## Evaluating Faith Formation

There are a variety of ways to incorporate feedback and evaluation in faith formation. It can be as simple as a two-question evaluation at the conclusion of a program or activity: “What benefited you?” and “What could we do to improve the experience?” It can be as extensive as an evaluation of all faith formation offerings in a seasonal network.

The method that you use needs to match the tool and the questions you are asking. To evaluate a season or a year of programming you will want something structured. Creating an evaluation form on SurveyMonkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)) gives you a way to ask multiple questions (structured and open-ended). invite people to complete the survey, and then have SurveyMonkey compile the results into a report for everyone to review and analyze. You can send participants an e-mail or text with the survey link (URL) or post the link on your website. You can also use Google Forms ([www.google.com/forms/about](http://www.google.com/forms/about)) to create a similar type of online evaluation. When creating a survey, try to limit the number of essay questions. People prefer the multiple choice/rating scales.

Some of the more popular methods for conducting an evaluation include:

1. Conducting interviews with selected participants
2. Conducting focus groups of ten to twelve participants
3. Designing and disseminating a survey with structured-response evaluation questions and open-ended questions using Survey Monkey ( https://www.surveymonkey.com) or Google Forms ([www.google.com/forms](http://www.google.com/forms) /about)
4. Conducting a poll or survey on Facebook or conducting a chat on Facebook at a set time to solicit feedback
5. Inviting people to upload a photo, story, or video to Facebook or Instagram describing the experience of participating in the program or describing what they learned.
6. Inviting people to create a video describing their experience, using a couple of prepared questions, and then posting the videos to your church’s YouTube channel and/or uploading them to your church website

### Focus Groups

Use a technique known as a **Feedback Capture Grid** to capture and analyze participant feedback—in person or online using Zoom or Google Meet. If you gather in person, have two people lead the focus group—one person can write response summaries and one person can facilitate the questions. You can also record the focus group and then transcribe the audio.

If you use Zoom, it can create a video and audio version of your meeting. Audio transcription automatically transcribes the audio of a meeting or webinar that you record to the cloud. After this transcript is processed, it appears as a separate VTT file in the list of recorded meetings. The transcript is divided into sections, each with a timestamp that shows how far into the recording that portion of the text was recorded. You can edit the text to more accurately capture the words, or to add capitalization and punctuation, which are not captured by the transcript.

Invite people who participated in programming into a focus group of ten to twelve people. Create a four-quadrant grid on newsprint or a whiteboard to capture people’s feedback in four different areas. Label each quadrant with a key word representing the question you are asking.

* The upper left quadrant is for things people found beneficial and really engaged them.
* The upper right quadrant is for suggestions for improvement.
* The lower left quadrant is for questions or challenges that emerged from people’s experience.
* The lower right quadrant is for ways that people are going to live their faith because of the experience or ideas that the experiences spurred in them.

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For **online seasonal evaluation**: Develop an evaluation form on SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com) and provide a link on the faith formation website and church website to the online evaluation. Design the online evaluation in two sections: an evaluation of seasonal programming and an evaluation of the website design and usability. Be sure to have people indicate if they did not participate in a program by adding a response to each question such as “did not participate.” Send an email to all those who participated in one or more programs and activities in the season and ask them to go online to compete the evaluation.

### Types of Evaluation Questions

Here are examples of evaluation questions that can be used to construct an evaluation form or a survey instrument. For a survey, try to limit the number of essay questions. People prefer the multiple choice/rating scales.

#### **Level 1: Reaction**

*How do participants react to the program, or better, what is the measure of their satisfaction?*

1. What is your overall feeling after participating in this program? (Circle all that apply.)

Enthused Astounded Satisfied Indifferent Ambivalent Encouraged

Uneasy Threatened Discouraged Affirmed Challenged Enriched

1. I was pleased by/with. . .
2. I was disappointed by/with. . .
3. One thing I found most helpful in this program. . .
4. One of the biggest benefits from participating in this program was. . .
5. Please rate your level of satisfaction with the program:   
   (Develop specific elements of your program for people to evaluate)

1 – Not satisfied

2 – Somewhat satisfied

3 – Satisfied

4 – Very satisfied

5 – Extremely satisfied

#### **Level 2: Learning**

*To what extent has learning occurred?*

* Understanding the concepts, principles, and techniques being taught.
* Developing and/or improving skills.
* Changing attitudes.

1. One way I can personally use what I learned from my participation is. . .
2. One way this program had an impact on my life. . .
3. What understandings, skills, tools, or ideas do you have now that you did not have at the beginning of the program?
4. What recommendations would you make for improving the program?
5. Identify several ways you can incorporate your learning from the program into your life.
6. List three actions you would like to undertake as a result of your participation.

#### **Level 3: Behavior**

*The what extent has behavior changed as a result of the program?*

#### **Level 4: Results**

*To what extent have results occurred because of the program?*

1. Identify several ways you have incorporated your learning in your life.

2. List three actions you have undertaken as a result of your participation.

3. What have you done differently in your life because of your participation?

4. As a result of your participation, what do you want to learn or do next?

#### Sample Evaluation Forms

#### **Level 1. Reaction Sheet: Sample Questions**

1. What is your overall feeling after participating in this program/activity? (Circle all that apply.) Enthused, Astounded, Satisfied, Indifferent, Ambivalent, Encouraged, Uneasy, Threatened, Discouraged, Affirmed, Challenged, Enriched.
2. I was pleased by/with . . .
3. I was disappointed by/with . . .
4. One thing I found most helpful in this program/activity . . .
5. One of the biggest benefits from participating in this program/activity was . . .
6. This program/activity was . . . very helpful, somewhat helpful, not very helpful, not at all helpful.
7. What recommendations would you make for improving the program?
8. Circle the number that best represents your evaluation of the program/activity. Use a rating scale of 1—strongly disagree, 2—disagree, 3—agree, and 4—strongly agree or a rating scale of: 1—not satisfied, 2—somewhat satisfied, 3—satisfied, 4—very satisfied, and 5—extremely satisfied.

* I feel that I will be able to use what I learned.
* The program/activity was interesting and engaging.
* The program/activity encouraged participation, questions, and practical application.
* The schedule and length of the program was appropriate.
* The program/activity respected my learning style.
* The program/activity offered a variety of learning activities and a variety of ways to learn.
* The program/activity helped me apply my learning to daily life.
* (Add specific features and content of the program/activity for people to evaluate.)

###### Level 1. Unfinished Sentences

This strategy involves asking unfinished sentences that participants can complete. You can add specific content that you want people to reflect upon. Here is a sample list to get you started.

* *I learned…*
* *I discovered…*
* *I was surprised…*
* *I was moved by…*
* *I felt…*
* *I wonder about...*
* *I need to know more about...*
* *I was reminded that…*
* *I’m excited by…*
* *I’m challenged by… or challenged to…*
* *I need to remember… or remember to…*

#### **Level 2. Learning: Sample Questions**

1. What understandings, skills, tools, or ideas do you have now that you did not have at the beginning of the program?
2. Identify several ways you can incorporate your learning from the program in your life/family/work.
3. As a result of your learning in the program, how would you rate your current level of understanding and skill in the following areas?
4. understanding \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
    (low level) 1 2 3 4 5 (high level)
5. utilizing or applying \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(low level) 1 2 3 4 5 (high level)

1. Please rate the quality of each of the Institute topics/sessions/features.

(Rating scale: 1 = poor, 2 = adequate, 3 = good, 4 = very good)

1. Topic 1. 1 2 3 4
2. Topic 2. 1 2 3 4

Please identify the topics/sessions that were the most enjoyable/enriching and/or beneficial to you and give a brief explanation why?

Session/Topic Comments

1. What recommendations would you make for improving the program?
2. What understandings, skills, tools, or ideas do you have now that you did not have at the beginning of the program?

###### Level 2. Reflection Questions/Learning Journal

Create a worksheet that includes the following information:

*To reflect on what you have learned, identify the insights you have gained and the potential application to your life.*

* *Insights (What I’ve Learned)*
* *­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­Applications (How I’ll Use What I’ve Learned)*
* *Questions (What I Need to Learn or Explore Further)*

#### **Level 3. Behavior: Sample Questions**

###### At End of Learning Program

* Identify several ways you can incorporate your learning from the program in your life.
* As a result of your learning, what do you want to learn next?

###### After Several Weeks/Months:

As a result of your learning in the program, how have you integrated the following knowledge and skills in your work?

* 1. understanding \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(limited) 1 2 3 4 5 (extensive)

* 1. utilizing or applying \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(limited) 1 2 3 4 5 (extensive)

* 1. etc.

###### Action Plan

Create a worksheet that includes the following five steps to creating an action plan.

1. *List three actions you would like to undertake as a result of your participation in the preparation and event.*
2. *Choose the action that you would like to plan to do first and enter it.*
3. *List the potential roadblocks to implementing this action.*
4. *Discuss with another person or your small group how you might overcome these roadblocks.*
5. *Describe in detail the action you will undertake and the steps you will take to ensure that it will happen.*

A shorter version of an action plan uses a three-column format:

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| Actions  *List several actions that you can begin living right now.* | Potential Roadblocks  *List potential roadblocks to implementing your actions.* | First Steps  *Name the first steps you need to take to accomplish the action.* |

###### A Practice Plan

Create a worksheet that helps people identify the new practices.

1. *I want to use \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (practice) in this situation: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*
2. *The roadblocks that could get in the way: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*
3. *Sample script or plan for using the skill: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*
4. *I will make my first attempt by (date): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

###### A “To Do” List

Create a worksheet designed as a “to do” list that helps people identify the new practices for living the Catholic faith they learned from participation in the preparation program and event. You can begin the “to do” list with: *Remember to…*

You can produce the “to do” list as reminder cards (file cards) that people can place on their desks, post at work or on the refrigerator. Give each person (or family) a pack of cards designed as reminder cards that they can personalize.

###### I Hereby Resolve….

At the conclusion of a preparation program and/or event, ask the participants to write letters to themselves indicating what they (personally) are taking away from the experience and what steps they intend to take to apply what you learned. Ask each participant to put his or her letter in a self-addressed envelope and to seal the envelope. Ask each person to place a Post-it note on the envelope with the date on which he or she wants letter mailed. Promise to send the letters to the participants on the dates specified.