

Evaluating Your Library's Summer Reading Program

Outputs such as circulation, attendance at programs, or number of participants can tell you how much your program was utilized, but those numbers do not tell you how well your program worked.

To track your library's outputs over time, consider using an Excel spreadsheet to keep track of your participation each year. A benefit of Excel is the capability to make instant charts and graphs. **Here is a spreadsheet designed with the outputs requested on the ICfL summer reading report:** <http://libraries.idaho.gov/page/summer-reading-resources>.

To assess the quality and effectiveness of your program, consider administering surveys and/or conducting focus groups. **A sample survey for parents can be found on ICfL's summer reading resource page:** <http://libraries.idaho.gov/page/summer-reading-resources>. This can be customized for your individual library or library system.

Library staff who attended ICfL's 2013 fall workshops, "Fizz, Boom, Summer Reading: The Big Bang of Programming" brainstormed topics that would help determine quality and effectiveness of summer reading programs, and to make improvements for future programs. Some of these are general; some would work better for children, some for parents, and some would be great for focus groups.

- What they liked most
- Where they heard about us
- Where they are from
- How many weeks
- Are you new? How many years
- What prevents you from participating?
- Are you going to multiple libraries?
- Did it make a difference in attitude, ability?
- Did parents change behavior?
- What did they read?
- Do you have library card?
- Have you been to library before?
- How many programs did you attend?
- In/Out district?
- 1st time user?
- What was your favorite activity?
- What was your favorite story?
- Will you come back next year?
- Did you read more this year?
- Sep. parent / child survey
- What would you like to see more of?
- Facility feedback... space,
- Timing of program
- Demographic information

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- IRI change? Up / Down
- How could we make this more accessible?
- How were staff?
- Did you participate last year?
- How many years?
- Volunteer next year?
- Do you have internet access at home?
- Smart phone or other mobile device available?
- Have you seen our web page?
- Language – Primary / Dual language?

Keep your surveys as simple and convenient as possible. Asking parents to fill out a survey on-site can increase the return rate.

Many libraries are now using online survey tools. A benefit to using an online tool is that most will download and compile the data for you; many even make charts and graphs. **Here are some web resources that offer free software:**

- www.surveymonkey.com
- www.jotform.com
- <http://docs.google.com/>
- www.poll daddy.com

Be sure to share results with your stakeholders:

- Board of Trustees
- School District/Individual Schools
- Chamber of Commerce
- Legislators
- Community (press release)

See a template for End-of-Program Reporting here: <http://libraries.idaho.gov/page/summer-reading-resources>

Remember, if you choose not to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of your SRP, others will (parents, children, school staff). Proactively assessing your program sends the message that you value the needs of your patrons.