An Online Course to Build Evaluation Capacity … Applied Environmental Education Program Evaluation (AEEPE)

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Evaluation Capacity Building

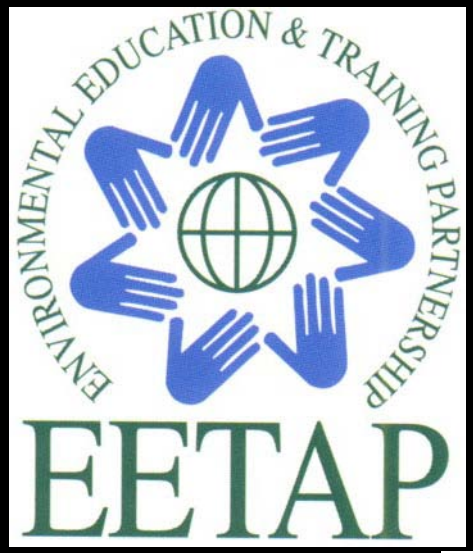
In most, ECB –

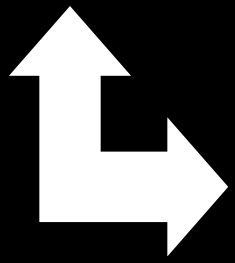
- **Involves equipping staff within organizations with skill to conduct rigorous evaluations**
- **Ensures routine practice**

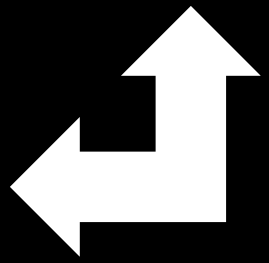
Supply – Demand (McDonald)

- **Demand – culture that values comprehensive evaluation, uses results**
- **Supply – developing technical skills & tools to produce evaluations**

Applied EE Program Evaluation

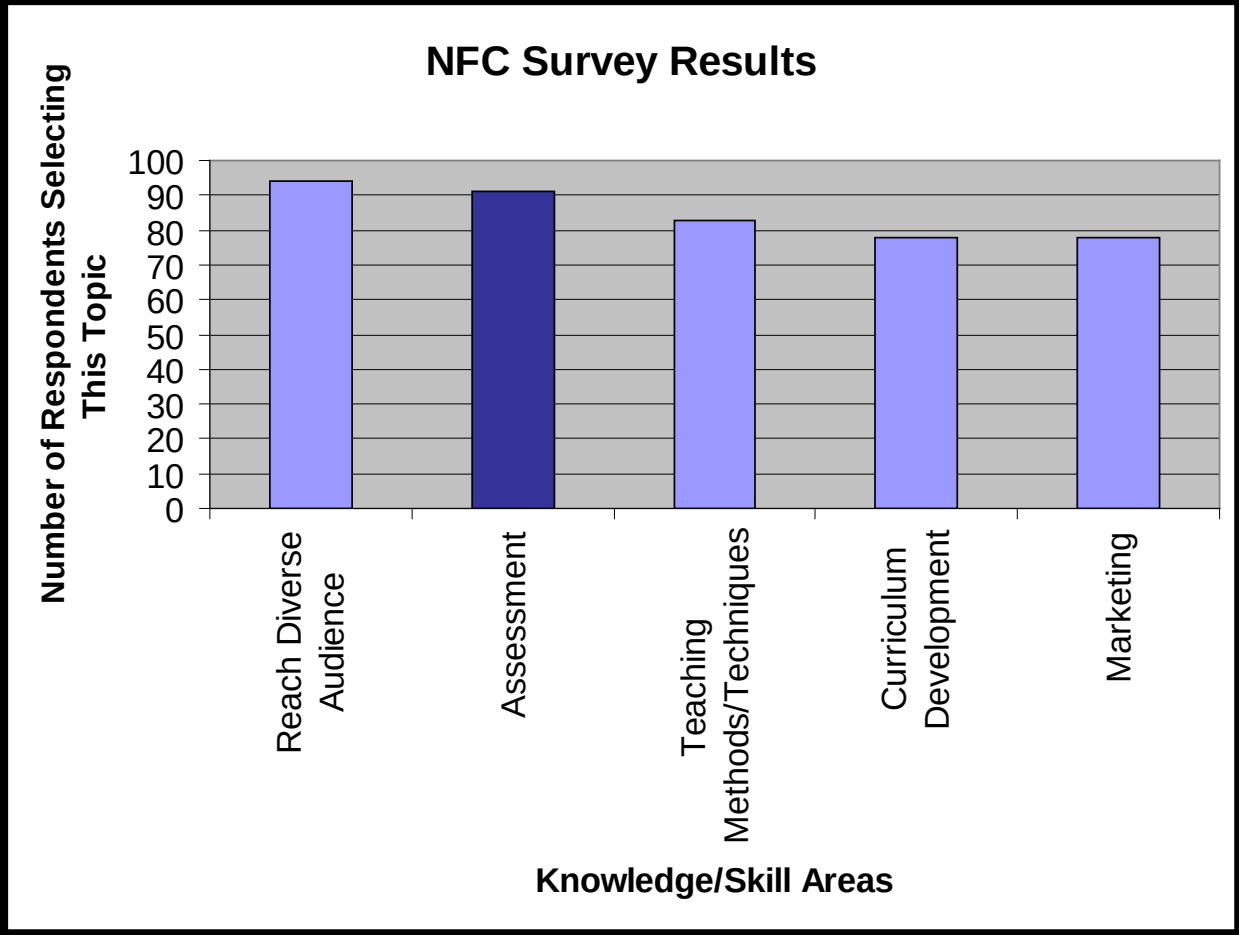






Course Fills A Need

Non-formal EE Commission Survey (NAAEE)



Course Development

AEEPE Design Team; Reviewers

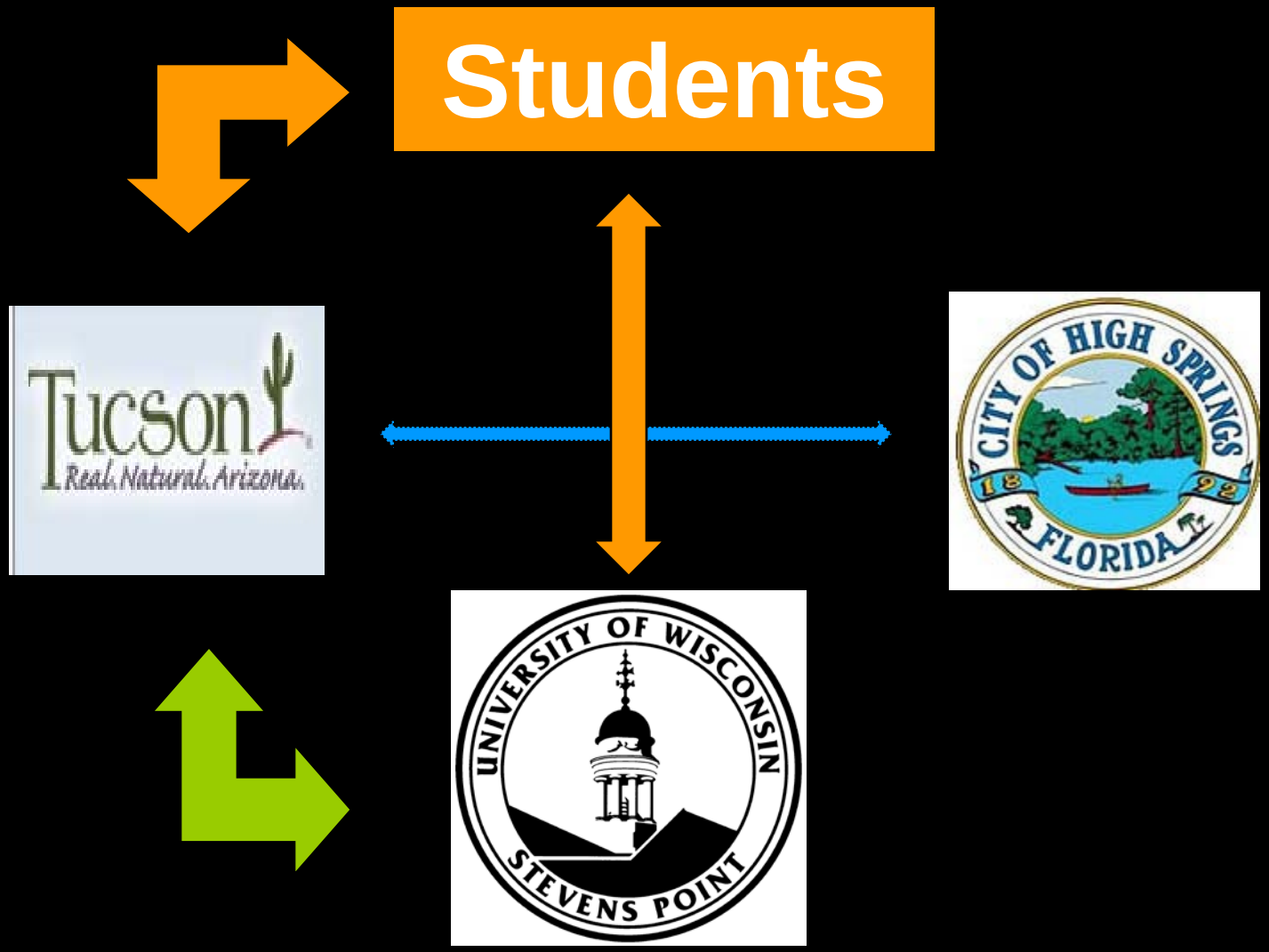
Based on educational materials from:

- **USFWS/NCTC onsite course**
- **NAAEE Guidelines for Preparation and Professional Development of Environmental Educators**
- **The University of Wisconsin-Cooperative Extension**

Course piloted fall 2004

Offered 15 times since Fall 2004

Applied EE Program Evaluation



Who Are the Students?

350 Registrants from:

46 states
12 countries
5 continents

90% Female

1/3 Federal/state agencies
1/3 Nonprofit EE organizations
1/6 Universities

Content & Objectives

Course Syllabus

UNIT	DATES
Introduction	Week One **June 2 - June 8**
Unit One: Evaluation Basics 1.1 Why evaluate? 1.2 Focusing your evaluation 1.3 Words to live by	Week Two **June 9 - June 15**
Unit Two: Linking Program Development & Evaluation 2.1 Program objectives 2.2 Logic model 2.3 Creating an evaluation plan	Week Three & Four **June 16 - June 29**
Summer Break	Week Five **June 29 - July 6**
Unit Three: Observations 3.1 Observations	Week Six **July 7 - June 13**
Unit Four: Interviews and Focus Groups 4.1 Interviews 4.2 Focus groups	Week Seven **July 14 - July 20**
Unit Five: Questionnaires 5.1 Why use questionnaires? 5.2 Questionnaire design 5.3 The survey process	Week Eight **July 21 - July 27**
Unit Six: Alternative Assessment 6.1 Alternative assessment approaches 6.2 Scoring tools	Week Nine **July 28 - August 3**
Unit Seven: Data Analysis and Reporting 7.1 Qualitative data analysis 7.2 Quantitative data analysis 7.3 Reporting the results	Week Ten & Eleven **August 4 - August 17**
Culminating Assignment	Week Twelve **Due By Midnight August 22**

Content

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Reedikulous Puppet Festival and Parade

Species Protection

Content

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Successes

Participant Feedback:

I really liked the use of real examples and the ability to develop materials that I will use in my program." **Summer 2005 participant**

Evaluation of instructors:

"The instructor made this course function, in some ways better than a classroom course. I felt I was getting personal treatment on a regular basis. The comments on assignments were thorough, on-target, specific to the tasks & very helpful." **Summer 2005 participant**

Outcomes:

2005 Cohort – Increases in knowledge & confidence

2006 Cohort – 75% conducted evaluation & used results within 1 year of course.

Challenges - Attrition

Range – 20-31%; 15 courses, 4 years

Reasons – family circumstances, illness, job demands, course demands, time management, discomfort with online format

Literature –

- Up to 20% higher for online than face-face
- Even higher for online adult learners

Challenges – Basics + Attribution

- No previous experience w/ evaluation
- Lack concept of evaluation as systematic process
- Few programs have explicit measurable objectives
- Program activities unrelated to desired outcomes
- Long-term outcomes for short-duration programs

Challenges-Community

Instructor/student & student/student

Asynchronous …Time lag

Time commitment

Technology

Solutions

- Instructor-initiated emails before start
- Scavenger hunt
- Biography & profile
- Discussion board points
- Office hours; student phone calls
- Engage program stakeholders
- Cyber Café
- Chat - synchronous group assignments
- Page or email
- Start synchronous chat any time
- Optional group work
- Skype & real study groups

Needs

Opportunities for more interactions

- Online “social learning” forum
- Advanced courses
- Conference meetings

Demand, support, use from organizations & professional associations

Applied EE Program Evaluation

http://www.uwsp.edu/natres/eetap/index.aspx

Questions? Ideas?

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Sidebar photos contributed by Brian Barch

Slide design by Jenn Dillard