

LEARNING HANDBOOK

Guidance and tools to support systematic learning before, during and after project activity in health and care

LEARNING

Learning at events

Attending external events, both in person and virtually, can be extremely informative for both the individuals attending and their teams and organisations. This guidance aims to support you to get the most out of your time at any given event and help you to share what you've learned with both your team and organisation.

Before the event

- **Finalise your mission brief**
Okay, so it may not be as rigid as that, but understanding exactly why you are going to an event and what for will help you to a) know what you're looking for when you get there and b) pass on the right information and learning when you're back in the office. Why not ask your manager or colleagues why they want you to go and align it with items in your professional development plan.
- **Create a list of all speakers and the topics they will be covering**
Many events and conferences will supply you with a timetable that will outline the speakers, workshops or discussions that will be taking place. If not, create your own timetable that makes sense to you. Doing this will help you to prioritise the sessions you'll be attending – it is recommended that you talk to members of your team and, where possible, align the event or conference topics with the work that is currently ongoing to maximise the relevance and benefits of attending.
- **Coordinate**
If more than one delegate is attending from the same team or organisation, it is best practice to coordinate diaries to maximise event coverage. You will learn more if you attend different seminars or workshops than if you all attend one.
- **Network internally**
It helps to know what type of intelligence you are hoping to gather. Networking within your team or organisation can help you come away with particular topics or questions that may guide your learning throughout your time at an event.
- **Set up reminders**
It can be useful to set up reminders in your phone to prompt you to head to particular talks or workshops – this ensures you are able to explore or network in the gaps between relevant sessions.
- **Get social**
Having a social media presence can help you to connect with presenters and delegates leading up to, during and after an event. If you do not have a social media account, it is advised you create one and familiarise yourself with it. We would recommend Twitter as this is often the most popular real-time method used at events and amongst delegates.

During the event

- **Connect virtually**

Most large events now use social media to inform, connect and get realtime feedback from delegates. It is recommended that you connect virtually by following the event via social media – even if you are there in person. Some speakers will ask for questions via platforms such as Twitter and you can get an insight into the aspects of the event you are unable to access, or sessions you are unable to attend. You can also connect with other delegates via social media and use these forms of communication after the event to maintain connections.

- **Download the app**

Some of the larger, more established conferences and events will have a related app that will contain up to date information about key note speakers, workshops and seminars, in addition to maps and other interesting information. If the event does have an app – download it.

- **Connect in person**

Most events will have designated sessions that encourage interaction and networking between delegates with similar interests, however it can be just as beneficial to network with those who have differing interests, or those who work in different sectors. It is useful to have an elevator speech to hand so that you can convey the work you are currently involved in, in a very short amount of time.

- **Ask questions!**

Whilst they are becoming much more interactive, events with large numbers of delegates can breed a passive audience and a one-way content flow. Asking questions will ensure you get the most out of the experience and can tailor the learning to your team's work. You can also refer to the questions your team have submitted.

- **Make notes**

Writing down notes is the most traditional and one of the most helpful methods of capturing the content of the event. It is often particularly useful to note down quotes that are specific to the work you are involved in, or those quotes that have had an impact on you. These can not only help to jog your memory when it comes to the write up, but it can help to bring a more personable feel to your take back.

- **Snap and steal**

Take as many freebies as possible from the event - and we don't just mean the pens. Take leaflets, flyers, booklets (with permission) and also, take pictures. Not only will you then have notes and ideas to take back to your team, but you will also have visual materials and physical resources to share – they may also jog your memory when it comes to sharing with the team.

After the event

- **Connect ... again!**

It is extremely beneficial to connect after the event with those people you have met during it. This helps to establish a relationship – it is also recommended that you connect with the speakers, particularly if you still have unanswered questions that could influence your work.

- **Collect**

There are many resources that are made available after an event has occurred, these often include slides that have been presented and videos of the sessions, collecting these will not only help you to feedback to your team, but can save you a lot of time – if you can disseminate learning and signpost colleagues to materials rather than explain the whole presentation, you will save a lot of time and effort. Make sure you know who organised the event so you can keep on track of their publications in the weeks after an event.
- **Categorise**

Understanding how your notes, pictures and quotes can be categorised and aligned to particular workstreams helps you to relay the relevant information to the right people. This will also help you to understand how best to present the information – for example, if you have a large amount of relevant pictures and diagrams within a particular category, it may help to present this using slideshare or other visual mediums, whereas categories with words and quotes as the majority of the content, it could be better to present it as a summary report, or a blog post.
- **Collaborate**

If you went to the event with other members of your team or organisation, it's useful at this point to meet and share the learning within the group of attendees. You can therefore then catch up on any sessions that you missed and synthesise the information to gain a better understanding of how the learning is, as a whole, related to your work. It's also useful to relay your learning to a small group before sharing with the whole team as you'll be able to gain valuable feedback from the small group as a 'first draft' explanation.
- **Discuss**

Having takeaways from an event that you can see yourself being able to immediately implement can be very exciting, however it may be worth having a quick discussion with the close members of your team to understand whether or not you could implement these in a different or more broad way to maximise impact.

Further reading:

- EDUCAUSE – [Ideas to action: 10 hints for getting the most from a conference](#)
- Inc.Com – [How to get the most out of a conference](#)

