

**An Innovative Approach to Teaching Nonformal Program Development: The Program  
Instructional Profile**

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## Introduction/Need/Connection to Literature

This presentation aims to bring attention to a new tool that fills a need for undergraduate or graduate students who are learning to design, develop, and evaluate nonformal programs. The Program Instructional Profile (PIP) is a simple template that can serve as a framework for helping students learn to design workshops, sessions, and lessons while ensuring the content is delivered with a rigor that allows for measurable knowledge, attitude, and behavior change.

Nonformal education is training outside of traditional schooling (Etling, 1993). While nonformal education is by definition supposed to be learner centered and adapted to each audience, often the instructors are not trained to appropriately deliver entered and adapted to each audience, often the instructors of nonformal education, especially those with the Cooperative Extension Service, are not trained to appropriately deliver the curriculum (Benge et al., 2020; Enslie, 2005; Myers, 2011).

Students enroll in program development courses with a variety of background and experience levels. This tool helps to level the playing field, scaffolding learning so all students can have a successful experience with developing a non-formal program. When students learn to develop programs, they need a clear understanding of why they are designing the program in a specific way, and they must be able to articulate the changes and outcomes that participants should experience as a result of program participation (Caffarella, 1994).

## How it Works

The PIP helps students keep outcomes and impacts in mind as they plan program activities. It is formatted loosely in Microsoft Word, allowing easy adaptation and utilization for individual program planning and development needs. The framework is transferable across all disciplines, which means this template can work in a variety of content areas. The PIP is an open-access Word document [<https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/items/124488>]. Below is a summary explaining the components that are included in the PIP:

**Overall Program Goal:** The PIP begins by reminding students to think through and record the overall program goal. It may include the long-term outcomes describing what society may look like in the future if the program is implemented and participants make life-long action changes. It may also include how participants' lives could differ after participating in the program.

**Description of Implementation:** Students should choose implementation strategies that match the focus of the proposed outcomes and enhance the learning effort (Caffarella, 1994). The *Description of Implementation* component of the PIP allows the program designer to record the chosen program structure. For example, a program involving procedures that take extensive time to explain and practice may prefer a longer time period for their program. Programs led primarily through virtual settings may be the best way to deliver the content.

**Program Outcomes:** This section refers to the specific program's short and medium-term outcomes. In other words, how will participants' knowledge, attitudes, and actions be different after completing the entire program? Kettner et al. (2017) suggest writing outcome objectives that are clear, specific, measurable, time-limited, realistic, and represent commitment. When written correctly, the program outcomes link to the program evaluation plan. An example is provided in the PIP as a reminder.

**Author's Background:** Each individual brings their own ideas, biases, and experiences to their role in program development and implementation. Especially when working with audiences from different backgrounds, students should think through how their views and positionality impact their programming decisions (Mahon et al., 2010). Acknowledging our own experience and biases also informs other facilitators who may use the PIP as a reference for a future program.

**Audience Analysis:** Each audience brings unique experiences and circumstances. Ideally, programs should draw on learners' previous experiences (Knowles, 1980). The PIP includes an

analysis of the specific audience for which the program will be delivered and a space to think through what those characteristics could mean for programming.

**Equipment, Supplies, Materials, Theories, and References:** Both practical and theoretical, the PIP asks the student to think through the materials and supplies necessary for program implementation. To promote the use of best practices in teaching and learning, the PIP also includes a section for documenting learning theories important for the program and a space to include additional references for the content.

**Background Information:** Background information allows the inclusion of additional content information needed for program implementation. Are there resources or additional information that the student might want to use or have available when implementing the program?

**Program Outline:** The adaptable PIP template includes a place to outline the various parts of the program delivery, including the introduction, learning objectives, activities and assessments, transitions between sections, and the closure, review and evaluation. The PIP includes a space to allocate time for each program section. We encourage students to consider chunking content information into smaller pieces, or *Parts* as labeled in the PIP, to enhance the likelihood that information will be retained by the participants (Miller, 1956). There is room in each PIP form for up to five *Parts*. Since this template is in Microsoft Word, students can easily add additional parts if their information is split into more sections. The descriptions in the program outline remind the student to include learning objectives and assessments for each part of the program, as well as time to reflect and evaluate before the program ends.

### **Results to Date**

The PIP template includes aspects of program development that are important for successful program delivery but often neglected in favor of technical content. We have seen the following benefits in our students since providing the template to intentionally think through these aspects:

- PIP requires students to consider how they will evaluate learning objectives as part of the program delivery as they plan the program while also linking to outcomes or participant attitude, knowledge, and future action changes that should continue program conclusion.
- PIP provides an opportunity for students to align teaching with audience experience, knowledge, and skill levels. Additionally, if implementing the program with another audience, this template reminds the student to reconsider the program delivery for the new audience, as no two audiences are the same or require the same teaching strategies.
- PIP provides a way for the student to document the program in a specific, complete format, making the program easy to share with others who may desire to deliver a similar program. Students tend to be proud of the programs they develop utilizing this format, and frequently add the program to their portfolios and/or list the programs on their resumes.

### **Implications and Future Advice**

Program planning requires time and focus. Students may feel they do not have the hours to invest in filling out a template. However, utilizing the PIP may save time in the long run and help ensure they are designing a rigorous program they can be proud of. The PIP may be particularly beneficial for students who have content knowledge but are new to program planning and development. The ultimate goal of this tool is to help students from various disciplines learn to intentionally design programs in a rigorous way that will allow for measuring a change in knowledge, attitude, and behavior.

## References

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