



Conducting effective skill building workshops

Ellen McIntyre¹, Tracy Reibel², Paul Aylward³, Denise Schultz⁴, Jacque Schroeder⁵, Phyllis Lau⁶, Olivia Baird⁷

Updated: Christina Hagger⁸

Workshops that build both research and clinical skills are popular learning events in primary health care. They are cost effective compared with individual training activities and provide a means of connecting the material to be learned to the learners' context, as well as providing opportunities for group interaction.

Planning the workshop

Workshops should be tailored toward the needs and expectations of participants.

Ensure that delivery methods and engagement strategies are:

- appropriate
- meaningful
- relevant
- stimulating.

Particular attention should be given to ensuring cultural appropriateness where workshops are to be delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culturally and linguistically diverse groups (see resources).

Develop clear objectives and outcomes

Objectives and outcomes of the workshop should be clearly stated to inform potential participants how the workshop will suit their needs.

Invite knowledgeable presenters

Select presenters who are knowledgeable of their field, have well developed ideas, are effective presenters, and can stimulate discussion.

Before the workshop brief the presenters on what type of audience they can expect and provide them with guidelines regarding what sort of audiovisual equipment may be provided.



Balance the program

The workshop should be structured with an appropriate balance of:

- small group and large group work
- theory and practice
- presentations and participation.

You may wish to organise refreshment breaks to encourage networking among participants.

A facilitator to introduce presenters, monitor the time and manage the program will ensure the event goes according to plan.

Provide materials to enhance learning

Organise brief pre-workshop materials and provide handouts of presentations and any other resources at the beginning of the workshop.

Organise a suitable venue

Select a venue that is easy to access, has a room that is large enough for participants to be seated around tables, and has an area for registration and refreshments.

Ensure you have jugs of fresh water and glasses available in the room.

Promote to the right audience

Plan a promotional strategy that focuses on your target audience and gives them enough time to plan their attendance.

Promoting the workshop in newsletters, on websites and via list serves that the target audience already accesses will encourage registration.

1 Director, PHCRIS

2 State Coordinator, WA PHCRED

3 Tri State Coordinator SA/NT/GGT, PHCRED

4 State Coordinator, QLD PHCRED

5 State Coordinator, NSW PHCRED

6 State Coordinator, VIC PHCRED

7 Student work placement, PHCRIS

8 Senior Research Fellow PHCRIS



Supply name tags and contact details

Supplying participants with name tags will make it easier for them to strike up conversations with other participants.

Providing a participant list with contact details will assist them to contact each other after the workshop. To do this you will need to receive their consent.

During the workshop

Introductions and housekeeping

At the beginning of the workshop:

- Acknowledge the traditional owners of the land.
- A Welcome to Country is a ceremony or speech performed by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people to welcome visitors to their traditional land.¹
- An Acknowledgement of Country is a way of showing awareness of and respect for the traditional Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders of the land on which a meeting is being held. Unlike a Welcome to Country, it can be performed by a non-indigenous person.¹
- Establish a culture for the workshop that builds respect, fosters inclusiveness and promotes the diversity of all participants.²
- Provide an overview of the workshop and information about the presenters.
- Provide 'housekeeping' information and rules of etiquette to ensure a smooth running workshop.
- Invite participants to introduce themselves and say something pertinent to the workshop topic.

Participation and discussion

Encourage everyone to participate in group discussions, but be aware of different skill levels.

Support constructive small group discussion by:

- using thought provoking, prompting or trigger questions
- keeping discussion focused on the objectives of the workshop
- requesting each group to briefly summarise their discussion for the whole group.

Evaluate the workshop

The most common form of evaluation involves participants completing a questionnaire. This can be in hard copy or online. The questionnaire should be as concise as possible and cover the following:

- appropriateness and convenience of the venue
- timing of the workshop
- pace of delivery
- style and clarity of presentations
- usefulness of activities and resources provided
- 'topic' specific objectives of the workshop and how well they were met
- some 'open ended' questions to allow participants to express or expand their views.

Thank participants and offer them a small incentive (a fun or tasty treat) to encourage completion and return of evaluations.

Have a debriefing session with workshop organisers and presenters to provide useful information on how to improve the next workshop. The evaluation responses will be a good source of information.

Provide presenters with a summary of the evaluation and follow up on matters as promised.

Thank the presenters and others involved in making the workshop a success.

Resources

McIntyre E, Reibel T, Aylward P, Lau P, Schroeder J, Schultz D. (2008). How to conduct effective skill building workshops. *Australian Family Physician* 37(10), 868-869.

PHCRIS Getting Started Guides: How to...Present your research to decision makers. http://www.phcris.org.au/guides/present_work.php

Steinert Y. (n.d.). Twelve Tips for Conducting Effective Workshops Retrieved January 2014 from http://www.royalcollege.ca/portal/page/portal/rc/common/documents/events/icre/12_tips_conducting_effective_workshops_e.pdf

References

- ¹ Reconciliation Australia. (2010). Welcome to and Acknowledgment of Country Retrieved January 2014 from <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/resources/factsheets/q-a-factsheets/welcome-to-and-acknowledgement-of-country>
- ² Fair Work Ombudsman. (2013). Fair Work Ombudsman workplace diversity and inclusion strategy 2013-2016 Retrieved January 2014 from <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/Publications/Diversity-and-inclusion/FWO-Workplace-Diversity-and-Inclusion-Strategy-2013-2016.doc>



To contact PHCRIS:

w phcris.org.au **e** phcris@flinders.edu.au

PHCRIS Assist: 1800 025 882

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