Best Practices for Planning and Hosting Successful Professional Development Events
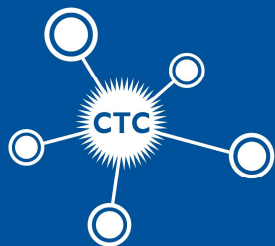
HITEC July 2023

National Convergence Technology Center

NSF

AGENDA

TODAY'S TOPICS

Introduction and background

Our PD events

Planning and preparing

Hosting

Wrapping it all up

WHO WE ARE

NATIONAL CONVERGENCE TECHNOLOGY CENTER

Background

Collin College – Frisco TX

Funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation

Regional ATE Center starting fall 2004

National ATE Center starting fall 2012

Mission

Support IT infrastructure/ cybersecurity programs across the country and align curriculum with employer need

Community of practice – 100 colleges in 32 states

All work is co-led by IT business leaders

Free professional development for IT faculty (21st anniversary year)

DIFFERENT FLAVORS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORMATS

- 30-minute "Brown Bag" online webinars
- Two-day in-person "summit" meetings
- Friday online workshops (five Fridays on single topic)
- Working Connections

These strategies work for any size event

WORKING CONNECTIONS

Cutting-edge IT topics for faculty to teach an entire new course

Free tuition – plus some travel expense reimbursements

Immediate classroom implementation

Attendee networking and collaboration

WORKING CONNECTIONS

SUMMER
Five days in July
First hosted 2002
Online 2020 and 2021
Hybrid 2022 and 2023

WINTER
Three days in December
First hosted 2010
Online since 2015

WORKING CONNECTIONS

IMPACTS SINCE 2008

900+ faculty members have attended

161,774 students impacted in the classroom by WC content

14,224 sections taught based on WC content

462 new degrees (or certs) developed based on WC content

THIS DATA COMES FROM LONGITUDINAL SURVEYS

PLANNING AND PREPARING

TOPIC SELECTION - align with workforce needs

INSTRUCTORS and GUEST SPEAKERS – choose wisely

REGISTRATION – Google and Constant Contact are your friends

COMMUNICATION – few read their email carefully

TECHNICAL SUPPORT – do as much as you can before it starts

DISCOURAGE NO-SHOWS – explain the consequences

PLANNING AND PREPARING

TOPIC SELECTION

Make sure offering topics that will support emerging workforce skills

- Faculty leadership team
- BILT (employer) suggestions
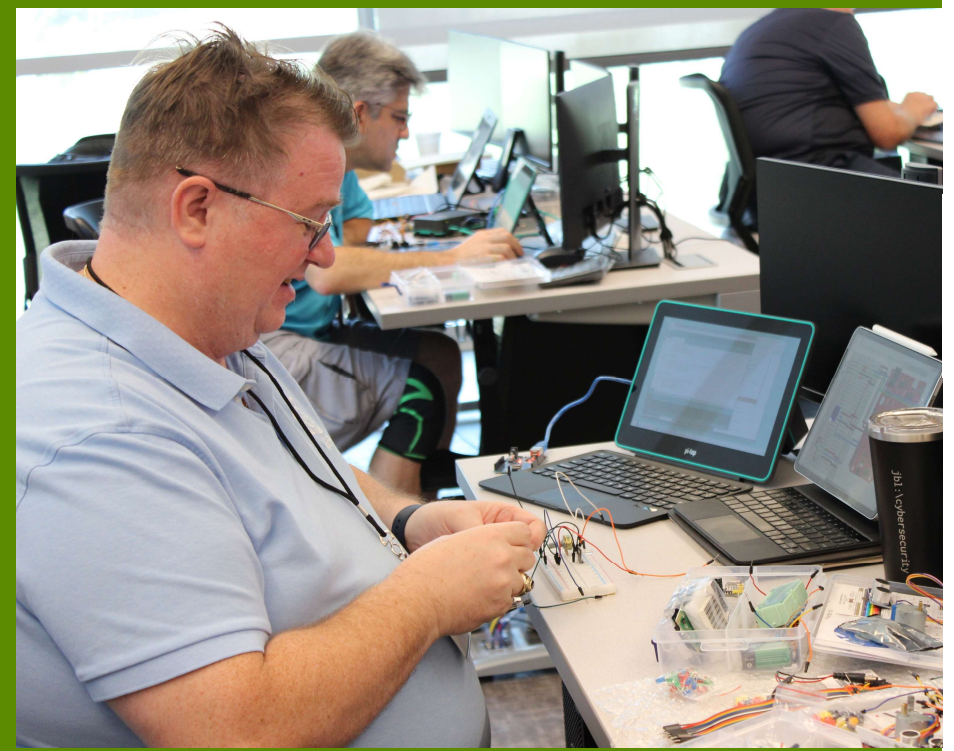- Past attendee surveys

PLANNING AND PREPARING

INSTRUCTORS and GUEST SPEAKERS

Finding them
- Word of mouth
- Vendor donation

Arranging payment – no two are ever alike
- Contractors
- Faculty at a college
- Faculty at your college

PLANNING AND PREPARING

REGISTRATION

Organization is essential
- Drops
- Wait lists
- Switching tracks
- Per-school limits

Excel sheet is the living record
Include detailed notes

Constant Contact subscription
- Allows for customized form
- "Non-responder" emails
- Export that to Excel

PLANNING AND PREPARING

REGISTRATION

Close registration early so you have time to prep

Use free Google Forms to acknowledge advanced pre-reqs

WHAT DO YOU DO?

How do you effectively communicate event details to registered attendees?
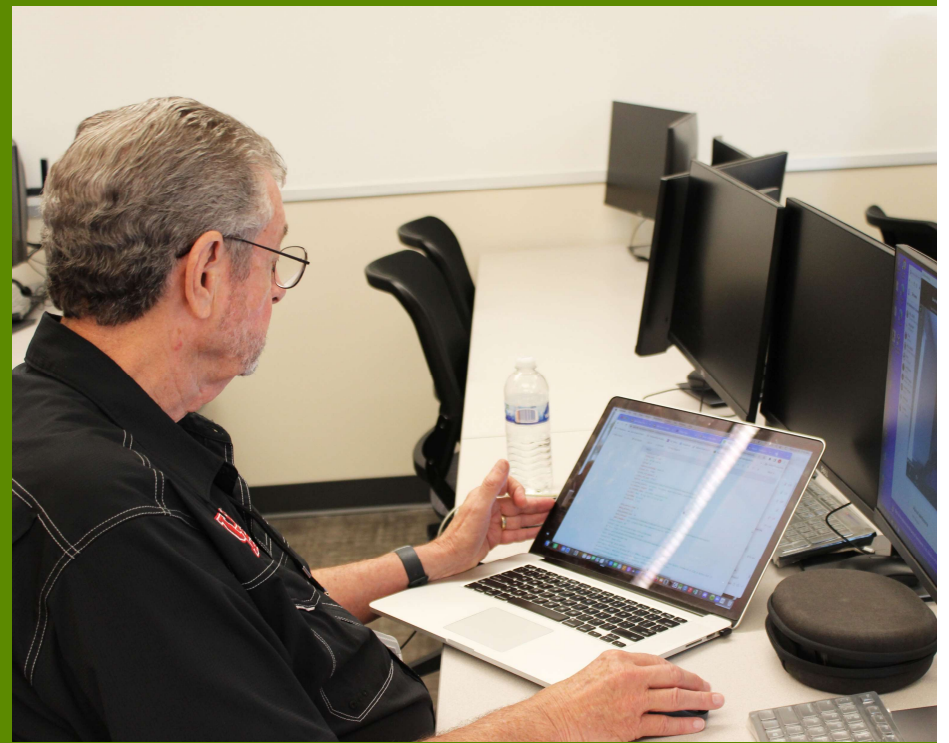
PLANNING AND PREPARING

COMMUNICATION

Few read emails carefully

Be a pest – proactive reminders
- Initial confirmation email
- Hotel block deadline reminder
- Cancellation deadline reminder
- Final check-in one week out
- For online, reminder on first morning

One week out, also confirm instructors and guest speakers
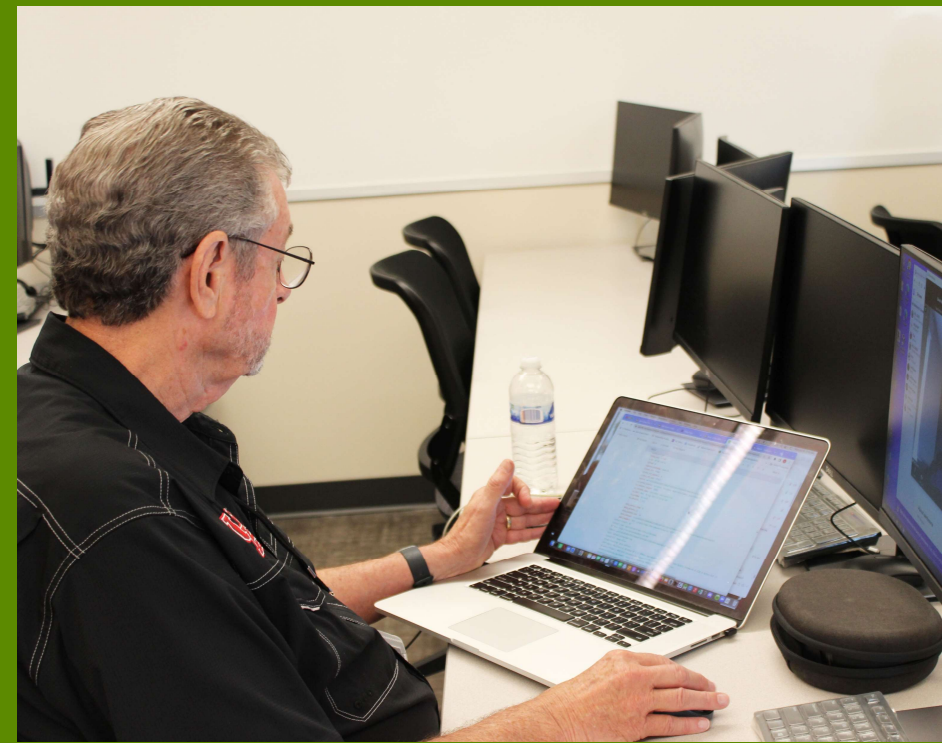
PLANNING AND PREPARING

COMMUNICATION

Final check-in email a week out
- Welcome letter
- Class URL
- Campus map
- Building floor plan
- Week agenda
- Survey reminder
- Orientation video link
- Lunch menu
- Optional happy hour notice

Anticipate questions
What would you want to know?
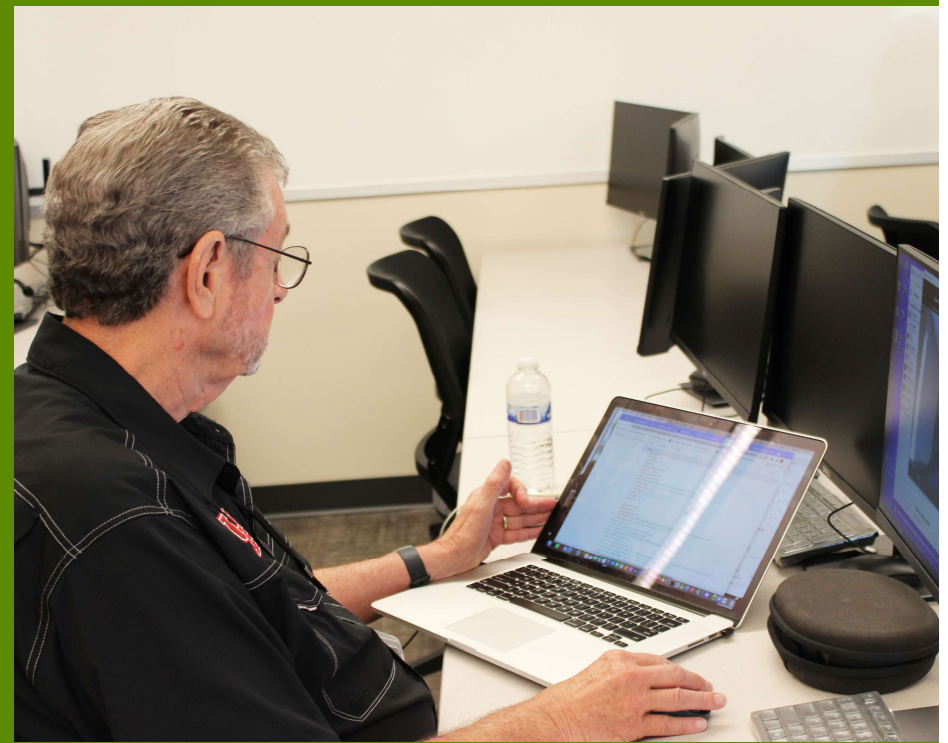
PLANNING AND PREPARING

COMMUNICATION

Orientation webinar
- General overview – 9 min
- Travel expense reimbursements – 7 min

From July 2022 survey (n=93)
- 43% found the webinar helpful
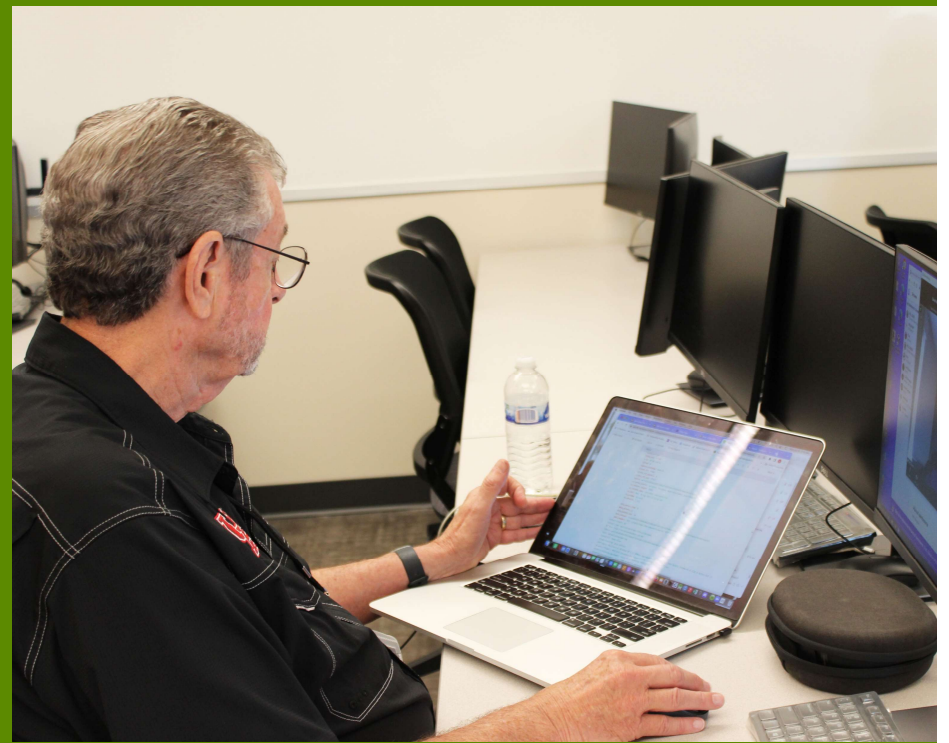- 36% didn't watch
- 9% didn't know about it

PLANNING AND PREPARING

COMMUNICATION

Also build event wikis
- Overview page
- Track descriptions
- Lunch speakers
- Schedule
- Menu
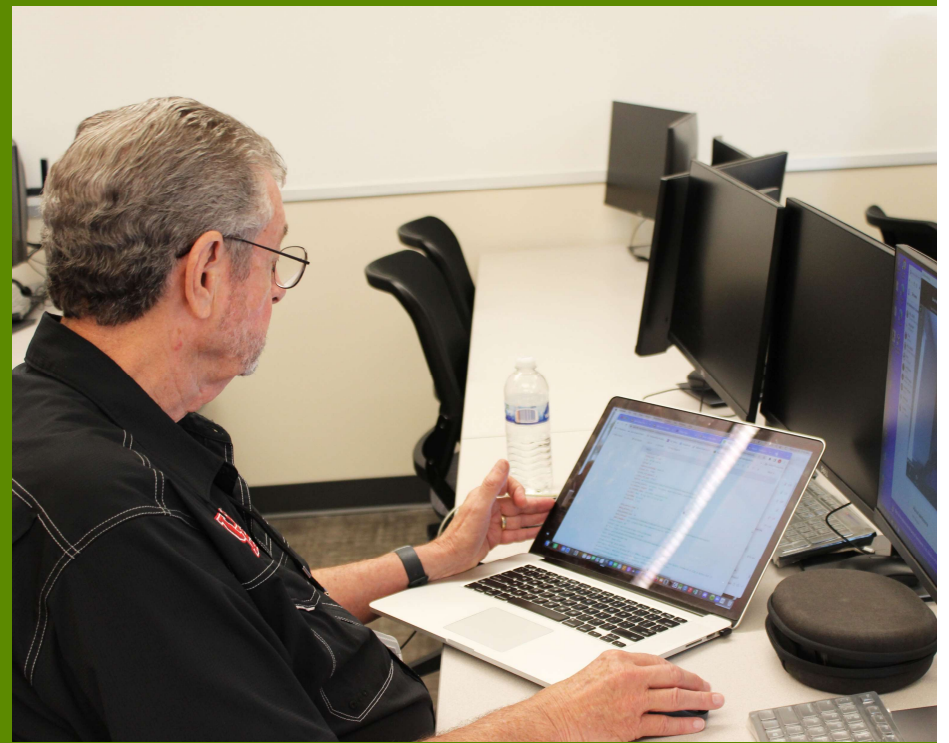- Travel reimbursement specifics
- Hotel suggestions

PLANNING AND PREPARING

COMMUNICATION

For Zooms, put the dial-in details on your auto-reply during the event

Also... send information via Outlook appointment invite

PLANNING AND PREPARING

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Be ready for Monday morning

In-person
- Classroom PCs set-up
- College support staff helps
- Double check with instructor

Online
- Zoom or other platform
- Slack support
- Insist attendees be proactive with technical requirements

WHAT DO YOU DO?

How do you get people who have committed to actually show up?

PLANNING AND PREPARING

DISCOURAGE NO-SHOWS

Firm deadline to drop or switch tracks
- Notify supervisor they've signed up
- If they no-show we'll take them off the invite list for 12 months

A similar program makes everyone pay $50 – "skin in the game"
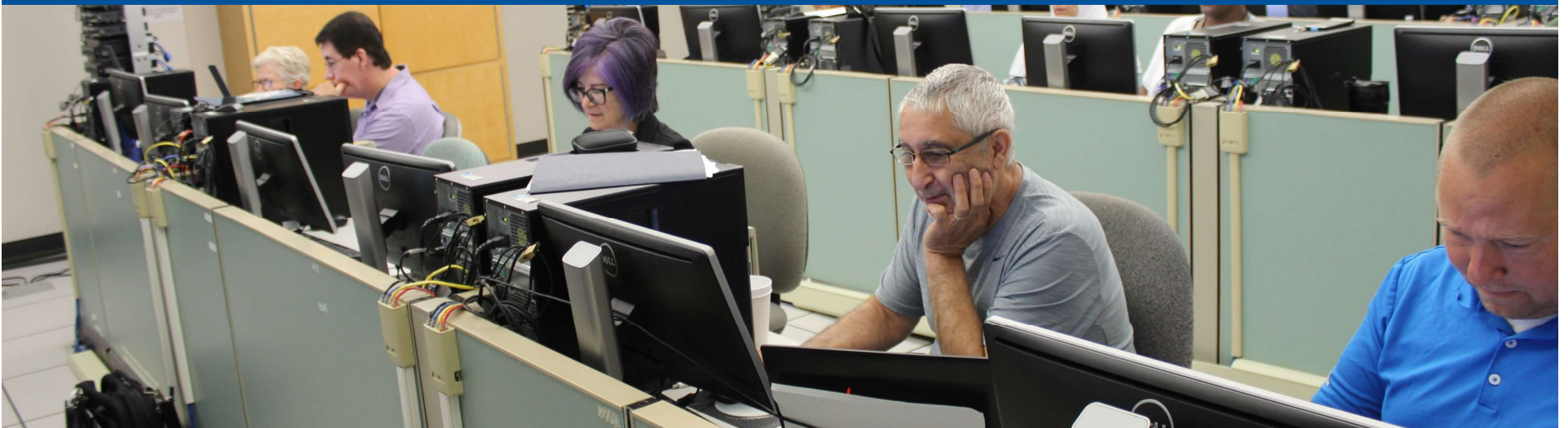
HOSTING

REGISTRATION PACKETS – everything they need for the event

LUNCH FORMATS – ways to engage during a working meal

FOOD – good meals make happy attendees

ACTIVITIES – fun outside of the classroom

SOCIAL MEDIA – promotion, dissemination, outreach

HOSTING

REGISTRATION PACKETS

- Receive these when they check in
- Emailed for online attendees

Most of it repeats what we sent in that one week out check-in email

Social distancing stickers – red, yellow, green

HOSTING

REGISTRATION PACKETS

- Welcome letter
- Week agenda
- Attendee directory (ask permission first)
- "Save the date" postcard for next event
- CEU request form
- Travel expense reimbursement forms
- Lunch menu
- Campus map and building floorplan
- Local restaurants map
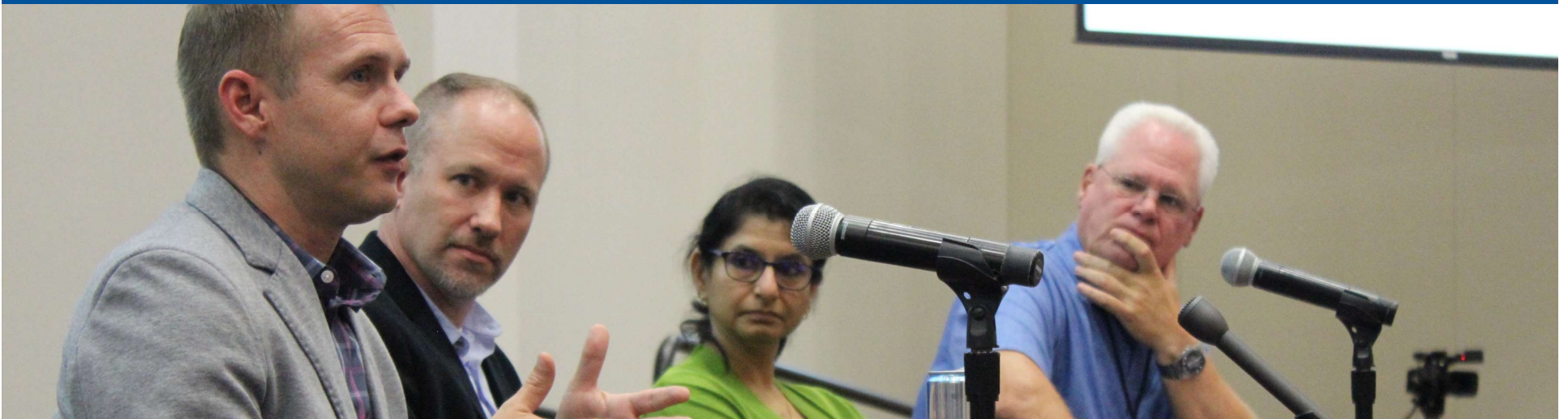- Happy hour mixer flyer
- Activities checklist

HOSTING

LUNCH FORMATS

NSF requires working lunch
- Keynote presentation – get their cell phone numbers
- Panel discussion
- Lightning round series of short presentations
- Birds of a Feather roundtables

Also always do housekeeping announcements before dismissal

HOSTING

FOOD

Confirm with caterers one week out
Beware letting them serve themselves
Two sides of buffet to move faster

Vegetarian option
- We ask this question on the registration form
- Special "V" icon on their badge, separate table in the lunch line

HOSTING

FOOD

Break room (which can be a classroom) – open all day, but coordinate break times for all tracks to encourage networking
- Coffee, iced water, and tea kettle all day
- Snacks in the afternoon (chips, fruit, popcorn)

Make use of the white board for further messaging – repeat the lunch announcements

WHAT DO YOU DO?

How can you keep your attendees engaged outside of the event content?

HOSTING

ACTIVITIES

Monday evening happy hour
- Ideally, vendor sponsors
- Backup: we book the room, attendees pay their own way

Lunch prize drawings – donated items only (college, vendors)

Other activities

HOSTING

ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

Working Connections
IT Faculty Development Institute
Founded by: AACC | Microsoft | NWCET
20TH ANNIVERSARY
2002 - 2022

☐ LOOK FOR THE DAILY HIDDEN COUGAR

☐ POSE FOR "I LOVE WORKING CONNECTIONS" PHOTO

☐ POST WITH HASHTAG #WHATILEARNEDATWC

☐ REQUEST A WORKING CONNECTIONS LUGGAGE TAG

☐ SIGN THE WORKING CONNECTIONS PHOTO MAT

☐ TAKE A SELFIE

☐ VOTE FOR "MOST SPIRITED" ATTENDEE

Complete five of the seven activities above and submit it for your prize.

Name _____

HOSTING

ACTIVITIES

IT SKILL STANDARDS BEYOND 2020 SUMMIT **HUMAN BINGO**

GREW UP IN THE COUNTRY	HAS BEEN ON TELEVISION	RAN A MARATHON	HAS A GARDEN	SPENDS A LOT OF TIME ON THE WATER
DOES YOGA	HAS MORE THAN THREE PETS	HAS A BUCKET LIST	IS A CERTIFIED NOTARY PUBLIC	KNOWS HOW TO WHISTLE BIRD CALLS
HAS WORKED AT THEIR COLLEGE FOR TEN+ YEARS	LOVES MEXICAN FOOD	**FREE**	HAS RIDDEN A HORSE	WAS IN SCOUTING AS A YOUTH
ATTENDED A PROFESIONAL BASEBALL GAME	LEFT-HANDED	LOVES TO COOK AT HOME	WAKES UP BEFORE 5AM	CAN PLAY A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT
HAS VISITED A HAWAIIAN ISLAND	NEVER GOTTEN A SPEEDING TICKET	CAN SPEAK TWO FOREIGN LANGAUGES	HAS BROKEN A BONE AND WORN A CAST	HAS TRAVELED TO EUROPE

WEDNESDAY APRIL 19, 2022

HOSTING

ACTIVITIES

HOSTING

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Promote hashtag use
- Many posed and candid photos
- Shoot video B-roll for future use
- Record lunch presentations and webinars, repurpose as YouTube clips

WRAPPING IT ALL UP

SURVEYS – The "so what?" factor

CERTIFICATES – something to remember you by

LESSONS LEARNED – what if you could do it all over again?

WHAT DO YOU DO?

How do you measure your event's success?

WRAPPING IT ALL UP

SURVEYS

First day anonymous – looking for quick fixes
"Taking the temperature"

- The learning goals and objectives of the track are clearly outlined.
- Track content includes relevant topics related to the subject.
- Instructor provides adequate opportunity for students to seek clarification.
- Instructor provides adequate opportunity to practice newly learned concepts, skills, and material.
- Instructor is adequately prepared.
- Instructor answers questions well.
- Instructor demonstrates adequate knowledge of the subject.

WRAPPING IT ALL UP

SURVEYS

Friday mandatory
Do our best to track all responses

Overall questions
- Was it relevant?
- Would you recommend it?
- How effective did you network with others?

Track questions
- Did you experience change in expertise across specific track goals?
- Rate instructor and content

WRAPPING IT ALL UP

SURVEYS

Longitudinals
Every January – last three cohorts

January 2023 we surveyed
- Summer 2022
- Summer 2021
- Summer 2022

WRAPPING IT ALL UP

CERTIFICATES

Used to print them out last day, now we email a PDF

For those who qualify we also offer CEUs
- Fill out a form, we enroll them

Ask attendees when they register what name they want to use

Don't forget your instructors and guest speakers

WRAPPING IT ALL UP

LESSONS LEARNED

Debrief and discuss as a team what you could have done differently

Reference that document next time

"Continuous improvement"

WRAPPING IT ALL UP

LESSONS LEARNED

"It's always something"
- Classroom door badges didn't work
- Attendee showed up who didn't register
- Instructor some disliked
- Attendee brought his grandson
- Instructor didn't specify what he needed until Monday
- Catering problems – late arrival or missing food

FOR YOUR NEXT EVENT...

You can never be too organized or meticulous with registration lists

It's okay to be an e-mail pest – multiple reminders and check-ins

Anticipate possible problems proactively so you have time to deal with the ones you didn't see coming

Serve good food

Discourage no-shows

Measure not just immediate event opinions, but long-term impact

Strive for continuous improvement – what could you have done differently?

RESOURCES

2023 Summer Working Connections wiki
https://summerworkingconnections2023.natio
nalctcwiki.org/

Working Connections 20th Anniversary
retrospective (17 min)
https://bit.ly/WC20thhistory

2022 "I Love Working Connections" montage
(40 sec)
https://bit.ly/IloveWC2022

Working Connections longitudinal impact data
report (2013-2019)
http://bit.ly/WClong1319

"Brown Bag" (30 minute webinar) YouTube
playlist
https://bit.ly/BrownBagplaylist

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