Heritage Monitoring Scouts: Assessing Citizen Science Programs Utilizing Outcome-based Evaluation and Self Determination Theory

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ABSTRACT

The Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN) developed the Heritage Monitoring Scouts program to provide a citizen science program to communities interested in preserving cultural heritage. This program is volunteer based and provides information to the Florida Department of Historical Resources. Many of the sites are located on public lands or cemeteries.

The focus of the program has been to address the effects of climate change, development, and other naturally occurring events that degrade and destroy important cultural places. Current hurricanes and weather events such as flooding have demonstrated the significance of this program. The before and after documentation has been vital to creating awareness of cultural heritage resources.

Utilizing the Outcome-based Planning and Evaluation model, programs were examined for perceived benefits (Gross, Mediavilla, & Walter, 2016). The Self-Determination Theory provided a model for program success focusing on intrinsic motivation. These two models help provide context to the participants’ experiences and program success (Deci & Ryan, 1985). These models can help inform other outreach citizen science programs on best practices for future development.

Over the course of two years, seven programs throughout the state of Florida were evaluated utilizing a two phase process of surveys and interviews. Sixty-seven participants filled out surveys. Seventeen participants responded to phone calls to participate in interviews. There were two groups that experienced a life condition benefit from being part of these programs. Most program participants experienced a feeling that they were making a difference.

TOPICS

cultural heritage; citizen science; community programming