

Program planners are very much like orchestra conductors. They must be able to bring together diverse players and pieces in a harmonious and balanced effort. This task may not be easy; some of the pieces may be much more difficult than anticipated . . .

— Caffarella

INTRODUCTION

Coordinating a training/educational program is a significant and complex undertaking. The process of coordination begins well before the start of a training program and concludes long after the final closing has taken place. Along the way, tasks range from the mundane to the more complicated, from scheduling meeting rooms to curriculum development, from ordering food to responding to participants' inquiries. Unlike the other training roles discussed throughout this manual, the role of coordination takes place, to a large extent, behind the scenes. A great majority of it occurs in preparation for the training.

Effective coordination is absolutely key to the success of any training program. Why is this so? Like the orchestra described in the above quotation, a training program is a unique coming together of a talented and diverse group of individuals and elements. Like a musical selection, each note must have been rehearsed, each instrument must be tuned and ready, and each musician must have thoroughly rehearsed his or her own piece of music. The conductor knows all the parts and is able to direct and manage the multiple components into one cohesive and harmonious whole.

A program coordinator fulfills the same function. Coordination is the support function of a training program—under the best of circumstances, it is the glue that holds all the various components of the program together. That is not to say that one person, i.e., the program coordinator, is responsible for holding everything together, but rather that the *process* of coordination, and how it has been organized, set up, and carried out, serves as the foundation for and effectively sets the tone of any training program.

It is important to distinguish between the *process* of coordination and the *role* of the coordinator. Although the coordinator may be one distinct member of the training/educational team, in fact, many facilitators and presenters perform coordination functions, and coordinators often have presentation and facilitation roles as well. In any successful training program, all members of the training team (i.e., on-site faculty and coordinators) have established a smooth and effective level of teamwork that allows for maximum flexibility and is fully supportive of the needs of participants as well as the needs of the training team members. This manual repeatedly illustrates that a key role of a training team is to promote and maximize learning and, in so doing, to be fully aware of and focused upon the needs of the audience. In the same way, the *process* of coordination focuses upon meeting the needs of the key parties,

i.e., the participants, faculty, staff, and program sponsors, in carrying out the tasks essential to managing a training program.

In addition to the training team, program coordinators often work with a planning committee—a group of people who share responsibility for all decisions regarding the training program. Generally the committee will include the program sponsor, the coordinator, content specialists, and often, an advisory board or group. To maximize the effectiveness and talents of the planning committee, you must ensure from the beginning that all roles, responsibilities, and expectations regarding each member are clearly and specifically designed.

SCOPE

Coordination can refer to everything from a small in-house staff training to a huge national-scope conference with thousands of attendees. Coordination as it is discussed in this chapter is based predominantly on the type of training and educational programs developed and implemented by the National Victim Assistance Academy. This is not an exhaustive description of coordination from the conference-planning viewpoint but rather an exploration of the kind of program coordination that is key to the success of academic-based training and education programs for adult learners.

THREE NEEDS TO WHICH COORDINATORS RESPOND

There are three types of needs to which a program coordinator must respond. While these needs are discussed throughout this chapter, a brief summary appears below.

EDUCATION/LEARNING NEEDS

There are differing levels of involvement that a program coordinator may have in meeting the educational and learning needs of the training participants. Some coordinators are also “content specialists” and so have responsibility for overall coordination of every aspect of the training program, including curriculum and resource development and other educational issues. Other coordinators may focus more on the administrative and logistical tasks involved in the content portion of the training. Assuming that learning objectives and training goals have been clearly established by the training team and training sponsors well in advance of the training, the process of addressing educational needs includes management of curriculum materials, resource materials, other learning aids, training of faculty and guest speakers, training schedule, and the learning formats to be used.

PHYSICAL NEEDS

The participants, staff, and faculty involved in a training program have a wide variety of physical needs, and the primary goal for meeting these needs focuses on establishing maximum comfort that is individually tailored as much as possible. This includes ensuring accessibility for participants with disabilities and accommodating any and all special needs of participants and faculty; comfortable and clean rooms for participants and faculty who are staying on-site;

plentiful, appetizing, and nutritious meals and snacks (if meals are not provided, then information regarding good local restaurants should be provided); well-lit and temperate meeting rooms with comfortable chairs; access to telephones; and provision of transportation and/or information regarding its availability.

EMOTIONAL NEEDS

The coordinator is the contact person for all participants and faculty. You must be visible, available, and accessible at all times. It is especially important for participants to know that there is *one person* to whom they can direct questions, concerns, problems, and complaints. It is crucial for the coordinator to understand that training programs, while learning-filled, fun, and often exhilarating, can trigger anxiety in many participants. Even seasoned faculty members can experience anxiety or concerns regarding a coordination matter. It is important for the coordinator to thoroughly understand this role and be willing and able to serve as the “central processing unit” or conduit for contact with the outside world. This can include crisis intervention and/or simply emotional support.

In meeting the emotional needs of participants and faculty, coordinators may feel like “emotional punching bags.” Coordinators should attempt to avoid taking issues, complaints, and concerns personally. It is helpful for coordinators to have a support person—usually a faculty member—who can debrief in difficult situations, brainstorm solutions to problems, and provide “care to the caregiving coordinator.” If stress resulting from other people’s emotional needs is not addressed, it can detrimentally affect both the attitude and the effectiveness of coordinators.

THE MANY ROLES OF THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Program coordinators fulfill many roles—some of these include:

- C Scheduler.
- C Contract negotiator.
- C Program designer and planner.
- C Content expert.
- C Curriculum developer.
- C Advertising guru.
- C Audiovisual aid coordinator.
- C Budget broker.
- C Faculty coordinator.
- C Participant/student liaison.
- C Program sponsor liaison.

- C Information clearinghouse.
- C Physical/emotional first aid provider.
- C Facilities expert.
- C Housekeeper.
- C Troubleshooter.
- C Financial manager.
- C Complaint department.
- C Sounding board.
- C Mood monitor.
- C Deadline enforcer.
- C Clock watcher.
- C Humor relief; and let's not forget—
- C Diplomat.

The above list is not exhaustive by any means; effective coordination involves wearing not one hat, but literally dozens of different hats each and every day. For some people (but certainly not all), this work can be immensely interesting. However, keep in mind that effective coordination is not an “add-on” to other training tasks; it is an art that must be learned. As stated by Rosemary Caffarella:

Effective program planners are not born that way. Through trial and error, they become more skilled at balancing the various components and tasks of the process (1994, 24).

Because many adult trainers and educators are primarily content specialists, they may not have been exposed to or even be aware of material and information on program planning. Many learn coordination specifics “by the seat of their pants” during a previous training program, or by being asked (though they have no prior coordination experience) to serve as program coordinator for an upcoming program because of their position in the sponsoring or training organization. No matter what a coordinator’s past experience, there are four principles of the coordination process that are essential to a basic understanding of the complexities of coordination, as well as the key role it serves in helping to ensure the success of any training endeavor.

FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF COORDINATION

COORDINATION IS A NONLINEAR PROCESS

In program coordination, there is no set order or sequence to the tasks involved. Jobs and duties do not follow one after another in orderly fashion; rather there is a constant and ever-

evolving circle of interconnected parts that requires continual checking and re-checking, monitoring, and attention. The analogy of a juggler is appropriate; a coordinator must become very adept at keeping a lot of balls in the air at the same time, and be prepared to start all over again with a smile if one (or all) of those balls drop!

Program coordinators must develop a working style that allows them to monitor and document the ongoing progress of the various details to which they must attend. Accurate and comprehensive record keeping is a must. It is extremely helpful to have accessible contact information (telephone number, e-mail, etc.) for all parties, e.g., training team members and facilities staff, with whom the coordinator communicates on a regular basis before, during, and after the training program.

ORGANIZATION IS MANDATORY

Whether you are coordinating a training for seasoned domestic violence practitioners or an academic-based educational training on restorative justice, the first rule to remember is that you must possess (or quickly develop): (1) a high level of organization; (2) an *extreme* degree of attention to detail; and (3) great *flexibility*. Again, this kind of working style is not for everyone, but program coordination will quickly suffer if the coordinator is not thoroughly in control of the many details that need to be addressed throughout the development, planning, and implementation of a training program. Successful program coordination must include an organized working plan for literally every aspect of the training program, including:

- C Program goals and objectives.
- C Staff and administrative assistance—needs and tasks.
- C Budget and finances.
- C Marketing and participant outreach.
- C Logistical arrangements.
- C Development and coordination of training materials and resources (including audiovisuals).
- C Faculty selection and coordination.
- C Participant coordination and communication.
- C Communication and coordination with the training sponsor.
- C On-site training requirements and coordination.
- C Evaluation.
- C Follow-on activities related to the program.

As stated by Caffarella:

Careful planning of educational programs does not guarantee their success, but it increases their probability for success. It also gives planners better data on which to evaluate their successes and failures (1994, 7).

THE PERSONAL BELIEF SYSTEM OF THE COORDINATOR DIRECTLY AFFECTS THE TRAINING

Another important but often overlooked aspect of program coordination is the impact that a coordinator's personal belief system—and attitude toward adult learning and program planning—has upon the training itself. Many times coordinators think that since much of what they do in preparation for a training or educational program is largely unseen by the participants, their attitude toward program planning will not affect the participants. Alternatively, if a program coordinator is not directly involved in training the participants, she or he might feel that her or his understanding of the program and adult learning in general is not critical to the program's success. This is, quite simply, untrue.

If you are coordinating a program for adult learners, regardless of whether you are actually involved in making a presentation or facilitating a session, you must understand the underlying goals and purposes of this learning, and be aware of the attitudes you bring to the program planning and educational process. As discussed in Chapter 3, *Ultimate Adult Learning*, adults learn best when they are involved in the learning process and when what they are learning is relevant for them in their professional lives. Adults do not want to be “taught to”; rather, they need to be active participants with a stake in the outcome of any learning process. The philosophy and belief system that a coordinator possesses with respect to adult learning permeates every aspect of a training program. If it is inconsistent with the goals and objectives of the training, participants will know it and will react accordingly.

Boyle (1981) and Apps (1991) have provided some useful questions and categories for help in assessing one's beliefs and attitudes about the following four key areas:

The Purpose of Adult Education

- To promote changes in the way workers behave so their job performance is enhanced.
- To encourage the growth and development of individuals.
- To assist adults to bring about change in societal norms and values.

The Program Planning Process

- Program planners should act as content experts and/or managers of the planning process, making sure all necessary tasks are completed.
- Program planners should serve as coordinators and facilitators in the planning process, enabling all parties (such as participants, supervisors, funding sources) to have an active role. They also may be content experts.
- Program planners should act as negotiators between and among the various groups involved in the planning process. They also may be content experts.

Adults as Learners

- Adults can and do want to learn regardless of age.
- Adults have a rich background of knowledge and experience that should be used in the learning process.
- Adults, for the most part, are pragmatic in their learning. They want to apply their learning to present situations.

The Learning Process

- Participants learn best when new information/skills build on past knowledge and experience.
- Participants are more motivated to learn when a variety of teaching methods are used.
- Participants learn both in independent, self-reliant modes and in interdependent and collaborative ways (Caffarella 1994).

PROGRAM COORDINATION MUST BE ETHICAL

Closely related to understanding one's personal beliefs and values regarding adult learning and program planning is the necessity for program planners to act in an ethical manner in coordinating every aspect of the training program. Ethics in this context means ensuring that the training is coordinated and carried out in a way that is completely consistent with its stated goals and objectives. The following passage effectively illustrates the close connection between understanding one's approach to adult learning and the need for ethical coordination of a learning program:

Although most program planners do not take the time to spell out clearly and precisely their working philosophies, being cognizant of and acting on one's beliefs about program planning is critical in planning programs for adults. Adult learners and program sponsors are usually quick at making judgments about planners who espouse one set of beliefs and then act in opposition to those beliefs. For example, if potential program participants are asked for ideas for future programs, they want to see those ideas used; and if their ideas are not used, they want to know why (Caffarella 1994, 31).

This may seem obvious to most people, but actually, ethics in program coordination can often be inadvertently overlooked. There are some "gray areas" that can prove troublesome, even for coordinators with the best of intentions. Some examples of unethical program behavior are:

- C Asking people to serve in an advisory capacity and then ignoring their advice.
- C Stating the goals and objectives of a training program and then not modeling those goals and objectives in the training itself.
- C Employing big-name presenters who draw crowds, even though their presentations may be neither relevant nor effective.
- C Using out-of-date resources because they are less expensive to obtain (Caffarella 1994).

As a coordinator, you need to periodically assess your own ethics in program coordination. Although an ethical "disconnect" can be minor and seemingly insignificant, ultimately it will affect the overall quality of the training and the educational experience for participants, not to mention the level of trust that can be achieved between the participants and the training team.

The specific details that go into the task of program coordination vary considerably from training to training. What is universally true about program coordination, however, is the fact that this process sets the tone for the training and ultimately, the quality of learning that will take place. Although the kinds of tasks and events that need to be coordinated by any program planner is discussed further in this chapter, the ongoing focus, as it is throughout this manual, is on the *process* of coordination and how, when performed effectively, this process interrelates and interacts with the overall training process as well as enhances and maximizes the learning environment and process.

PROGRAM COORDINATION IN ACTION

In looking at the specifics of program coordination and how program coordinators contribute to the maximization of adult learning, it is useful to separate this process along a continuum, including: (1) pretraining coordination; (2) on-site coordination; and (3) posttraining coordination. During all phases of coordination, the ultimate coordinator operates from the standpoint of fulfilling the following two essential queries:

1. How can the training process and learning environment be enhanced and maximized for the benefit of participants and the training team?
2. How can the coordinator meet the needs of participants and the training team in the most effective way possible so that maximum attention can be focused upon learning?

PRETRAINING COORDINATION

This phase of program coordination is clearly the most comprehensive in laying the foundation and setting the tone for a successful training program. For purposes of this discussion, it is assumed that the underlying objectives and educational goals for the training program have already been clearly and comprehensively established. Generally, the major tasks to be accomplished during this phase include:

- C Determine training dates.
- C Select site.
- C Develop and manage training budget.
- C Negotiate contracts for training facilities and amenities.
- C Select meeting rooms.
- C Advertise the training.
- C Develop training resources.
- C Arrange for academic credit or other continuing education credits.
- C Select participants.
- C Identify any special needs of participants and/or faculty.
- C Communicate/coordinate with participants.
- C Select/invite faculty.
- C Coordinate with faculty.
- C Coordinate with facilities staff.
- C Liaison with program sponsor(s).
- C Schedule technical equipment and staff.

- C Develop training schedule and agenda.
- C Purchase/acquire training supplies/resources.
- C Oversee evaluation process.

Determine training dates. Decisions about the training dates depend on the availability of the site that is to be used for the training, whether it is in-house or must be contracted outside the coordinating organization. If it is imperative that a particular site be used, then clearly the training dates will revolve around its availability. As much as possible, training programs should be scheduled during weekdays so as to not interfere with participants' off time on the weekends. If additional time is needed, a carryover into Saturday can be optimal, particularly for people who may be traveling from out of town and who may need to allow for Saturday night stayover airfares.

Make sure to check that your selected training dates do not conflict with any holidays or religious observances. Part of being multiculturally sensitive is not just including such information in your training program, but ensuring from the start that the selected date does not conflict with participants' religious observances. In addition, be aware of other training programs and conferences already scheduled in your state or on the national level. For example, a statewide victim services training is scheduled for victim advocates; however, because the state prosecutors' annual meeting is also scheduled for the same time, prosecutor-based advocates are faced with the difficult choice of which program to attend. Finally, if key presenters are needed for the program's success, they should be "locked in" as early as possible (popular speakers may plan their schedules up to one year in advance).

Select site. Assuming other factors regarding the training have not already predetermined its location (e.g., it is a component of a university program or offered by an organization with its own training facility), there are typically prerequisites to meet regarding the location and how it fits into the overall training scenario. The site and corresponding facilities directly affect the learning that takes place. Obviously, the most important spaces for participants are the meeting rooms, both the large meeting rooms and any other rooms that might be used for breakout discussions or other smaller group activities.

There are essentially five different types of facilities that may be appropriate for adult training programs:

1. In-house organizational facilities.
2. Hotel and motel facilities.
3. Conference and retreat centers.
4. University and college facilities.
5. Resort areas (Caffarella 1994).

Depending on the learning objectives and goals, and the purpose and nature of the training program itself, there are advantages and disadvantages to each type of facility and site. Considerations and objectives should be specifically set forth well before this stage so that it is perfectly clear what type of facility will best suit the needs of the training.

If facilities require contracts, program coordinators must check them out thoroughly and never rely on verbal or written descriptions alone. A checklist of issues to think about in considering and selecting a site for a training includes the following:

1. Availability on program dates.
2. Costs.
 - C Meeting rooms
 - C Food (meals and breaks)
 - C Lodging
 - C Recreation
 - C Audiovisual equipment
3. Location.
 - C Safe and secure lighting
 - C Barrier-free access
 - C Convenience
4. Transportation convenience.
 - C Public
 - Convenience
 - Frequency
 - Cost
5. Accessibility for people with disabilities.
 - C Private rooms
 - C Parking
6. Meeting rooms.
 - C Size
 - C Appearance
 - C Lighting
 - C Décor
 - C Furnishings
7. Cleanliness.
 - C Ventilation, heating, and cooling
 - C Sound projection
8. Supporting Services.
 - C Food
 - C Accommodations/lodging

- C Recreation
 - C Fitness facilities
 - C Public telephone
 - C Quality of service
9. Accessibility to medical services in cases of emergency.
10. General factors.
- C Attractions in the area
 - C Experience in hosting/housing educational programs
 - C Site personnel
 - C Safety issues (Nadler and Nadler 1987; Vosko 1991; Munson 1992)

Develop and manage training budget. The program coordinator is usually responsible for developing and managing the program budget for the training. This is a complex task and one whose specific details are beyond the scope of this discussion. Yet, in terms of the *process* of coordination, it is critical that the budget reflects the objectives and goals of the learning program and that it be well-planned and understood by all essential parties to the process. The ability to develop a sound budget for a training program is also an acquired skill, one that requires the coordinator to essentially anticipate every need that will arise before development of the training has even begun. Remember, you do not want to run out of money just when it is time to buy the coffee and doughnuts for breaks!

The program budget is much more than a description of the dollar amounts that will be allotted to each program activity and resource. It is a comprehensive and detailed planning guide that can serve as a very useful check throughout every stage of the program. The planning necessary for creating a comprehensive and thorough budget will serve as the primary foundation of and assurance that all program goals and objectives will be met. An example of the budget categories used for the National Victim Assistance Academy is attached as Appendix E, *Sample Budget*.

Negotiate contracts for training facilities and amenities. Anything that will be provided by the training facility itself (e.g., hotel, university, etc.) must be included in a *written contract*. This includes all arrangements regarding meeting rooms, sleeping rooms, meals, refreshments, equipment, and any other obligation the facility agrees to undertake. The art of negotiating favorable contracts is another skill that can be acquired through experience and thorough questioning of and research into all particulars of the facilities. You should be aware of the legal elements of a contract as well as the ramifications of signing a contract. Seek legal help if you are unsure about any aspect of the contractual process.

Select meeting rooms. Meeting rooms are critical since they are the primary learning environments, defined by Finkel as “every space in a facility in which meeting activities occur and the degree to which every detail of those spaces can be designed to contribute to higher levels of learning” (Caffarella, citing Finkel 1984). This requires a great deal of attention to numerous details so as to ensure that the environment is conducive to participant learning and

the overall effectiveness of trainers and instructors. In some cases, there will be no choice as to meeting rooms, such as a training held in-house in the only space large enough to accommodate participants. In such cases, the available space should simply be used to its best advantage. However, when there is a choice as to which meeting space can be used, the following summary of factors set forth by Caffarella (1994) offers some important considerations:

- C *Access*. Choose rooms that are barrier-free and accessible (ramps, elevator access, braille directions).
- C *Room size*. Avoid overcrowding and oversized rooms.
- C *Room structure*. The ideal room structure is square. Watch out for narrow rooms and posts in the wrong places.
- C *Windows*. Choose rooms with no windows or rooms whose windows can be completely covered.
- C *Furnishings*. Make sure tables and chairs are movable. Chairs need to be padded and provide good back support.
- C *Adornments*. Check to see whether pictures, sculptures, or other types of adornment can be taken down.
- C *Lighting*. Look for indirect, warm fluorescent lighting and rheostatic controls. Eliminate all sources of glare.
- C *Temperature*. Make sure you are able to regulate the temperature. Keep the temperature between sixty-five and seventy degrees. If you err, err on the cool side.
- C *Ventilation*. Keep the air circulating in the room.
- C *Noise*. Check for noise from heating and air-conditioning units in adjoining rooms, corridors, and outside the building.
- C *Acoustics*. Check on the bounce and absorption of sound.
- C *Electrical outlets*. Identify the location and type of outlets (for example, prong outlets).
- C *Computer hookups*. Check for telephone jacks that would allow for computer hookups.
- C *Access to other areas*. Check for easy access to restrooms, vending machines, eating facilities, etc.

The way the meeting room is arranged has a tremendous impact on the quality and quantity of learning that takes place. It is crucial for the coordinator to understand the learning objectives and the *kind* of learning and interaction that will take place. For example, if you want to encourage and utilize group processing, the ideal arrangement is probably round tables, not classroom style rows. Tables should be arranged in a semi-circle around the presentation area. Moreover, you may need to allow for space for special equipment, such as computers, overhead projectors, or distance learning equipment. Smaller spaces lend themselves better to a more intimate learning environment; if you have no choice but to use a larger room, make

arrangements to partition it or use the seating arrangement to create a smaller, more congenial learning environment.

In larger meeting rooms, the emphasis is the same; although in a training of 100 or more people, you obviously will not have the same seating flexibility or opportunity for individual participant sharing. Again, the environment should be maximized to allow for as much participant involvement in the lesson as possible. Amphitheatre style seating arrangements (try to have tables or lap desks) can be effective when all participants have a good view and the acoustics are good. Make sure in larger meeting rooms that instructors and facilitators have the option of using microphones if they have trouble being heard by all participants. Hand held and clip-on microphones—particularly those without cords—can be especially helpful since they do not limit the speaker to one specific location.

One final note on seating arrangements: If you are using a space off-site and are asked by the facility staff how you want the room arranged, *be specific*. Do not hastily describe what you have in mind, assuming that they have done this a hundred times before and so will know exactly what you want. A drawing is worth a thousand words, and a highly specific and detailed drawing even more. The room should be set up, if at all possible, the night before the training is to begin, and *you should check* it at that time to be sure it is the way you want it.

Advertise the training. Depending on the type of training, there are many options for advertising the event to potential participants, including brochures, fliers, advertisements in trade magazines, online advertising via e-mail and Web sites, etc. Any advertisement should answer the basic questions of who, what, where, when, and why. Having a clear picture of the audience to be reached is the essential first step to any marketing campaign (Caffarella 1994, 174). The materials should be geared toward the target audience in such a way that potential participants are able to clearly understand requirements and/or prerequisites for the program. In keeping with the ethical approach to program coordination, it is critical that the coordinator, even a coordinator who is not involved with content aspects of the training, be keenly aware of the needs of the target audience. Since one of the primary tasks of any program coordinator is *information broker*, the coordinator must be familiar with what is being offered and how it can contribute to and enhance the professional experience and expertise of potential participants. For example, victim service professionals who call for information about the National Victim Assistance Academy (NVAA) are often interested in knowing how they might benefit from the training and whether their experience level is appropriate for them to be participants.

While training announcements vary based upon length of the program and topics, etc., the core components to consider for advertising a program include:

- C Cover page that includes the title of the program, days, dates, location, and sponsorship.
- C Introduction/overview that highlights the reasons for the training (why participants should attend).
- C Conference/training goals.
- C Description of target audience.

- C Information about the training faculty (including brief credentials).
- C Information about conference resources available to participants (as well as opportunities for them to bring resources to share with others).
- C Answers to frequently asked questions, i.e. whom to contact for additional information via telephone, fax, e-mail, or Web site.
- C Training agenda/topics.
- C Registration and fees (if applicable).
- C Lodging and logistics (if applicable).
- C Dress code.
- C Registration form with details and deadlines for submission.
- C Academic credit or other continuing education/professional credit available to participants.

Develop training resources. Responsibilities for the program coordinator in this area can vary considerably, from a primary and direct involvement in content to more of an oversight role. The development of resources for a training program is a major undertaking in and of itself, so the coordinator must understand that this task must be extremely well planned and carried out within clearly established deadlines and budget constraints. As with any other task in the process of coordination, the coordinator must identify staff and faculty members who have the expertise and availability to assist in the development of resource materials, and must coordinate all aspects of development and final production of the materials. The coordinator must also ensure the compliance of all training resources with any applicable Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, e.g., closed-captioning for videotapes.

Arrange for academic credit or other continuing education credits. Some training programs, like the NVAA, provide the opportunity for participants to receive credit, such as academic credit at the undergraduate and/or graduate levels, or continuing legal education or other allied professional education units. When this has been identified as an objective of a training program, the coordinator must initiate approval processes well in advance of the start date for the program. Approval processes for university academic credit, for example, vary from university to university and must typically go through several channels of approval before a final decision is made by the credit-granting university. Similar procedures exist for continuing professional education credits. The key to this task is to identify the university or other academic personnel who are the pertinent decision-makers for the credit issue and work closely with them to satisfy the requirements for making educational credit available to participants. It is also important to work closely with them to ensure that you thoroughly understand the requirements, *both administrative and academic*, that participants will need to satisfy in order to receive credit. Detailed and clear instructions regarding all aspects of educational credit should be sent to all participants along with their confirmation package.

Select participants. Depending on the training requirements, participants may simply register, apply to attend, or may be required to attend due to professional standards/requirements or simply a supervisor's request. The impetus for attendance can be a major determining factor in how the participant feels about attending the training (e.g., coerced, thrilled, etc.) and how to market the training.

Identify any special needs of participants and/or faculty. It is the role of the coordinator to become aware of any special needs of participants or faculty that will require accommodation during the training program. This information can be carefully elicited through the use of a registration form that encourages participants to list any special needs, and by personal communication with participants and faculty prior to the training program. When individuals express their special needs via a registration form, *always* contact them personally to discuss the specifics of the need(s) and ensure that you understand exactly what it will take to meet them. Special needs are as varied as are individuals, and almost all can be met as long as the coordinator *becomes aware* of them. Although the ultimate coordinator meets the special needs of all participants and faculty as a function of the participant-centered training process, it is important to remember that the ADA imposes legal requirements that must be met, in most training situations, with respect to individuals with disabilities. Arrangements for interpreters for deaf participants or special dietary needs for individuals with allergies or physical ailments, or ensuring the accessibility of facilities for individuals with disabilities can be easily accomplished as long as the coordinator is aware of the needs in advance.

If a participant does not, for some reason, disclose a special need or accommodation before arriving on site, you must address that need as quickly and comprehensively as circumstances at that time will allow. Since most special needs must be arranged in advance, this underscores the need for personal communication with all participants well in advance of their arrival.

Communicate/coordinate with participants. One of the best ways to start a training program off on the right foot is to be *accessible* and *reliable* for training participants prior to the program. Once the first contact is made with participants, the tone is set. Your objective as a coordinator is to establish a credible and trustworthy relationship well before the participants arrive.

Once participants are confirmed for the training, they should receive an attractive and comprehensive package of information regarding the facilities, meals, dress code, schedules, what to bring, surrounding areas, and any other information they may reasonably need in order to be fully prepared to begin the training. If at all possible, you should communicate with each participant in person, by telephone or e-mail, approximately two weeks before the start of the training to ask about their arrangements and any special needs or questions they might have about the training or logistical issues. If calling or e-mailing each participant is not feasible, use a welcoming letter encouraging them to call or e-mail with any questions or concerns.

Select/invite faculty. Selection criteria for faculty are determined by the training objectives and goals as well as by the planning committee. Faculty should receive a formal letter of invitation as well as all pertinent information about the training facility, accommodations, travel arrangements, etc. All expectations about faculty members' contributions to the curriculum and training should be clearly spelled out. Request a copy of their one-page vitae for introductions. Again, personal contact by telephone is important if possible, and you should make your contact information, including telephone and e-mail address available and accessible.

Coordinate with faculty. A primary function of the coordinator is to ensure that any trainers' needs for their presentations, facilitation, etc. are met before they arrive at the training. It is a good idea to send a checklist of potential teaching aids (see list of teaching aids in Chapter 6, *Ultimate Presentation*), such as:

- C Tear sheets and multicolored markers with wide felt tips.
- C Data projector equipment.
- C VCR.
- C Overhead projector.
- C Any special items for a planned interactive activity (construction paper, poster boards, etc.).

Just giving trainers the opportunity to inform you of their training needs helps to ensure that they are thinking about what they will need before they arrive. It is particularly important to be sure that any materials they may want reproduced for participants are taken care of before the training begins. Another item to check with faculty is whether they wish to use music and whether they will need an audio tape/CD player.

If the training program involves many faculty members with a variety of slides and participant handouts, it's a good idea to obtain electronic versions of these in order to add a unified look. A uniform background on "powerpoint" slides, and matching "headers" and "footers" on both curricula and handouts, offers the appearance of a streamlined and coordinated approach.

Coordinate with facilities staff. One important rule to keep in mind with regard to coordinating arrangements with facilities staff is—*the squeaky wheel gets the grease!* It is crucial, of course, to develop good and pleasant working relationships with facilities staff members, but it is equally crucial to stay in touch with staff so that your arrangements are not inadvertently rearranged for you due to unexpected or last minute changes at the training facility. Your best bet against this happening is to develop a strong working relationship with one primary contact at the facility and make sure he or she understands the underlying needs, objectives and goals of your training. Developing and maintaining an on-site ally are crucial components for success.

Liaison with program sponsor(s). Serving as the liaison with the program sponsors is typically a responsibility of the program coordinator. Again, ethical program coordination is the primary objective: keep the program sponsor apprised of all developments and ensure that the goals and objectives of the training are clearly understood and being met by all parties.

Schedule technical equipment and staff. Technical equipment, such as data projectors, VCRs, and microphones, must be scheduled well in advance to ensure its availability, as well as the availability of any necessary technical staff. This may require coordination with different personnel (e.g., a university with a separate media department) and budgetary considerations; so it is important to ascertain the appropriate contact as soon as possible. It is important to ensure that all technical equipment meets any ADA requirements that may be in place (e.g., television monitors must have the capacity to read close-captioned videos).

Develop training schedule and agenda. Schedule and agenda development should be coordinated with the trainers and sponsors of the training program, incorporating the underlying goals and objectives of the training. The schedule should be based on adult learning principles, and therefore it is critical that the coordinator ensure that trainers rotate presentation formats. In fact, it's a good idea for coordinators to attend training programs periodically to remember what it's like to be at the mercy of a training schedule! Breaks for participants are *very* important, especially after sessions that are emotionally intense or otherwise taxing. To the degree possible, after-lunch sessions should be interactive and engaging, as participants begin to tire at this point. Try to stay within a typical workday schedule and maximize opportunities for participants to network with each other. "Topic" tables during meals and opportunities for optional evening get-togethers are appreciated by many participants.

Since there is a tendency to cram too many topics and too much information into one day, the coordinator and planning team should prioritize topics. In addition, the ideal training schedule should not exceed six hours a day, allowing for an additional 75 minutes for lunch and 30 minutes for breaks.

Purchase/acquire training supplies/resources. This includes everything you will need on-site (all training aids, participant prizes, refreshments, etc.) such as:

- C AV equipment.
- C Tear sheets.
- C Masking tape and other office supplies, such as scissors, stapler, pens, etc.
- C Construction paper, glue, glitter, or any supplies for projects the students may do.
- C Markers (at least four different colors; water-based for use on tear sheets).
- C Overhead transparencies and pens (these are particularly helpful for large audiences, where it may be difficult to see writing on tear sheets).

- C Post-it notes for students to post inquiries, requests, etc.
- C Audio tape/CD player and music for breaks, sessions.
- C Prizes for participants—silly/funny items and/or items that have meaning in their profession, e.g., victim services posters, videotapes, etc.
- C Candy for participants (great during breaks).
- C Camera and sufficient film (post pictures of the training while it is going on—get double prints and let students take pictures they want).
- C Sufficient copies of everything you will be handing out to participants during the training, including resource materials and daily/overall evaluations.

See Appendix B.1, *Presentation “Tools of the Trade”* for a comprehensive list of training aids.

Oversee evaluation process. Evaluations, daily, overall, and follow-up, must be developed by the training team in accordance with the goals, learning modalities, and learning objectives of the program. All evaluation forms should be copied and ready for handing out on-site. It is helpful to use a different color paper for each day’s evaluation forms so they can be easily sorted and organized. Remind participants throughout the training that evaluation forms are a major and essential method for obtaining feedback on the training and/or recommendations for change. Make sure that participants have adequate time to complete their evaluations and know where to put them when they are finished.

ON-SITE COORDINATION

Although the program coordinator and other staff have been working and planning for participants’ maximum learning and comfort for the past three to twelve months (or more), this activity has not been very apparent to the arriving participants. What *is* extremely apparent is the level of organization that exists when the participants arrive at the meeting room on the day of the training. As Smith and Delahaye (1987) point out:

Although most program participants are unaware of or indifferent to what went into *planning* a program, they are usually immediately cognizant of the details related to its on-site coordination; and they form opinions about the program based on those details.

Until now the program coordinator has focused on *preparing* for the training. Now it is time to ensure that all preparations have been successfully completed and every precaution has been taken to keep things running smoothly during the training. As Knowles (1980) points out, “I am convinced that what happens in the first hour or so of any learning activity (course, seminar, workshop, institute, tutorial, etc.) largely determines how productive the remaining hours will be.” Although it is to be expected that something will probably go wrong (remember Murphy’s Law!), it is important to do everything possible to ensure that the participants enter a learning climate that is organized, energetic, fully participant-centered and ready for them.

On-site coordination can be exhilarating, fun, and also challenging. It is the coordinator's primary responsibility to serve as a reliable support to the participants and training team in all three of the areas of need identified above: education/learning, physical, emotional. Even with the best of preparation, expect the unexpected. Air conditioning systems break down, faculty members have last minute emergencies and cancel, A/V equipment malfunctions. Such happenings are all in a day's work for the ultimate coordinator. A positive and upbeat attitude will accomplish more than any amount of agonizing over unforeseen events and/or problems. The coordinator must remain outcome-oriented and tend to such events as quickly and positively as possible. The mindset of the coordinator in the face of unexpected events will directly affect the experience of the participants; know that you set an example and make an invaluable contribution to the learning environment when you handle any and all training "glitches" with grace, dignity, diplomacy, speed, and *humor*.

Major on-site tasks for the coordinator include:

- C Prepare final checklist of all arrangements.
- C Give final and clear staff assignments.
- C Complete registration materials.
- C Set up participant resource table.
- C Meet and greet participants.
- C Conduct orientation for participants.
- C Attend to all on-site needs throughout training.
- C Monitor learning environment and participant "moods."
- C Thank participants, faculty, and staff.
- C Develop a plan to respond to inquiries for follow-on information and resources.

It is also good to keep in mind that the coordinator should and can *enjoy* the training. Being organized and staying on top of things should help you arrive at the training fully prepared for just about anything. The importance of arriving well rested cannot be overestimated.

Prepare final checklist of all arrangements. As much as possible, everything that can be in place prior to the arrival of the participants should be. The following checklist includes items that should be finalized anywhere from one to seven days prior to the training program:

FINAL CHECKLIST FOR PARTICIPANT-CENTERED PROGRAMS

ITEMS TO BE CHECKED	POINTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR EACH ITEM
Facilities (meeting rooms for large and small-group sessions, meal areas, break areas, breakout rooms)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All facilities are accessible to persons with disabilities. - Lighting is adequate. - Ventilation is good. - Temperature is comfortable. - Layout of room (arrangement of tables and chairs, placement of equipment) is what was requested.
Meals and breaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Menus reflect what was requested, and vegetarian and kosher options are available for every meal. - Final count of people for each meal and break is done. - Exact times for meals and breaks are established.
Sleeping accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reservations are in order for both participants and staff. - Rooms are clean, comfortable, and secure.
Trainers and Program Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All staff have a clear understanding of their roles and tasks. - All presenters, facilitators, and instructors are accounted for.
Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The correct equipment is placed in the correct rooms. - All equipment is working properly. - Backup parts and equipment are available and easily accessible.
Materials/Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All items are complete and ready. - The number of copies allows for ten more copies than the number of participants). - The materials are arranged in order of use, or by day.
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transportation needs are provided for (travel to the site, on-site parking for participants and staff, etc.) - Responsibility for assisting participants and/or program presenters with transportation is assigned. - Transportation needs, and for whom, is determined.
Program Schedule/Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People have been assigned responsibilities for keeping the activities on time. - Methods for keeping on schedule have been agreed upon.
On-site Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Procedures are clear and participant-friendly. - Available registration times are posted and have been communicated to participants. - Nametags and other registration materials are ready and arranged alphabetically. - Staff/trainers are available one hour prior to registration.
Message Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Procedures for participants receiving emergency messages while in training have been established. - An emergency contact telephone number has been given to all participants prior to their arrival. - A staff person has been assigned responsibility for being the contact person for emergency messages. - Every participant has provided an emergency contact number at home to the coordinator.

Give final and clear staff assignments. Staff assignments should be made regarding everything that needs to take place during the training program, from handing out evaluation

forms to daily announcements to staying on schedule, etc. Literally anything and everything that needs to be handled by a staff member should be assigned beforehand to eliminate the possibility of confusion or disorganization.

Complete registration materials. All registration materials, including folders, schedules, and nametags, should be neatly laid out and ready for participants to pick up at least one hour before the training begins. A staff member should be on hand to talk with participants as they pick up their materials and to answer any questions. Nametags and name plates should be alphabetized for easy access. The nametags should also feature large print that is easily read from a distance of ten feet.

Set up participant resource table. Many training programs utilize one or more resource tables with current information, research, and publications pertinent to the professional affiliation of the participants. It is also useful to provide a table(s) for participants to leave materials about their own programs or other relevant resources.

Meet and greet participants. If possible, the coordinator (as well as other trainers and staff) should personally meet and greet each participant individually. Inquire about their arrival, registration process, any difficulties they may have experienced, etc. Many participants feel anxious prior to the beginning of a training program. This is an excellent opportunity to begin breaking the ice, getting to know the participants, and introducing them to each other.

Conduct orientation for participants. When opening a training, the coordinator or other trainer usually conducts a short orientation about what the participants can expect during their stay. This should cover logistical matters, meals, expectations of students and faculty, schedule issues and/or changes, and any other concerns. It should be as interactive and participant-centered as possible so that information flows in both directions. This is the first group opportunity to illustrate the training team's desire to meet the learning needs and expectations of the participants. It is good to keep the orientation session upbeat, fun, and short. Let the participants know that you are available at all times and *interested* in any feedback, comments, questions, or concerns they may have at any time.

Attend to all on-site needs throughout training. This task sounds relatively simple, doesn't it? As coordinator, think of yourself as the host of a very large and complex party. All questions about everything from why the salad bar does not include anchovies, to where the overhead transparencies are for the Tuesday morning session, to why there are not extra blankets in the sleeping/hotel rooms, will probably be directed to you. Remember: All questions and inquiries are *equally* important and should be promptly and thoroughly investigated and resolved. Your preparation should have eliminated as much last minute confusion as possible. Yet no training program runs perfectly, and you can never anticipate all needs, particularly those of the participants on-site. You must be genuinely interested in responding and attending to the concerns of all participants and faculty; if you are not interested (or are perceived as not

being interested), the maximum effectiveness of the learning environment may be compromised. Program coordinators should be available on-site and accessible *at all times* during the training.

Monitor learning environment and participant moods. Coordinators must constantly monitor the learning environment to ensure that conditions are optimum. Is the temperature comfortable and consistent? Are participants comfortable with the seating arrangements? Are the refreshments delivered on time for breaks and is the quantity sufficient? Are speakers able to be heard clearly? Is all the equipment working properly? This is not only a last-minute check, but also a constant re-checking to ensure no glitches develop.

It is also crucial to monitor participants' reactions to the program. Circulate during breaks and ask for feedback. Do participants have any concerns that need to be addressed through a group process that you can bring to the attention of other faculty members? Are there any participants who are having trouble with the material or perhaps reacting to some difficult or emotionally intense session?

Let participants know you are there for them to handle any kind of feedback they may have, positive or negative. The learning environment and mood is a dynamic process—it is not something to be established at the beginning of a training and then forgotten. All potential problems can be handled, in one way or another, as long as the coordinator and entire training team remains participant-centered and aware.

Thank participants, faculty, and staff. As part of the formal closing (more fully discussed in Chapter 8), honor the participants by acknowledging and thanking them for their participation and commitment during the training process. Where applicable, they should receive special certificates, with their individual names, for successfully completing the training program, signed by the program and organizational sponsors. Do not forget to thank staff and faculty for their invaluable contributions with a special token of appreciation or small gift. It is crucial to acknowledge the hard work and personal investment by all parties to the training as a form of closure.

Develop a plan to respond to inquiries for follow-on information and resources. Prepare a sign-up sheet for participants to fill out if they wish to be put on future mailing lists and/or request additional or ongoing resources. Announce to participants that the sheet is available for sign-up throughout the training as well as where it will be located.

POSTTRAINING COORDINATION

Since the primary focus of this chapter is on the process of coordination and how it affects the quality of adult learning that takes place during a training program, the emphasis on post-training coordination is minimal except to point out the importance of some essential factors.

Faculty debriefing. It is helpful to conduct a quick, on-site faculty debriefing to determine which training techniques and processes were effective, and which need improvement. A simple debriefing approach called “Alpha-Delta” can provide a “snapshot” of faculty assessments. Two-column charts can be prepared in advance, with the debriefing/evaluation topic on top, and “alpha” (things that went well) and “delta” (things that need improvement) in each of the columns. Typical topics for faculty debriefing include:

- C Content of training program.
- C Faculty (which requires a group commitment to honesty and open communication).
- C Curriculum and resource materials.
- C Schedule and time allotments for different subjects.
- C Training techniques.

A summary report of the debriefing outcomes should be prepared and provided to all faculty. (See Appendix B.2, “Alpha-Delta” Faculty or Participant Debriefing.)

Closing down the training. Coordinators must ensure that all items are packed up and all equipment that remains on-site is there and in the same condition it was when the training began. Make contact with any facilities personnel to thank them for their assistance as well as for final instructions regarding billing matters and/or equipment return. Make sure that all evaluations are collected and carefully packed up and returned so that the evaluation results can be properly recorded and summarized in an overall evaluation report for the program for the program sponsors and presenters. Finally, go home and take a well-deserved rest!

Preparation of the evaluation report. One of the most essential elements for improving, refining, and further developing a training is the evaluation. The evaluation report should reflect the feedback of participants as literally as possible and be made as comprehensible and readable as possible for program sponsors, faculty, and staff. Follow-up evaluations should also be conducted with participants three to six months after the training has concluded to inquire about the impact the training has had upon them personally and professionally, and whether the learning objectives were successfully achieved and maintained.

Follow-up communication with participants. All participants should have received a list of the students and faculty with all appropriate contact information (name, agency, mailing address, telephone, fax, e-mail, and Web site) so that they can communicate with one another after the training has concluded. The coordinator should send a letter to all participants thanking them again for their participation and perhaps enclosing a memento from the training, such as a certificate of completion (if not already received) or photograph of the participant taking part in the training program. Let students know that you are interested in all outcomes (what they do with the training they received) and would like to hear about ways they put their new knowledge to use, as well as any additional feedback they might have.

A three- to six-month follow-up evaluation should be conducted so that the program sponsor, planning committee, and training team can learn specific ways that the training was useful and beneficial to participants, as well as any changes that should be made.

THE ULTIMATE COORDINATOR IS ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE!

The ultimate coordinator is, indeed, all things to all people, particularly during the training program. Although this philosophy cannot be carried out on a daily basis without exacting a *major* physical and emotional toll, it can and should be maintained by the coordinator during the training program. As much as possible and within human limits, program coordinators must be prepared to do everything within their power to keep the show running smoothly and to ensure that all conditions are in place, and kept that way, to allow for maximum adult learning.

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