invested in contributing to the growth and future success of the program.” <p>What were the important evaluation “lessons learned”?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to stick with the process (i.e. MEERA’s eight steps) – it was rewarding and satisfying. • Logic model formation and goal setting are key components of a good evaluation. • It is difficult to translate the evaluation results into actual program change because of resource limitations and unforeseen circumstances. <p>What could have been done differently?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping administrators better informed during the evaluation process might have increased the likelihood that results will translate into a change in the program. <p>The coordinator would like to have the evaluation results continue to be used to improve recruitment and retention of teams, but is concerned that they will not be used in future planning beyond 2010 since program leadership is in transition..</p>
Experience with MEERA	<p>How was MEERA used to conduct the evaluation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEERA was the primary tool; the evaluator was a novice and used its step-by-step approach to guide the entire process. <p>What was helpful about using MEERA to conduct the evaluation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The step-wise process helped the evaluator: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stay on track ○ Choose realistic evaluation goals ○ Grasp the evaluation’s scope. • The resources provided were very helpful, especially the “Clarifying Program Logic” and “Analyzing Data” sections. <p>What recommendations would you have for others who are considering using MEERA to evaluate their programs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow the steps as they are laid out on the site. • Find a resource person (colleague, evaluation professional, etc.) to approach with questions if need be. MEERA has great resources, but unexpected situations can arise and it’s key to have a contact to help with those.
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