

Evaluation

An ongoing and systematic evaluation effort is an essential component of a comprehensive professional development system. Since professional development is about change, the role of evaluation within a professional development system is not only to provide information about the impact of professional development, but to provide data for refining and adjusting professional development activities. Evaluation should, therefore, be built into all professional development activities—and appropriate questions need to be asked both to determine the effectiveness of such activities and to identify how professional development efforts can be improved.

The purpose of professional development is to improve learner outcomes by changing instructional behavior to achieve a pre-determined goal whether in teaching adults or administering programs, in designing professional development activities, or in teaching adult students. This change process takes time. Therefore, it is unreasonable to expect that individual professional development activities will immediately result in altered long-term instructional behavior, improved learner performance, or changed organizational structures and practices. The role of evaluation, then, is not only to provide information on the impact of professional development, but also to provide data for refining and adjusting professional development activities to ensure that services can be improved on an ongoing basis.

In the [*Professional Development Resource Guide for Adult Educators*](#), Sherman and Kutner offer a helpful framework for evaluating process and impact of your professional development system. The approach was developed by D. Kirkpatrick primarily for evaluating business and industry training programs, consisting largely of the workshop approach, but many of the concepts and aspects of his design are applicable to a broader base of adult programs. The four stages of evaluation are intended to measure: (1) reaction, (2) learning, (3) behavior and actions, and (4) results. If you would like more information, click [here](#).