

## Chapter 5: Assessing the Workshop

### Overview

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**Introduction** This chapter provides information about how workshops are assessed and ways in which trainers may obtain feedback in order to continually improve the quality of their presentations.

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**In this Chapter** This chapter contains the following topics:

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## Workshop Evaluation

At the end of the workshop the evaluation form should be distributed. The purpose of the evaluation is to solicit the participants' opinions about the satisfaction levels with the workshop and assess the learning that took place. Here are the steps to follow when conducting the workshop evaluation.

Step	Action
1	Distribute a copy of the evaluation form and explain that you would like the participants to evaluate the workshop and to what extent the objectives have been
2	Ask if there are any questions about the evaluation form. Encourage participants to write any additional comments on the back.
3	Point out that an honest evaluation will improve future workshops and that trainers will carefully review their comments.
4	Tell them it is not necessary to sign their names. Thank participants in advance for thoughtfully taking time to complete the evaluation form.
5	Ask the participants to leave their evaluation forms in a designated place near the exit when they leave.

**Note:** The evaluation can be provided either at the end of each day or at the end of the overall workshop. You might want to introduce the evaluation form earlier in the workshop, so that the workshop participants can make comments about the workshop presentations as they go along.

### Alternative: Evaluation in Stages

Time is provided at the end of each session for the workshop participants to evaluate the presentations. The forms are collected then, and any questions or concerns can be addressed at the beginning of the next session. This format has the advantage of obtaining feedback when the presentations are fresh in the minds of the participants. At the end of the last session, the participants not only evaluate the final presentations and whether the objectives were met; they also make overall comments about the room, scheduling, trainers, future needs, etc.

### Workshop Evaluation Sample

A sample [workshop evaluation](#) form is provided in the Tools and Resources section at the end of Part A of this manual.

The questions in Part 1 relate to the learning outcomes in the LETS guidelines. Because each workshop is tailored to individual program needs, not all of the questions may be applicable to your workshop. In addition, some of the questions may relate to topics that are covered in orientation sessions instead of during the actual workshop. As the trainer, you will need to make this determination and adjust the evaluation form accordingly.

The questions in Part 2 have been adapted from the questions on the standardized evaluation form found in the original Literacy Trainer Handbook with some additional questions. This document is meant as a tool for you to use or adapt as an evaluation form that is suited to your specific workshop.

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# Providing Constructive Feedback

Constructive feedback is aimed at helping trainers or apprentice trainers to develop their performance in a supportive environment. It is used to encourage people to continue putting in great effort or to help them through when they may lack confidence or skills.

Constructive feedback is

- Positive and affirming
- Behavioural based
- Balanced.

## **Guiding Principles**

The following guiding principles are identified as the foundation for the constructive feedback process.

- Respect people for the value of their time and their work commitment
- Encourage self-assessment
- Maintain two-way dialogue
- Provide feedback, development and support
- Encourage continuous learning

## **Guidelines for Effective Feedback**

- Assess *with* the person where they might need help.
- Focus on the action not the person when providing feedback.
- Discover how you can best help.
- Encourage people to find solutions for themselves.

## **Basics of Constructive Feedback**

- Communicate feedback face to face (to the extent possible).
- Observation should be based on pre-determined and agreed upon performance criteria.
- Observations should be recorded.
- Review/discuss self-assessment of workshop performance first (see [Workshop Self Assessment](#) in the Tools and Resources section at the end of Part A).
- Feedback should be factual, evidence-based, timely and specific.
- Identify the value of changing the actions/behaviours.
- Refer to the individual development plan and the progress being made.
- Identify steps for monitoring and evaluation.

## **Feedback Process**

### ***Prior to the Feedback Session***

- Review any plans that were developed and have clear expectations around performance and self-assessment.
- Ensure that the person has the necessary tools and/or support to do the job/performance the role.

### ***Guidelines for Observers***

- Jot down feedback that is behavioural and specific.
- Note factors with which you are impressed as well as those you think might be improved.
- Be descriptive of the performance (expressive, explanatory, illustrative) rather than strictly evaluative (based on examination and judgement of the value, quality or importance)
- Describe your own perceptions – what you saw, heard, and/or felt.
- Be specific rather than general. Describe specific observable behaviors, including non-verbal body language, mannerism, use of language (quote the person), tone of voice.
- Consider the needs of the trainer receiving your feedback, paying attention to their ability to hear and use what you say. In other words, a few crucial comments may go a long way; don't feel you need to say everything that you noticed.
- Direct feedback only towards factors that can be changed, those over which the trainer has control.
- If appropriate and if you are debriefing as a group, check the accuracy of your perceptions with other observers.
- Compliment the trainer with the same specificity and ownership with which you provide the constructive feedback.
- Do not plan to go over more than three key issues or areas of challenge. If there are more than this, prioritize them and schedule another time to meet.

### ***During the Feedback Session***

- Welcome and introduction to the feedback session.
- Review and discuss self-assessment of workshop performance.
- Ask questions to draw out more information if required.
- Enquire if the trainer has the right tools/support to do the job.
- Focus on the gaps between expectations and performance.
- Know exactly what behaviour or performance occurred and focus on what you would like to see change.
- Avoid general statements, be as specific as possible.
- Offer suggestions, support and encouragement for example:
  - Maybe do/try this instead ...
  - Focus on changes in observable behaviour.
  - What could the trainer do more of/less of/start doing/stop doing altogether.
  - Mention what you would like to see continue.

### ***Conveying Respect in the Feedback Process***

At times we may not recognize our own behaviours or characteristics and we may be unaware of how they affect others. Maintaining respect in the feedback process is an essential skill, both in the message that is conveyed and the manner in which it is conveyed.

- ✓ Be sure to be aware of your tone of voice, make appropriate eye contact and maintain open and supportive body language.
- ✓ Preparation is also essential. Ensure that you minimize external and internal distractions. Be prepared, have your notes and any questions in order. Be on time and stick to the agreed time for the feedback session.

### **Effective Listening Skills**

The opportunity to provide constructive feedback is as much about how you can learn from the process as it is for the person receiving the feedback. Every time you provide feedback, it is a learning experience for you in terms of how the session went, what you could have done better or differently, things that you would like to change for the next session etc.

In order to convey your sincere interest during the feedback process, it is important that you use effective listening skills. For example:

- ✓ Invite additional comments such as: “go on” or “what else”?
- ✓ Ask questions for more in-depth details or clarification.
- ✓ Use variety; “yes”, “I see”, “go on”, “right”.
- ✓ Avoid complete silence.
- ✓ Lean forward to demonstrate interest.
- ✓ Face the other person.
- ✓ Use relaxed but alert position.
- ✓ Do not cross arms.
- ✓ Use direct eye contact.
- ✓ Use appropriate facial expressions and head movements.

## Using Appropriate Questioning

There are a number of questioning types that can be helpful in the feedback session. Following are examples of when to use a specific question type and some samples.

Type	Purpose	Sample Questions
Clarification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To get additional facts</li> <li>To help the person explore all sides of the situation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you clarify this please?</li> <li>Do you mean ... (this)?</li> <li>Is this the situation as you see it now?</li> </ul>
Restatement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To check our meaning and interpretation with the other</li> <li>To show that you are listening and that you understand what the other has said</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As I understand it, your plan is ..</li> <li>Is this what you have decided to do .. and the reasons are ...</li> </ul>
Neutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To convey that your are interested and listening</li> <li>To encourage the person to continue talking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I see.</li> <li>I understand.</li> <li>Yes, I can see your point.</li> <li>I can see why you did it that way.</li> </ul>
Reflective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To show that you care about what the other is feeling or saying.</li> <li>To make sure you understand what the other person is saying</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You feel that ...</li> <li>You felt you did not get a fair chance to explain ...</li> </ul>
Summarizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To show that you understand all that was said and not just individual points</li> <li>To serve as a springboard to discussion of new aspects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These are the key ideas that you have expressed ...</li> <li>If I understand how you feel about this, you would like to ...</li> </ul>
Empowering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To encourage the individual to seek their own solution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is a viable alternative? Follow-up: What are the advantages and disadvantages you see in this suggestion?</li> <li>Can you more fully describe your concerns?</li> <li>What are a few options for improvement?</li> <li>How do you feel about the workshop thus far?</li> <li>What have you accomplished so far that you are most pleased with?</li> <li>What are we not doing that we could be doing?</li> <li>How can I help you?</li> </ul>



### Negative vs Constructive Feedback

The table below presents examples of negative feedback and how it could be turned into constructive feedback.

<b>Negative Feedback</b>	<b>Constructive Feedback</b>
<b>Impulsive, blunt “put-downs”</b> “What a disaster that was!” Anything good said after this would probably not be heard.	Start with a positive point and end with encouragement. “You’re so enthusiastic. At times, you get talking too fast...Slow down and you’ll have a super presentation. Your enthusiasm is catching!”
<b>A list of negatives</b> “I think that presentation went overtime---it sure felt long! You seemed to lose interest and your voice became a monotone. And you didn’t need to repeat... The whole thing was rather dry.”	Do not mention everything you noted. Select one or two items to work on and suggest what might be done to improve. “You have a lot of experience tutoring. Perhaps a short anecdote would add interest.”
<b>Setting yourself up as an “expert” can convey an air of superiority</b> “When I do that segment, I’m careful not to...” or “No, I’m sure that’s the way you’re supposed to do that...”	Give the trainer a chance to assess themselves first. “Were you happy with that presentation? Did you notice how the trainees reacted? Can you think of a better way to do that?”  Identify with some of the problems of a trainer. “I’ve often done that too” or “We’ll all asking poor questions. Let’s try to...”
<b>Comments which imply trainer incompetence</b> “Why would you do it that way?” or “How could you forget...?”	Soften criticism by suggesting a reason, other than incompetence, for the problem. “You were getting tired.” “That’s a hard presentation.” Or “I’m sure you were nervous.”
<b>Comments which imply lack of confidence in the trainer’s ability to improve</b> “You did it again!” “I’ve told you this before.” Or “Why can’t you remember?...?”	Indicate that you see change, that you expect improvement. “I notice you’ve been working on speech sounds. With more practice, it will come easily for you.”
<b>Criticizing a situation which can’t be changed</b> “This is a poor choice for a workshop room.” Or “Your voice was very raspy tonight.”	Suggest ways to cope with the situation. “Let’s put the tables here so that pillars aren’t in the way.” Or “Could I get you some water?”

### **Understanding the Possible Reactions**

In some situations there may be a reaction from the person receiving the feedback that was unintended on your part. For example they may feel unappreciated, de-motivated or their feelings may be hurt.

- It is important for you to watch for these reactions, either through verbal and/or non-verbal communication, and to respond accordingly to correct any misunderstanding as soon as possible. Listen for direct verbal comments, tone of voice changes and watch for a shift in open body language.

### **When to Provide Constructive Feedback**

Constructive feedback should be provided at a pre-arranged time so that all participants are available, prepared and fresh from the training experience.

- To maximize the exchange of information, feedback should be provided within a maximum time of one or two days following the workshop. That said, it is also important for the trainer to have appropriate time for self-reflection and assessment.
- Very seldom is it necessary to correct a trainer in front of the workshop participants. A word to the trainer at the next break may provide the opportunity for correction prior to the next presentation. In some situations, it may be possible to supplement information or demonstrate a technique correctly later without direct reference to the particular presentation.
- Most trainers appreciate receiving feedback from the workshop participants via the workshop evaluation form. This information provides valuable insight about what is working well in the workshop, modifications the trainer should make to meet expectations or things that can be done differently at the next workshop session.
- In the event of a serious situation or error, immediate action may be necessary. In a case such as this it is important that you use your discretion and tact and show respect at all times.