



Planning Ahead

This Info Sheet gives a brief overview of the wealth of helpful information you can find in *Best Practices Workbook for Boating, Fishing, and Aquatic Resources Stewardship Education (Workbook)*. See the back for details.

Make sure your programs are relevant to your mission, and have clearly defined educational purpose.

The things you do *before* you contact a single participant literally can be the difference between an effective, exciting program and one that perhaps makes sponsors feel good, but does not meet your objectives.

A series of Best Practices have been developed through research and repeated design, delivery, and evaluation. They can help you plan (or enhance) your program for maximum effectiveness.

► First Things First

Nine Best Practices deal specifically with planning. Ideally, you should implement these simultaneously, but if that is not possible, two should come first: program relevance and educational purpose.

- Effective programs are relevant to the mission of the agency or organization sponsoring the program.

Relevance helps you justify your program and funding, and makes your program more efficient and sustainable. There are specific ways to determine if your program is relevant and improve its relevance if it is not clear.

- Effective programs clearly define their “educational purpose,” including program mission, goals, and measurable objectives, and ensure all are aligned with each other.

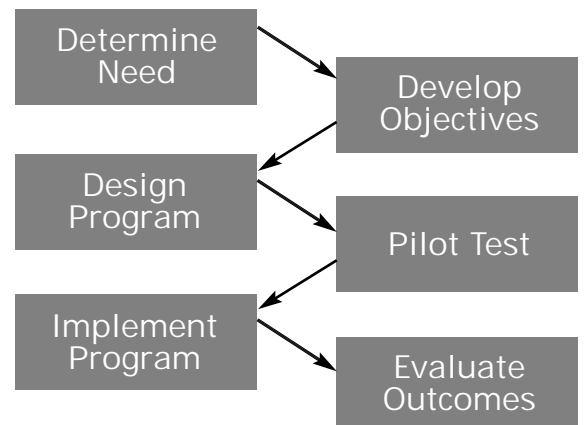
The educational purpose may be the most important aspect of program planning, but it often is overlooked. Systematic processes have been developed to help you identify what, specifically, you are trying to accomplish with your program.

► Logic Models and Evaluation

- Effective programs are based on and shaped by some form of logic model.

A logic model is a simplified, visual description of how different factors in your program are related. It can help you show cause-and-effect relationships between activities and outcomes, help improve program design and implementation, and link program development and evaluation.

Program Development is Linked to Evaluation



To be most effective, evaluation should begin before a program is implemented and be continued throughout implementation.

- Effective programs plan for program evaluation in the initial stages of planning.

Most people recognize that evaluation is a critical part of education programs, but many are not aware that, to be most effective, evaluation should begin before a program is implemented and be continued throughout implementation.

► Support and Staff

- Effective programs receive adequate support, resources, and staffing to become sustainable over time.

Education programs must receive support from the administration at several levels. Financial support is critical. Just as important, administrators must think of education as an integral part of doing business.

- Effective programs rely on experienced, well informed, prepared, and ethical staff to develop, implement, and evaluate programs.

One of the key ingredients to any successful education program is quality staff to provide leadership and work effectively with instructors and learners. And the program should provide ongoing opportunities for staff to receive training and development.

► Reinforcement

- Effective programs provide educational opportunities that are frequent and sustained over time.

Research shows that, even when strong, short-term behavioral change occurs, long-term change is doubtful without continued reinforcement. Your program will be most effective at

achieving long-term behavioral changes if it includes repeated exposures sustained over time.

► Stakeholders and Partners

- Effective programs involve stakeholders and partnerships at all levels of program development.

Stakeholders and partners are people who care about your program and are willing to commit to it. They lend a variety of perspectives to your program, helping shape the focus and audience for maximum benefit to all. Effective programs with experience in partnership building have developed a list of tips for developing stakeholder teams.

► Accessibility

- Effective programs are inclusive of all audiences (accessible/available to anyone with an interest in participating).

Plan to make your program accessible to all individuals regardless of their race, gender, age, or physical characteristics. There are important considerations for addressing diverse audiences, as well as audiences with physical disabilities.

Long-term behavioral change is doubtful without continued reinforcement.

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

This information sheet is just the tip of the iceberg. MUCH more information on planning, developing, and evaluating education programs can be found in the *Best Practices Workbook for Boating, Fishing, and Stewardship Education*. The more Best Practices you can incorporate into your program, the greater the chance that your program will achieve the goals you set for it.

To review and/or order copies of this and other Information Sheets, the *Workbook*, or other Best Practice tools and materials, go to: www.RBFF.org/educational/bestpractices.cfm or contact RBFF at: 601 N. Fairfax St. • Ste. 140 Alexandria, VA 22314-2054 • 703 519 0013