

RHR CONSORTIUM MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROGRAM

***WORKSHOP IV: EXPLORING PROGRAMMING TO ADDRESS GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE AND USING POWERPOINT TO COMMUNICATE***

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Conference Presentation Guidelines

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How many times have you been at a conference and looked forward to a presentation only to be shown slides of tables or graphs that you could not read? Or presented with transparencies with print so small, you had to squint in order to see them?

Now it's your turn. You're giving a presentation in front of colleagues and strangers. You're excited and nervous. Your work deserves to be presented well and the audience deserves a good, clear presentation.

Using good visual aids during an oral presentation serves several purposes. They illustrate the points made in the talk. They help the audience follow the presentation. They provide a visual complement to the spoken words. They help the presenter keep on track. They hold the audience's interest.

Poorly designed visual aids confuse the audience. As they peer at the slides, they miss what the speaker is saying. They miss the main points of the talk.

Note: There are two aspects to presenting a paper at a meeting or conference: content and presentation. The presenter must pay ample attention to both. If you have nothing interesting to say, the best visual aids won't help. By the same token, the importance of significant project findings can be lost in a confusing or unappealing presentation.

How can you ensure that your visual aids will enhance and clarify your presentation?

These Guidelines offer suggestions on creating effective slides and transparencies as visual aids.

Elements of Good Slides and Transparencies

➤ **Color**

Slides the key is **light** letters or figures on a **dark** background

- ◆ Use white or yellow on blue or black.
- ◆ Avoid dark red, blue or green on a blue or black background. These colors do not provide enough contrast and make the text or graphics difficult to read.
- ◆ Use solid colors (versus shading) on graphs or pie charts for better effect.

Transparencies the key is **dark** letters or figures on a **light (clear)** background

- ◆ Printing transparencies on a laser or inkjet printer (or photocopying laser or inkjet printed sheets onto transparencies) are simple ways to produce very nice visual aids. Good dot matrix printers can also be used.
- ◆ Any dark colors -- for example, dark red, blue, green if you have access to a color printer or color photocopier -- also show up very nicely on a transparency.
- ◆ Avoid handwritten transparencies for formal presentations.

➤ **Font** refers to the appearance (typeface) of the letters. All computer software offer font options. Note that different software and printers have different fonts accessible to them. *The names also vary, so go by general appearance.*

- ◆ Choose simple, clear fonts rather than fonts with curly or elaborate lettering.

- ◆ Best choices for both slides and transparencies are

 - Univers which looks like this.

 - CG Omega which looks like this.

 - Antique Olive which looks like this.

 - Arial which looks like this.

- ◆ Acceptable choices include

 - CG Times which looks like this.

 - GV terminal which looks like this.

 - Times New Roman which looks like this.

- ◆ Poor choices include

 - Coronet which looks like this*

 - Brush which looks like this.*

 - Lucida Calligraphy which looks like this.

 - Onyx which looks like this.

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- **Size of the print.** Print size is measured in points. The larger the point size, the larger the print.

- ◆ Most standard documents (such as this one) are printed in 12 point print. This is far too small for transparencies. *Do not just make a transparency from a regular typed page of print.*
- ◆ Absolute minimum size for a slide is 26 point. 30 point and larger are better. Titles should be 36-40 point. Text and bullets should be 28-36 point.

This is Arial 12 point.

This is Arial 18 point.

This is Arial 24 point.

This is Arial 30 point.

This is Arial 36 pt.

- ◆ Using **bold**, underline, double underline or *italics* can make a word stand out even if it is the same point size as the other words on the slide.

This is Arial 30 pt. bold.

Underlining can emphasize a word.

- ◆ The same point size in different fonts can be different actual sizes, so make sure the actual size is large enough.

This is Arial 24 point.

This is Coronet Italic 24 point.

- **Composition** refers to the words, graphs, tables or other images that are put on the slide.

If you are tempted to say to the audience, “I don’t know if you can see this clearly, ...” then the print is too small or the slide is too busy. *Do not use the slide!!* Why show it if the audience can’t read it?

Text

- ◆ Present the points you want to make in a few words on the slide or transparency. The slide is a guide for the audience and an outline for you. Your spoken comments explain and elaborate on the points on the slide.
- ◆ Use the “6x6” Rule for slides:
 - No more than 6 lines of text
 - No more than 6 words per line
- ◆ The slide is not a script. You do not need complete sentences and you should not read to the audience what is written on the slide. If the slides are that detailed, they can read them for themselves. They don’t need you.
- ◆ Bullets, indenting and space between lines can make slides easier to follow. (This document uses these techniques.) Use numbers only to show rank or sequence.

Graphs

- ◆ Make sure all graphs and diagrams are simple and clearly labeled. Avoid 3-D graphs.
- ◆ Usually, each graph should illustrate one result. Use a series of slides on different slides to show multiple results.
- ◆ If you want to compare data on the graph, limit the information to two or, at most, three lines or bars.
- ◆ Use the graph to make a sharp visual point. For presentation purposes, a graph does not need to be as detailed as it should be in an article or report. A presentation graph should have a clear title and clear legend (labels for the bars or lines.) It may not need detailed scales on the axes or each point on the line labeled. This would make it too busy. So, for example, rather than labeling each time period on the x-axis (“Jan-Mar 1993, April-June 1993, July-Sept 1993,” etc, as you would do in a report),

it might just be labeled “1993-1995.” Similarly, rather than labeling every observation on a line, just the first and last points might be identified.

Tables

- ◆ Tables are difficult to present clearly on a transparency or slide because even simple tables contain substantial information. For example, in examining a simple 2x2 table, the audience has to absorb what the table is about, the row and column meanings, the four table entries and they also have to assimilate the relationship among the numbers. This requires a lot of processing. While they are doing that, they are not listening to you.
- ◆ If you are discussing only a few cells of a table, highlight those by shading them or circling them by hand to draw the audience’s attention where you want it.
- ◆ If possible, make the point in a graph or in a simple comparison of figures rather than in a table.
- ◆ If you do use tables, the recommendations regarding clear titles and labels listed under *Graphs* also apply.

Photos/Slides

- ◆ Photos only apply to slide presentations, as they do not reproduce well on transparencies.
- ◆ Adding a few photos can enliven a presentation. They give a strong visual image of the project site. They can illustrate geography (terrain and roads), state of health facilities, project activities (e.g., survey field work, training.)
- ◆ Do not turn the presentation into a travelogue. If you include photos, only use those that help make a point that is relevant to the presentation.

➤ Other suggestions

- ◆ ***In preparing your presentation, pare down your results, findings, implications, conclusions and recommendations to a maximum of three concise statements you want the audience to remember when they leave.*** This is your conclusion, which should be presented as brief statements on a transparency. So, for example, though you may have explained that your project reduced hospital CFR by 25% between 1991 and 1995 through improved infrastructure, training, blood bank, and drug supply, the audience will never remember all that information. The important conclusion, or ‘take-home message,’ might be that ‘Hospital CFR can be reduced.’ As they leave, you want them to think, “That project showed that hospital CFR can be reduced. I’ll have to find out more about how they did that.”
- ◆ ***Three is a magic number.*** In 15 minutes, people will hear and remember no more than three points, so it is important to decide the most important “messages” or the three most important points you want to communicate. You then fit these main messages into the overall framework.
- ◆ ***Results are the heart of the matter.*** Most presenters lose time talking about the geographic, demographic or historical context of their research. They go overboard explaining the problems and objectives. They often go into too much detail about the method used, though a solid explanation of method is important. What people **really want to hear**, however, is results. What changed? What did you discover? What difference did it make?
- ◆ ***Practice makes perfect.*** There is a saying that it takes 5 minutes to prepare a 2-hour presentation and 2 hours to prepare a 5-minute presentation. It’s true! Practicing in front of the mirror works, but if you have a colleague who can listen, keep time and offer suggestions, it is even better. Knowing and rehearsing exactly what you want to say means a more natural delivery (versus making a speech or reading directly from a prepared paper), greater confidence, improved ability to speak clearly and without jargon, and, most importantly, better connection with your audience.

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- ◆ ***Practice your presentation with the slides or transparencies.*** Make sure you know when to switch to the next slide. Mark the changes in your notes. If someone is helping you with your transparencies, make sure they practice with you.
 - ◆ ***Make sure you know how to operate all of the equipment you will need.*** If someone will help you with the presentation, make sure he or she knows too.
 - ◆ ***If possible, practice in the actual room where the presentation will be made.*** Know where the LCD projector or overhead machine should be placed for clearest projection.
 - ◆ ***Number the transparencies so that when (not if!) they fall on the ground, they can be quickly re-ordered.***
 - ◆ ***When preparing transparencies, use only the top 1/2 or 2/3 of the page.*** Anything written on the bottom of the transparency cannot be seen by audience members beyond the first row, even if it appears in the projector window.
 - ◆ ***If PowerPoint slides are used, it is a good idea to make a backup of the presentation on transparencies.***

Most people are nervous when they stand up in front of a conference audience to present a paper. If a problem arises, it's hard to think on your feet. Your best chance for success is to prevent an awkward situation by ensuring that no problems arise: make sure your visual aids are well-designed, ready and tested so that the presentation can proceed smoothly.