Evaluating Learning in Continuing Professional Education (CPE) Programs, Conferences, and Short-Term Meetings

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So Why Me On Evaluation?

- Degrees in Rural Soc., Extension Educ., and Adult Community Educ.
- Coop. Ext. Program Planner/Evaluator
- Worked as Comm. Educ. Planner
- Research Scholarship in CPE Program Planning, Design, and Evaluation
- Teach courses in Program Planning and Evaluation

What Can You Take Away From This Presentation?

- A better understanding of what is required in skillful evaluation

- How to assess the value, impact, and effectiveness of your programs

- How to make future programs better

- Recognize the potential of CPE planning and evaluation in meeting your and your attendee's needs

Defining Evaluation

Evaluation – Appraising the value or worth of some educational undertaking such as a particular instructional effort, program, conference, or individual performance in some area of learning or training.

What is Involved?

Evaluating the following:

– Learners/attendees/trainees

– The learning process

– Yourself as planner

– Other possibilities:

  • Organization or sponsor

  • Community

  • Society

Two Kinds of Evaluation

- **Summative (End Product):**
  - Most typical form
  - Occurs at the end of an event
  - Used for assessing participant performance, program worth, or educational effectiveness
  - Examples: Exams, surveys, informal feedback

Two Kinds (continued)

- **Formative (Ongoing-Process):**
  - Less typical (unfortunately)
  - Occurs at each stage of an event
  - Used for improving presenter, learner, or program performance
  - Examples: Session evaluations, interviews with learners, participant observations, outside evaluators

Evaluation Concepts

- Evaluating in relation to a philosophy
- Evaluating in context of learning goals
- Evaluating via learning contracts/plans
  - Personal evaluation plans
  - Outside validators/experts
- Grading, testing, or critiquing
  - Formal or required testing (in some cases)
  - Negotiating with participants
  - Institutional policies and expectations

Evaluation Tools

- Post Meeting Reaction Sheet (PMRS) or other instruments (more on next slide)

- Interview techniques (personal, group, or follow-up telephone interviews)

- Evaluation groups
  - Evaluation committee or team
  - Advisory committee

- Direct observations
  - Self or program/conference planning team
  - Outside expert or team

Evaluation Instruments

- Standardized or self-designed tests
- Essay or other qualitative forms
- Mid-conference forms
- End of session, course, program forms
- Instructor/presenter/trainer forms
- Follow-up/mailed forms

"Mind filling out this evaluation form first?"

Evaluation Typically Includes At Least These Planning Process Questions

- What were the objectives?

- How were the objectives implemented?

- Were the objectives realized?

- Were they the right objectives?

- Was the imple-mentation appropriate?

- Did I/we/they have overall success?

Questions to Guide the Planning of Evaluation

- What do you want to know?
  - Why evaluate in the first place?
  - Questions needing answers?
- Where and how will you obtain the needed information?
  - From whom?
  - From what?
  - In what form?

Questions (continued)

- Who will collect the data?
  - Roles for various people?
  - Kinds of training needed?
  - When is the data collection started?
- How will the information be analyzed?
  - What summation is needed?
  - What statistical analyses are needed?
  - How will it be explained, interpreted, described?

Questions (continued)

- What does it all mean?
  - What are the applications/implications for your organization?
  - What changes are needed (the feedback and modification)?
  - What reports are needed to be written and for whom?
  - How will the evaluation results be disseminated?

Steps in Evaluation!

– Review the objectives

– Determine who is best qualified to do the evaluation

- Meeting planner/manager

- Specialized staff person

- Participants

- Outside specialist

- Advisory council member

– Develop the desirable methods to achieve the appropriate evaluation plan

Steps (continued)

- Implement the evaluation procedures

- Summarize, analyze, and interpret the results

- Write the appropriate reports

- Disseminate the reports

- Reorganize (feedback and modification) future program plans and activities in light of the evaluation data

Evaluation Standards*
(Summarized)

Propriety Standards

Ensuring evaluation is conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for others' welfare.

- **P1 Service Orientation** – Serving the needs of a full range of targeted participants.
- **P2 Formal Agreements –** Obligations of parties agreed to in writing.
- **P3 Rights of Human Subjects –** Respecting and protecting all rights and welfare of human subjects.
- **P4 Human Interactions** – Respecting human dignity and worth of all participants.
- **P5 Complete and Fair Assessment** – Complete and fair in recording program strengths and weaknesses.
- **P6 Disclosure of Findings** – All evaluation findings made accessible to relevant persons.
- **P7 Conflict of Interest** – Any conflict of interest dealt with openly and honestly.
- **P8 Fiscal Responsibility** – Resource expenses reflect sound accountability practices.

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Evaluation Standards
(Continued)

<u>Utility Standards</u>

Ensuring evaluation will serve the information needs of intended users.

- **U1 Stakeholder Identification** – Persons affected by evaluation should be identified.
- **U2 Evaluator Credibility –** Persons conducting the evaluation should be trustworthy and competent.
- **U3 Information Scope and Selection –** Information collected should be responsive to the needs and interests of clientele.
- **U4 Values Identification** – Rationale for interpreting findings should be carefully described so bases for value judgments are clear.
- **U5 Report Clarity** – Report clearly describes program, purposes, and procedures.
- **U6 Report Timeliness** – Information disseminated in a timely fashion.
- **U7 Evaluation Impact** – Evaluations planned, conducted, and reported to encourage follow-through by stakeholders.

Evaluation Standards
(Continued)

Feasibility Standards

Ensuring an evaluation is realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal.

– **F1 Practical Procedures** – Persons affected by evaluation should be identified.

– **F2 Political Viability –** Anticipate different interest group positions so any attempts to curtail evaluation operations or to bias the results can be averted or counteracted.

– **F3 Cost Effectiveness –** Evaluation should be efficient and produce information of sufficient value so that resources expended can be justified.

Accuracy Standards

Ensuring an evaluation reveals technically adequate information.

– **A1 Program Documentation** – Describe and document clearly and accurately.

– **A2 Context Analysis** – Examine program context in detail so likely influences can be identified.

– **A3 Described Purposes and Procedures** – Provide enough detail so that purposes and procedures can be identified and assessed.

Evaluation Standards
(Continued)

Accuracy (continued)

- **A4 Defensible Information Sources** – Used information should be described in detail so the adequacy can be accessed.

- **A5 Valid Information** – Information gathering procedures chosen and implemented to ensure valid interpretation.

- **A6 Reliable Information** – Information gathering procedures chosen and implemented so interpretations are valid.

- **A7 Systematic Information** – Reviews of information to correct any errors.

- **A8 Analysis of Quantitative Information** – Quantitative data systematically analyzed so evaluation questions are effectively answered.

- **A9 Analysis of Qualitative Information** – Qualitative data systematically analyzed so evaluation questions are effectively answered.

- **A10 Justified Conclusions** – Conclusions justified so others can assess them.

- **A11 Impartial Reporting** – Guard against distortion from personal feelings/biases.

- **A12 Metaevaluation** – All evaluation efforts should be formatively and summatively evaluated against these standards to ensure appropriateness.

Suggestions for Improving your Evaluation Efforts
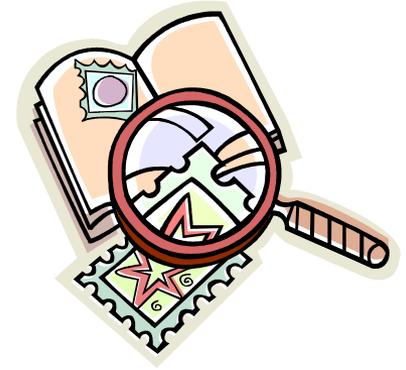
- **Be critical of your own findings – try to prove them wrong**

- **Recognize and take into account your own biases**

- **Don't draw a conclusion from a single or few observations**
  - **Always seek more data or proof**
  - **Remember qualitative techniques that may work with few observations**

Suggestions for Improving (continued)

- Consider all causes for any observed human behavior

- Don't read into an analysis what you wanted or expected to find

- Don't overlook reasonable interpretations

- Use consistent judgment criteria

Suggestions for Improving (continued)

- **Make your evaluation plan repeatable for yourself or others**

- **Don't generalize beyond the limits of your data**

- **Tell the truth by letting others know about your assumptions, methodological choices, and limitations**

IT IS YOUR TURN!

What are your ideas and experiences in evaluating programs, conferences, meetings, etc.