Career Internship Network Resource Publications

The Career Internship Network (CIN), a program of the Youth Development Institute, comprises more than thirty New York City institutions with established internship programs for adolescents that provide exposure to, understanding of, and experiences in potential careers. As part of its services, CIN provides professional development workshops for staff of its member programs. Resource guides and worksheets accompany each workshop to assist program coordinators in their work with interns. This downloadable publication is part of a series adapted from these materials that we want to share with the field. We encourage you to use any of the materials, but please include copyright information on related pages.

Evaluation (*verb*): to examine and judge

Sound Evaluation and Assessment
Determining how you're doing, what's working, what's not, and where you excel is at the heart of evaluation and assessment. Sound evaluation and assessment is not based on hunches but rather a well-designed systematic process that ultimately allows programs to make trustworthy claims based on sound results.

> ***No Graduate Degree Necessary***
> Program directors should be familiar with sound evaluation and assessment processes whether they or a professional evaluator will ultimately administer the evaluation. If hiring an external evaluator, programs should enough to make sure the person is a knowledgeable professional.

What is the Difference Between Evaluation and Assessment?

There are distinctions between evaluation and assessment that are important to grasp. Experts differ about the exact definitions between the two. For the sake of this series, we will say that we usually evaluate programs, examine them to come to judgments about efficacy and quality. Programs typically use assessment to monitor quality in relationship to participants themselves, whether the depth of their comprehension, manner in which they go about a process, or a final product they create. Unlike evaluation, assessing participants does not necessarily move to making judgments, but rather provides information, about the people involved. The key point is that regardless of their distinctions, program evaluation and participant assessment both address a wide range of needs.[1]

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[1] From an email on March 2, 2006 from Jane Remer, arts education consultant and author.

Program Evaluation and Intern Assessment

Why Undertake Evaluation or Assessment?

> *Program evaluation and study can help foster accountability, determine whether programs make a difference, and provide staff with the information they need to improve service delivery.[2]*

If planned and executed well, sound evaluation and assessment addresses an impressive array of needs. It can:

- Articulate **outcomes** (results) to judge quality
- Monitor activities of all involved for **efficiency** and **accountability**
- Discern areas for program **improvement**
- Make and embed **informed changes** in a program's infrastructure and practice so lessons learned are not lost with staff turnover and/or over time
- Document **participants'** experiences, knowledge, and reflections
- Instill a sense of **ownership** in participants by soliciting their feedback
- Offer educators opportunities to self-review to improve their practice
- Serve as a **learning mechanism** for participants to self-critique, improve, and internalize criteria for quality work
- Gain buy-in from **internal administrators** and **external funders** of the **impact** and **importance** of programs
- Capture **promising practices** to **disseminate** to the field

Where to Start: Step One in Evaluation and Assessment

The very first step in finding out how your program is doing *is not* determining what you want to evaluate. You start by stepping back and taking a good hard look at *who* and *where* you are. Only then can you confidently examine *how well* you are doing.

It might be tempting to skip this step because you know your program inside out; you live it everyday. It's exactly *because* you are so thoroughly immersed in your program that you need to step back and take a bird's-eye view.

It is helpful to begin at the beginning, examining what your program *believes* (premises), what it *thinks* (principles), and its *practices* (what takes place). The following materials

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[2] National Research Council Institute of Medicine, Executive Summary, "Community Programs to Promote Youth Development," Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2002, p.14.

detail what premises, principles and practices are, and how to identify them in your program. The *process* of this step is as valuable as the end result of your completed written form. It will help you clarify the basic underpinnings of your program in a way that you might not have done before. Because of this it is highly advisable to complete this step in collaboration with your staff.

Making the Picture Crystal Clear!

What You *Believe*, What You *Think,* What You *Do*

Premises (*Why* we do what we do)

Premises are underlying values, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions that we hold. For youth workers, premises focus on beliefs and attitudes towards young people, communities and the profession of youth work. In essence, your premises essentially are what your program *believes.*

- Premises are *underlying belief*s and theories about people, systems, and society and how they relate
- Premise are givens; basic assumptions
- A premise is the lens through which we see and act in the world
- Premises orient our program policies and practices
- Premises are belief statements; they are what *drive* the institution to do what it does

Sample Premise statements—
- *All young people deserve equal access to resources*
- *Early experiences can impact one's future*
- *Youth learn best from well-planned experiences*
- *Youth mature and expand their worldview when working with people of varying ages, experiences, backgrounds, and points of view*

Hints:
- Premises come from leadership. Look at your organization's mission statement
- Try the following stem to identify your institution's premises: *Our program believes…*
- You can learn a lot about yourself and your program by bringing premises to light, and reflecting on them and their impact in a meaningful way

Principles (Principles of practice; generalizing *what* we do in youth work)

Principles are underlying assumptions required in a system of thought. In essence, what your program *thinks* stemming from your premises (values) and laying the foundation for your practices (what you actually do).
- Principles are neither right nor wrong, they are declarative statements
- Principles are what you *think* as a result of your core beliefs (premises)
- Principles *stem* from premises and they *guide* practices

Sample Principle statements:

- *Programs must be community-based and culturally & socially relevant*
- *All participants should be treated with respect and have equal access to resources and opportunities*
- *Staff should be selected for their expertise and their ability to establish caring relationships*

Try the following-

> *Our program believes…(*premise*), therefore our program thinks…(*<u>principle</u>*)*

Hint:

- Try thinking of a principle as the conditions under which your premise is true. For example: *All people can learn* (premise) if they have the proper supports (*principle*)

Practices: Practices are what your program *does* literally—its activities, actions, and anything else you carry out.

- Practices are what we do as a result of our premises and principles. They give concepts substance
- Practices affect people and programs

What we believe about internship programs and youth is _____(premise), therefore we fundamentally think _____ (principle), and thus carry out is _____(practice).

See next 2 pages for an example of a Premises, Principles, and Practices chart that can help you identify the very basics of your program.

Taking Stock Worksheet

Your Program's Three Ps
(The "I" in the prompts is your program's voice)

Premises (statements about beliefs) *I believe that…*	Principles (statements about quality of program) *…therefore, I think…*	Practices (statements about specific actions) *… so, I do…*

(Sample)
Taking Stock Worksheet: Your Program's Three Ps

Premises *I believe that…*	Principles *…therefore, I think…*	Practices *… so, I do…*
Reflection is the most important element in any learning experience	Reflection must be • *Woven into every aspect of an internship program* • *Interns should reflect both on content and how it applies to themselves*	• *Daily journal entries using reflective stems* • *Summative exchanges after behind-the-scenes experiences* • *Baseline and final reflection questionnaires*
Everyone has the possibility to reach her/his potential	*Quality programs must provide supports that address the intellectual, emotional, and physical needs of participants*	• *Curriculum of stimulating activities, asking students to move beyond their comfort zone* • *Mentor, school staff, and parent support network used throughout program* • *Mentors who are able to balance and communicate their dual roles of friend/adult in a fair and consistent manner* • *Establish personal workspace and equipment* • *Daily exchanges between mentor and intern* • *Access to outside resources for, college, or workforce prep; adolescent health and social services*
Authentic work experiences in internship programs greatly contribute to students' success in and realistic expectations of future work experiences	• *Authentic work experience must be work that a real staff member would do is an integral part/aspect of accomplishing the overall task — not "busy" work that is abandoned once completed* • *Introduces students to new information, skills and understanding*	• *Mentor application form and interview to devise authentic work with scope and sequence* • *Monitoring of this plan through intern journal writings and comments* • *Placements in areas/jobs that are new to intern* • *Mentors include interns in daily activities bringing them to meetings, laboratories/storage rooms, etc. that mentor considers "old hat" but are new to intern.* • *Entire program is a "job" experience in which work-related requirements, benefits, with consequences*

Interns learn and integrate information best in engaging activities	*Activities that* • *Require participation, critical thinking, reflection, and expansion of knowledge/experience* • *Have an internal logic—scope and sequence* • *Include a component in which students transfer what they learned about the material and themselves into a new context to demonstrate complete ownership*	• *Group work that requires new skills and knowledge and increases understanding and approaches to learning* • *Mentor-Career journey case study* • *Intern devised tour involving skills in object and inquiry based learning, child and adolescent development, research*

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