EDU4IMPACT – IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Practical Guidance for Implementing Social and Emotional Learning through Sport with Adults in Vulnerable Situations

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1. Introduction

1.1 About Edu4Impact

Edu4Impact, Adult Education Through Sport as a Mean to Enhance Social Inclusion is an Erasmus+ cooperation project focused on strengthening adult education through the intentional use of sport and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). The project explores how experiential, movement-based learning can support educators and other professionals working with adults in vulnerable situations, while promoting social inclusion, participation and transferable life skills.

The core experimentation took place within Work Package 3 (WP3), which combined an eLearning environment, a transnational Train-the-Trainers activity (LTTA), local training workshops in partner countries, and evaluation of the experimentation. These Guidelines translate that experience into practical guidance for future implementation.

1.2 Purpose of these Guidelines

This document is designed to help trainers, educators, social workers, sport professionals and other relevant practitioners integrate the Edu4Impact Training Programme and eLearning resources into training activities for professionals and adults in vulnerable situations. It is not intended as a rigid protocol. Instead, it offers a practical framework that can be adapted to different organisations, target groups, physical environments and levels of previous experience.

- Understand the Edu4Impact approach and the role of SEL through sport
- Plan training activities around clear SEL learning objectives.
- Select and adapt sport-based activities to the needs of participants.
- Facilitate reflection so that sport experiences become learning experiences.
- Connect learning to everyday life and professional practice.
- Monitor participation, inclusion, learning and participant feedback.
- Replicate the methodology in diverse social, educational and therapeutic contexts.

1.3 Who these Guidelines are for

The Guidelines are intended for trainers and adult educators, social workers, psychologists and other psychosocial professionals, sport and physical activity professionals, staff of third-sector organisations, community organisations, and professionals supporting adults who may experience social, economic, cognitive, emotional or health-related vulnerabilities.

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1.4 How to use this document

Sections 2–5 explain the approach and provide the implementation framework. Sections 6–9 translate the project experimentation into lessons, recommendations and examples. Section 10 provides a concise replication checklist, while the annexes offer editable tools that can be reused when designing and evaluating future activities.

Core implementation principle

Sport creates the experience. Reflection transforms the experience into learning. Transfer makes the learning meaningful beyond sport.

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2. The Edu4Impact Approach: Social and Emotional Learning through Sport

2.1 What is Social and Emotional Learning?

Within Edu4Impact, Social and Emotional Learning is approached as the development of competences that help people understand and manage themselves, relate to others, participate constructively in groups and make thoughtful decisions. The project organises learning around five interconnected SEL competence areas.

SEL competence	Practical focus in Edu4Impact
Self-Awareness	Recognising emotions, body signals, strengths, limits, reactions and personal resources.
Self-Management / Self-Regulation	Managing emotions, stress, attention, impulses and behaviour; sustaining effort and motivation.
Social Awareness	Understanding others, recognising different perspectives, empathy, inclusion and respect for diversity.
Relationship Skills	Communication, trust, cooperation, mutual support, listening and constructive group interaction.
Responsible Decision-Making	Making choices, anticipating consequences, problem-solving, shared responsibility and learning from decisions.

2.2 Why sport and physical activity?

Sport and physical activity create immediate, observable situations in which emotions, communication, decision-making, cooperation, frustration, confidence and group dynamics naturally emerge. In Edu4Impact, the sport task is therefore not the final objective: it is the learning environment in which a SEL competence can be experienced, observed, discussed and transferred.

The experimentation showed that practical and cooperative activities often made abstract SEL concepts easier to understand. Participants were able to identify emotions and behaviours in real time, receive support from peers, experience shared success and discuss how similar skills could be used outside the activity.

2.3 The learning cycle

Phase	Key question	Trainer action
Experience	What happened?	Create a purposeful sport or movement challenge.
Observation	What did I notice in myself and others?	Help participants identify emotions, behaviours and interactions.
Reflection	Why did it happen? What helped or made it difficult?	Use short, concrete debriefing questions.

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SEL learning	Which competence was involved?	Name and clarify the relevant SEL competence.
Transfer	Where else does this happen? What can I use?	Connect the experience to daily life, relationships or professional practice.

Important

A sport activity does not automatically become a SEL activity. Intentional learning objectives, facilitation, reflection and transfer are what turn movement into an educational experience.

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3. The Edu4Impact Implementation Model

The following six-step model synthesises the approach used during the LTTA and local experimentation. It can be used to design a single workshop, a short training course or a sequence of sessions.

STEP 1 — Know your target group

Start from the people, not from the activity. Before selecting a game or exercise, identify who will participate and what may support or limit their participation.

- Age and physical condition.
- Cognitive and communication abilities.
- Emotional and psychosocial needs.
- Previous experience with sport or structured learning.
- Motivation, confidence and possible fear of failure.
- Language, cultural and gender considerations.
- Accessibility and support needs.
- Group size, existing relationships and potential power dynamics.

STEP 2 — Select the SEL competence and learning objective

Choose one primary SEL competence and define what participants should be able to notice, practise or understand. Keep the objective observable and realistic for the duration of the session.

> **Example**
>
> Instead of "improve relationship skills", use: "Participants will practise asking for help, supporting peers and communicating during a shared cooperative task."

STEP 3 — Choose or adapt the sport activity

Select an activity that naturally creates opportunities to practise the chosen competence. The same game can support different SEL objectives depending on the rules, roles and reflection questions used by the facilitator.

STEP 4 — Create a safe and inclusive environment

Plan for physical and emotional safety. Use achievable tasks, clear instructions and cooperative structures. Ensure that success does not depend only on speed, strength or previous sport experience. Participation should be meaningful for people with different abilities.

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STEP 5 — Facilitate reflection and debriefing

Build reflection into the session rather than leaving it to the end if time remains. Short debriefs after key activities can be more effective than one long discussion, especially with groups that find abstract reflection difficult.

STEP 6 — Transfer learning beyond the activity

The final step is to connect what happened during sport to another setting: family life, community participation, relationships, emotional regulation, work, learning or professional practice. The facilitator should help participants identify one concrete behaviour or strategy they can reuse.

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4. How to Design and Deliver an Edu4Impact Training Activity

4.1 Before the session: planning

Planning question	What to define
Who?	Target group, vulnerabilities, support needs, group size and previous experience.
Why?	Primary SEL competence and one or two specific learning outcomes.
What?	Sport/movement activity and the behaviour it should elicit.
How?	Instructions, roles, progression, adaptations and facilitation strategy.
Safety?	Physical, emotional, accessibility and safeguarding considerations.
Reflection?	2–4 questions directly linked to the objective.
Transfer?	Daily-life or professional context to which learning will be connected.
Evidence?	Simple observation and participant feedback method.

4.2 Recommended session structure

Stage	Indicative purpose	Examples
Welcome and check-in	Create safety, explain purpose and assess readiness.	Name game, emotion check-in, simple movement.
Warm-up / icebreaker	Reduce anxiety and build connection.	Pairs, mirroring, low-pressure coordination.
Main challenge	Create the SEL experience.	Cooperative game, route, team challenge, dance, circuit.
Short debrief	Identify emotions, behaviours and strategies.	2–3 concrete questions.
Adapted/progressed challenge	Apply learning with a new rule or increased complexity.	Role change, new constraint, shared decision.
Final reflection and transfer	Connect the experience to life or practice.	Group discussion, pair reflection, one action to take away.
Feedback / closure	Capture learning and participant experience.	Short rating, one-word checkout, feedback form.

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4.3 The role of the facilitator

The facilitator creates the conditions for learning rather than simply directing the sport activity. Across the experimentation, effective facilitation was associated with clear demonstrations, active listening, positive reinforcement, flexibility, observation of group dynamics and continuous adaptation.

- Explain the purpose without overloading participants with theory.
- Model the task visually when possible.
- Observe who participates, who withdraws and who dominates.
- Adjust pace and complexity in real time.
- Reinforce effort, cooperation and learning rather than only performance.
- Use mistakes and unexpected situations as learning opportunities.
- Protect participants from humiliation, exclusion or unnecessary comparison.
- Create enough time and psychological safety for reflection.

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4.4 Debriefing: turning action into learning

Debriefing should be short, purposeful and adapted to the communication abilities of the group. Concrete questions are usually more accessible than abstract questions.

Focus	Example questions
Emotion	What did you feel during the activity? When did that feeling change?
Challenge	What was difficult? What helped you continue?
Relationship	When did you need another person? How did you help someone else?
Decision	What choice did you make? What happened because of that choice?
Inclusion	Did everyone have a role? What helped the group include everyone?
Transfer	Where could this happen in your daily life? What could you try next time?

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5. Adapting the Methodology to Different Target Groups

Adaptation is not an exception to the Edu4Impact approach; it is a core implementation principle. The local workshops involved adults with different vulnerabilities and levels of physical, cognitive, emotional and communication ability. Trainers repeatedly reported that flexibility improved participation and inclusion.

Observed need or challenge	Possible adaptation
Difficulty understanding instructions	Use one instruction at a time; demonstrate visually; ask participants to show rather than repeat the rule.
Cognitive or intellectual disability	Simplify the task; reduce simultaneous rules; use visual cues; repeat and model; allow extra processing time.
Low physical fitness or older age	Reduce intensity and duration; offer seated/low-impact options; extend recovery; avoid speed as the main success criterion.
Low confidence / fear of failure	Start with achievable tasks; celebrate small successes; use pairs or small groups; avoid elimination.
Communication difficulties	Use gestures, objects, visual prompts and non-verbal activities; allow different ways to contribute.
Heterogeneous abilities	Create complementary roles; use cooperative goals; vary equipment, distance, time or complexity.
Difficulty with reflection	Ask concrete questions about a specific moment; use emotion cards/scales; discuss in pairs before plenary.
Low concentration	Use shorter activity blocks, clear transitions and active reflection.
Cultural discomfort with proximity/touch	Offer alternatives; explain contact in advance; never require touch; consider cultural and personal boundaries.
Language barriers	Demonstrate; use simple language; pair participants strategically; use visual materials and peer support.

5.1 Inclusive design principles

- Cooperation before competition when the learning objective is social inclusion.
- No participant should be eliminated from the learning experience because of a mistake.
- Offer meaningful choice whenever possible.
- Allow multiple ways to succeed and contribute.
- Adapt the environment and rules before assuming the participant cannot take part.
- Use participant feedback to adjust subsequent sessions.
- Coordinate with therapeutic, educational or support teams when relevant and appropriate.

Example from the local experimentation

In the Sport2live workshop with adults with intellectual disabilities, both the physical challenges and the final

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cognitive task were simplified. Clear demonstrations, step-by-step guidance and continuous support enabled all participants to contribute to the cooperative objective.

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6. Lessons from the Edu4Impact Experimentation

6.1 What worked well

Across the LTTA and local workshops, several recurring strengths emerged. These should be treated as practical design principles for future implementation.

- Experiential learning made SEL concepts more concrete and memorable.
- Cooperative challenges supported communication, peer support and a sense of belonging.
- Safe, respectful and non-judgemental environments increased willingness to participate and share.
- Simple movement tasks could generate meaningful reflection without requiring advanced sport skills.
- Progression from individual or pair activities to group challenges supported confidence and group cohesion.
- Guided reflection helped participants recognise the connection between physical activity, emotions and relationships.
- Participant-centred adaptation increased inclusion in heterogeneous groups.
- Activities were most powerful when participants could identify a clear connection with daily life.

6.2 Main challenges observed

- Different levels of physical fitness, cognition and communication within the same group.
- Limited time for structured reflection and transfer.
- Difficulty understanding abstract SEL terminology.
- Maintaining attention during longer discussion phases.
- Need for continuous adaptation during delivery.
- Language barriers in international training contexts.
- Age-related fatigue or different comfort levels with physical proximity and dance.
- Last-minute attendance changes affecting pair and group structures.

6.3 Lessons learned for future implementation

The experimentation confirmed that sport can provide an accessible context for SEL learning, but the quality of the learning depends strongly on facilitation. The most transferable lessons were to simplify without infantilising, demonstrate rather than over-explain, prioritise cooperative success, observe the group continuously, and protect sufficient time for reflection.

The local implementation also showed that collaboration between sport professionals and social, educational or therapeutic teams can strengthen adaptation and help connect the session with participants' broader support context.

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Key lesson

Do not treat reflection as an optional closing activity. It is the bridge between the sport experience and the SEL learning objective.

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7. Practical Recommendations for Trainers and Educators

DO	AVOID
Define one clear SEL objective.	Trying to work on every SEL competence at once.
Use short instructions and visual demonstrations.	Long theoretical explanations before participants move.
Design cooperative goals and complementary roles.	Making success depend only on speed, strength or technical skill.
Adapt rules, space, equipment and pace.	Keeping the original activity unchanged when participants struggle.
Build early experiences of success.	Using elimination or public failure as motivation.
Observe emotions and group interaction.	Focusing only on whether the sport task is completed.
Ask concrete reflection questions.	Using abstract terminology that participants cannot connect to experience.
Connect learning to daily life.	Ending the session without transfer.
Collect participant feedback.	Assuming engagement automatically means learning.
Coordinate with relevant support professionals.	Working in isolation when participant needs require additional expertise.

7.1 Trainer preparation

Before delivering an Edu4Impact activity, trainers should understand the selected SEL competence, experience the sport task themselves, anticipate possible adaptations, prepare debrief questions and clarify how the activity connects to participants' real-life context. When working with vulnerable adults, trainers should also know the organisation's safeguarding, accessibility and emergency procedures.

7.2 Using the Training Programme and eLearning resources

The Edu4Impact Training Programme and eLearning environment should be used as complementary resources. The online materials can introduce or reinforce SEL concepts, provide examples and support self-paced learning, while face-to-face or synchronous activities provide the experiential component through which participants practise, observe and discuss those competences.

A blended sequence can therefore follow a simple logic: prepare online → experience through sport → reflect together → revisit resources → apply in practice. Organisations may adjust the balance between online and face-to-face learning according to participant access, digital confidence and training objectives.

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8. Monitoring and Evaluation

8.1 What should be monitored?

Evaluation should remain proportionate to the activity. For a short workshop, simple observation and participant feedback may be sufficient. Longer programmes can use repeated measures and structured trainer reports.

Dimension	Possible indicators
Participation	Attendance, active involvement, completion of activities, willingness to try.
Inclusion	Equal opportunities to contribute, mutual respect, peer support, sense of belonging.
SEL behaviours	Emotion recognition, self-regulation strategies, communication, empathy, cooperation, decision-making.
Confidence and motivation	Willingness to speak, attempt tasks, support others and continue physical activity.
Learning	Ability to identify the competence practised and explain what was learned.
Transfer	Ability to name a daily-life or professional situation where the learning can be applied.
Satisfaction	Perceived usefulness, enjoyment, safety and relevance.
Trainer learning	What worked, what was adapted, what should change next time.

8.2 Expected versus actual results

A useful practice from the Edu4Impact local workshop reports is to distinguish expected outcomes from what was actually observed. This encourages realistic reflection and helps trainers avoid interpreting all positive participation as evidence that every intended learning outcome was achieved.

8.3 Participant feedback

Feedback should be accessible to the target group. Depending on participants' needs, use a short Likert scale, visual rating, one-word checkout, guided interview or small-group discussion. Questions can cover enjoyment, participation, respect, emotional awareness, confidence, cooperation, usefulness and perceived transfer to daily life.

8.4 Trainer reflection

- Which activity generated the strongest engagement?
- Did the activity actually elicit the intended SEL competence?

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- Who participated less, and why?
- Which adaptations were necessary?
- Was there enough reflection time?
- What evidence of learning or transfer was observed?
- What would I change before repeating the session?

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9. Edu4Impact in Practice: Examples from the Pilot

The following examples illustrate how different SEL competences were translated into practical activities during the LTTA and local experimentation. They are examples for adaptation, not fixed protocols.

Example 1 — Responsible Decision-Making: "The Path You Choose"

Element	Example
Context	LTTA training session.
SEL focus	Responsible decision-making.
Activity	Participants follow a route with checkpoints and choose the order in which to complete them.
Learning opportunity	Choice, consequences, planning and adaptation.
Transfer	Participants adapted the exercise to their own professional contexts.
Implementation lesson	The practical adaptation phase generated strong learning; more reflection time was recommended.

Example 2 — Relationship Skills through Dance and Mirroring

Element	Example
Context	LTTA training session.
SEL focus	Relationship skills, social awareness and self-awareness.
Activity	Pair and group dance activities including mirroring, following a leader and changing partners.
Learning opportunity	Non-verbal communication, trust, personal space, cooperation and connection across differences.
Adaptation	Adjust pace for older participants and consider cultural/personal comfort with proximity and touch.
Implementation lesson	Simple movement rules generated high engagement and intuitive understanding.

Example 3 — Cooperative Sports Gymkhana: Puzzle Challenge

Element	Example
Context	Sport2live local workshop with adults with intellectual disabilities.
SEL focus	Relationship skills.
Activity	Participants complete cooperative physical challenges to obtain puzzle pieces, then assemble a shared final puzzle.
Learning opportunity	Helping, waiting, communication, shared success and belonging.

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Adaptation	Simplified physical and cognitive tasks, demonstrations, step-by-step guidance and continuous support.
Implementation lesson	A shared visible goal helped sustain cooperation and allowed different participants to contribute.

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Example 4 — Sport and Guided Reflection with Vulnerable Mothers

Element	Example
Context	Sorangeli local workshop.
SEL focus	Five SEL competences with emphasis on family relationships.
Activity	Icebreakers, cooperative games, movement challenges and guided reflection.
Learning opportunity	Emotion recognition, stress management, empathy, communication and cooperation.
Transfer	Participants explored how movement-based games could be used with their children.
Implementation lesson	Reflection and group discussion helped connect physical activity with emotional wellbeing and parenting.

Example 5 — Mindful Physical Exercise for Self-Awareness

Element	Example
Context	Local experimentation.
SEL focus	Self-awareness.
Activity	Physical exercise combined with attention to body sensations, emotions and concentration.
Learning opportunity	Recognising internal signals and linking physical activity with wellbeing.
Transfer	Participants identified personal benefits and motivation to remain physically active.
Implementation lesson	Mindful attention can make familiar exercise an explicit SEL learning experience.

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10. Replication Checklist

Before the activity

- ☐ Target group and support needs have been identified.
- ☐ One primary SEL competence has been selected.
- ☐ Learning outcomes are concrete and observable.
- ☐ The sport activity clearly creates opportunities to practise the competence.
- ☐ Adaptations for ability, communication, culture and accessibility have been considered.
- ☐ Physical and emotional safety considerations have been reviewed.
- ☐ Reflection questions have been prepared.
- ☐ A simple feedback/evaluation method has been selected.

During the activity

- ☐ Instructions are short and demonstrated when possible.
- ☐ The facilitator observes participation and group dynamics.
- ☐ Activities are adapted when participants struggle or disengage.
- ☐ Cooperation and meaningful participation are reinforced.
- ☐ Reflection takes place after key experiences.
- ☐ Participants are helped to name the SEL competence in accessible language.

After the activity

- ☐ Learning is connected to daily life or professional practice.
- ☐ Participant feedback is collected.
- ☐ Expected and actual outcomes are compared.
- ☐ The trainer records adaptations, challenges and good practices.
- ☐ Improvements are identified before the next implementation.

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11. Conclusions

Edu4Impact demonstrates a practical way of connecting adult education, sport and Social and Emotional Learning. The project experimentation suggests that sport-based activities can create meaningful opportunities for adults to practise emotional awareness, self-regulation, empathy, communication, cooperation and decision-making when those activities are intentionally designed around learning objectives.

The central implementation message is simple: the educational value does not come from physical activity alone. It emerges from the combination of an appropriate challenge, inclusive facilitation, observation, structured reflection and transfer to real life. This is especially important when working with adults in vulnerable situations, where flexibility, safety, dignity and meaningful participation must remain central.

The Edu4Impact Training Programme, eLearning resources and practical activities can therefore be integrated in different ways according to organisational context. The six-step implementation model presented in these Guidelines offers a common framework while leaving room for adaptation to participants, settings and professional practice.

Final message

Experience → Reflection → SEL Learning → Transfer. This cycle is the foundation for replicating Edu4Impact beyond the project.

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Annex 1. Session Planning Template

Field	Planning notes
Target group	
Number of participants	
Duration / setting	
Primary SEL competence	
Specific learning outcome(s)	
Sport / movement activity	
Materials	
Potential barriers	
Planned adaptations	
Safety considerations	
Debrief questions	
Transfer question / task	
Evaluation method	

Annex 2. SEL–Sport Activity Design Template

Design element	Description
1. SEL objective	What competence and behaviour do you want to practise?
2. Sport experience	What task will create an opportunity to practise it?
3. Rules / roles	How will the task be structured?
4. Inclusion	How can participants with different abilities contribute?
5. Observation	What behaviours/emotions will the trainer watch for?
6. Reflection	Which questions will make the learning explicit?
7. Transfer	How will participants connect the learning to daily life?

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Annex 3. Debriefing Question Bank

SEL area	Possible questions
Self-Awareness	What did you notice in your body? What emotion appeared first? What are you proud of?
Self-Management	What did you do when the task became difficult? What helped you stay calm or focused?
Social Awareness	What did you notice about other people? How did you know someone needed support?
Relationship Skills	How did you communicate? When did trust matter? What helped the group work together?
Responsible Decision-Making	What options did you have? Why did you choose that one? What consequence followed?
Transfer	Where else could this happen? What strategy from today could you use this week?

Annex 4. Adaptation Checklist

- Can the activity be completed at more than one intensity level?
- Can rules be simplified without removing the learning objective?
- Can the task be demonstrated visually?
- Can equipment, distance, time or space be adjusted?
- Can participants contribute through different roles?
- Is physical contact optional?
- Can reflection be supported with visuals or concrete examples?
- Is there a non-competitive or cooperative version?
- Can the activity continue if attendance changes at the last minute?

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Annex 5. Trainer Observation and Reflection Sheet

Area	Notes
Participation and engagement	
Group climate and inclusion	
SEL behaviours observed	
Key participant reactions / learning moments	
Adaptations made during the session	
Challenges encountered	
Evidence of transfer	
Participant feedback	
What worked well	
What should change next time	

Annex 6. Suggested Participant Feedback Items

Use a 1–5 scale, visual scale or adapted response format according to the target group.

- I liked the activities.
- I took part in the activities.
- I felt good in the group and respected by other people.
- I understood my feelings better during the activities.
- I learned new things about myself.
- I felt more confident expressing myself.
- I learned how to understand other people better.
- I learned how to work better with other people.
- Sport and activities helped me learn new things.
- I can use what I learned in my daily life.
- This workshop was useful for me.
- Overall, I am satisfied with the workshop.

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