QENO Board Governance Evaluation

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Introduction

This evaluation plan describes the methods that will be used to evaluate the Board Governance workshop that is offered by Quality Enhancement for Nonprofit Organizations (QENO), University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW). This plan includes a background section describing the overall function of QENO, as well as information on the Board Governance workshop. The purpose of the evaluation, the audience and stakeholders, and key questions that must be answered are all included. The plan also includes the main affected stakeholders in addition to featuring a logic model, the framework for the evaluation, and the evaluation design used in this process.

Background and Rationale

Quality Enhancement for Nonprofit Organizations (QENO) was founded in 2006 through the joint efforts of local funders, community leaders, and UNCW faculty and administrators with the intent to "help build the capacity of nonprofit organizations and increase philanthropy in southeastern North Carolina" (http://uncw.edu/qeno/index.html). Their services include the facilitation of professional workshops on Board Governance, Exceptional Board Governance, and Financial Accountability, Board Development, and Organizational Assessment and Counseling. For the purpose of this evaluation, the evaluation team will focus on the Board Governance workshop currently offered by QENO, participants who have completed the workshop within the last year, those who have registered in upcoming Board Governance workshops, and the impact that their newly learned knowledge and skills have had on their respective nonprofit organizations.

The Board Governance workshop is instructor-led in a face-to-face learning environment and is facilitated by a contracted instructor over two half-day (four-hour) sessions. The workshop covers roles and responsibilities of board members for non- profit organizations, as well as best practices for managing and leading a nonprofit board of directors. Initially, one Board Governance workshop was offered annually, and due to demand, has grown in frequency to one per quarter. Today, growing awareness and demand for this topic has led QENO to schedule eight offerings of this workshop for the 2013 calendar year. On average, 11 participants attend each workshop.

Purpose

The main purpose of this evaluation is to measure the impact that Board Governance training has had on affiliated nonprofit organizations. Essentially, the client wants to know if workshop participants are adept at conducting board business and at improving board function and effectiveness as a result of their participation in this training. This includes validating whether or not participants are successful in:

- Appraising their board's capacity to engage in generative governance (discerns challenges and opportunities; probes assumptions, logic, and the values behind strategies), and develop mechanisms to foster generative thinking (a cognitive process for deciding what to pay attention to, what it means, and what to do about it) and communication;
- Analyzing how their board incorporates diversity of thought in board deliberation and identifies steps to decrease groupthink and increase diverse perspectives;
- Determining which decision-making process is most appropriate in varying situations;
- Assessing their board's conflict management style and developing mechanisms to reduce destructive conflict and use constructive conflict as a means to promote innovation; and,
- Developing a board structure, composition, practices, and processes that support the work of exceptional (applying tools and procedures for maximizing meetings, recruiting new members, new member orientation, and training) boards.

The final report will quantify and qualify the impact QENO's Board Governance training has had on the regional nonprofit community

Secondarily, the evaluation will elucidate what changes, if any, are needed to improve the delivery and content of the workshop. The results may be used to improve the Board

Governance workshop by suggesting revisions that will better accommodate and match the learners' needs.

Audiences/Stakeholders

Primary Stakeholders:

The primary stakeholder in this evaluation process is QENO who plans, designs, develops, and facilitates the delivery of the Board Governance workshops. In addition, as sponsors and funders of QENO, the University of North Carolina Wilmington, Cape Fear Memorial Foundation, Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, First Federal Bank, Corporation for National and Community Service, Association of Fundraising Professionals NC - Cape Fear Region Chapter, and United Way of the Cape Fear Area are primary stakeholders.

Secondary Stakeholders:

The secondary stakeholders in this evaluation are the participants who complete the Board Governance training.

Tertiary Stakeholders:

The tertiary stakeholders in this evaluation are the participants' organizations and the clients they serve and ultimately the greater regional community of nonprofit organizations.

Logic Model

The evaluation team will use a logic model to visually represent the relationship between resources, outputs, outcomes, and mitigating factors. The model illustrates the connections between components, thus delineating how activities and participation can contribute to the realization of short, moderate and long-term goals of QENO. Additionally, the model will be used as a tool to monitor the scope of the evaluation. Please refer to Appendix A for a visual depiction of the logic model.

Evaluation Model/Framework

Baldwin and Ford's A Model of the Transfer Process will provide the framework for the evaluation. This model states that transfer is dependent on interconnected factors during the training (training inputs) as well as learning and retention after the training (training outputs). Training inputs and outputs additionally determine whether learning is likely to be transferred to new situations and sustained in the workplace. Figure 1 below delineates the interconnectedness between training inputs, outputs, and conditions of transfer.

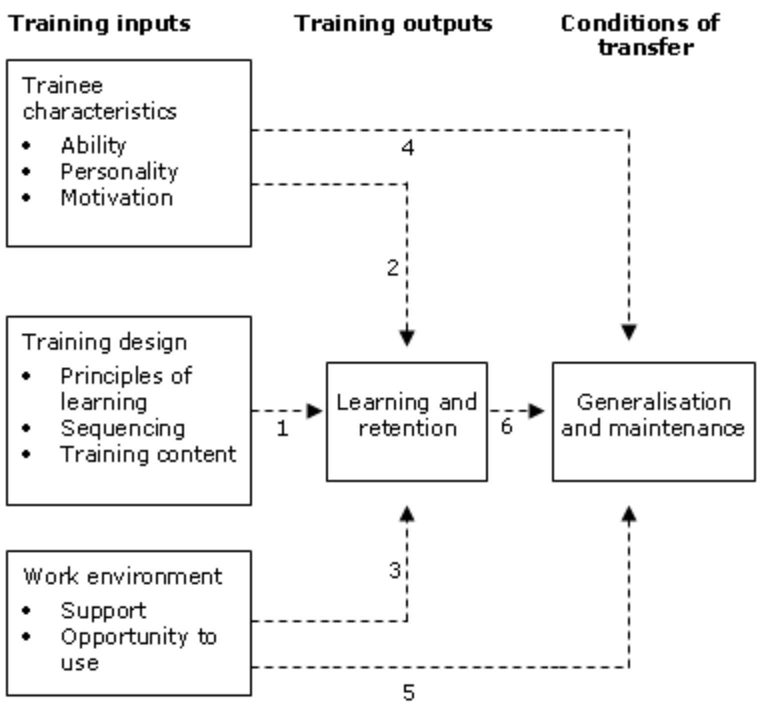


Figure 1 – Conditions of Transfer

As seen in the figure above, six links are critical to the transfer process. A good learning experience (link 1), learner characteristics (links 2 and 4), support and opportunity for use in the workplace (link 3) that can affect the learned skills/knowledge, the use of skills to be transferred (link 6), and the support and opportunities to apply the learning to new situations that can be sustained (link 5).

The tools used for this evaluation align with the six links identified above. In an effort to effectively triangulate the data, the following resources and methods will be reviewed/used:

- Archival data such as class rosters, participant evaluations of past Board Governance workshops, facilitator PowerPoint slides and notes, and e-letters promoting the training
- Focus group feedback (those who completed the Board Governance training in 2012)
- Telephone interviews of those who completed a Board Governance workshop in 2012)
- Assess prior knowledge (pre-test), trainee characteristics and work environment of participants scheduled to attend a March 2013 Board Governance workshop
- A post-test at the conclusion of the March 2013 Board Governance workshop to measure new learning
- Non-participant observation of the March 2013 Board Governance workshop

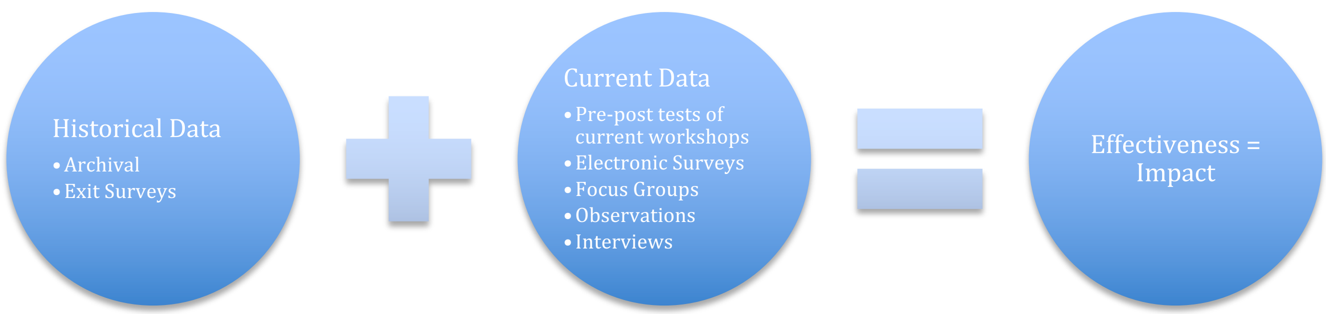
It is hoped that these resources and data collection methods will provide qualitative and qualitative data that provide meaningful insight on the training design, learning and retention, and conditions of transfer.

Key Questions

1. What prior board member experience do participants have?
2. Has the training positively impacted (the content was relevant, applicable, and implemented by individual and organization) the individual(s) completing the workshop and the organizations they represent?
3. How have the skills learned in the workshop impacted an organization's board procedures?
4. How has the workshop impacted the organization as a whole?

Evaluation Design

To facilitate the evaluation process, the Case Study Design will be used because it addresses the need to collect and analyze data from individuals, groups, processes and organizations (p 204). It is appropriate and useful when context is critical and generalization is *not* the goal. In addition, it supports a blended approach to acquiring both quantitative and qualitative data which fits with the methods previously listed. Most importantly, it aligns with key questions and requirements posed by our client.



Advantages of Case Study Design

- Provides descriptive data
- Reports include verbatim quotes of those interviewed
- Gathers data using multiple methods (triangulation)
- Captures what is important to participants
- Provides data that is rich with examples
- May lead to greater understanding about practice

Disadvantages of Case Study Design

- Evaluator bias may interfere with validity of findings
- Time consuming endeavor
- Produces excess data, which may not be analyzed due to time constraints.

Sample

Due to time limitations, the evaluation team opted to go with convenience sampling. Individuals will come from the approximately 35 participants who completed Board Governance training in 2012. We will ask them to participate in a focus group, complete an electronic survey, and/or be interviewed. The advantage of this approach is that we can readily access members of the population we need to query. The disadvantage is that the first people who respond to our request for volunteers may not be representative of the pool of people who participated in a Board Governance workshop in 2012 (p 347). Their responses may therefore skew the data and be non-representative of the greater group. However, we believe the results from working with a convenience sample will provide us with a basic understanding of how the Board Governance training was internalized and implemented.

Limitations

There are four main limitations for this evaluation.

1. Time –
    a. This evaluation will be conducted over a two-month period. Since most boards meet at most, once a month, this does not allow for enough time to observe and document a participant's board meeting before
    b. We will also be able to observe only one offering of a workshop and after they complete the workshop.
2. Sample size – those involved in the surveys, focus groups, and interviews will self-select. Since this a volunteer-based approach, this may result in a sample unrepresentative of the entire group of workshop participants.
3. Workshop class size averages 15 people per offering. This will limit the amount of pre/post tests that can be administered for our evaluation.
4. Multiple workshop presenters - variance of content delivery may also impact the validity of the evaluation data due to the use of multiple instructors.

References

Baldwin, T. T. & Ford, J. K. (1988). Transfer of training: a review and directions for future research. *Personnel Psychology.* 41: 63-105.

Appendix A – Logic Model

Resources	Outputs: Activities	Outputs: Participation	Outcomes -- Impact: Short	Outcomes -- Impact: Medium	Outcomes -- Impact: Long
QENO Staff Funding QENO Board Governance (BG) attendance roster 2012 workshop schedule QENO LISTSERVE database Other – UNCW faculty, independent contractors (instructors) Past participant (BG 2012) evaluations BG participant notebook Email correspondence QENO e-letter QENO webpage	Workshop prep Promotion of workshop Registering people for workshop Delivering workshop Participant evaluation of workshop Tweaking workshop based on participant evaluations.	Examples of current board activities are cited by participants. Participants exchange experiences and best practices. Participants vent, talk about the dysfunction on their boards. Application of skills learned in current and future board work.	Awareness of effective board practices and engagement	Implementation of skills learned in the BG training in the conducting of board meetings and board business	BG completers are: ▪ Competent in identifying board needs and in identifying the gaps between board resources and board needs. ▪ Effective in cultivating and recruiting high-functioning board members ▪ Able to orient and involve new board members in way that provides them a complete overview of the organization's structure and function ▪ Mentor new board members and support ongoing education of all board members ▪ Regularly evaluators of board meeting practices and annually review the board's strategy, goals and level of board member engagement ▪ Supportive of rotating existing members off and recruit new ones as a way to keep the board fresh and engaged ▪ Knowledgeable in outlining action plans that set realistic goals and strategies, specific steps with which to accomplish the goals, assigning these to a responsible party, setting and meeting deadlines, and evaluating the results.

Assumptions

- Members of area boards will take advantage of this training.
- Members of area boards are volunteers (non-paid).
- The make-up of area boards changes often.
- The board members we speak with are open to observation and being interviewed as a part of this evaluation project.

External Factors

- It may be difficult to coordinate people's schedules with that of the board governance offerings and/or our interviews and focus groups.
- Time is limited to complete this project and may not allow for actual observations of board members implementing their newly learned skills.