Responding to the Needs: Tailoring Programming to International Postdocs for Measurable Outcomes
Welcome!

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Objectives

...explore the individual needs international postdocs experience
...gain awareness of the institutional value-add to tailoring professional development opportunities to targeted audiences, international postdocs in particular
...explore and engage with a framework of needs driven programming and its benefits
...set long and short term goals around needs driven & tailored professional development training
Definition of Postdoc

“...Is an individual who has received a doctoral degree (or equivalent) and is engaged in a temporary and defined period of mentored advanced training to enhance the professional skills and research independence needed to pursue his or her chosen career path.”

NPA Fact Sheet, February 1, 2016
According to the 2017 NPA Institutional Policy Report, roughly 50% of postdocs are considered “international.” This is about 40,000 postdocs.
Differentiated Instruction
Trainers can differentiate...

 according to learners’ ...

to increase...

Content  Process  Product

Needs  Readiness  Interests

Growth  Motivation  Efficiency
Turn and Talk:
What individual needs do international postdocs and scholars bring to your institution?
Cultural & Linguistic Needs for International Scholars 2018 Survey

Distributed through NPA in 2018 & received 937 responses

93% are Postdoctoral Researchers (see Figure 2).

Participants come from 84 different countries, primarily China (N = 159), India (N = 140), France (N = 48), Spain (N = 47).

Figure 2. Sample educational level or professional status
27.3% of respondents rated themselves lower than a 3 when rating their “Confidence in English communication in professional contexts.”

Figure 3. Confidence in English communication in professional contexts
Learner Goal Statement Samples

In Fall 2018 and Spring 2019, we worked with 30 international biomedical postdocs at an elite institution to improve their English proficiency and fluency for academic and professional purposes.

Each learner completed a goal statement prior to starting the 6-week course (24 instructional hours + approx 12 hours of outside prep)
Need Statement Samples

“I always have problems when I [am] communicating with my lab mates and also presenting in our lab...I always cannot follow well when talk[ing] with others” Learner A

“I feel difficulty discussing with my lab member, and I feel stress[ed]. I [am] strongly eager to improve my English ability and be able to talk and discuss with my lab members about my study freely. My weakness is less vocabulary, and I am not good at arguing my opinion strongly.” Learner B
Need Statement Samples

“I personally noticed many times that my audience was not receiving 100% of my message. It was frustrating to have clear ideas of what I wanted to communicate but not being able to do it properly.” **Learner C**

“Language is a big barrier for my professional promotion….Because of different cultural background, it’s difficult for me to have an appropriate word in a specific situation. And presenting in a second language, because of lack of self confidence, I have some subconscious reactions to tension. However, I am a quick learner and eager to learn new things.” **Learner D**
“...delivering clear and concise lectures in English has been a difficult task for me. Preparing and delivering lectures in English have been usually long tasks, due to lack of specific vocabulary and also due to the tendency of translating everything literally to Portuguese... In a sense, if I had the chance to speak clearer I would be more understandable, bring the name of the institution where I work forward more often and ultimately help more colleagues to help more patients abroad and nationally.” Learner E
Addressing Learner Need

70% said their institutions offered general professional development on communication training, and 56% said that they attend workshops on communication when offered/

But of those that reported they attend, 40% said the workshops do NOT address their needs as a non-native English speaker.
Participants were largely uninformed about the English language skills supports their institutions offered.

Nearly 58% said they did not know what types of support were available to them.
Barriers to attending trainings

Figure 9. Participants’ barriers to attending trainings/workshops
Turn and Talk:
Do these barriers to attending trainings correspond to your personal observations at your institution?
Interest in workshop topics for non-native English-speaking scholars

Figure 10. Participants' interest in future workshops for non-native English-speaking scholars
“I want help with pronunciation”

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<tr>
<th>Segmentals</th>
<th>Suprasegmentals</th>
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<td>Vowels</td>
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<td>rhythm</td>
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<td>thought groups</td>
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Not just for production, but also for input
Thought Groups

How to NOT Sound Like a Robot When Speaking English
Pragmatics / Thought Groups

Thought Groups for Phone Number (267)-928-2911

3 Thought Groups
Two six seven nine two eight two nine one one

4 Thought Groups
Two six seven nine two eight twenty-nine eleven

Wrong Thought Groups
Two six seven nine two eight two nine one one
Syllable Stress

**Directions:** Listen to your instructor pronounce the word. Underline the syllable with the most stress.

1. collaboration  
2. deficiency  
3. metastasize  
4. analytical

5. strategic  
6. strategize  
7. parameter  
8. analyze

**A stressed syllable is:** longer, lounder, and higher in pitch
Turn and Talk:
Do you program differently for your international postdocs? Do you analyze and respond to their individual needs? How? Why/why not?
NPA Core Competencies/IDP

NPA Core Competencies

IDP-NIH
To Consider:
What is the value add to considering a needs driven analysis for international postdocs when programming?
Training Design Process

1. Research Needs
2. Set goals: Guided by Core Competencies/IDP
3. Analyze Findings
4. Create Plan
5. Conduct Training
6. Evaluate & Analyze
Why Needs?
Effective training is needs driven

What training & human resources researchers recommend

- linking training to relevant outcomes
- evaluating programs to assess effectiveness and prove worth
- including three distinct phases in program design: needs analysis, delivery and evaluation

What often happens....

- Ad hoc processes

### Malcolm Knowles: Adult Learning Theory

#### Children
1. are dependent on adults/instructors for guidance and learning
2. have little experience to draw from
3. need external motivation
4. follow teacher-selected levels and subjects

#### Adults
1. are self-directed
2. use past experiences as a resource for learning
3. guided by internal motivation to learn
Training Design Process: Step #1 Research Needs

Identify the gaps between where trainees currently are and where they want to be.

Ask specific questions through surveys, focus groups and conversations to key stakeholders: trainees, their colleagues and mentors, and their future employers.

Turn and Talk: How do you research needs? How often do you do this? What do you do with the information?
Effective training is needs driven

Some Questions about Needs Analysis (Needs Assessment)

**What?** Conducting research to determine what is needed to close the gap between current state and desired state

**Who?** All stakeholders

**How?** Surveys, interviews, observations, focus groups, literature review, etc.

**When?** Before deciding on how to allocate resources

**Why?** To make all of your training and development activities meaningful and relevant to both participants and institutions.
Considerations

- Given objectives and considering constraints, how can we close the gap between needs and goals?
- Who can provide the training? Internal vs. external capacity?
- Can we develop partnerships?
Training Design Process: Step #6 Evaluation & Analysis

How do we measure if we’ve met our objectives?

Sample Evaluation- Questions Tailored to Workshop Goals

What do we do with that information?
Recap - Our Suggestions
And...always encourage goal setting around communication

Set one programming goal that you can achieve in the
next week.

next 6 months.

next year.
Thank you!
Training Design Process

1. Research Needs
2. Analyze Findings
3. Set goals: Guided by Core Competencies/IDP
4. Create Plan
5. Conduct Training
6. Evaluate & Reflect