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

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So Why Me On Evaluation?

- 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 implementation 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.

Evaluation Standards (Continued)

**Utility Standards**

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.