Assessment

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Assessment is a necessary part of making programs sustainable. Does the program achieve its objectives? Did attendees consider it valuable? Would they return or recommend it to others? In addition to looking at objectives, you might also want to assess the administrative aspects. Did attendees easily find information about the event? Was communication clear? Was the structure of the event appropriate for their academic and personal needs? Were there logistical problems you had not anticipated?

In order to collect relevant data for this sort of program assessment, you might also consider all of the stakeholders involved. What was their level of collaboration in the event? What are their objectives for the event? What sort of data will they want to see? How might you collect and disseminate this data?

The charts in this handout will help you think about these and other questions related to assessment. Note that these do not cover all of the aspects of assessment you might find valuable when creating sustainable programming. Use this material as a starting point and add to it according to your context and needs.

Information about Your Specific Audience

For a program to be sustainable, it must meet an audience's needs. Assessing a program thus involves collecting information from the audience specifically. This information can then be used to determine the closeness of fit between audience needs and program. Evaluation questions might collect general information about your audience's background or specific information about their experiences related to your program topic, but they may also ask the audience to specifically rate aspects of the program itself. This type of information will help you improve programming for the future.

In the table below, the column on the left provides methods for collecting information as well as a few suggestions of information that might be collected using each method. Read over the suggestions to determine which methods might work best for your program and context. In the column on the right, jot notes about the methods you plan to use and the particular topics you plan to cover.

Methods for collecting information	**Choices for your program**
Application/Registration ❏ Demographics ❏ Language(s) ❏ Field of study	
Pre-session audience surveys ❏ Writing & project goals ❏ Writing process ❏ Attitude toward writing & toward this project ❏ Existing peer support	
Pre-session advisor surveys ❏ Writing needs of advisees ❏ Best times to offer programs given constraints of coursework and research	

Post-session audience surveys
❏ Accomplishments during the program
❏ Program evaluation
❏ Personal changes in:
    ❏ Goals
    ❏ Writing process
    ❏ Attitudes
    ❏ Plans to find peer support	

Post-session advisor surveys ❏ Changes in advisee writing ❏ Changes in advisee motivation or attitude ❏ Changes in advisee process ❏ Increased advisee degree completion	
IRB-Approved research projects ❏ Pre- and post-comparison of drafts ❏ Interviews/focus groups	

Information about Stakeholders

Sustainability also requires that you pay attention to all stakeholders, not just to the audience themselves. For instance, other stakeholders might be collaborators who must decide whether or not to continue the collaboration, or they may be funders who must decide whether to continue funding the program. Use the table on the following page to identify all of the stakeholders for your proposed event. Some are obvious, e.g., the attendees themselves or you. Others might be less obvious, e.g., a unit on campus that has a stake in graduate success but who is not yet a direct collaborator for your program.

For each stakeholder listed, decide what their objectives for your event would be, what their current level of collaboration is, and what sort of data they would consider valuable. For example, a unit that provides lunch funding might want to know the caterer, the cost per day per person, and the total cost. In addition, however, they might be interested to know that attendees evaluating the program specifically said it was important to provide lunch rather than asking attendees to go find their own lunch.

If there are people/units you consider stakeholders who are not yet collaborators, you might use this chart to think about potential future collaborations. Might they provide funding, for instance, or help you with advertising? Or might they give a short presentation during your larger event?

After completing the table on the next page, you may want to return to the previous table and reconsider methods of collecting data. You may have identified data of interest to your stakeholders that you have not yet included in your planning.

Example Chart: Turn to the next page for a chart you can fill in.

Stakeholders	**Objectives for this event**	**Current or potential level of collaboration**	**Data they consider valuable**
Grad School	Completed dissertations	Funding for lunch	● Total attendees ● Total cost broken down by day/person ● Amount of work completed
Institutional Office for International Students	Supporting international students	None currently; could be persuaded by data to fund or advertise	● Number of international attendees ● Countries represented by attendees

Stakeholders	Objectives for this event	Current or potential level of collaboration	Data they consider valuable
You			
Graduate Writers			
Event Facilitators			
Event Collaborators			
Your Unit Director (if different than facilitators)			
Faculty Advisors			
Graduate School			
Dean/Provost of the College/ University			
Other Funding Bodies			
Other:			

Data Collection and Dissemination

Any data you collect about your event and its audience may serve multiple purposes. For example, you may use it to tweak the program for future semesters, or one of your collaborators may use it to determine future collaboration with this particular program. Using the table you completed above, transfer each type of data you'll need to collect to the first column in the table below. For each, decide the best time and method to collect the data and the best method to disseminate it. Note that if more than one stakeholder is interested in the same type of data, you'll want to think about disseminating it in a way that reaches all interested stakeholders (e.g., a single report) rather than having to disseminate the same material in multiple different ways (e.g., individual emails). Remember that the examples below are just that--examples. You should borrow from them or add to them according to your own context and program needs.

Suggestions for collecting data

- Application form
- Registration form/system
- Attendance form
- Pre-session survey
- Post-session evaluation
- Receipts
- IRB-approved project

Suggestions for disseminating data

- Overview report (like an annual report)
- As part of a larger unit annual report
- Letter/email
- Website
- Tables/charts
- Copies of receipts
- Conference/journal publication

Specific types of data from the stakeholder chart	**Best time and method to collect the data within your planned event's format**	**Best method to disseminate the data**

If you use these handouts to help plan your event, we would love to get feedback from you on how useful they were. You may email any comments to Vicki R Kennell at vkennell@purdue.edu. 5/7/21