



Quality Enhancement for
Nonprofit Organizations

Achieving Successful Programs Using a Participant-led Program Design

Natasha Davis, MPA
Stephanie Straughn, MSSW
Dr. Andrea Jones, PhD



UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON

QENO New Executive Director Academy

- Issue:
 - Influx of new Executive Directors/CEOs in southeastern NC who had never held the position before and sought training on how to be a successful ED/CEO
- Question:
 - How can QENO support these first time EDs/CEOs?
- Program Design:
 - Executive Directors/CEOs in their role 4 years or less designed the academy through multiple feedback channels
- Results:
 - Increased attendance, ownership, and trust
 - 49% increase in the participants confidence in addressing difficult board conversations
 - 41% increase in confidence that they have the necessary tools to be a successful director

Quotes from QENO ED Academy Participants

- *“I think the network of peers was incredible. I didn’t anticipate the impact of that in the beginning.”*
- *“You go to a conference and spend \$300-\$400 for registration and not get what we get . . . not even a third of what we’ve gotten with the number of hours that we’ve spent here.”*
- *“As a leader, I do think for our small community to have something like that. I’ve never heard of anything like it.. That’s a huge opportunity, not just the tools I get when I’m there, but sitting around with ten EDs in and of itself is pretty tremendous.”*

Participant-led Program Design

- Community-based participatory research is a model of a specific research process.¹
 - Recognizes “community” as an entity
 - Builds on strengths & resources of community
 - Promotes bi-directional learning (community teaches researchers & vice versa)
 - Balances research findings and action
 - Is about the relevance of community-defined problems, questions, or issues
 - Uses a *cyclical, iterative* process to develop the research process
 - Reports back to the community frequently

1 Holkup, P., Tripp-Reimer, T., Salois, E., & Weinert, C. (2004). Community-based participatory research: An approach to intervention research with a Native American community. *Advanced Nursing Science*, 27(3), 162-175.

QENO's PLPD process did not assume we have the answers to our community's questions.



What is the issue that you are trying to address?

QENO: Influx of new Executive Directors/CEOs in southeastern NC who had never held the position before and sought training on how to be a successful ED/CEO

Identify Stakeholder Groups

Directly Benefit

- Who will receive the services or goods directly?
- All decisions must be made through the lens of this group.
- *QENO: Executive Directors who have been in their role four years or less*

Indirectly Benefit

- Who will benefit without receiving goods or services directly?
- *QENO: Funders who invest in our region's nonprofit organizations*

Perform a Strengths-based Inventory

Asset

- List the assets that each stakeholder group possesses
- Do this for both direct & indirect beneficiaries

- *QENO:*
ED/CEO: First-hand knowledge of the challenges that they face in their new role

Funder: Knowledge of a wide range of organizations

Value to Program Planning

- What value can these assets bring to the program planning & implementation?
- *QENO:*
→Enable us to develop services that directly address their priority issues

→Help to share surveys with orgs not in our network

Getting Feedback

What Do We Ask??

Form questions that:

- Test our assumptions/verify need
- Inform programmatic decisions
- Provide data necessary for research
- Provide info that can be used in outcomes measurement

****Do not ask for information that will not be used for decision-making, research, or outcomes measurement****

Designing a Great Survey

Lessons learned from cognitive psychology and participatory action research:

- Keep it simple...an 8th grade reading level is best.
- Keep it consistent...let's look at the SF-36.
- Use a focus group to develop questions.
- Pilot your survey multiple times. Other readers will pick up important errors:
 - Loaded questions
 - “How easy was it to get to the stadium?”
 - Double-barreled questions
 - “Is this presentation useful and interesting?”
 - Dichotomous questions
 - “Your performance at work is accurately evaluated...yes or no.”
 - Leading questions
 - “The performance was excellent: Agree or Disagree”
 - Other flaws in your logic.
- Put demographic information at the end of your surveys...WHY?

Assess Communication Channels

- Email
- Face-to-face meetings
- Phone calls
- Snail mail
- Social media
- Flyers

Discuss the pros/cons of each communication channel considering:

- Cost
- Reach
- Expertise needed
- Reliability
- Effectiveness
- Cultural appropriateness & sensitivity

Let the Feedback Guide You

- What the feedback showed us:
 - List of priority topics needed to be covered
 - Date/time/frequency preferences
 - Delivery method (must be current or former ED)
- Use the feedback to advocate for your clients
 - We were able to insist on a current or former ED as the facilitator because that's what our "clients" told us they needed. When pressured to select faculty as the facilitator, we were able to say, "As long as that faculty member is a current or former ED of a nonprofit".

QENO Executive Director Academy Model

- 9-month academy meeting monthly for 2 hours
- Led by former executive director
- Each class includes peer problem solving
- Topics include staff management, financial management, board relations, leadership, fundraising

Defining Success

- What do you want to accomplish? What does success look like to you AND to your direct and indirect beneficiaries?
- *QENO: Increase in confidence of executive directors in multiple aspects of the role of ED*

Creating a Continuous Feedback Loop

- Findings from a focus group at the conclusion of the academy:
 - Expressed need for a second year with a deeper dive into topics meeting bi-monthly
 - Findings after second year expressed wish to have met monthly
 - Topics to cover in second year
 - Potential improvements for year one
 - Unanticipated close relationships formed within the group



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