

FEAST CONFERENCE

PROGRAM PLANNING CONTENT

The materials below emerged from a number of assignments in a course on program planning. These assignments were designed as reflections around a particular program planning process. As is clear in the reflections below, I decided to focus my attention on a potential food justice conference to be conducted in Cambodia. The materials below are therefore very provisional and demonstrate my own reflection process, coupled with interactions with colleagues and their resulting feedback. Despite the tentative nature of some of this content, though, it nevertheless demonstrates key elements of a viable program plan for conducting this sort of conference.

APPROACH TO PROGRAM PLANNING

For the exercises throughout this course, I intend to focus on the possibility of organizing a conference, hosted by my organization, focused on the theme of food justice in Cambodia. Among the three major approaches to program planning presented by Caffarella and Daffron (2013), the radical approach seems to be most consistent with the nature of this event. The very topic proposed for the conference – ensuring just and equitable access to a sustainable and healthy food system – would suggest that due consideration be given to the themes of social activism, power, participatory democratic processes, etc. that are reflected in this approach.

What may be most challenging in this approach for me, however, is the reality that such an approach necessarily entails some relinquishment of control. Even though this conference event is in the very early visioning stages (i.e., it exists primarily in my imagination at this point, and only a couple people know I've even thought of it), I am already getting excited about what it might look like, and the benefits that might result for me and for my organization. But if I "hold on to the reins" and drive my own vision for the conference through to completion, without getting authentic input from other participants, then this would be the very antithesis to the radical approach. Getting that input and responding to it, on the other hand, may well mean that the conference, if and when it does come about, may look substantially different from my own personal vision.

To some degree, then, to take a radical approach to planning this conference will require an up-front commitment on my part to follow the process wherever it may lead. I will have to engage in a great deal of networking and relationship-building on the front end, and hold my own vision of the overall conference somewhat loosely. It does not mean that my own ideas will be set aside entirely. It simply means that my own voice will become one of many. Such an approach is only viable when we truly believe that there is a synergy that comes about through such participation and cooperation, when we have a genuine faith in collective wisdom.

Ultimately, then, I suppose that what the radical approach to program planning really requires is a radical humility. This approach requires us to set aside the belief that our own ideas are the best! It requires us to recognize that others have valuable ideas and perspectives to contribute, and that other

people having a voice in the planning process is not only their right, but also contributes to the greater common good. Effectively, this radical approach requires us to believe, “It takes a village to plan a program.”

ETHICAL DILEMMAS

As I continue to explore the idea of planning a conference on food justice in Cambodia, two ethical issues specific to that event come to mind.

The first ethical issue has to do with transparency about the purposes and benefits of the conference. In considering whether conducting such a conference would be worthwhile, I can envision a wide array of potential benefits. Some of these benefits are quite noble, others perhaps less so. Certainly, conducting a conference of this nature would be a great opportunity to disseminate information about just and sustainable food systems, to allow people from diverse perspectives to network, and hopefully to generate some cross-pollination of ideas. However, not all of my objectives are so idealistic! One major benefit of us conducting a conference like this is to generate some name recognition for my own organization. While we are a medium- to large-size organization within our particular “space” in Cambodia, I do not feel like we are that well known. Many benefits which are vital to the ongoing viability of the organization (such as funding, partnership opportunities, etc.) are more likely to come to better-known organizations, so increasing organizational visibility is a key strategy to ensure ongoing organizational success. More personally, I cannot deny that organizing a conference like this (and perhaps presenting a paper at it) would look pretty good on my own resume, so admittedly that factor is in my mind, as well! Ethically, it seems like there should be some level of transparency about the motives for conducting a conference of this nature. “Hidden agendas” are ethically problematic, to say the least.

The second ethical issue involves inclusion of marginalized voices, and not just “big players.” Since admittedly part of the purpose of the conference is to improve the “public relations” presentation of my own organization, it would be easy to cater the focus of the conference toward the “big players” in the development world, who might be best positioned to contribute benefit to my own organization. Large, well-funded organizations and donors (like World Food Program, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, USAID, and World Vision) may be the kinds of groups I would like to have us “rub shoulders” with. However, in a conference on food justice (of all things), it seems incredibly important to ensure that the voices of the excluded, the marginalized, and the “little guy” are equally heard and valued.

Ethical Dilemma	Possible Course of Action	Rationale	Potential Consequences
Multiple motives	I think the best course of action is to form a conference planning committee with diverse representation on it (including people from other groups and organizations). Perhaps our organization's desire to gain some public recognition could be revealed transparently to that committee (in a positive, appropriate way), with hopes that they could help us to meet that objective while also promoting mutual benefit.	While my organization may provide some key members of this committee, and I personally might even chair the committee, having representatives of other groups/organizations involved in the planning would significantly reduce the risk that the conference become a mere vehicle of organizational or personal self-aggrandizement.	It is certainly possible that such a diverse committee could in fact reduce the actual benefit which could (or even ought to) accrue to my organization – such as another member of the committee taking all the credit. However, it is probably worth the risk to ensure that the actual benefit of the conference is well balanced.
Inclusion of marginalized voices	Again, it seems like the composition of the conference planning committee would be a vital matter. I'm assuming that I would have some freedom to determine the composition of the committee (through inviting members), and so I could ensure that representatives of smaller and more marginalized groups are involved.	This takes the metaphor of the "planning table" (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013, loc. 993) quite literally! Representatives of marginalized groups would be equal partners in the conference planning process. There is still the possibility that they could be marginalized <i>within</i> that process, but effective facilitation could mitigate that risk.	It is possible that some of the members of smaller, more marginalized groups might not have the capacity to contribute equally effectively to program planning, and this could drag down our effectiveness. Again, though, it is a matter of values: inclusivity is arguably more significant than effectiveness.

CONTEXT ANALYSIS

I am currently serving as Country Director for FH (Food for the Hungry) in Cambodia. FH was started in 1971 as a faith-based relief and development organization. The vision of FH is to respond to God's call until physical and spiritual hunger ends worldwide. In Cambodia, we work in partnership with 54 rural Cambodian villages, empowering their leaders to become more effective in identifying opportunities for development and developing their capabilities to respond to those opportunities. Though our name suggests an emphasis on feeding programs, that's actually not an accurate reflection of what we do. We have an integrated approach to community development that cuts across multiple sectors: agriculture, health/hygiene, economic development through savings groups, and children's education.

As noted in previous assignments, I am specifically considering the possibility of FH Cambodia coordinating a weekend conference on the topic of food justice (with multiple sessions and workshops). A variety of contextual factors could impact the planning of this event, as described below:

PEOPLE ISSUES

One of my big questions is the issue of who would be involved in the planning of a program like this. Food justice has become a recent passion of mine, and it is something that I am actively learning more about. In fact, a desire to learn more about the topic is one of my key motivations for considering such a conference. However, I am not an expert in the topic by any means. I am also, unfortunately, not an expert in planning a program for a conference like this, either (though hopefully my competence will increase as a result of this class). In short, I am going to need to find some help! I am hoping that I will be able to identify a committee of people who would have the interest and capacity to contribute meaningfully to a program of this nature. Whether I will be able to do that remains to be seen (especially since the people who may be the best fit are probably quite busy already). Once such a committee was in place, I believe I would have the facilitation skills necessary to guide the process forward.

I have already done some online work to identify some of the organizations that are involved in work related to this topic. I hope to begin the program planning process by doing some exploration – going to meet with people from these various organizations, sharing my vision for the conference, requesting their input, and asking whether they might like to be involved. As noted in previous assignments, though, as part of a radical approach to program planning, I want to ensure that smaller “players” have a seat at the table. The very nature of smaller players (such as a local farmers co-op, or something of that nature) is that they might not be immediately visible (such as through having a website). I would need to keep this in mind during my program planning, and actively seek personal referrals to identify the various agencies and groups working on this topic, so that I can be as inclusive as possible.

ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS: STRUCTURAL

One important question that I have been asking is whether it is worth it for me to devote a significant amount of attention to planning a conference of this nature. On the surface, conference

planning is not explicitly in my job description as Country Director. In some ways it would seem not to fit with our programmatic emphasis of developing rural Cambodian communities (since this would be a conference for English-speakers in the nation's capital). However, in another sense the program is entirely consistent with what we are about as an organization. We understand that the vision of ending poverty and hunger is bigger than our own organization; we need to work in partnership with others. Thus, a cooperative endeavor like this is broadly consistent with our vision and mission. Furthermore, having an influence on other organizations is part of our organization's strategic plan, and this conference matches that objective perfectly.

I believe that similar events have been conducted in the past (though not recently), so it is not entirely innovative. I have already raised the idea with my supervisor, and he is initially supportive. I will simply have to keep him in the loop and make sure that my other responsibilities as Country Director are still carried out as I devote attention to this new program idea. There are, in fact, resources within our organization (e.g., resources related to food security programming) which may be immensely helpful to a program like this.

ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS: POLITICAL

This issue does not seem terribly relevant within the context of my own organization. As Country Director, I have a reasonable degree of freedom to be creative and innovative in pursuing new ideas like this. I do not think anyone would object within my own organization (though again I do need to stay in dialogue with my supervisor to ensure ongoing support).

More relevant, perhaps, would be the power dynamics that would come into play within the conference planning committee. In any kind of networking context like this, especially when some "big players" are at the table (major donors, for instance!), people are likely to jockey for position and try to gain benefit for their own organization. This is not inappropriate; after all, I am doing this in the interest of my own organization! However, those power dynamics could complicate the planning process. Our course discussion this week has highlighted the importance of power dynamics within the context, and that will be especially relevant when trying to get multiple agencies to work together in planning a conference – on a potentially contentious topic!

ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS: CULTURAL

This factor is a bit ironic. I am often frustrated by the way that the name of our organization ("Food for the Hungry") is misunderstood to imply a focus on feeding programs. Our logo (which combines a stylized fish with a stalk of grain) reinforces the food focus. I have wished that we would change our name, as I frequently have to try to correct the misunderstanding to point people to the fact that we focus on integrated community development rather than narrowly on food distribution. In this case, however, that common misperception would work in our favor. Our food-focused brand would make us a logical choice to champion a cause like food justice.

ENVIRONMENTAL

A number of environmental factors would impact the success of planning a food justice conference in Phnom Penh. One challenge would involve determining the appropriate level of

engagement with the Cambodian government. For food justice issues to take hold in a sustainable way, the government will have to be involved long-term. Thus, it would make sense to invite some key government officials to participate in the conference. That could raise other challenges, though, as I would like to conduct the conference “Western style” rather than follow the protocol typical of Cambodian events. Sometimes the Cambodian government “guest of honor” expects to give some sort of speech. Sometimes this guest of honor does not show up on time! It would be incredibly rude to go on with the program without him, so we could end up with the whole program derailed from the start. That would be incredibly frustrating.

Another big issue is whether there is in fact a demand for a conference of this nature. It would appeal primarily to expatriates, I assume, and expatriates in Phnom Penh are a pretty busy group already. Would they really be willing to give up a weekend to participate in the conference? Would potential committee members be willing to give up a lot more time to plan the conference? (And, also of significant concern, would people be willing to pay a registration fee to attend?)

Another concern with regard to attracting a broad spectrum of participants is the need to be sensitive to different approaches to the food system. With a theme like food justice, some participants would likely be strongly in favor of organic approaches to agriculture, and opposed to approaches heavily emphasizing inputs like fertilizers and pesticides. However, there are almost certainly food-focused groups in Cambodia that promote fertilizers and pesticides as a way to increase productivity. There is thus a very real possibility of a “culture clash” within the topic of food justice, and this will need to be managed well. Again, this connects with the issue of power dynamics, and whose voice gets “heard” in the process of planning the conference.

In order to explore these issues further, here are some avenues for further investigation of the context:

Written documents	People	Group Meetings and Other Gatherings	Trade and Professional Associations	Technology-Based Tools
I have already been doing a fair amount of internet research, both on the topic of food justice generally (so I have a growing expertise on the related issues and can thus lead the program planning process well), and also specifically on groups that are doing work in Cambodia related to this theme.	My main priority to get this process started would be to begin meeting with some representatives of organizations doing work in this area. I hope to develop an “interview template” of sorts to guide these conversations effectively. Part of this template would involve asking about willingness to serve on the committee.	Individual interviews are probably the best approach to gaining information about the context, but ongoing contextual analysis could be included as part of the work of the planning committee (once it is formed).	Connecting with associations is probably best done through individual interviews, but I do plan to go visit some of the newer grocery stores specifically marketing organic produce, and at least get exposed to what’s out there.	I have already set up a draft conference website, and have begun to draft an online survey that could collect information about people’s interest in the conference and its topics. In individual interviews, I could refer people to the website and ask them to complete the linked survey.

PEOPLE SUPPORT FROM COMMUNITY

In this exercise, I am continuing to focus on the opportunity to plan a weekend conference, hosted by my organization, on the topic of food justice. My idea is for the conference to begin on Friday evening, with programming all day Saturday and on Sunday afternoon, ultimately concluding on Sunday evening. Though my organization would be responsible for coordinating the event, the objectives that I have in mind for this conference will likely not be attainable without forming some type of broad-based planning committee. In responding to this assignment, though, I realize that I cannot recall ever actually being involved in a program planning committee before! I was involved in program planning for a youth leadership training program in a provincial area of Cambodia over a few years. During most of that time, the program had an “advisory board” of local Cambodian pastors who provided input on our programming, but they did not have any decision-making authority as such. The staff (including myself as manager) took the input under advisement, but ultimately we were the ones making the decisions about programming. So, a program that is actually planned by a committee would be a new experience for me. (And, I must admit, I find the idea a little intimidating, as the idea of a camel being a horse designed by a committee does come to mind!)

Since this program is still in the early visioning stages, I cannot report on actual role assignments, but I can describe some of the potential roles that I envision for members of the conference planning committee, along with possible sources of support (and thus I’m restructuring the table for this assignment).

ROLE	DESIRED OUTCOMES	POSSIBLE SOURCES OF SUPPORT
Conference Coordinator	This role is responsible for casting the overall vision of the conference, and for coordinating the work of the other committee members in their respective responsibilities to ensure overall effectiveness.	I’m assuming this role will be played by me!
Publicity	This person (or persons) would be responsible for designing and maintaining a conference website, and for designing and implementing an overall marketing plan for the conference.	I would hope that we could identify someone outside our organization with competence in this area, since this is not a field we are very strong in.
Sponsorship/Finance	This person (or persons) would be responsible for securing funding, creating and managing the conference budget, and paying bills.	Since my organization is supposed to be “responsible” for organizing this conference, it may be a little bit tricky to ask someone outside our organization to find the money for it! At the very least, we would probably have an outsider work closely with our staff in this area. I am assuming that income and expenses for the conference will be run through our own accounting

		system, so that makes it imperative that my Finance Manager is working closely with the person responsible for this area.
Registration	This person (or persons) would be responsible for the conference registration process ahead of the event, as well as managing the registration table at the event itself. I assume I could ask this role to prepare the conference folder for participants, as well.	We will definitely need to have this coordinator cooperate effectively and efficiently with the Publicity coordinator, especially if we use an internet-based registration process. This role is a bit more administrative, though, so perhaps a high level of experience would not be essential (if we can have someone with experience give some initial direction, at least).
Program	This person (or persons) would be responsible for designing and coordinating the actual content of the program, including arranging speakers, workshops, and poster sessions.	This is the area where it is probably most important to have a broad base of input. Most likely this role should be held by more than one person – a “sub-committee” of sorts –to ensure a diverse perspective, including the voice of more marginalized groups.
Logistics	This person (or persons) would be responsible for facility reservation and set up, and for arranging catering for the five meals of the event.	I have a possible venue in mind, already, which is reasonably well known (and I believe it is reasonably affordable). I am not sure what the catering options would be. Alternative venues and catering options would be relatively easy to research, though. I have a colleague within my organization (regional, not local) who would be able to provide some guidance because she has some significant experience in event planning.

This exercise is leading me to the conclusion that this is going to be harder than I thought! On the one hand, I am expecting for my organization to have the main responsibility for organizing this conference. On the other hand, I want the conference planning process to be inclusive (with an emphasis on being open to the voice of more marginalized groups), to ensure that we are appealing to a broad base of potential participants. So, for one thing, I wonder how much I can realistically ask of volunteers from outside our organization (as in, “I have this great idea for a conference coordinated by *my* organization; can *you* go find us the money?”). One option, perhaps, would be for volunteers to bring in some experience and expertise, but I could make available some of my own staff’s time to do the “grunt work.” Another alternative would be to restructure the committee to focus primarily on the

conference content and structure, and my organization's staff would take the responsibility for things like publicity, fundraising, registration, and logistics.

Thinking through these various roles also drives home to me the importance of avoiding "silos" in the planning process. Certainly, we will need to divide up the responsibilities (probably along the lines I've outlined above), but there will still need to be a lot of sharing ideas, coordinating various elements, and providing feedback to each other. This level of teamwork reinforces how important the coordination of the committee's work will be. (And, since that's a role I expect to take on, I have got my work cut out for me!)

In terms of actually finding the support to carry out these different roles, I am essentially planning to combine my needs assessment with a recruiting effort. I will be contacting various organizations and asking (1) if they are interested in participating in a conference of this nature and (2) if they are interested in helping to plan it. Another colleague has suggested that I start this exploration process with organizations that are similar to ours and reasonably familiar to me – people that would be "safe" for me to try out my "spiel" on – and then I can move on to less familiar organizations which are nevertheless important contacts to include in this assessment/recruiting process. In that light, I've included on the next page a draft list of four tiers of contacts/organizations that I want to connect with. Hopefully, this exploration process would provide some helpful information from a needs assessment perspective, as well as identifying interested people to help plan the conference.

One other option I may consider is to find another organization to "co-host" the conference (sharing the responsibility and the credit, I suppose!). There is an international church here in Phnom Penh which might be interested in such a cooperative endeavor.

TIER 1

- IDE
- World Relief
- World Renew
- Talmage Payne – Discovery Farms
- Christians for Social Justice/Theary Seng
- World Vision

TIER 2

- CEDAC (Centre d'Etude et de Développement Agricole Cambodgien / Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture)
- CDRI (Cambodia Development Resource Institute)
- Farmer and Nature Net

TIER 3

- ADRA
- Heifer Cambodia
- Oxfam America

TIER 4

- USAID Feed the Future (Cambodia HARVEST)
- Peace Corps
- World Food Program
- FAO
- Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (Cambodian government)

DEVELOPING PROGRAM GOALS

In this assignment, I am continuing to focus on the development of a conference on food justice, to be hosted by my organization. I'm proposing that this be called the FEAST Conference, an acronym for Food, Empowerment, and Sustainable Transformation. The program would be conducted over a weekend, and would likely include a combination of plenary sessions with keynote speakers, smaller interactive workshops, and poster sessions. Five meals would be included in the conference, and I would hope that these would be important networking opportunities for participants. (One option would be to structure the lunches as "learning lunches" with some specific objectives for participants at their tables, but that might be too much structure!) I am also hoping that the food for the meals could be catered from a company that would model some key aspects of food justice and sustainability (e.g., perhaps a fully organic meal, catered by a socially responsible company).

While I would want the overall program design to be inclined toward the radical approach to program planning, I would probably take the collaborative approach to identifying the goals for the

program. While the nondirective/facilitative approach to goal-setting might be more consistent with the radical approach I want to take in this program, I believe that this would generate too much freedom and fluidity for a program of this nature. After all, my organization will be investing significant resources (personnel and time, if not finances!) in the coordination of the conference, so there would need to be a legitimate “business case” for the program, a justification for the investment. Thus, my organization needs to have a clear voice in the establishment of program goals to ensure consistency with organizational mission. At the same time, the radical approach taken for the program (which is consistent with the social justice emphasis of the conference theme) mandates that an entirely directive approach to setting goals would also be inappropriate. Thus, the middle way of a collaborative approach is most suitable, with my organization proposing some goal statements (as drafted below), but subjecting those statements to a review process by the conference planning committee (composed of multiple stakeholders) to ensure mutual agreement.

While ultimately I would hope that this program would contribute to the long-range development of just and sustainable food systems in Cambodia, I recognize that such an outcome is unlikely for a three-day educational event! The purpose of this particular event, then, is more about raising awareness, with the hope of setting in motion processes that could contribute to more comprehensively transformative outcomes in the future. Thus, the following statements (with brief explanations) describe the goals for this particular conference.

Goal 1: To promote a social justice-based understanding of the food system and related interventions in the Cambodian context.

Many of the participants in the conference will likely already have a significant level of expertise in some aspect of the food system (since people with this competence would be the ones most likely to attend!). However, what they may well lack is a “social justice” lens through which to view the food system, as well as an appreciation of how different sectors (business, government, civil society) interact in ways that promote (or fail to promote) justice and sustainability in the food system.

Goal 2: To challenge people to make personal work and lifestyle choices which are increasingly consistent with just and sustainable food systems.

While much of the conference content will be devoted to providing a forum for the “big picture” integration of academic scholarship, effective development practice, and social justice activism around the theme of just and sustainable food systems, I would hope that individual program participants would be personally reflective, as well. Through the conference and the various ideas and opportunities participants are exposed to, my hope is that participants would make some personal decisions about their own involvement in the food system in order to align more effectively with the vision of food justice presented at the conference.

Goal 3: To catalyze the formation of an ongoing community of practice focused on just and sustainable food systems.

One key intent of the conference is simply to create opportunities for people from various sectors interested in just and sustainable food systems to establish meaningful relationships. That will likely happen through mingling at breaks and interactions over meals. However, the ideal is that these

relationships might become somewhat formalized through the creation of a community of practice which could have life beyond the conference – perhaps leading to further conferences and perhaps even active partnerships in the future.

PROGRAM GOALS	PROGRAM OBJECTIVES
Goal 1 To promote a social justice-based understanding of the food system and related interventions in the Cambodian context.	Objective 1.1 Participants will openly discuss “food justice” and its relevance to the Cambodian context. Objective 1.2 Participants will be able to identify three or more models of successful interventions in Cambodia which contribute to just and sustainable food systems. Objective 1.3 Participants will appreciate the contributions of multiple sectors (civil society, government, private business) to the attainment of just and sustainable food systems in Cambodia.
Goal 2 To challenge people to make personal work and lifestyle choices which are increasingly consistent with just and sustainable food systems.	Objective 2.1 Participants will make choices in which their personal work and lifestyle choices positively affect the justice and sustainability of the Cambodian food system. Objective 2.2 Participants will access/utilize resources located in Phnom Penh which can support personal change in their engagement with the food system (e.g., an organic grocery store, a socially responsible vegan restaurant, etc.). Objective 2.3 Participants will make a specific personal commitment to change in one area related to food justice.

Goal 3 To catalyze the formation of an ongoing community of practice focused on just and sustainable food systems.	Objective 3.1 80% of conference participants can identify at least three people/organizations connected to food justice with whom they are newly acquainted as a result of the conference. Objective 3.2 Participants will be able to articulate the vision presented at the conference of an ongoing community of practice focused on just and sustainable food systems. Objective 3.3 Conference organizers will generate a “networking list” of participants who express interest in further cooperation around the conference theme.
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In this exercise (building on exercise 7.1), I have drafted the goals using an infinitive verb structure that focuses on what I want the conference itself to accomplish (e.g., “To promote...”), while I have written objectives that are more focused on the outcomes for participants. Certainly, it would be possible to rewrite these objectives in an alternative format (so that they were all participant-focused, for instance), but this is the approach that I have used here as a first draft. Also, these *are* the first draft versions of the objectives, and some possible changes (based on feedback from colleagues) are noted in exercise 7.3.

EVALUATING PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

In order to complete this exercise, I shared my first goal and its related objectives with two colleagues in order to get their feedback using the chart below.

Goal 1 (of 3): To promote a social justice-based understanding of the food system and related interventions in the Cambodian context.

	Objective 1.1 Participants will be able to describe “food justice” and its relevance to the Cambodian context.	Objective 1.2 Participants will be able to identify three or more models of successful interventions in Cambodia which contribute to just and sustainable food systems.	Objective 1.3 Participants will appreciate the contributions of multiple sectors (civil society, government, private business) to the attainment of just and sustainable food systems in Cambodia.
Is there a clear relationship between the objective and the goal identified?	Colleague #1: Yes Colleague #2: Yes,	Colleague #1: Yes Colleague #2: “sustainable” is added here and is beyond scope of this goal	Colleague #1: Yes Colleague #2: Yes, a system has many players involved
Does the objective focus on a crucial part of the program?	Colleague #1: Yes Colleague #2: Yes,	Colleague #1: Yes Colleague #2: Yes,	Colleague #1: Yes Colleague #2: Yes, important to understanding the entire system
Is the objective practical and achievable?	Colleague #1: Yes – I might also add that the learner will also be an advocate perhaps? Colleague #2: Is this a one day event?	Colleague #1: Yes Colleague #2: Yes	Colleague #1: Yes Colleague #2: Yes at least in a broad scope

Is the objective attainable in the time frame you have proposed?	Colleague #1: I'm not sure what the time frame is? It isn't clear. Colleague #2: Is this a one day event?	Colleague #1: Again, not sure what the time frame is? Is it supposed to be the duration of the session? Or, conference? Colleague #2: Is this a one day event?	Colleague #1: Same as the others – not clear Colleague #2: Is this a one day event? I'm not sure what the timeframe is and if all these objectives can realistically be achieved
Does the objective clearly communicate the proposed outcome or accomplishments?	Colleague #1: Yes Colleague #2: "relevance" is a subjective, vague term to me	Colleague #1: Yes Colleague #2: Yes	Colleague #1: Yes Colleague #2: "appreciate" implies that they value the role of all sectors. Perhaps "recognize" is less value-laden
Is the objective meaningful and can it be understood by all parties?	Colleague #1: Yes Colleague #2: How about "importance" instead of "relevance"?	Colleague #1: Yes Colleague #2: Do you want them to do more than "identify" perhaps? Perhaps "understand" or "define and identify" how will participants define "successful" ?	Colleague #1: Yes Colleague #2: Not sure what you mean by "appreciate"
Is the objective supposed to be measurable, and if so, is it?	Colleague #1: I believe it is measurable. Colleague #2: "All" participants? 80% of participants? Depends on plans for assessing and retrieving outcomes. It may not be measurable within the scope of the work planned	Colleague #1: Yes, it is measurable Colleague #2: "All" participants? 80% of participants? Depends on plans for assessing and retrieving outcomes. It may not be measurable	Colleague #1: I don't think so. Colleague #2: Seems difficult to measure but you may have the means to do so within the scope of the project

Does the objective reflect the prior knowledge, experiences, and abilities of the potential participants?	Colleague #1: No Colleague #2: Implied that participants bring their prior knowledge etc to add to what they learn at conference to be able to describe “food justice” and relevance	Colleague #1: No Colleague #2: Implied, but also the kind of participation planned will enhance drawing out this prior knowledge etc.	Colleague #1: No Colleague #2: Implied, but also the kind of participation planned will enhance drawing out this prior knowledge etc.
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In response to this feedback, I realize that it may be appropriate to reword these objectives to include a time element. Since each of these objectives is focused on what the participants will be able to do by the end of the conference, we could make that explicit. Thus, Objective 1.1 could read, “By the end of the conference, participants will be able to describe “food justice” and its relevance to the Cambodian context.” However, since all of the objectives will have the same timeframe (things to accomplish by the end of the conference), I confess that adding the phrase seems a little bit pedantic to me. Perhaps an overarching statement that simply clarifies that all objectives are to be completed by the end of the conference would be preferable.

I would agree that Objective 1.3 is not very measurable (it certainly is the least measurable of these three). It may be possible, though, to ask a question in the final evaluation survey like, “As a result of this conference, to what degree have you gained an increased appreciation of the contributions of multiple sectors (civil society, government, private business) to the attainment of just and sustainable food systems in Cambodia?” The respondents could be given a 1 to 5 scale for indicating their level of increased appreciation. Such an approach would be entirely subjective, of course, but would nevertheless be one way to “measure” the attainment of this objective.

One colleague notes that the objectives as written do not reflect prior experiences or knowledge of participants (while the other assumes that this prior knowledge is implied). This is a valid point, and the objectives may thus be subject to revision after conducting the actual needs assessment. (So, for instance, if many participants already have a solid understanding of “food justice,” then Objective 1.1 may need to be reconfigured.)

My second colleague makes some helpful suggestions about possible re-wording, and also raises the issue of setting targets for measurement. This is an interesting question: does creating a measurable objective require the establishment of a target? Does the target have to be included in the objective itself? We may decide that an 80% response rate is acceptable, but does that mean that the 80% target has to be written into the objective itself (especially when we are hoping for 100% success)?

PLANNING A PROGRAM EVALUATION

For this assignment on planning a program evaluation, I will continue my focus on the prospect of developing the “FEAST Conference,” a three-day gathering on food justice hosted by my organization, FH Cambodia. (This draft plan has been shared with a colleague, whose input is included in the table below.)

Elements	My Evaluation Plans
Secure stakeholder support	There are three major stakeholder groups to be considered: my own broader organization, the conference planning committee (which would include representatives of multiple groups/organizations locally), and any potential funding agencies. An evaluation process which satisfies each of those groups is essential. I assume that a dialogue about the nature of the evaluation process would be included in any request for funding from an outside agency. The expectations for a systematic, formal evaluation may be less strenuous from within my organization or from the conference planning committee, but I would still want to demonstrate that we had satisfied the objectives of the conference.
Identify individuals involved	For me, an ideal person to oversee the evaluation process would be Mrs. Debra Wilson. She is currently employed by my organization on a part-time basis in a role emphasizing the development of partnerships. She has extensive experience in organizational leadership, and has conducted evaluations for other groups (with recognized success). Though technically she reports to me, she has effectively served as a mentor/coach and general “sounding board” as I struggle with the challenges of organizational leadership. Deb thus has the potential to offer a unique blend of an insider and an outsider perspective. However, because she is formally employed by my organization, any stakeholder who insisted on an outside evaluator would probably not be satisfied with having her lead the evaluation. I would also have to have a dialogue with her about whether she would be comfortable making this kind of commitment. If she is not available, we could try to identify someone else with similar qualifications (and hope that the person would be willing to serve on a volunteer basis!). One issue worth further consideration involves when to bring on the evaluator. In some ways, it makes sense to me to have the person responsible for the evaluation as part of the conference planning committee. Ultimately, the hope is that program goals/objectives, program implementation, and program evaluation are all well-aligned, so having the evaluator involved from the beginning could be

	helpful toward that end. However, this may be viewed as sacrificing objectivity, as the person would (again) no longer be an “outsider.” Another resource within my organization is our Global Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator. Though he serves the entire organizational globally, it just so happens that he is based in Cambodia, so we share the same office. His focus is on monitoring and evaluating our community development efforts globally, but his expertise would be worth tapping into – at least perhaps to review our evaluation plan.
Define purpose of evaluation and use of results	The purpose of the evaluation will be to determine whether the FEAST Conference effectively satisfied the conference goals and objectives as specified by the conference planning committee. The results of this evaluation will be used to determine whether ongoing investment by my organization in efforts to bring people together around the theme of food justice is worthwhile. Thus, for instance, the results may indicate whether the facilitation of an ongoing community of practice would be worthwhile, and/or whether future conferences of this nature should be conducted.
Specify what is judged and formulate evaluation questions	The main focus of the evaluation would be whether or not the conference satisfied the stated program objectives. Assuming that the objectives are as drafted in my exercise 7.2, the evaluation questions could be as follows: • To what extent are conference participants able to describe “food justice” and its relevance to the Cambodian context? • To what extent are conference participants able to identify three or more models of successful interventions in Cambodia which contribute to just and sustainable food systems? • To what extent do conference participants appreciate the contributions of multiple sectors (civil society, government, private business) to the attainment of just and sustainable food systems in Cambodia? • To what extent are conference participants able to describe the ways in which their personal work and lifestyle choices affect the justice and sustainability of the Cambodian food system? • To what extent are conference participants able to identify three or more resources located in Phnom Penh which can support personal change in their engagement with the food system? • What proportion of conference participants have made a specific personal commitment to change in one area related to food justice?

	• What proportion of conference participants can identify at least three people/organizations connected to food justice with whom they are newly acquainted as a result of the conference? • To what extent are conference participants able to articulate the vision presented at the conference of an ongoing community of practice focused on just and sustainable food systems? • Was a “networking list” of participants who express interest in further cooperation around the conference theme generated as a result of the conference? These core questions would constitute the assessment of participant learning and change. In addition, it would be useful to evaluate the logistics of the conference, as well – such as the venue, food, format/schedule, etc. My colleague has recommended that these logistical issues also be addressed in a pre-conference survey to identify what people are looking for in terms of venue, format/schedule, cost, and food selection (Western vs. Khmer food). A pre-conference survey is already in the works, but her input suggests some additional material to include.
Determine source of evidence	As this will be an entirely new event, there are no existing sources of evidence to be considered. The evidence will have to be freshly generated from program participants and conference organizers/staff.
Delineate evaluation type	The evaluation will take an objectives-based approach, with emphasis on determining whether or not the program objectives have been effectively satisfied. Other evaluation information will also be collected (such as level of participant satisfaction with the food service), but the primary emphasis will be on successful accomplishment of program objectives.
Choose data collection techniques	Techniques for collecting data may include the following: • Participant survey (participants could be given an option of completing a paper version at the end of the conference itself, or completing it online afterwards). For some of the evaluation questions, the survey could function as a “post-test” of sorts, if desired. (For instance, the survey could ask the respondent to define food justice, and the response could be assessed to determine whether the response is satisfactory.) • Observations by conference implementers during the conference program itself

	• A conference planning committee “post mortem” reflection discussion • (optional) Follow-up interviews with selected conference participants My colleague suggests that the follow-up interviews could also be valuable for gathering testimonials, which could be used for marketing future conferences!
Indicate analysis procedure	The evaluation will be conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The participant survey will allow for quantification of results for a number of the evaluation questions (at the level of simple percentages of respondents), but the judgment of program effectiveness will be heavily dependent on the qualitative feedback gathered during the evaluation. My colleague makes this suggestion: <i>Could you also set up a discussion board (or some sort of networking group/ opportunity) for people to come together several months (3-6 months) after the conference as a way to receive feedback of how they are implementing what they have learned, as well as it serving as a way to share among peers and learn from one another?</i> Her suggestion feeds into the third program goal (which she actually has not directly seen yet!) about forming a community of practice.
Stipulate criteria for judgment	The stated program goals will constitute the major criteria for judgment of program effectiveness. While the standard of judgment would probably need to be determined by the conference planning committee, we could hope that at least 70% of program participants recognize growth in their own understanding of food justice, and have made a personal commitment reflecting their desire to align with this ideal. The criterion for the third program goal could be the existence of an operational community of practice 12 months after the conference.
Determine timeline and resources	Non-personnel costs for the evaluation would be minimal. There would be some printing costs for the printed version of the participant survey (and possibly the final evaluation report, though hopefully this could be prepared exclusively in soft copy). A snack for the conference planning committee meeting “postmortem” would also be appropriate, as well as travel costs for any (optional) follow-up

	interviews. \$100.00 would probably be sufficient to cover these costs. Personnel costs could hopefully be minimized by using volunteers and contributions of existing staff time. The participant survey would need to be designed in advance of the conference, of course. We would hope that all participant responses would be collected within one week after the end of the event. All other data collection processes should be completed within one month after the end of the conference, with a final report to be submitted within three months after the end of the conference. (This obviously does not allow for determination of whether a community of practice exists 12 months after the conference, but that could be followed up later.)
Conduct evaluation	The individual responsible for conducting the evaluation (Mrs. Debra Wilson?) would be expected to write a final evaluation report (including recommendations). The report would be shared with the conference planning committee, the Asia Regional Director for my organization (my supervisor), and any funding agencies. My colleague has even volunteered to come help do the evaluation, if her supervisor (same as mine) approves!

BUDGETING

For this assignment, I found it most useful to develop a fresh budget (using Excel) using my own budget categories rather than the categories suggested in the assignment. My own initial budget is therefore presented below and in the attached Excel file. (However, to confirm that I have not missed anything, I have included the expense/income categories from the assignment, with appropriate comments, as an annex to this assignment.)

I submitted this budget to a colleague (with significant event planning experience), and she suggested the following (directly quoted from her email):

1.) I would consider increasing your registration fee. \$15 is good but, I think people are willing to pay more, especially for a 3 day conference. With the increased price, you could maybe afford to provide an "attendee bag" for everyone, which allows them to put their registration notebook, supplies, handouts, etc. It is very common to provide a tote bag for attendees. Or, maybe, the increased registration cost would allow you to offer lunch for everyone. Many hotels/ conference centers are likely to give you a better rate on the conference room rental b/c where they make money is on the food and beverage (F&B). So, providing lunch to attendees could help keep room rental costs low. Just a thought to consider.

2.) Have you thought about covering speaker's expenses? I saw you have an honorarium. Is the honorarium supposed to help cover those expenses? Usually, when a speaker agrees to speak at a conference, they will expect to have their expenses covered on top of having an honorarium. Just something to consider. It may not be needed for this particular conference. Or, again, you could take the additional registration fee to help pay for speaker expenses??

3.) I didn't see a line for marketing/ advertising. I think your plan is to do everything through email, website, online, etc. Even if it isn't much, you may want to consider having some small budget for printed flyers, printed registration forms, etc.

Based on her feedback and some additional reflection in completing this assignment, I have made some modifications to the budget (below and in the attached Excel sheet). I have increased the conference registration fee to \$25.00. I fear this might be cost prohibitive, though, for some potential attendees (even the \$15.00 might be a bit much), so I could consider increasing the grant request from a potential donor to create a "scholarship fund." At this point, though, I'm assuming that all attendees would be able to pay this amount. I made another adjustment, though, in assuming that the conference planning committee would be included in the participant number but would not be paying the registration fee. That was simply an earlier oversight.

I did add in a tote bag for attendees. I have also increased the amount for a thank you gift to presenters, but have not converted this to an honorarium. Again, I am assuming that this will be conducted on an all-volunteer basis. I suppose I'm also assuming that people will be so excited to participate in this event that the opportunity to share their ideas will be its own reward (so maybe I am being just a tad bit idealistic here!). I do not think it would be viable to "hire" speakers to come, though, so I think my plan is the best approach for our situation. I have also increased the amount for printing costs (which will cover the publicity items she suggests), and also increased the amount for indirect costs payable to my organization's admin cost center. All together, these adjustments still result in a "cushion" of over \$200.00, so it appears to work as a draft budget.

ORIGINAL BUDGET

BUDGETING ASSUMPTIONS

Participants	80
Conference Planning Committee	10
Registration fee	\$15.00

INCOME ESTIMATE

Registration	\$1,200.00
Contribution from FH Asia	\$500.00
Contribution from FH Cambodia	\$500.00
GRANT PROPOSAL (Tearfund UK?)	\$5,000.00
TOTAL	\$7,200.00

EXPENSE ESTIMATES

	Rate	Times	Units	TOTAL
CONFERENCE				
Main meeting room rental	420	3	1	\$1,260.00
Breakout room rental	84	2	2	\$336.00
LCD rental	15	2	2	\$60.00
CONFERENCE FOOD SERVICE				
Meals	6.6	5	80	\$2,640.00
Snacks	1.7	3	80	\$408.00
SUPPLIES				
Conference Banner	30	1	1	\$30.00

Posters	8	1	10	\$80.00
CD-ROMS (spindle of 100)	20	1	1	\$20.00
Printing	200	1	1	\$200.00
Film purchase (with exhibition rights)	49	1	1	\$49.00
Nametags	0.5	1	110	\$55.00
Registration packet (pen, plastic folder, etc.)	3	1	80	\$240.00
Misc. supplies	200	1	1	\$200.00
APPRECIATION				
Government rep honorarium	50	1	1	\$50.00
Presenter thank you gifts	5	1	12	\$60.00
CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE				
Snacks for monthly meeting	1.5	15	10	\$225.00
Thank you gift	12	1	10	\$120.00
SUBTOTAL				\$6,033.00
INDIRECT COSTS (contributed to FH PP Admin)				\$670.33
GRAND TOTAL				\$6,703.33
<i>Per person total</i>				\$75.41

UPDATED BUDGET

BUDGETING ASSUMPTIONS

Participants	80
Conference Planning Committee	10
Registration fee	\$25.00

INCOME ESTIMATE

Registration	\$1,750.00
Contribution from FH Asia	\$500.00
Contribution from FH Cambodia	\$500.00
GRANT PROPOSAL (Tearfund UK?)	\$5,000.00
TOTAL	\$7,750.00

EXPENSE ESTIMATES

	Rate	Times	Units	TOTAL
CONFERENCE				
Main meeting room rental	420	3	1	\$1,260.00
Breakout room rental	84	2	2	\$336.00
LCD rental	15	2	2	\$60.00
CONFERENCE FOOD SERVICE				
Meals	6.6	5	80	\$2,640.00
Snacks	1.7	3	80	\$408.00
SUPPLIES				
Conference Banner	30	1	1	\$30.00

Posters	8	1	10	\$80.00
CD-ROMS (spindle of 100)	20	1	1	\$20.00
Printing	400	1	1	\$400.00
Film purchase (with exhibition rights)	49	1	1	\$49.00
Nametags	0.5	1	110	\$55.00
Registration packet (pen, plastic folder, etc.)	3	1	80	\$240.00
Attendee tote bag	4	1	80	\$320.00
Misc. supplies	200	1	1	\$200.00
APPRECIATION				
Government rep honorarium	50	1	1	\$50.00
Presenter thank you gifts	10	1	12	\$120.00
CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE				
Snacks for monthly meeting	1.5	15	10	\$225.00
Thank you gift	12	1	10	\$120.00
SUBTOTAL				\$6,613.00
INDIRECT COSTS (contributed to FH PP Admin)				\$901.77
GRAND TOTAL				\$7,514.77
<i>Per person total</i>				\$82.66

Annex 1: Assignment expense categories

Budget Items	
Personnel	
Program Director	Not applicable (N/A), as all personnel will serve on a volunteer basis, or as part of their already-salaried positions within my organization
Instructors/facilitators	N/A, as noted above
Support staff	N/A, as noted above
Other staff	N/A, as noted above
Fringe Benefits	
Program Director	N/A, as noted above
Instructors/facilitators	N/A, as noted above
Support staff	N/A, as noted above
Other staff	N/A, as noted above
External staff	
Program Consultants	N/A, as noted above
Instructors/facilitators	N/A, as noted above
Honorariums	I have included an honorarium for the government speaker we will invited, and also thank you gifts for the plenary/workshop presenters.
Sub-contractors	N/A, as noted above
Others	N/A, as noted above
Materials	
Copying	Incorporated into printing costs
Design	Incorporated into printing costs
Printing	Included in budget above (with some detailed breakdown)
CDs	Included in budget above
Technical support	
Website costs	N/A, as the organizational Google sites can host the website
Internet fees	Covered through indirect costs, payable to my organization's admin cost center
Learning management system	N/A
Other	N/A
Equipment	

Computers	N/A, as we will not be purchasing equipment for this program
Printers	N/A, as we will not be purchasing equipment for this program
Projectors	N/A, as we will not be purchasing equipment for this program
Screens	N/A, as we will not be purchasing equipment for this program
Microphones	N/A, as we will not be purchasing equipment for this program
Other	N/A, as we will not be purchasing equipment for this program
Travel	
Airfare	N/A, as this program will be locally conducted
Ground transportation	Covered through indirect costs, payable to my organization's admin cost center
Mileage	Covered through indirect costs, payable to my organization's admin cost center
Rental car	N/A
Parking fees	N/A (the envisioned site has a parking lot)
Facilities	
Overnight rooms	N/A, as this will be a locally conducted conference (thus participants can sleep at home!)
Meeting rooms	Included in budget above
Food	Included in budget above
Hospitality	Included in budget above
Receptions	Included in budget above
Special activities	N/A
AV rental	Included in budget above
Supplies/Telephone/Postage	
Supplies	Included in budget above
Telephone	Covered through indirect costs, payable to my organization's admin cost center
Postage	Covered through indirect costs, payable to my organization's admin cost center
Special services for participants	N/A
Miscellaneous	
Total direct expenses	Included in budget above
Indirect costs	Included in budget above
Total expenses	Included in budget above

Annex 2: Assignment Income categories

Income source	
Parent organizational subsidy	Included in budgets above, but split out as contributions by Asia regional office and local Cambodian office
Sponsorship funds or donations	N/A
Participant fees	Included in budget above
Auxiliary enterprises and sales	N/A
Grants and contracts	Included in budget above as single \$5000.00 grant to be solicited from an existing partner
Government funds	N/A
Profit from any educational units	N/A
Miscellaneous income	N/A
Total income	Included in budget above

REFLECTION

I never would have guessed where this course would lead.

When I started reading the textbook a couple of weeks before the course started and realized that some of the assignments in the syllabus were going to require some trial runs at program planning, I immediately imagined an ideal hypothetical: a "food justice conference" at my home church in the United States. The idea resonated with my current interest in the topic of food justice, and I believe my home church would be open to conducting a program along those lines. Of course, the thought dawned on me that I might consider conducting such a conference closer to "home" (i.e., here in Cambodia), but that initially struck me as unrealistic.

The more I thought about the idea, though, the more it began to make sense. This kind of conference actually resonates with a number of priorities for my organization. Though admittedly we do not have any recent local experience in conference planning, the conference theme I'm exploring is in many ways a great fit for our organization's identity. The course assignments have been a way of thinking through the details, and in the process I have become more convinced that putting together a program like this would be challenging but feasible. Being able to dialogue with a colleague about some of those details has only made it more "real" - especially since she is a key resource who could help me pull it off!

Of all the courses I've taken thus far in the AET program, then, this one is the one with the most direct impact on my work. I've gone from considering a hypothetical for a course assignment to taking some concrete steps toward designing a new program for my organization. There's a lot left to do, of course (and still a long time left to do it in, since I'm envisioning this conference for October 2015). But this is something that I plan to pursue, assuming the continued blessing of my supervisor!

As I move forward with this, one of my biggest “lessons learned,” though, is this: **the idea of “if you build it, they will come” only works in Hollywood.** I admit that this is a real temptation for me. I tend to think that if I just have a “great idea” and create a nice, balanced structure for it (and have a good acronym to call it by), then people will come. At least, the people who actually know how to appreciate a good thing will come, right? And when they don’t come, or they come and are not awed by the wonderful ideas floating around, then I wonder what went wrong.

The “great idea” is just the start. Some form of needs assessment (informal or formal) is important to make sure that I am indeed “scratching where people itch.” In the design process, I need to be open to the “great ideas” of *other* people. Doing the intensive relational work of marketing is important to make sure people are aware of what’s happening. Getting the logistical details of venue, schedule, food, etc. right is imperative to make sure people aren’t so hot, hurried, or hungry that they can’t pay attention to the great ideas!

So, in the process of this class, I’ve taken some significant steps towards a new program for my organization, and learned (or re-learned) a number of important things about myself in the process. I do plan to move forward with this conference idea, but hopefully I can form a good team (the conference planning committee) who will contribute some expertise in the areas of needs assessment, evaluation, marketing, and logistics with the same passion that I have for the “big idea” of food justice!

REFERENCES

Caffarella, R. S., & Daffron, S. R. (2013). *Planning programs for adult learners: A practical guide* (3rd ed.) [Kindle edition]. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.