

APPENDIX B: ASSESSING TRAINING FOR SUCCESSFUL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT: LITERATURE REVIEW SUMMARY

This summary presents the main findings of a literature review exploring the different stages of the training process. Works included in the literature review are indicated by an asterisk in the bibliography. The full literature review is available on this evaluation's Web site at <http://www.worldbank.org/ieg>.

Design

Designing training begins with a thorough diagnosis and training-needs assessment. Based on information obtained from the assessment, appropriate training objectives can be set, criteria for participant selection established, and training content decided.

Correct diagnosis of training needs should both identify organizational and/or institutional capacity gaps to be targeted and the best means of addressing these gaps. The human, resource, and incentive dimensions of capacity should be considered in order to determine whether training is needed, and what other forms of capacity support are needed, in order to facilitate the implementation of training. The target organization should play an active role in diagnostic exercises, both to better identify capacity problems and to ensure client commitment to training goals.¹

Once diagnosis has determined the capacity needs to be addressed by training, a training-needs assessment provides specific information on what participants need to learn, the issues they face, and what is expected from the training. When done well, such an assessment ensures that training addresses the most relevant issues efficiently.² Steps and procedures to conduct training-needs assessments vary. A preferred

starting point is a stakeholder analysis, which helps identify the best sources of information regarding training needs.³ Informants can report on whom they would like to see trained, what type of training is needed, or even who could potentially be a trainer. Involving many stakeholders allows the information to be triangulated and avoids bias caused by too much focus on any one type of respondent.

Training has two sets of objectives. First, the general objectives or aims, encompassing the changes expected to take place, or competencies that will improve. The second are learning objectives, describing what participants should be able to do at the end of the course. Good learning objectives derive from the results of the training-needs assessment, and cover all the different areas of learning the training activities have to offer.⁴ Learning objectives should be timely and context-specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic.⁵

The training-needs assessment usually provides the necessary information for selecting participants or identifying the target group. Participant selection, including the number of people to be trained, as well as how diverse they are, must be linked with course objectives and the context in which change is taking place.⁶ The levels and backgrounds of the participants help determine the appropriate depth and level of detail of the training. Furthermore, task and job analyses help prioritize learning needs, in order to assign proper time allocation during training delivery. This aggregated information should, in turn, influence the method in which knowledge and skills will be imparted: face-to-face communication, interactive exercises, lectures, etc.

It is also important that content areas be properly sequenced, so as to ensure linkages among different topics, and to enhance learning.

Implementation of Training Activities

There is no single method for teaching or learning—the trainer must choose the strategy that best fits the needs and backgrounds of the participants, the facilities and equipment available, and the learning objectives. The following six principles provide useful guidelines for successful adult learning.⁷

- **Participation:** People learn better and remember more when they are actively engaged in the learning process. Practical exercises, discussions, simulations, and games also prompt participants to share their knowledge and experiences, thus fostering a collaborative environment.
- **Understanding:** Checking participants' understanding by asking questions, listening to their discussions, or using a vocabulary appropriate to their level (as determined by the training-needs assessment) can all improve the learning process.
- **Feedback:** Providing opportunities to practice and giving trainees specific feedback information on the quality of their work gives participants a sense of their progress toward the learning objectives.
- **Interest:** The relevance of the training objectives to the needs of the participants is crucial in developing the participants' interest and ownership of the training. Providing various case studies and activities will help stimulate and maintain interest.
- **Emphasis:** Focusing the attention of participants on the most important points of the training, by spending more time on important topics and allowing sufficient time to practice new skills, will help them remember the key lessons from the training.
- **Results:** Keeping participants informed of their progress, and recognizing them for work well done will increase their confidence in newly acquired skills and knowledge, and encourage them to use what they have learned.

Capacity development occurs once participants transfer what they have learned to their everyday jobs, and improve their performance. The impact and sustainability of training is the successful application of new skills and knowledge.

Major obstacles to the transfer of new skills and knowledge tend to be the types of power structures within an organization, entrenched attitudes, and lack of resources.

To increase the likelihood of transfer, factors such as the timing of the training (that is, sequencing it or conducting it when it is most needed), feedback to the participants, practical application of the training (with numerous real-life and relevant examples), and support from supervisors are essential.

Follow-up

Follow-up activities assist in the transfer of training to the workplace, by helping to address any barriers to the working environment, and by maintaining participants' motivation to apply new learning. Follow-up, through technical assistance or supervision, can help trainees adapt the learning to real-life situations.⁸

Furthermore, follow-up can contribute to self-efficacy (confidence in one's ability to perform successfully) and motivation, two factors shown to impact skill maintenance.⁹ Trainees experiencing difficulties in applying new learning to their work should have the opportunity to seek advice immediately after the training.

Evaluation

Accountability and decision making are the most cited reasons for evaluating training. Feedback evaluations (or formative evaluations) help monitor the quality of design and delivery of training. They provide information on the effectiveness of the methods used, the achievement of the training objectives, or the appropriateness of management and training design. Decision making evaluations focus instead on the value and contribution of the training for an organization or a project. These evaluations assist managers, team

leaders, and donors in making informed decisions regarding training activities. Other types of evaluations are input evaluations and process evaluations. An input evaluation shows how resources were employed and whether they were adequate for achieving the goals of the program. A process evaluation examines why certain objectives were achieved and others were not, and where improvements are needed.¹⁰

There are several evaluation “levels,” ranging from simply providing information on participants’ reactions to the training—the effectiveness of the instructor, the relevance of the content, the quality of the materials—to measuring the outcomes or results of the training program.¹¹

Several tools can be used to evaluate training. These include evaluation sheets, questionnaires, and interviews, as well as direct observation of training results in the workplace.

Conclusion

The process of training preparation for capacity development begins with a diagnosis, followed by a training-needs assessment. Based on the information collected on participants’ needs and background, learning objectives and content can be set and developed during the training design phase. The training process can be enhanced through participation, checking the understanding of the participants, giving feedback to participants, stimulating their interest, emphasizing the important lessons, and focusing on results. Also, following up on the training through supervision and on-the-job support helps adapt the training lessons to real-life situations, thereby helping to ensure long-term impact. Finally, evaluations are a necessary step that can provide valuable information on how to improve future training.