



Evaluation Report: Academy for Conservation Training 2006

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Program Profile	
Program Description:	The Academy for Conservation Training organized a three week conservation training program for zoo educators at the Chengdu Zoo in China. The program was headed by the Zoo Atlanta Conservation Education Division and advised by a committee of U.S. zoo educators. The first week of the program consisted of a conservation education primer. During the second week, participants were trained in how to conduct youth conservation education camps. In the final week of the program, participants gained hands-on experience by implementing a youth conservation education camp.
Program Goals:	The Academy for Conservation Training (ACT) designed the conservation training program to address the following three goals: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To create a “train-the-trainers” opportunity for zoo educators at the Chengdu Zoo to prepare them to facilitate the ACT workshop with their colleagues. 2. To provide Chinese Association of Zoological Gardens (CAZG) educators with the training and tools they need to design, implement and evaluate engaging and effective conservation education programs for key audiences. 3. To create a professional network for zoo educators in China.
Program Funding:	Corporate funding for this program was provided by UPS.
Program Links:	http://www.zooatlanta.org/conservation_education.htm
Evaluation Profile	
Evaluation Goals & Questions:	<p>Evaluation questions were developed to address each of the program goals discussed above. Evaluation questions related to goal 1 included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How satisfied were participants with the workshop(s)? • To what degree did the training/workshop/camp change participants’ interest, engagement, intent, and where appropriate, comfort? • What did participants learn? • What are the skills participants believe they gained? • What do participants intend to do when they return to their zoos? <p>Evaluation questions related to goal 2 included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the perceived value of the tools provided? • What is the reported use of the tools provided? • What is the perception of camps in terms of value, usefulness, practicality, etc.? • Do participants feel prepared to implement a camp at their zoo? • Were campers satisfied with the camp? • What were the outcomes of the camp? <p>Evaluation questions related to goal 3 included:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are participants’ perceptions of the “field” of zoo education? • What are participants’ perceptions of “role of self” in the profession of zoo education?
Evaluation Methods:	<p>Questionnaires and daily activity logs were used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from staff, program participants, and camp participants.</p> <p>Staff completed daily activity logs during the week one conservation education workshop. During the week two conservation camp training, staff participated in daily debriefing sessions to identify which aspects of the training worked well and which could be improved.</p> <p>A pre/post evaluation design was used to evaluate many questions related to the week one conservation education workshop, such as participants’ attitudes toward animals, conservation education, and the role of zoos, as well as participants’ perceptions of their ability to conduct conservation education. A retrospective pretest was used to investigate participants’ knowledge of conservation related topics and teaching methods. Participant satisfaction with the program was also assessed on the posttest questionnaires administered at the end of the conservation education workshop (week one), the camp training workshop (week two), and the hands-on camp implementation (week three).</p> <p>Camp participants completed a pre/post questionnaire designed to assess their perceived knowledge of various conservation related issues.</p>
Instruments:	A complete set of evaluation instruments is available in the report.
How were results used?	The evaluation results led to a scaled down version of the program, with changes to the depth and focus of various topics as well as the length of the program, which was shortened from 3 weeks to 10 days. In addition, more detailed information is being collected about participants’ attitudes before the program and more time has been dedicated to interactive/collaborative learning and to skills application activities.
Evaluation Cost:	The evaluation funding was included as part of the program funding, and cost approximately \$6,500. The costs were to cover instrument development, domestic travel (to advisory board meetings and planning sessions), instrument testing, and data entry for analysis. The total did not include costs related to travel/lodging, program staff time, or other materials such as training resources and onsite duplication.
Evaluation Insights:	<p>What worked well? Having specific evaluation questions was extremely helpful in guiding the evaluation, especially when developing instruments.</p> <p>What were important evaluation “lessons learned”? As evaluators, we can be completely surprised, even when we’ve done our homework. In this case, the quality of participants and the commitment to action was overwhelmingly positive. Information from sources prior to the program suggested otherwise. This supports the demand for needs assessments for all audiences—something we did not include in the evaluation plan.</p> <p>What could have been done differently? There was a need for more qualitative data from participants, but due to the need for interpretation (Chinese to English), interviews were not feasible. Given this challenge, it would have been useful to train future instructors in the use of interviews for evaluation.</p>
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