

Note to reader: This guide was originally produced as a small, four-page leaflet and can be obtained in that hardcopy format from the Civic Participation team.

POCKET GUIDE TO TRAINING

This guide highlights some important issues to consider when organizing training programs.

Training and Development

Democratic development is often linked to individual and institutional change. NDI's programs frequently involve training activities that help bring about these changes by creating opportunities for program participants to learn new knowledge, skills, and values. Designing a training program to transform the way people think and act, however, is typically a difficult undertaking that requires thorough planning and an operational understanding of different training techniques and approaches.

Training Adults Is Not As Easy As 1, 2, 3 (it is also not as hard as rocket science) Most participants in NDI training programs are adults with established beliefs and opinions acquired during a lifetime of experiences. At the same time, their direct experience with democratic principles and practices is often limited. Cultural circumstances are different from program to program. For example, women and men cannot always be trained together. Recognize that all of these factors heavily influence the design and effectiveness of NDI training programs. Some additional adult learning principles worth keeping in mind include:

- Adults need to understand why they are learning something and believe that the learning process directly addresses their concerns and needs.
- Adults benefit from activities that allow them to relate new information and skills to realistic problems and previous experiences.
- Adults respond positively to a give-and-take training process; not a process where information is just poured by the trainer.
- Changing the established behavior of adults requires more than simply providing information through a lecture.

Bottom Line: Treat adults as adults and recognize that all participants have something valuable to add to a training program.

If You Don't Have A Road Map, Make One

Successful training programs begin by mapping out the purpose and process of the program. Certain steps are important:

- Identify the training needs of the participants.
- Develop corresponding training goals and objectives.
- Determine the sequence of training sessions.
- Create an agenda that outlines the content and methods of each session.
- Develop evaluation mechanisms.

Consult with program participants to determine training needs. Participant training needs generally revolve around their learning to do something new or something better. Generally, this requires the trainer to design a program that affects the knowledge, skills, or values of the participants. If people are being trained to become competitive soccer players, they need to learn the game's rules, how to pass the ball, and how to act as part of a team. In this case, the training goal is to create competitive soccer players and the training objectives are defined by answering the following questions: What do I want the players to know? (rules); What skills do I want the players to develop? (ability to pass the ball); What do I want the players to value? (team-work and improvement). These same questions should be asked in preparation for any training program.

Once the objectives are defined it is then possible to determine the sequence of training activities and the most appropriate training methods. Different training objectives necessitate the use of different training methods. For example, a lecture may help a soccer player understand the game's rules, but it will not help them develop the skill needed to pass the ball.

A training agenda provides the written plan for the training program. However, it does not simply list the topics being covered. Instead, an agenda also highlights the objectives and explains the content and methods for each training session. The agenda should also reflect how the sessions help to achieve the objectives. This means that there should be an explicit link between each session and the program objectives.

To assess the success of the training program, it is critical to have a plan, which should be written into the agenda.

Bottom Line: Adequate preparation is vital, because if you do not know where you are going, you will not be able to get there.

Learning Is Not A Spectator Sport

Any training program organized around lectures will likely fail to keep the interest of the program participants and likewise will fail to affect their skills and values. For instance, lectures may be a good way to provide information, but a terrible method to develop decisionmaking skills or democratic values. To achieve a high level of participation and to increase the level of learning, incorporate discussions, break-out groups, exercises, games, visual aides, role-plays, and simulations into the training program.*

Many NDI training programs help build relationships among participants and help them work effectively together. The skills and values needed to work together can best be developed through practice. In other words, learning by doing. To facilitate the practice during every training program, the trainer should help participants apply new knowledge, skills, and values. This is the best way to ensure that the participants will continue to apply them outside of the training session.

As mentioned, the trainer acts as a facilitator. This means that the trainer creates opportunities for learning by focusing activities and promoting participation and reflection. Facilitation does not mean telling the participants what they need to know and asking whether they agree. A facilitator is goal-oriented and guides the participants, but does not drive them. Some principles to keep in mind include:

Begin every training program by explaining what the objectives are and why they are important. Adults need to understand what they are doing and why they are doing it. An explanation of the objectives also helps create appropriate participant expectations.

Develop consensus around the agenda by reviewing it with participants and asking them if they have questions or comments. This process also helps mitigate any anxieties the participants may feel when they arrive at the training program.

Establish some ground rules for the group's operation during the training program. The rules should answer two questions: 1) how will the group interact; and, 2) what are the different roles and responsibilities of the participants and trainers.

Model relevant behaviors during the training program. This means, be respectful, attentive, supportive, open, tolerant, etc. Behavior modeling is particularly important when trying to help participants develop more democratic values. **Bottom Line:** Make it active!

* Contact NDI functional teams for training materials

If You Do Not Assess, You Do Not Succeed

If you do not assess what the participants learned, how do you know if they learned anything? A fundamental part of any training program is assessment. It should not be a last-minute discussion of participant likes and dislikes, but a planned process that requires participants to reflect on what they learned and how they learned. Do not simply ask the participants, "Was it useful?" It is also important to find out why the training was useful and how the participants intend to use what they learned in the "real" world.

There are a number of ways to assess the program's effectiveness. Some formal methods include questionnaires and short written reports from the participants. Less formal methods may involve participants interviewing each other or engaging in a structured discussion about the program.

Some of the most practical assessment activities, however, require the participants to apply what they learned. This means the participants actually demonstrate, in some way, their ability to use the knowledge, skills, and values developed during the training. For instance, the participants may have to produce a plan, an activities calendar, a persuasive message, or they may have to solve a problem. (Of course, the products created will depend on the training objectives and topics.) Additionally, when participants apply what they learned, they reinforce the learning process. Even when the participants do not do an acceptable job, the trainer can help them learn from their mistakes.

Bottom Line: Assessment is fundamental.

Pre-Training Questions

- Have you consulted the participants about the program's purpose and process?
- Is there a timed agenda that lays out the training objectives, content, and methods?
- Does the training site provide a comfortable environment with no distractions?
- What are the plans to identify and address the anxieties of the participants?
- Will the participants have the opportunity to relate new issues and ideas to previous experiences?
- Are lectures avoided and interactive methods promoted?
- Does the program allow participants to practice what they learn?
- How will you assess whether the participants learned anything?

This guide was produced by Aaron Azelton with contributions from NDI staff members.