

Review of *Planning Programs for Adult Learners: A Practical Guide* (4th Edition)

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In 2021, Daffron and Caffarella published the fourth edition of their *Planning Programs for Adult Learners*, updated to reflect a world indelibly shaped by COVID-19. The text offers a comprehensive overview of program planning and management by outlining an updated version of their Interactive Model of Program Planning. The Interactive Model that provides the framework for the book certainly transcends what the authors critique as often niche-driven literature on program planning; ultimately, their text offers both a broad overview of the landscape shaping programs today as well as a detailed framework of essential program components.

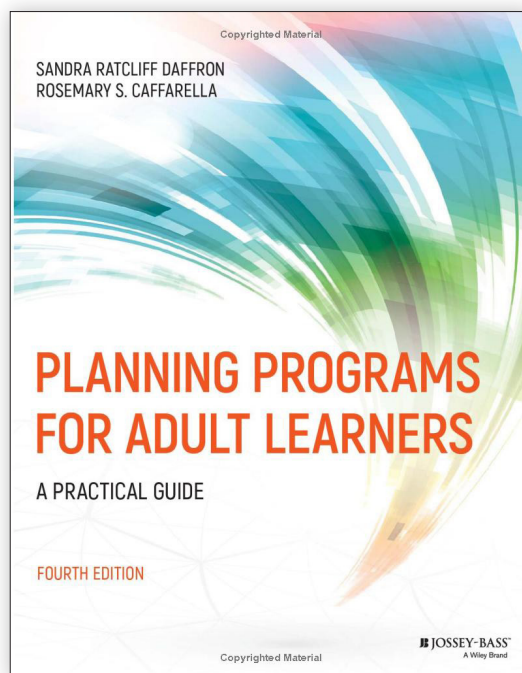
The Interactive Model of Program Planning, arranged to mimic a blooming flower, includes (from center moving outward) three influences (ethical, political, and social justice); seven administrative tasks (budgeting, marketing, staffing, formatting, managing details,

scheduling, and negotiating); seven learning tasks (context, evaluation, learning transfer, instruction, goals and objectives, needs assessment, and support); and five assumptions (change,

culture, global problems, stakeholders, and power). If the model seems complex, it is because it is, but, as the authors convincingly write, so is the current world influencing and shaping program management.

Although the book discusses each of the elements of the model, and readers can enter the text at any point based on their own needs and goals, the elements are integrally interwoven. This interconnectivity is perhaps the greatest strength and

weakness of the book. Just as the model itself reflects a complex, interdependent world filled with uncertainty and change, the very nature of this interconnectivity makes it difficult to truly utilize individual elements of the model without reading through and engaging with the model altogether.



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A strength of the authors' model is its non-linear arrangement. Although the book goes through the various elements of the model systemically, the model itself allows for flexibility and fluidity of adaptation, allowing, in theory, the reader to enter the model at any given point. For those looking for a handbook to guide and inform their practice, they can enter the model at the location most pertinent to their own needs. However, because of the complexity of the model, meant to reflect an increasingly complex world, it is difficult to fully utilize the book without reading through it in its entirety. Thus, this is less a book that can be dissected and used episodically and more a text to be used to inform and shape practices at large.

The previous edition of the text debuted in 2013. The authors rightly describe the need for an updated text reflecting changes in the world over the last decade. In particular, the authors focus on the ways COVID-19 has upended many of the norms with which program planners have had to contend. To this end, and among other updates, they added an additional chapter (Planning Programs in Difficult Times with Technology), meant to address the increasingly online nature of both day-to-day life as well as program delivery. Although the chapter addresses important changes in the world since the advent of COVID-19 and the large role technology plays in these changes, the chapter also provides an interesting insight into how technology is framed throughout the text. Certainly, technology creates its own unique challenges that must be thoughtfully navigated, particularly regarding issues of equity, social justice, and politics of power; however, technology can also be an asset that can transcend challenges as well. Perhaps the text simply reflects the more reactive moments at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic as programs struggled to move in-person offerings and practices into a digital

sphere and technology was experienced more as a challenge to be overcome rather than an asset to be strategically utilized. Whatever the reason, the book's discussion of technology tends to focus more on transcending technology's shortcomings (of which, admittedly, there are many) and less on the possibilities it may open for programs.

The fourth edition's updates feel exceedingly relevant to this moment in history, as people still contend with the effects of COVID and increasingly face a changed landscape in which they must adapt program operations and practices at a moment's notice. What remains to be seen, however, is the longevity of the book's approach as the world moves beyond COVID specifically and must approach day-to-day life of program operations in a landscape intimately influenced by new macro and micro events.

The authors, in the preface, explain their goal to write a text that could transcend niche needs of program management that had previously dominated much of the existing literature on the topic as well as to offer a comprehensive look at the mechanics of program management. In the fourth edition of *Planning Programs for Adult Learners*, they certainly succeeded in producing an extensive text that acknowledges and describes the important contextual complexity that influences program decisions, and the interconnectivity of program elements and designs practitioners must consider and navigate when managing programs for adult learners. Though not without its shortcomings, particularly in their framing and discussion of technology's role in the 21st century, the text still manages to offer both a competent overview of program management as well as a helpful model that distills the integral elements, practices, and complexities with which practitioners will inevitably contend. Additionally, their



inclusion of “real-world” scenarios, relevant references for further study, and reflective questions at the end of each chapter provide additional content with which readers can continue their engagement on each subject that transcend the pages of the book itself.

In this way, the book’s textbook-like setup makes

it a perfect resource for any class or training on program design, planning, or management. This book would be particularly helpful for those new to adult learner programming as its model and framework provide a complex yet manageable overview of the multifaceted world in which both programs and adult learners must learn to operate.