

Evaluation

Project Performance Measures listed in the Logic Model submitted with the project proposal will be used by the Principal Investigator and the Evaluation Team (Participatory Evaluation) to quantify short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes for the various project outputs.

After recruitment, participants, teachers, volunteers, and partners will be trained in a professional development workshop where teachers receive continuing education credits issued by the Texas Environmental Education Advisory Committee, an ad hoc committee of the Texas Education Agency. The projected delivery period for this series of workshops is November 3 through December 19 of each project year. A five-hour initial workshop will orient participants to the history of scientific work at Caddo Lake and Big Cypress Bayou, review project specifics and output expectations (such as alignment with the state's education standard, problem-based student products, and Paddlefish Festival participation), and delve into the particulars of inquiry education and problem-based learning methods and techniques. Sessions will also announce to school districts the details of the project's sub grant awards program and Professional Development summer camp opportunities. This initial training is followed by collaboration between a schools participating teachers, consulting project specialists, volunteers and partners to select, refine, and begin problem-based, service learning investigations.

The Principal Investigator will conduct a post-test evaluation of the quality of all Professional Development delivered. For the initial workshop and the Professional Development Summer Camp, a Texas Education Agency approved evaluation is being utilized that looks at quality of instruction. After the initial workshop, the focus is on teachers working within their own districts to develop student-centered, inquiry projects. This activity will be tracked by the Principal Investigator to gauge the progress of each district toward the development of appropriate learning modules for curricular integration and create and maintain files to document each. In addition, the Principal Investigator will deploy additional support from contracting specialists as indicated by this review.

The Principal Investigator will maintain metrics on the number of teachers, volunteers, and partners trained. This data will be reported as the project progresses in interim reports and in the final report. The Principal Investigator will work with the Evaluation Team to track and quantify the outcomes of all training sessions, which are ultimately the goals of the Paddlefish Reintroduction Education Initiative:

- (1) to improve stewardship, the public's ability to proactively engage with issues affecting the health of Caddo Lake and the Big Cypress Bayou Watershed, and
- (2) to improve student performance in specific areas of the statewide science assessment.

Participatory evaluation modeled after “Participatory Evaluation. What is it? Why do it? What are the Challenges” by Zukoski and Lulaquisen, will be used to assess how well project goals are met, because this approach not only allows stakeholders to identify locally relevant evaluation questions and to speak with a single voice, but improves program performance, builds capacity, develops leaders and sustains organizational learning and growth. A published tool kit for planning and implementing participatory evaluations from The Community Toolbox of the Work Group for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas will be used as a guide for the evaluation of the Paddlefish Project. An experienced participatory evaluation consultant will be contracted to work with the evaluation team over the project period. The evaluation team will be selected and trained by the evaluation consultant as a first step toward beginning the project.