

# Evaluating the Impact of Training: The Trainers Point of View

**Purpose:** Using the point of view of trainers and thinking about the contributions they make to our health and safety education programs, this roundtable will examine the needs and roles of trainers in the program evaluation process.

**Focus:** We will look at evaluations of the longer term impacts and outcomes of training - what happens at the work site after training, rather than at shorter term evaluations that look at specific sessions or workshops.

**Step 1: Using a case example as a starting point, we will explore the experiences of those around the table with program evaluation.**

- First, for the attached case example, in what ways have trainers been effectively involved in the processes of designing, carrying out and using the results of these evaluations?
- Next, thinking about your own experience, how have trainers been effectively involved in these processes in your program?
- Now, considering both your experience and the case, what factors affect whether or not trainers see long term evaluation as useful?

**Step 2. Thinking about trainers involvement in general, we will discuss gaps between what has been done and what needs to be done.**

- How could the design and execution of program evaluations be improved so that they better support the contributions trainers make to our programs?
- What strengths do trainers have that could be used to improve the evaluation process?

**Step 3. Making program evaluations and trainers' roles in them more meaningful and useful.**

- What improvements should be made in how evaluations are designed and managed?
- What improvements should be made in how evaluation information is collected is fed back to trainers?
- How can we make these things happen? What are some of the initial steps that need to be taken?

# Trainers and Long Term Evaluation: A Case Example

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## **The program.**

This program is operated by a consortium of six unions, a university and a occupational health center. The program:

- provides four-day chemical emergency response and hazardous waste worker training sessions, primarily to union members
- has 9 full-time instructors (most on extended leave from their industrial jobs)
- has 70 part-time trainers (on periodic short-term leave from their industrial jobs)
- conducts approximately 20 training sessions per year at its central training site with each program attended by 20 to 24 students from 6 to 8 local unions or work sites
- conducts six 5-day trainer development courses per year
- also conducts numerous training programs in the field

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## **The long term goal.**

The long term goal of this program is to help workers become and remain active participants in determining and improving the health and safety conditions under which they work.

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## **The evaluation.**

Recently this program's evaluation was extended to cover its sessions conducted at five sites in the field, however, the central site sessions that have been the main focus of follow-up evaluations. To evaluate its success in achieving its long-term goal the program hired a survey research firm to conduct follow-up phone interviews with one representative from each local union one year after attending a session. Using the data from these interviews the program's professional staff and consultants wrote an article for a scientific journal where the evaluation was published.

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## **The evaluation results.**

Interviews were conducted with 481 workers and 50 managers (each from a separate work site/local union). Results from the interviews showed:

- the training manual continued to be used by more than 70% of students,
- more than 70% of students taught coworkers,
- more than 50% of union students went on to train their managers,
- more than 90% of students identified problems at work and sought and obtained changes in work site programs, training or equipment,
- more than 20% reported major spills following training with the majority saying the handling of spills had improved since the training,
- more than 80% stated that the training made them better prepared for their health and safety duties,
- responses from 50 managers who had attended sessions supported union members' reports.

The journal article and other reports from the evaluation data have been used in the grant application and reapplication processes. It is believed that their inclusion has helped the program receive good ratings in the grant review process.

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## **Trainer involvement.**

The following is a very brief summary of how the evaluation was developed and the roles trainers have played.

- The original follow-up evaluation
  - designed by the program's professional staff and consultants to reflect plans for action made by program participants on the last day of training (trainers had substantial input into the design of this training)
  - trainers were asked to review the questionnaires although there was no formal process to involve them in deciding what should be in the evaluation or how it should be carried out
- The recent evaluation expansion and questionnaire revision.
  - two trainers were part of a group brought together to suggest revisions
  - trainers were given the role of explaining and collecting questionnaires at the beginning of each training session.

Full-time trainers were told of findings in staff meetings and a copy of the published journal article was made available.