Community Values Feedback Script

This tool, based on the [Communication Recovery Model](#), was developed by Educopia staff to support ourselves and our community members in responding to feedback in areas that can feel very personal. It's fairly easy to receive feedback on logistical matters ("I didn't like the food at this conference.") it can be much more difficult to hear that you have done something that doesn't support your community's values ("I felt unwelcome at this event."). It can also be difficult to respond to that feedback, both in the moment and through follow-up.

Purpose

This 'script' reflects one possible process for receiving, responding to, and following up on difficult feedback in a community setting. It may be helpful to community leaders, event organizers, and others who are in positions of authority or responsibility within the community. It can help you to navigate difficult conversations and remove the pressure of feeling that you have to solve the problem on your own, in the moment. It can also help you to set up a process within the community for responding to and learning from feedback. This is, of course, not the only way to handle these conversations, but we feel it provides a useful starting point.

Assumptions

This tool is based on the assumption that values are always aspirational, in that we are not going to live up them perfectly at every moment. We are all human, and we all make mistakes. What is important is how we respond to and learn from them. Another important assumption of this guide is that the feedback being given is non-urgent. *If there is an immediate threat to someone's well-being or safety then this process needs to fork into a call for first responders (ambulance, police, etc.), a Code of Conduct request, or other formal community process.*

Detailed Script for Responding to Feedback

Yes, this is a lot of steps! It's great to read them over before an event or other opportunity for feedback, but there is a brief, reminder version below that you can keep accessible to help you remember in the moment.

1. **A community member, event participant, etc. gives you feedback related to community values.** They may or may not refer to a values statement specifically,

but their feedback suggests an area where the community isn't fully living up to its ideals.

2. **Take a moment to be quiet and acknowledge your emotions, which may include feeling attacked or defensive.** Acknowledge your own humanity. It is more than "okay" to pause, feel, and think - it is necessary.

3. **Accept the feedback, graciously.** Say thank you, summarize what they said, repeat it back to them. Doing this explicitly conveys that you heard what they said. It also creates time for them to consider whether they communicated clearly what they felt was most important for you to hear.

4. **Acknowledge your impact and your intent.** This step starts by "owning your impact," acknowledging that as a community leader or event organizer you are in a position of trust and that your actions and/or the actions of the community have negatively impacted this individual. That acknowledgment of positionality alone conveys sensitivity to very real power dynamics (leaders/participants, majorities/minorities, etc.) at play within communities. The step ends by reaffirming (as much for yourself as your participant) your commitment to community values and your intention to live those values, without making any immediate commitments to follow-up action.
    i. *Example: "Our goal is to make community spaces safer. We acknowledge that [we had the impact they said we had]."*
    ii. *Example: "Our goal is to make spaces more inclusive, and we did not provide ASL interpretation at this event."*
    iii. *Example: "Our goal is to make our communities inclusive spaces, and the percentage of people of color is low - we have a representational problem."*

5. **Apologize**. Whether you are *directly responsible* for the negative impact felt by the participant, you as a community leader are *accountable*. An apology is simply the next step in acknowledging the participant's humanity and the impact that the event/incident/exchange has on them directly. Apologies are a critical part of relationship repair.

6. **Ask questions for clarification, or for more information as appropriate.** This step moves beyond the acknowledgment of humanity, accountability and repair - and shifts towards a deeper understanding of the context surrounding the feedback. Deeper understanding is critical to determine whether and what to **do**. If action is warranted, more information will help you determine whether action can be taken quickly and easily, or whether action will require more planning, time, resources, and buy-in from additional stakeholders.
    i. *Example: "Are there specific things that we could have done differently?"*
    ii. *Example: "Are there specific people that we could reach out to?"*
    iii. *Example: "What would have made you feel more welcomed and taken care of?"*

7. **Say thank you again, and let them know who else will be informed about the feedback.** This step helps to close the loop on the feedback interaction. This step also clearly communicates that just as you have accountability to participants, that accountability is shared by the whole community. Therefore, part of your responsibility is to bring these insights back to the community stakeholders.

8. **Request contact information for following up.** If they are comfortable giving you contact information and if they are interested in following-up, this can be an extension of the process. However, if you take someone's contact information and say you will follow-up, they need to hear from you within 12 days.

9. **Reestablish the relationship.** This step reminds both you and the participant that there was a relationship or a basis for connection before the incident, and there will be a basis for connection afterwards.
   a. *Example: "I really enjoyed your presentation" or "I really value your contribution to X group."*
   b. *Example: "What sessions are you planning on attending this afternoon?"*
   c. *Example: "What is your publishing/digital curation/etc program working on this year?"*

Brief (Memorable) Version of the Script

- Deal with your own feelings
- Acknowledge the impact and apologize
- Gather more information
- Tell them what you're going to do with their feedback and ask if they want to be followed up with
- Reestablish the relationship

Bringing Feedback to your Community

1. Share the feedback with the people in the community who are responsible for making related plans and decisions.
2. Identify the community mechanism for addressing the feedback and put appropriate plans or reminders in place to address it.
   a. *Ex. "The planning committee will determine the best way to incorporate this feedback into program planning for next year."*
3. Share the feedback with the community leadership more broadly. Even if the feedback has been addressed or you have a clear plan in place for addressing the feedback, it is important to share the resolution with the broader team to foster organizational learning. In some cases, it may be appropriate to share the feedback and the follow-up plan with the full community, or through public communication channels. Whether this is appropriate may depend on the type of feedback, the

wishes of the person who gave it, the potential impact of the communication on impacted individuals, and the plan for addressing the issue.