

4R Participant Survey

Code Book and Summary Statistics

May 2015

Abstract: During March 2015 nutrient service providers from Ohio, Indiana and Michigan who were participating in the voluntary Western Lake Erie Basin 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program were surveyed on their experience with and expectations for the program. Participants were asked about their fixed and variable costs as well as any benefits they expect to receive from the program.

Notes:

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Note: The number of respondents (N) for each question is 25 unless otherwise noted.

Note: Variable names do not always correspond to the question number per Qualtrics output code.

Q1. Did you hear about the 4R program from (mark all that apply)...

	Yes	No
Q1_1: From owners, senior management or board members within the company	1 (88%)	0 (12%)
Q1_2: From other industry groups	1 (72%)	0 (28%)
Q1_3: From customers	1 (44%)	0 (56%)
Q1_4: From the media	1 (8%)	0 (92%)
Q1_5: Other	1 (0%)	0 (100%)

Q1_6_TEXT: Did you hear about the 4R program from another source (0%)

Text response

Q2: How have other branch locations of your firm responded to the 4R Program?

- 1= All branches have committed (36%)
- 2= Some but not all branches have committed (36%)
- 3= No other branch has committed (12%)
- 4= Not applicable - there are no other branches associated with our company (16%)

Q3: What criteria determined which branches within your company committed? (N=12)

- 1= Branches located in key watersheds/areas (41.67%)
- 2= Branches located where management has shown interest (33.33%)
- 3= One branch was chosen as a 'pilot' site (16.67%)
- 4= Other (8.33%)

Q3_TEXT: What criteria determined which branches within your company committed? (N=0)

Text response associated with answering "other"

Q4_1: Were owners consulted during the decision making process that led to your branch's commitment to the 4R Program?

- 1= Yes (16%)
- 2= No

Q4_2: Were board members consulted during the decision making process that led to your branch's commitment to the 4R Program?

1= Yes (20%)

2= No

Q4_3: Was senior management consulted during the decision making process that led to your branch's commitment to the 4R Program?

1= Yes (72%)

2= No

Q4_4: Was key personnel consulted during the decision making process that led to your branch's commitment to the 4R Program?

1= Yes (64%)

2= No

Q4_5: Were customers consulted during the decision making process that led to your branch's commitment to the 4R Program?

1= Yes (8%)

2= No

Q4_6: Were others consulted during the decision making process that led to your branch's commitment to the 4R Program?

1= Yes (4%)

2= No

Q4_6_TEXT: Specify what others were consulted during the decision making process that led to your branch's commitment to the 4R Program. (N=1)

Text response

"Us at the plant"

Q5_1: How important was Financial Responsibility when your branch was considering whether or not to commit to the 4R Program?

1= unimportant (20%)

2= neutral (40%)

3= important (40%)

4= not applicable (0%)

Q5_2: How important was Corporate Social Responsibility when your branch was considering whether or not to commit to the 4R Program?

- 1= unimportant (4%)
- 2= neutral (12%)
- 3= important (84%)
- 4= not applicable (0%)

Q5_3: How important was Managing Impending Regulations when your branch was considering whether or not to commit to the 4R Program?

- 1= unimportant (4%)
- 2= neutral (4%)
- 3= important (92%)
- 4= not applicable (0%)

Q5_4: How important was other factors when your branch was considering whether or not to commit to the 4R Program? (N=4)

- 1= unimportant (0%)
- 2= neutral (25%)
- 3= important (25%)
- 4= Not Applicable (50%)
- 99= No response

Q5_4_TEXT: Specify what other factors were important when your branch was considering whether or not to commit to the 4R Program? (N=1)

Text response

“It’s the best most transparent image we can send to the general public.”

Q6_1: When it comes to implementing changes required due to your commitment to the 4R Program, how difficult has it been to develop appropriate records and auditing protocol? (N=24)

- 1= Difficult (37.5%)
- 2=Neutral (50%)
- 3=Easy (12.5%)
- 4= Not applicable (0%)

Q6_2: When it comes to implementing changes required due to your commitment to the 4R Program, how difficult has it been to adapt operations and scheduling to meet the demands of the program? (N=24)

- 1= Difficult (25%)
- 2=Neutral (58.3%)
- 3=Easy (16.67%)
- 4= Not applicable (0%)

Q6_3: When it comes to implementing changes required due to your commitment to the 4R Program, how difficult has it been to motivate employees to embrace the goals of the program? (N=24)

- 1= Difficult (20.83%)
- 2=Neutral (54.17%)
- 3=Easy (25%)
- 4= Not applicable (0%)

Q6_4: When it comes to implementing changes required due to your commitment to the 4R Program, how difficult has it been to adapt customer expectations to changes that might arise due to commitment to the program? (N=24)

- 1= Difficult (41.67%)
- 2=Neutral (41.67%)
- 3=Easy (16.67%)
- 4= Not applicable (0%)

Q6_5: When it comes to implementing changes required due to your commitment to the 4R Program, how difficult has it been to offset additional costs created by the program? (N=24)

- 1= Difficult (41.67%)
- 2=Neutral (54.17%)
- 3=Easy (4.17%)
- 4= Not applicable (0%)

Q7: How difficult has it been to maintain your commitment to the 4R Program? (N=24)

- 1= More difficult than we imagined (25%)
- 2= As difficult as we imagined (54.17%)
- 3= Less difficult than we imagined (20.83%)

Q8: How different would you say the guidelines and recommended practices of the 4R Program are from those that you used prior to committing to the 4R program? (N=24)

- 1= Identical (20.83%)
- 2= Very Similar (45.83%)
- 3= Somewhat Similar (25%)
- 4= Somewhat Different (20.83%)
- 5= Very Different (0%)

Q9_1: How **informed** would you say your branch was about the linkage between farm management practices and harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie before committing to the 4R Program? (N=24)

- 1= not at all informed (4.17%)
- 2= somewhat informed (45.83%)
- 3= very informed (50%)

Q9_2: How **informed** would you say your branch was about the linkage between farm management practices and harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie after committing to the 4R Program? (N=24)

- 1= not at all informed (0%)
- 2= somewhat informed (25%)
- 3= very informed (75%)

Q44_1: How **concerned** would you say your branch was about the linkage between farm management practices and harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie before committing to the 4R Program? (N=24)

- 1= not at all concerned (4.17%)
- 2= somewhat concerned (66.67%)
- 3= very concerned (29.17%)

Q44_2: How **concerned** would you say your branch was about the linkage between farm management practices and harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie after committing to the 4R Program? (N=24)

- 1= not at all concerned (4.17%)
- 2= somewhat concerned (37.5%)
- 3= very concerned (58.33%)

Q11. What impact do you anticipate your branch’s decision to commit to the 4R Program will have on....

	Negative	None	Positive
Q11_1: current client list (N=24)	1 (20.83%)	2 (45.83%)	3 (33.33%)
Q11_2: your ability to attract new clients (N=24)	1 (8.33%)	2 (50%)	3 (41.67%)
Q11_3: total number of clients (N=24)	1 (16.67%)	2 (41.67%)	3 (41.67%)

Q12: Would your branch prefer to participate in a voluntary program like the 4R Program to help curb nutrient runoff as an alternative to a government regulated program? (N=24)

- 1= Yes (83.33%)
- 2= No (4.17%)
- 3= Not Sure (12.5%)

Q13: Which statement best reflects your branch’s views? (N=24)

- 1= Government regulations similar to those of the 4R Program will be implemented if the 4R Program is successful (16.67%)
- 2= Government regulations similar to those of the 4R Program will be implemented if the 4R Program is unsuccessful (4.17%)
- 3= Government regulations similar to those of the 4R Program will be implemented regardless of the success of the 4R Program (75%)
- 4= Government regulations similar to those of the 4R Program will not be implemented regardless of the success of the 4R Program (4.17%)

Q14: How much influence does your branch believe it has on the nutrient application practices implemented by your clients? (N=24)

- 1= Very Influential (54.17%)
- 2= Somewhat Influential (41.67%)
- 3= Not Very Influential (4.17%)
- 4= No Influence (0%)

Q15: In the event that clients choose not to implement your suggested strategies, how likely do you think it is that there will be negative repercussions for your branch? (N=23)

- 1= Very Unlikely (8.7%)
- 2= Somewhat Unlikely (56.52%)
- 3= Somewhat Likely (30.43%)
- 4= Very Likely (4.35%)

16_1: At this point, what is the likelihood that your branch will continue with the 4R Program into the 2nd year? (N=24)

- 1= Very Unlikely (8.33%)
- 2= Somewhat Unlikely (0%)
- 3= Somewhat Likely (33.33%)
- 4= Very Likely (58.33%)

16_2: At this point, what is the likelihood that your branch will continue with the 4R Program into the 3rd year? (N=23)

- 1= Very Unlikely (8.7%)
- 2= Somewhat Unlikely (0%)
- 3= Somewhat Likely (30.43%)
- 4= Very Likely (60.87%)
- 99= No Response

Q17: Would your branch encourage all nutrient service providers to commit to the 4R Program? (N=24)

- 1= Yes (95.83%)
- 2= No (0%)
- 3= Not Sure (4.17%)

Q18: Does your branch believe that best practice sharing among companies committed to the 4R Program would be something that should be incorporated into the program? (N=24)

- 1= Yes (54.17%)
- 2= No (8.33%)
- 3= Not Sure (37.5%)

Q19: Does your branch envision any changes in marketing strategies for your products and/or services as a result of your commitment to the 4R Program? (N=23)

- 1= Yes (62.5%)
- 2= No (12.5%)
- 3= Not Sure (20.83%)

Q20: If your branch does envision a change in marketing strategy going forward, what will become the primary focus of your new strategy? (N=15)

Text answer

Q21_1: Considering all aspects of meeting your commitments under the 4R Program, please *estimate* how many total additional full time equivalent employees (FTEs) you expect your branch will hire in the first year of the commitment to meet these commitments (feel free to use fractional FTEs)? (N=17)

Average = 0.78

Median = 1

Q21_2: Considering all aspects of meeting your commitments under the 4R Program, please *estimate* how many total additional full time equivalent employees (FTEs) you expect your branch will hire by the end of the third year of the commitment to meet these commitments (total FTEs added in years 1-3 combined)? (N=19)

Average = 1.91

Median = 2

Q22: Including salary and benefits, what is your branch's *estimated* current average annual cost per FTE for the types of positions added in the question above (in \$/year)? (N=16)

Average = \$60,781

Median = \$55,000

Q23: Considering all aspects of meeting your commitments under the 4R Program, what is the *estimated* new cost associated with training new and existing employees incurred in:

	Average	Median	N
Q23_1_1_TEXT: Year 1	\$13,864	\$5,000	11
Q23_2_1_TEXT: Year 2	\$16,682	\$5,000	11
Q23_3_1_TEXT: Year 3	\$20,636	\$5,000	11

Q24: Considering all aspects of meeting your commitments under the 4R Program, what is the *estimated* new cost associated with new office procedures including all new software expenses, accounting procedures, logistic programming, and other alterations to office operations incurred in:

	Average	Median	N
Q24_1_1_TEXT: Year 1	\$8,750	\$5,000	12
Q24_2_1_TEXT: Year 2	\$8,091	\$5,000	11
Q24_3_1_TEXT: Year 3	\$6,773	\$5,000	11

Q25: Considering all aspects of meeting your commitments under the 4R Program, what is the *estimated* new cost associated with new equipment and facilities incurred in:

	Average	Median	N
Q25_1_1_TEXT: Year 1	\$30,300	\$15,000	10
Q25_2_1_TEXT: Year 2	\$66,300	\$12,500	10
Q25_3_1_TEXT: Year 3	\$80,283	\$40,000	11

Q26: Considering all aspects of meeting your commitments under the 4R Program, what is the *estimated* new cost associated with any other changes not already specified in Q23-Q25 incurred in:

	Average	Median	N
Q26_1_1_TEXT: Year 1	\$4,700	\$2,500	5
Q26_2_1_TEXT: Year 2	\$7,700	\$2,500	5
Q26_3_1_TEXT: Year 3	\$39,700	\$15,000	5

Q27: Beyond any necessary price increases for your services, how do you think that the typical farmers' productions costs will change if they fully implement recommendations from a 4R certified nutrient service provider? (N=22)

- 1= Costs will increase (54.44%)
- 2= No change in farmers' production costs (27.27%)
- 3= Costs will decrease (18.18%)

Q28: How does your branch anticipate public perception of the agriculture sector will change as a result of nutrient service providers committing to the 4R Program? (N=22)

- 1= Improve (54.55%)
- 2= Stay the Same (45.45%)
- 3= Decline (0%)

Q29: What kind of impact does your branch anticipate commitment to the 4R Program by your business, and businesses like yours, will have on harmful algal bloom occurrences and the overall health of Lake Erie? (N=22)

- 1= Positive Impact (59.09%)
- 2= No Impact (40.91%)
- 3= Negative Impact (0%)

Q30_1: How likely is it that farmers will experience improved operational efficiencies if they hire a firm like yours that has committed to the 4R Program? (N=22)

- 1= very unlikely (9.09%)
- 2= somewhat unlikely (13.64%)
- 3= somewhat likely (54.55%)
- 4= very likely (22.73%)
- 5= not applicable (0%)

Q30_2: How likely is it that farmers will improve their reputation in the community if they hire a firm like yours that has committed to the 4R Program? (N=22)

- 1= very unlikely (4.54%)
- 2= somewhat unlikely (4.55%)
- 3= somewhat likely (63.64%)
- 4= very likely (27.27%)
- 5= not applicable (0%)

Q30_3: How likely is it that farmers will be able to meet regulatory obligations if their watershed is designated as 'distressed' if they hire a firm like yours that has committed to the 4R Program? (N=22)

- 1= very unlikely (4.54%)
- 2= somewhat unlikely (0%)
- 3= somewhat likely (31.82%)
- 4= very likely (63.64%)
- 5= not applicable (0%)

Q30_4: How likely is it that farmers will help reduce the odds of future farm-level regulations if they hire a firm like yours that has committed to the 4R Program? (N=22)

- 1= very unlikely (4.54%)
- 2= somewhat unlikely (9.09)
- 3= somewhat likely (54.55%)
- 4= very likely (31.82%)
- 5= not applicable (0%)

Q31: For farmers who strictly follow the recommendations of firms committed to the 4R Program rather than recommendations of firms who are not committed to the 4R Program, do you think crop yields would be...? (N=22)

- 1= Lower (22.73%)
- 2= About the Same (50%)
- 3= Higher (27.27%)

Q32: How likely is it that a farmer might choose an uncertified competitor over a certified firm like yours due to uncertified firms:

	Very Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	N
Q32_1: being more flexible in the timing of nutrient applications	1 (13.64%)	2 (40.91%)	3 (36.36%)	4 (9.09%)	22
Q32_2: having less paperwork that needs to be filled out by farmers	1 (13.64%)	2 (18.18%)	3 (50%)	4 (18.18%)	22
Q32_3: being able to charge a lower price	1 (9.09%)	2 (22.73%)	3 (36.36%)	4 (31.82%)	22

Q33: How many years has your branch been in business? (N=22)

Average = 50

Median = 43

Q35: How many FTE employees does your branch currently have? (N=19)

Average = 9

Median = 8

Q34: How many branch locations does your company have? (N=21)

1= Single branch (19.05%)

2= Between 2 and 5 (38.10%)

3= More than 5 (42.86%)

-99= no response

Q37: What is the legal organization of the company your branch belongs to? (N=21)

1= Cooperative (52.38%)

2= Private Corporation (23.81%)

3= Public Corporation (23.81%)

4= Other (0%)

-99= no response

Q37_TEXT: If “other, specify what the legal organization of the company your branch belongs to is? (N=0)

Text Response

Q36: In the last fiscal year, how many acres of farmland did your branch service? (N=14)

Average = \$81,071

Median = \$70,000

Q38: Which counties are your branch's clients located in? (N=16)

Ashland, Medina, Lorain, Richland, Wayne, Huron, Paulding, Putnam, Defiance, Wood, Henry, Hancock, Allen, Seneca, Hardin, Sandusky, Crawford, Wyandot, Ottawa, Van Wert, Holmes, Stark, Summit, Fulton, Lenawee, Monroe, Lucas, Williams, Auglaize, Mercer, Steuben, Dekalb, Lagrange, Noble, Erie

Q39: Of the total acres your branch serves, about what percent receive:

	Average	Median	N
Q39_1: nutrient sales only	13.73%	10%	22
Q39_2: Nutrient Application Services only	9.23%	0%	22
Q39_3: Soil Testing/Nutrient Recommendations only	8.64%	0%	22
Q39_4: some combination of nutrient sales, nutrient application, soil testing, and nutrient recommendation services	56.73%	67.5%	22

Q41_1_1_TEXT: In the most recent fiscal year, for the farmland acres your branch serviced, what was your branch's estimated gross revenues? (N=4)

Average = \$2.26 billion

Median = \$9 million

Q41_2_1_TEXT: In the most recent fiscal year, for the farmland acres your branch serviced, what was your branch's estimated total costs? (N=4)

Average = \$3.77 million

Median = \$2.74 million

Total Cost per branch: (N=17)

Average = \$230,212

Median = \$140,000