

Conference Evaluation Results
Functional Assessment: A Time for Consensus, A Time for Change
September 25-27, 2002

Overall, the conference was evaluated very positively. The event was praised for the broad representation of delegates. However, worker and insurer stakeholder groups would have benefited from more numbers present. The strength of the event appears to have been the collaboration that went on in reaching a shared understanding of issues and the formation of a group ready and eager to take action. There was recognition of the need for structured follow-up to make it work. Participants' comments expressed how their presence made a difference and they felt part of the decision-making.

The evaluation results described here and shown in attached tables were obtained from the 66 participants who returned the evaluation questionnaire subsequent to the September Future Search conference. Excluding research team members, there were a total of 83 participants in the conference. The evaluation questionnaire developed by the research team consisted of 42 questions. In 37 of these, participants were asked to rate different aspects of the conference using ratings of "Not At All", "A Little", "Somewhat", "A Lot" and "Completely". In five questions involving action taking/intention, the options were "yes/no". We grouped the responses (1) "Not At All" and "A Little", and (2) "A Lot" and "Completely" together, in order to facilitate interpretation.

Did the conference meet its objectives? The majority of participants found that the conference met its objective of building a common understanding of best FA practices. The 8% (5 participants) who gave a low rating were evenly distributed across 5 categories (WSIB, employers, healthcare and worker reps). All 66 participants felt that the conference helped them, "somewhat" or "a lot", in building a commitment to collaborative action to improve FA practices.

Were participants satisfied with the action plans developed at the conference?

The majority responded positively: 41 participants were "very satisfied", 19 were "somewhat satisfied" and two were "a little" satisfied. Although the 19 that were "somewhat satisfied" are from different categories of stakeholders, most are from employers and WSIB.

Were they satisfied with the process through which action plans were developed?

The majority indicated satisfaction with the process: 46 participants gave a rating of "a lot" and 14 gave a rating of "somewhat". Two participants reported "little" or "no" satisfaction. Support for the process were expressed in comments such as:

"Future Search methodology was a very interesting strategy and certainly promoted better understanding, cohesiveness and action planning than a standard format would have".

"Overall, an exciting, dynamic process to be part of."

"I think the format was excellent in terms of allowing everyone to see the various perspectives and goals the different stakeholders have and how despite the diversity we can become a venue for change by consolidating all these resources."

Were stakeholder groups well represented? 41 participants felt that all stakeholder groups were very well represented (62%), 17 rated “somewhat” (26%) and 8 felt that stakeholders were not well, or poorly represented (12%). Some participants expressed the need for a more workers and other payers i.e., insurers.

Did participants have access to relevant information and knowledge? Thirty-four participants felt that they had a lot of access to relevant information, 25 answered “somewhat” and six felt that they did not have, or had very little access. This may be reflective of some last minute substitutions of representatives by organizations.

Did the common understanding arrived at reflect the views of all stakeholder groups? 45 participants rated “a lot”, 15 rated “somewhat” and four rated “a little” or “not at all”.

Were the action plans consistent with common understanding? 44 participants found action plans were “a lot/ completely” consistent, 15 expressed “somewhat” consistent and 2 people endorsed “a little/ not at all” consistent with common understanding.

Did participants have an equal opportunity to speak, participate? Most (91%) of the participants felt that everyone had an equal chance to speak and participate, 7% gave a rating of “somewhat” and 2% “a little”. Sixty participants indicated that everyone had an equal opportunity to question views of others, 15 felt “somewhat” and 2 gave poor ratings. Some comments talked about how the process enabled people to share perspectives and clarify misconceptions. For example:

“I think the Future Search Conference provides a good opportunity for the different players in a specific situation to talk about the problems, understand the other individuals’ position and clarify all issues, especially the contentious ones. In that sense the conference was quite successful.”

How did participants rate the individual sessions as being helpful to achieve conference objectives? All sessions received high ratings ranging from 70% to 73% of participants. High ratings were given to the “Sharing the Future” session (70%), the “Mindmap” activity (73%) and to the “McMaster Model” group discussions (73%).

In the ratings for the session called “The Future We Want To Create” there were many participants who did not answer the question. This may be the result of the wrong weekday printed in the questionnaire. However, 78% of participants who did respond said that it contributed “a lot” for the conference objectives. This must be interpreted with caution due the large number of missing data.

Seven participants rated the “Introductions” session held on the first day as contributing “A Little”, 22 rated it as contributing “somewhat” and 33 gave a rating of “A Lot”. The lowest ratings of sessions came from 13 participants who found that the “Understanding Our Past” session contributed little.

Conference facilitation and organization: The levels of satisfaction with conference facilitation, conference facilities and overall organization received high ratings: 84%, 84% and 94%, respectively, rated “A Lot” or “Completely”. Nine participants (14%) were “somewhat satisfied” with conference facilitation and with meeting facilities, and three were “somewhat satisfied” with the overall organization of the conference (5%). Only a few of the 37 written comments were complaints related to the physical set-up (e.g., acoustics, lack of tables and uncomfortable chairs). Others viewed the removal of tables as a strategy to have stakeholders interact differently:

“One of the most significant things that contributed to that outcome was the removal of tables during the sessions. That one simple psychological barrier forced all of us to interact in a different manner than had we physical barriers available.”

Need for improvement in FA practice: Most participants believe that there is need for improvement in the way FAs are initiated (77%), conducted (73%), interpreted (86%) and used (84%). Similar ratings were obtained from those who believe that improvement is possible concerning when FAs are initiated (75%), conducted (68%), interpreted (76%) and used (75%). A comparison of responses to the two questions indicated that the same individuals who believe that there is need for improvement do believe that it is possible to improve practice.

Most participants indicated that improvement to FA practice depends largely on group actions, such as multiple stakeholder groups working together (90% answered “a lot” in this instance). Many participants also feel that it depends on their professional/peer group (54%), and on their organization (47%). Relatively few (17%) felt that improvements depended a lot on themselves personally. A considerable number of participants did not rate the need for improvement for “functional assessment provider”, “multidisciplinary groups” and “other”. Therefore, results for these questions are not reported or interpreted here.

Taking action to improve FA practice: Forty percent of participants reported having taken actions to improve FA practices within the past six months, and an additional 35% have taken such action at some time in the past. Forty percent indicated intention to take action to improve practice in the next 30 days, and 69% within the next six months.

Descriptive Statistics

	A Little or Not At All	Somewhat	A Lot or Completely	Total
1. To what extent do you feel that the conference met its objective of:				
a) Building a common understanding of best FA practices?	5 8%	23 35%	38 58%	66 100%
b) Building a commitment to collaborative action to improve FA practices?		13 20%	53 80%	66 100%
2. Overall, to what extent are you satisfied with the action plans developed at the conference?				
	2 3%	19 31%	41 66%	62 100%
3. How satisfied were you with the process through which the action plans were determined?				
	2 3%	14 23%	46 74%	62 100%
4. To what extent were all stakeholder groups adequately represented at the conference?				
	8 12%	17 26%	41 62%	66 100%
5. To what extent did participants have an equal chance to speak and participate?				
	1 2%	5 8%	60 91%	66 100%
6. To what extent did participants have access to relevant information and knowledge?				
	6 9%	25 38%	34 52%	65 100%
7. To what extent did all participants have an equal opportunity to question the views of others?				
	2 3%	15 23%	49 74%	66 100%
8. To what extent did the common understanding arrived at reflect the views of all stakeholder groups?				
	4 6%	15 23%	45 70%	64 100%
9. To what extent were the action plans consistent with this common understanding?				
	2 3%	15 25%	44 72%	61 100%

10. To what extent did each of the following sessions contribute to the achievement of the conference objectives (i.e. building common understanding and action on FAs)?

- a) Introductions (Wed. p.m.)
- b) Understanding our Past: Timelines (Wed. p.m.)
- c) Focus on the Present: Mind Map (Wed. p.m./Thu. a.m.)
- d) Perspectives of Functional Assessment (McMaster Model group discussions) (Thurs. a.m.)
- e) Focus on the Present: Prouds and Sorries (Thurs. a.m.)
- f) Future Scenarios (Thurs. p.m.) & creative presentations
- g) Sharing the Future that excites us (Thurs. p.m.)
- h) Group Dialogue on Future we want to create (Fri. a.m.)
- i) Group Action Planning

A Little or Not At All	Somewhat	A Lot or Completely	Total
7 11%	22 35%	33 53%	62 100%
13 21%	16 26%	33 53%	62 100%
6 10%	11 18%	45 73%	62 100%
	17 27%	46 73%	63 100%
8 13%	22 35%	33 52%	63 100%
8 13%	21 34%	32 52%	61 100%
2 3%	16 27%	42 70%	60 100%
3 6%	6 12%	40 82%	49 100%
3 5%	11 20%	42 75%	56 100%

11. How satisfied were you with:

- a) Conference facilitation
- b) Meeting facilities
- c) Overall organization of the conference

A Little or Not At All	Somewhat	A Lot or Completely	Total
1 2%	9 14%	54 84%	64 100%
1 2%	9 14%	54 84%	64 100%
1 2%	3 5%	60 94%	64 100%

12. To what extent do you believe that there's need for improvement in the way FAs are:

- a) Initiated
- b) Conducted
- c) Interpreted
- d) Used

A Little or Not At All	Somewhat	A Lot or Completely	Total
	15 23%	49 77%	64 100%
2 3%	15 23%	47 73%	64 100%
1 2%	8 13%	55 86%	64 100%
1 2%	9 14%	53 84%	63 1

13. To what extent do you believe that it is possible to improve the way FAs are:

a) Initiated

b) Conducted

c) Interpreted

d) Used

A Little or Not At All	Somewhat	A Lot or Completely	Total
1 2%	15 24%	47 75%	63 100%
3 5%	17 27%	43 68%	63 100%
1 2%	14 22%	48 76%	63 100%
2 3%	14 22%	47 75%	63 100%

14. To what extent do you feel that improvements to the practice of FAs depend on action by:

a) You personally

b) Your organization

c) Your professional or peer group

d) Multidisciplinary group

e) Multiple stakeholder groups working together

f) Functional Assessment Provider

g) Other:

a) Not Specified

b) WSIB

c) Insurance

d) Large employers

c) Legislation

d) Payers' expectations

Total (Other)

A Little or Not At All	Somewhat	A Lot or Completely	Total
24 38%	28 44%	11 17%	63 100%
16 26%	17 27%	29 47%	62 100%
12 19%	17 27%	34 54%	63 100%
4 8%	8 16%	38 76%	50 100%
1 2%	5 8%	57 90%	63 100%
1 2%	8 16%	42 82%	51 100%
	1	14	15
		1	1
		1	1
	1		1
		1	1
	2 10%	18 90%	20 100%

15. Have you, yourself taken any action to improve FA practice

- a) I have, more than six months ago
- b) I have, more recently than six months
- c) I intend to in the next 30 days
- d) I intend to in the next six months

	YES	NO	Total
a) I have, more than six months ago	22 35%	41 65%	63 100%
b) I have, more recently than six months	25 40%	38 60%	63 100%
c) I intend to in the next 30 days	27 44%	35 56%	62 100%
d) I intend to in the next six months	43 69%	19 31%	62 100%