

Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence

Virtual Workshop Outline

SOME GENERAL NOTES:

1. Links to several Jamboards, Google Docs, and Google Sheets are provided. These documents are meant to be shared by everyone. PLEASE download these to your own computer BEFORE USE.

2. This virtual workshop was designed to include the following sequencing:

- ✓ Homework Assignment (approximately 1 ½ hours)
- ✓ Virtual, group meeting (approximately 2 hours)
- ✓ Homework Assignment (approximately 1 ½ hours)
- ✓ Virtual, group meeting (approximately 2 hours)
- ✓ Homework Assignment (approximately 30 minutes)

3. There are many ways to introduce the Guidelines for Excellence to your participants. Please feel free to adapt this outline for your own setting.

HOMEWORK #1

- Watch the overview video of the National Project for Excellence: naaee.org/guidelines
- Read the Introduction [pages 7-21] in *Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence*.
- Complete a SOAR analysis for one of your programs [see page 25-26] in *Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence*. Use this link to access the Homework: SOAR Analysis: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1g6Z8oxFokFTpaRo_ik9EltAhs80bAoyF/edit?usp=sharing&oid=102344212071058778908&rtpof=true&sd=true
- Visit the Appreciative Inquiry Commons at <https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu/> or read Resource #18 from the *Community Engagement: Guidelines for Excellence* [pages 138-141].

MEETING #1: Getting Started and Digging In

Welcome

- check in
- agenda
- icebreaker

Overview of the Six Key Characteristics:

Provide an orientation/overview to how the guidelines are structured. Show an illustration or listing of the Six Key Characteristics and go over them quickly. Mention that the program development and implementation process is not linear.

Key Characteristic #1: Gather Information and Assess Priorities and Resources.

Quick overview of the Key Characteristic and the guidelines.

- 1.1 Self-assessment
- 1.2 Organizational priorities, capacity, and resources
- 1.3 Environmental, educational, and community needs
- 1.4 Audience needs
- 1.5 Partnerships

Tell group that we're going to focus a bit on guideline 1.1: Self-assessment. Remind participants that they were asked to complete a SOAR analysis for one of their programs:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1g6Z8oxFokFTpaRo_ik9EltAhs80bAoyF/edit?usp=sharing&oid=102344212071058778908&rtpof=true&sd=true

Ask the group:

- Have any of you conducted a SOAR Analysis before or something similar?

Activity #1: SOAR Analysis

In small groups/breakout rooms, ask participants to:

- Introduce each other
- Explain a little about the program they analyzed
- If they are comfortable, share their SOAR analysis.
- Share what they learned from conducting the SOAR analysis.
- As a group: What were your big take aways from conducting your SOAR Analysis?

Small Group Discussion: SOAR Analysis Google Sheets link:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1WBbNV_5Cnxigs0pThwLRZkd2vViTfMT1rB6K6moVito/edit?usp=sharing

Back in the larger group, ask participants to share what they learned, including what their big take aways were and whether they see themselves changing anything based on the results.

1.2 Organizational priorities, capacity, and resources

Organizational priorities and missions

Introduce the idea of organizational priorities and missions.

Ask if any could share their organization's mission (fair game to paraphrase).

- What are some of your organization's priorities?
- What are some of the challenges you face?
- Is your organization mission driven?
- Anyone care to share the mission of your organization? It's OK to paraphrase?

Show slides of some different mission statements.

Activity #2: Too Good to Pass Up

In this activity, the participants will discuss a scenario that delves a bit into organizational priorities and the possibility of mission creep.

Form small groups to discuss the **Too Good to Pass Up** scenario and ask them to copy the **Jamboard link**:

https://jamboard.google.com/d/1IMwlfB8SAIFCKyEKpn9rKxbUAVOySGmSdzt_XvPBm/dl/edit?usp=sharing

Too Good to Pass Up

Scenario: Your environmental education organization has been approached by a community-based group interested in forming a partnership. Your staff and board members have previously expressed a desire to work with this group. The group would like to work with your organization on a multiyear, grant-funded program designed to reach at-risk youth. Funding for the program is assured if your organization serves as the fiscal agent. The funder wants the community-based group to develop a program that will teach youth technology skills. The funder is particularly interested in job skill development.

Assignment: You are assigned to take this proposed partnership to your board of directors. In preparing for the meeting, develop a list of questions and concerns. What do you need to know before you explore this partnership any further for your organization? What might be a “deal breaker?” What might motivate your organization to enter the partnership?

Caution: If you find yourselves saying, “we assume that—,” write the assumption down as a question or concern.

Share: Prioritize your questions and concerns. Post them on your Jamboard.

Back in the large group – lead a discussion:

- Ask a couple of groups to share some of their questions.
- Ask if anyone would be willing to talk about how they would advise the board – join the partnership or pass?
- Do you find yourself tempted to engage in projects that are outside the scope of your organization’s mission? Why?
- Whether you have or have not done so in the past, when might it be appropriate to engage in projects that could be considered “mission creep”?

Explain that you are moving to the 2nd quadrant – PLAN – of the Design & Implementation process

Plan Quadrant includes:

Design Instruction
Design Program Structure & Delivery
Develop Evaluation Plan

Remind participants that the process is NOT LINEAR

KEY CHARACTERISTIC #2 Design Instruction

Quick overview of the Key Characteristic and the guidelines.

- 2.1 Goals and objectives
- 2.2 Instructional materials and techniques
- 2.3 Instructional staff

Overview of SMARTIE Goals and Objectives

After you have developed or reviewed your program goals, you will want to write/review your program objectives.

Has anyone developed SMART Goals and Objectives?
PowerPoint of SMART Goals and Objectives

SMARTIE Goals & Objectives:

Strategic, Specific and Stretching - Describes an action, behavior, outcome, or achievement that is observable.

Measurable - Details quantifiable indicators of progress towards meeting expectations and outcomes

Audience - Names the audience and describes outcomes from the perspective of the audience

Relevant - Is meaningful, realistic, and ambitious; the audience can (given the appropriate tools, knowledge, skills, authority, resources) accomplish the task or make the specified impact.

Time-bound - Delineates a specific time frame.

Inclusive – Invites traditionally excluded or marginalized people into activities and decision-making in ways that share power.

Equitable – Designed to address systemic inequity and injustice.

Activity #3: Writing a SMARTIE Goal

Scenario:

Your nature center is going to host Pine Street Elementary School's 4th grade classes for an Every Kid Outdoors Field Trip. Students have been studying forest ecology and the role of fire and human management in the forest ecosystem as part of their curriculum. The teachers would like their classes to spend three hours at the nature center doing hands-on activities.

- 1.) Review the description of a SMARTIE Goal.
- 2.) Write at least one SMARTIE Goal for the program.

3.) If you have time (and energy) write a SMARTIE Objective to support the SMARTIE Goal.

Jamboard – Writing a SMARTIE Goal:

<https://jamboard.google.com/d/1PQD46iG15bUYh64tbYAC0oVJ4zxVEf-uTFKzbu0iS9E/edit?usp=sharing>

Ask groups to share their SMARTIE Goals

Ask if anyone tried to write a SMARTIE Objective – ask to share

Wrap up:

- Questions/comments
- Go over homework assignments
- If you run out of time for the SMARTIE Goal activity, consider assigning it as homework.

HOMEWORK #2

- Skim Key Characteristic #1-6
- Read Key Characteristic #4: Evaluation in detail.
- Review NAAEE's new eeVAL
- Complete a Logic Model, focusing on the Evaluation components:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qdgVPBC0xgjiurwdfJ-PYOC-iQxivG/edit?usp=sharing&oid=102344212071058778908&rtpof=true&sd=true>

MEETING #2: Moving on in the Process

Welcome

- check in
- agenda
- icebreaker

As a reminder, show participants the graphic of the six Key Characteristics and tell them that we'll be focusing on KC #3-5 today.

KEY CHARACTERISTIC #3 Design Program Structure and Delivery.

Quick overview of the Key Characteristic and the guidelines.

- 3.1 Format and delivery
- 3.2 Facilities
- 3.3 Health and safety
- 3.4 Communication

KEY CHARACTERISTIC #4 Develop an Evaluation Plan.

Quick overview of the Key Characteristic and the guidelines.

- 4.1 Evaluation plan
- 4.2 Evaluation strategies, techniques, and tools
- 4.3 Pilot test the program and revise

Activity: Review Logic Model – Evaluation

Review the notion of creating a Logic Model as a way of helping form the outline for an Evaluation Plan.

Remind them that they were asked to complete a Logic Model as homework. Go over the Logic Model and how it is structured. Point out the examples for Inputs as a starter.

- Discuss:
 - Have they used Logic Models before or something similar?
 - What were your big take aways from working with a Logic Model?

Logic Model Homework

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gdqVPBC0xgjiurwdiFJ-PYOC-iQxivG/edit?usp=sharing&oid=102344212071058778908&rtpof=true&sd=true>

Small Group – Greening the School Yard Logic Model (Google Sheets)

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/14OT-lkfGMqO_EUIPN0_eqJRoXPpTKdlZmuzW5nDT9kU/edit?usp=sharing

In small groups/breakout rooms, ask participants to:

- Introduce each other
- As a group, they should review the Situation, Priorities, and the information provided for Inputs, Outputs, and Outcomes
- Given that information, complete the Greening the Schoolyard Logic Model, focusing first on developing Evaluation Questions and then, Indicators.

Back in the large group, ask a couple of small groups to report out.

KEY CHARACTERISTIC #5 Deliver Program and Implement Evaluation.

Quick overview of the Key Characteristic and the guidelines.

Activity: Fostering a Positive Learning Environment

- 5.1 Instructional content
- 5.2 Learning climate
- 5.3 Flexible and responsive instruction
- 5.4 Inclusion and collaboration
- 5.5 Instructional methods
- 5.6 Implement evaluation

We're going to shift focus now to how programs are implemented or delivered. The focus is on the experiences of the learners.

Ask participants to think about a favorite teacher or learning experience.

- What was so special about the teacher?
- What was so special about the learning experience?

Ask the participants to think about a learning experience where you did not feel included.

- What made you feel excluded or unwelcome?

Activity: Fostering a Positive Learning Environment – Observation Rubric

Introduce the activity by telling participants that they will be creating a rubric for one of the guidelines listed under **Key Characteristic #5**. Each group will be assigned a different guideline.

Explain that the rubric is designed to be used to as an observation tool to gauge novice educators' ability to apply the assigned guideline *during* instruction.

Display the rubric and tell the participants that their task is to fill in the rubric by identifying at least two criteria that shape highly successful teaching and program implementation.

Small Group Discussion: Fostering a Positive Learning Environment [Google Sheets]:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1MCiGRH0u2Oo7nD4Sa1PkLNq_UOoTVjTFrGFmp8Jmu3s/edit?usp=sharing

Taking one criterion at a time, they should write a description for each of the four levels (e.g., Highly Effective, Effective, Improvement Necessary, and Does Not Meet Expectation). Each should describe a different level of success for the selected criterion. Point out the example criterion, Organizing physical space, and how it is elaborated across the four levels.

Finally, ask participants to be prepared to discuss how they addressed the inclusion of all learners in their rubric.

Remind participants that they will need access to Key Characteristic #5. They should download a copy of the EE Program Guidelines and navigate to page 79:

chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://cdn.naaee.org/sites/default/files/guide_4.ee_programs.5.20.22.no_crops_compressed.pdf

Back in the large group:

Once breakout groups have completed their task, bring them back together for a large group discussion. Ask each group to provide a quick overview of their rubric. Provide an opportunity for other participants to comment or ask questions.

Once all the groups have shared their work, ask the participants to take a moment or two to think about their own teaching. If someone observed one of your typical classes:

- How would you rate?
- What are your strengths?
- What are areas of needed improvement?

Point out the checklists in the box RESOURCES YOU CAN USE! Positive Learning Environment Observation Checklist

KEY CHARACTERISTIC #6 Analyze, Adapt, and Share.

Quick overview of the Key Characteristic and the guidelines.

- 6.1 Evaluation results
- 6.2 Plan for long-term sustainability
- 6.3 Share learnings

Wrap up:

- Questions/Comments
- Go over homework assignments
- Final Reflections

HOMEWORK #3:

As a final opportunity to reflect on their own programs and program development process, ask participants to complete the self-assessment:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lwth-6W1dAFnQugCjkz9Qe5bD-RI3hOl/edit?usp=sharing&oid=102344212071058778908&rtpof=true&sd=true>