

Evaluating your public engagement activities

Developing an evaluation plan



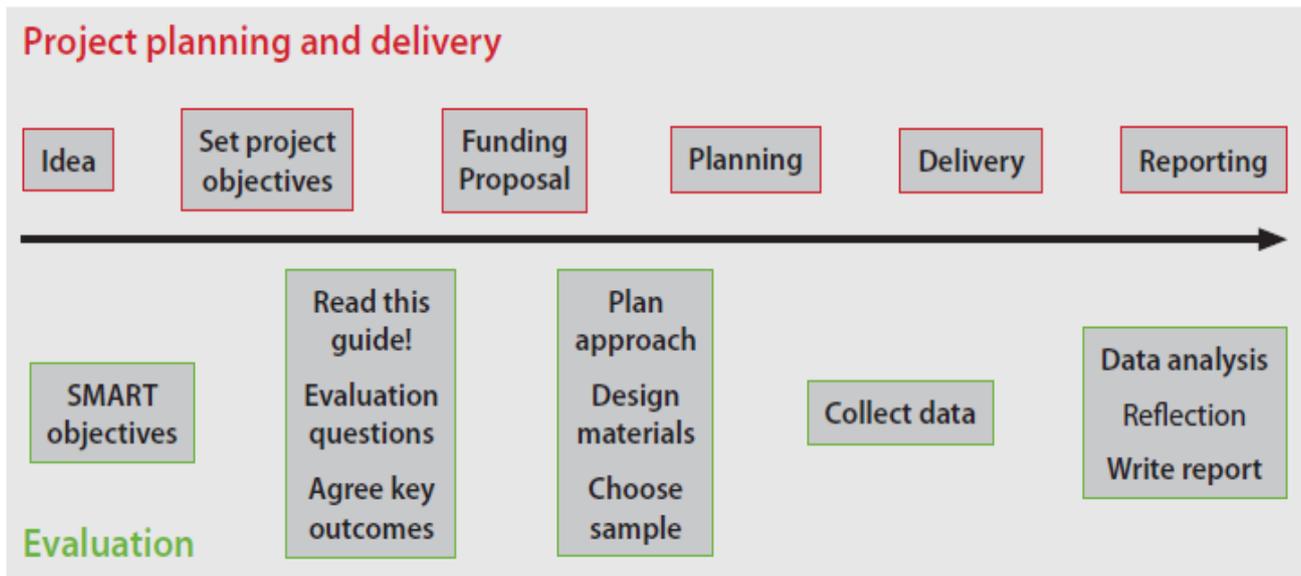
Why evaluate your engagement activity?

Benefits include:

- Help improve practice.
- Demonstrate impact of activity.
- Helps with funding applications / secure funding.
- Proves value and benefits of your activity.
- Inform or demonstrate commitment to institutional access agreement.
- Focus on what you want to achieve and how you will know if you have been successful.
- Provides you with evidence.
- Offers opportunity to improve your practice.
- Record of your achievement.
- Demonstrate value for money.
- Can inform future activities and improve them.
- If shared, can inform practice of others.

What are you aiming to do?

It is important to develop your evaluation plan alongside your project/activity plan. It does not need to be a lengthy document but it will give your evaluation structure and focus.



Source: Ingenious evaluations: A guide for grant holders, The Royal Academy of Engineers

EVALUATION PLAN

Project/Event/Activity:

AIM: *What I want to achieve*

OBJECTIVES: *What I need to do to achieve my aim*

EVALUATION QUESTIONS: *What I want to know*

METHODOLOGY: *Which strategy I will use*

DATA COLLECTION: *Which data collection technique(s) I will use*

DATA ANALYSIS: *How I will analyse the data*

REPORTING: *Who will be reading my report*

What is an evaluation plan?

An evaluation plan is a step-by-step guide of your evaluation. It summarises what you are going to do, why you are doing it and how you will undertake the process. It is a summary of your evaluation process and therefore does not need to be a long document.

Your evaluation plan should include:

1. **Aim** (what do you want to achieve? The big picture!)
2. **Objectives** (what you need to do to achieve your aim?)
3. **Evaluation questions** (what do you want to know?)
4. **Methodology** (what strategy will you use?)
5. **Data collection** (what techniques will you use to collect your evidence?)
6. **Data analysis** (how will you analyse your data?)
7. **Reporting** (who will be reading your report?)

Aim and objectives

Aim - why are you doing the activity?

What is your overall aim of your activity? This will be the same as your project/activity plan aim.

Objectives – how are you going to achieve that aim?

Your objectives should be the same as those in your project plan. Remember they need to be SMART:

S pecific - straight forward, focused and well defined with emphasis on action and the required outcomes. Something you can actually do that will help you to achieve your aim.

M easurable - how you will measure progress toward the attainment of each objective you set. You need to think about how you will know whether the objective has been, or is being, achieved.

A chievable – can you get the objectives done. Make them stretch you, but not so far that you become frustrated and lose motivation. Will make you think about how much money you need, what skills you and your team need and how long it will take to plan and run the activity.

R elevant – must be something you can actually do that will help you to achieve your aim, taking into account the resources you have for your activity including financial, personnel and time resources.

T ime defined - must have deadlines but they need to be both achievable and realistic.

EVALUATION PLAN - EXAMPLE

Project/Event/Activity: "From Supermarkets to Sewers" Science Show

AIM: *What I want to achieve*

To promote healthy eating by explaining how the body digests the food we eat.

OBJECTIVES: *What I need to do to achieve my aim*

To explain how the human digestive system works.
To develop an understanding of the importance of eating 5 fruit and vegetables a day.
To create a fun science show that young people enjoy.
To run 40 shows for schools and 20 shows for families.

Evaluation questions

What do you want to know?

Evaluation questions are what you want to know and may include what your funder or institution also wants to know.

Remember to think about questions that not only measure outputs but also outcomes and possible impact – whether short or medium term.

What is meant by Output, Outcome and Impact?

Outputs = results of you activity eg. How many took part? What type of people took part? How many sessions were delivered? How could it be improved?

Outcomes = overall benefits eg. Did people change their behaviour or attitudes? Acquire new knowledge or skills? How did your activity achieve these outcomes? How could it be improved?

Impact = overall effect or influence – the sum of the outputs and outcomes eg. Has the activity had an impact? What type of impact? Could the impact have been greater?

Outcome questions

To what extent were the desired changes met?

What were the unintended results?

Who benefitted?

Who didn't benefit?

Impact questions

To what extent can changes be attributed to the activity?

What are the final results?

Is the activity value for money?

EVALUATION PLAN - EXAMPLE

Project/Event/Activity: "From Supermarkets to Sewers" Science Show

EVALUATION QUESTIONS: *What I want to know*

Do young people understand how we digest our food?

Do young people understand the importance of eating a healthy diet?

Do young people find the show fun and entertaining?

How many people attended the shows?

How could we improve the show?

Creating indicators

Indicators are tools for simplifying, measuring and communicating important information. They can provide focus and add structure. Make your indicators manageable and jargon-free with no more than 6 per activity.

A good way to remember this is to think of AIMS:

- A**ction Indicators are relatively action-focused because they look at the impact of certain behaviour.
- I**mportant Remember, what is important to you may be only important to you. Work with a group of people to see what matters most.
- M** easurable Can data for the indicator be collected? Remember to think creatively.
- S** imple Avoid making your indicators too complicated. Simple is best!

You should have a mixture of qualitative and quantitative indicators and indicators for outputs and outcomes.

- Qualitative indicators (answer questions about things that are expressed in numbers) – How many? How often? How much?
- Quantitative indicators (demonstrate, describe or measure that something has happened) – When? Who? What? Why?
- Output indicators help you to assess the work generated by the activity and to show progress towards meeting your objectives ie. activities, services and products.
- Outcome indicators help you to assess the changes that take place as a result of your activity, and show progress towards meeting your aims ie. what signs will show us that the change we hoped for has happened?

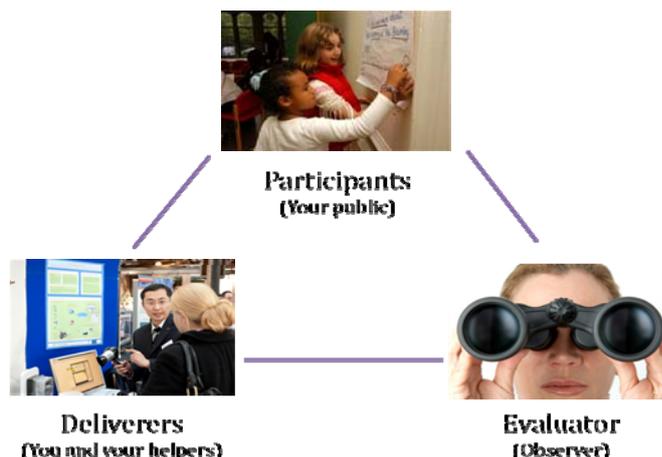
Devising your methodology

What strategy will you use?

When thinking about how you are going to conduct your evaluation consider:

Triangulation

Triangulation combines different research approaches and asks different people so developing a deeper picture of the activity. Based on the Mosaic Approach¹, it involves capturing different perspectives on your activity eg. from the public (*the participants*), your own (*the deliverer*) and a neutral observer who can be a helper or colleague (*the evaluator*). This coupled with being systemic and structured in your approach, can reduce bias.



¹ Spaces to Play: more listening to young children using the Mosaic Approach by Alison Clark and Peter Moss (2005) London: National Children's Bureau

YOUR EVALUATION QUESTIONS ↓	Participant (Your public)	Deliverer (You and your helpers)	Evaluator (An observer)
<i>Resources</i>			
<i>Activity</i>			
<i>Outputs</i> (results of activity)			
<i>Outcomes</i> (overall benefits)			
<i>Impact</i> (overall effect/influence)			

Quantitative and qualitative data

Ideally you should be collecting a mixture of both quantitative data (eg. responses to factual questions) and qualitative data (eg. responses to open questions). The latter allowing you to explore and understand what is happening in more depth.

Creating a baseline

It is important to create a baseline from which you can measure and evidence any change. It will help you know if people's knowledge or attitudes have changed and where you are starting from.

There are other stages at which you can conduct evaluation:

Front-end – to inform the initial creation of an activity/event.

Formative – to support the development of the activity/event.

Summative – to assess the final impact of the activity/event.

Sampling

You do not have to evaluate everyone and every activity – just a representative sample. A large sample takes longer to analyse and is often not likely to give you any more information.

Quantitative data usually involves larger sample sizes (eg. 40-60) and you should ask at least 100 people before expressing results as percentages. Qualitative data involves smaller sample sizes (eg. 10-20) but is in more depth.

Ethics

When collecting data consider the following ethical issues:

- Be professional and treat participants with respect
- Inform people that evaluation is taking place
- Inform participants about purpose of research
- Ask permission to record
- Be honest about constraints influencing decisions
- Keep names and contact details confidential
- Consider data protection procedures
- Use a range of methods
- Use open-ended methods
- Do not leap to conclusions without evidence.

EVALUATION PLAN - EXAMPLE

Project/Event/Activity: "From Supermarkets to Sewers" Science Show

METHODOLOGY: *Which strategy I will use*

Audience: school children, children with families, teachers, parents/carers, staff delivering the show.

A range of qualitative and quantitative methodologies will be employed including 3 interactive questions, in-depth interviews with sample of schools and families, and staff debriefs.

Attendance numbers of adults/children will be recorded.

A baseline will be established as part of the in-depth interviews - questions asked before seeing the show and then questions asked afterwards.

Collecting your data

When deciding how you will be collecting your data, remember to consider the following:

- suitability for the audience
- questions you are trying to find the answers to (ie. your evaluation questions)
- time (of both evaluators and participants)
- space and location
- situation eg difficult to get people to fill in a questionnaire at railway station.

Collection techniques

There are various collection techniques you can use from the traditional questionnaire to the more creative artwork or vignettes. Some examples include:

- Comment cards, postcards
- Questionnaires
- Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Graffiti walls
- Video or photographs
- Observation
- Letters, emails
- Artwork and sculpture
- Role play/acting
- Vignettes/case studies.



Ask for comments creatively; on a washing line or post-its on walls

Asking questions

There are two types of questions:

Open questions: Open questions have no predetermined set of responses, and participants are free to answer however they choose. An obvious advantage is that the variety of responses can be richer and more truly reflect the opinions of the respondents. This increases the likelihood of you receiving unexpected and insightful suggestions.

Open questions do have several disadvantages:

- There is no way to automatically tabulate or perform statistical analysis on them.
- They are also open to the influence of the reader, for no two people will interpret an answer in precisely the same way.
- They require more thought and time on the part of the respondent. Whenever more is asked of the respondent, the chance of tiring or boring the respondent increases.

Closed questions: Closed questions are usually multiple-choice question. They offer many advantages:

- Time and money.
- By restricting possible answers, it is easy to calculate percentages and other statistical data.

When writing questions consider:

Clarity: Questions must be clear, succinct, and unambiguous. Eliminate the chance that the question will mean different things to different people. For example, if asking a question about frequency, rather than supplying choices that are open to interpretation such as:

Very Often
Often
Sometimes
Rarely
Never.

It is better to quantify the choices, such as:

Every Day or More
2-6 Times a Week
About Once a Week
About Once a Month
Never.

Leading Questions: A leading question is one that forces or implies a certain type of answer. It is easy to make this mistake in the choice of answers. A closed question must supply answers that not only cover the whole range of responses, but that are also equally distributed throughout the range. For example these answer choices are weighted more towards a favourable response:

Superb
Excellent
Great
Good
Fair
Not so great.

A better way would be to ask the same question but supply the following choices:

Totally agree
Partially agree
Neither agree or disagree
Partially disagree
Totally disagree.

Phrasing: Most adjectives, verbs, and nouns in English have either a positive or negative connotation. It is advisable to try to use verbs that have neither strong negative or positive overtones.

Hypothetical Questions: Avoid hypothetical questions because they ask for conjecture.

Prestige Bias: Prestige bias is the tendency for respondents to answer in a way that make them feel better. There is little that can be done to prevent prestige bias.

EVALUATION PLAN - EXAMPLE

Project/Event/Activity: "From Supermarkets to Sewers" Science Show

DATA COLLECTION: *Which data collection technique(s) I will use*

The 3 interactive questions will be built into the show and asked at each performance. In-depth interviews will be held with a selection of schools and family groups as well as staff debriefing meetings at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the scheduled run of shows.

Analysing and interpreting your data

This stage involves analysing, interpreting and reflecting on the evidence you have gathered. It is important to:

- Allow plenty of time
- Refer back to original aim and objectives – your evaluation questions
- Group data into categories or themes (ie. coding)
- Use highlighters to mark key points
- Look for patterns and trends and themes
- Find representative quotes
- Look for contradictory data
- Be critical of your interpretation of data
- Ideally discuss data with colleagues.

Using coding and frameworks

Coding is a method by which you can quantify qualitative data – to group the data into categories that can then be counted. You can code any questions where respondents have entered their own answers. It can be simple (such as negative and positive comments) or more complex.

Coding frameworks are often used for reporting. For example:

- Generic Learning Outcomes (museums)
- SROI (Social Return on Investment) model
- RCUK's Pathways to Impact.

EVALUATION PLAN - EXAMPLE

Project/Event/Activity: "From Supermarkets to Sewers" Science Show

DATA ANALYSIS: *How I will analyse the data*

Inspiring Learning for All's GLOs will be used to code the data; quotes will be used to illustrate learning points.

Critical Reflection

To maximise the benefits of your evaluation plan you need to critically reflect on your activity. It is about learning from experience.

Critical reflection is about:

- Questioning
- Seeking alternatives
- Keeping an open mind
- Comparing and contrasting
- Viewing from various perspectives
- Asking "what if...?"
- Asking for others' ideas and viewpoints
- Considering consequences
- Hypothesising
- Synthesising and testing

- Seeking, identifying, and resolving problems.²

The key questions to ask are:

- what worked well?
- why?
- what did not work well?
- why not?
- what will I do the same next time?
- what will I do differently next time?

Reporting your findings

There is no point in spending energy on collecting data unless you use the information, learn from it and share it with others. One way to do this is to produce a written report or case study but there are some key things to remember:

- think about who will be reading it and tailor the content to their needs.
- critically reflect on what you have learned from the experience. Stand back and be objective. How could I have done better? What changes will you make next time?
- if possible remember to feedback findings to those involved, value their contribution and thank them.
- make sure the findings are acted upon.

Your report should contain the following:

- Summary
- The context of the evaluation
- Aim, objectives and evaluation questions
- Description of activity/event
- Methodology
- Summary of evidence (data itself may form an appendix)
- Overview of the activity/event
- Conclusions and recommendations.

EVALUATION PLAN - EXAMPLE

Project/Event/Activity: "From Supermarkets to Sewers" Science Show

REPORTING: *Who will be reading my report*

Short report will be written to inform future programme development and a case study produced to contribute to the learning department's end of year review.

² Roth, R. A. "Preparing the Reflective Practitioner: Transforming the Apprentice through the Dialectic." *Journal of Teacher Education* 40, no. 2 (March-April 1989): 31-35

Resources

Below are a few examples of various resources and opportunities available to you to help and support your evaluation.

Evaluating participatory, deliberative and co-operative ways of working (Interact Working Paper)

http://www.sharedpractice.org.uk/Downloads/Interact_Working_Paper.pdf

Festival of Robotics – Evaluation Report

<http://www.scu.uwe.ac.uk/Files/Walking%20with%20Robots%20Overall%20Evaluation.pdf>

Inspiring Learning For All

Triangulation/the Mosaic Approach

http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/export/sites/inspiringlearning/resources/repository/gso/resource6_2.pdf

Data Collection Techniques

http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/export/sites/inspiringlearning/resources/repository/Methods_-_strengths_and_we.pdf

Generic Learning Outcomes

<http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/toolstemplates/genericlearning/>

Making a difference: a guide to evaluating public participation in central government (INVOLVE)

<http://www.involve.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Making-a-Difference-.pdf>

Practical guidelines: a guide for evaluating public engagement (RCUK)

<http://www.manchesterbeacon.org/about>

Public engagement evaluation guide (Manchester Beacon for Public Engagement)

<http://www.manchesterbeacon.org/about>

RCUK's Pathways to Impact

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/impacts/RCUKtypologydiagram.pdf>

SROI (Social Return on Investment)

<http://www.sroi-uk.org/home-uk>

UCL Evaluation Toolkit

http://www.ucl.ac.uk/public-engagement/research/toolkits/Event_Evaluation

Using participatory visual methods

<http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/morgancentre/realities/toolkits/participatory-visual/>

APPENDIX: Strengths of Different Data Collection Techniques

Based on the *Research Methods*, Inspiring Learning For All, MLA

http://inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/export/sites/inspiringlearning/resources/repository/Methods_-_strengths_and_we.pdf

METHOD	STRENGTHS	THINGS TO CONSIDER
Response cards Comments cards Comments books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are a flexible way of engaging with the public • Can be used as part of a display and other people can be encouraged to read them - it can be made "fun" and interactive to catch attention • Need minimal administration as people can complete the card or write in a comments book themselves • Can encourage people to write, draw or record their comments in their own way and take into account different levels of ability • Can target people engaged in particular activities depending upon where the response cards or comment books are placed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posing questions in a comments book or on a card will improve the quality of the comments • Provide good quality pens and paper to indicate to people that their comments are being taken seriously • Place comments cards so that everyone can see them and are encouraged to share their views
Questionnaires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are good for large-scale collection of evidence where broad information is required rather than in-depth exploration • Are flexible and can be used in a variety of formats - on-site, by email or post • Can include closed or multiple-choice questions as well as open-ended ones • Can be used flexibly - they can be self-completion or administered by deliverers who can help explain questions that may not be straightforward for some people • Collect demographic information for comparison across age / gender • Have the potential to collect information from participants over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions need careful phrasing to reflect age, language and ability levels of your targeted public group • The 'look' of the questionnaire is important and good design is crucial • Be aware of questionnaire 'overload' - is this method suitable for the public you are trying to reach? • It can be difficult to control who completes self-completion questionnaires • Make them manageable so that users are not put off by (perceived) length or difficulty of questions • It is essential to develop skills in using spreadsheets to analyse information especially for large-scale collection of questionnaires
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can take place face to face or on the telephone • Conducted by peers • Used one to one, can provide good information about learning, attitudes, feelings, opinions and behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find ways of setting participants at ease - they need to feel comfortable about sharing their experiences with the interviewer • If language is an issue use a translator or peer interviews where one person could translate for the

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the potential to collect information from participants over time about their experience 	<p>other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan how you will analyse the data in advance – an interview may produce a large amount of evidence that may be time-consuming to analyse unless the interview is structured (then answers may be more predictable)
Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can elicit in-depth information from participants about their views and experiences • May encourage people to share their attitudes, beliefs and experiences more openly through group interaction • Are a good way of collecting and reinforcing evidence of learning from groups participating in the activity/project • Enable you to collect different perspectives of the same experience or at different time periods if focus groups are carried out at different stages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitator needs to be skilled in leading the discussion and keeping the group focused. He/she needs to ensure that everybody feels comfortable about sharing their experiences and opinions equally • Make practical arrangements clear for all involved including location, maps, furniture and refreshments • You may need to pay for participants attending a focus group or provide an incentive • It may not be easy to extract the individual's experiences from the group's • You will need to take notes (which may require a second moderator) or record the discussion
Graffiti Walls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are interactive as comments can be made to look attractive as part of a display - people can read others' comments and may be encouraged to add their own • POST IT notes can be used as a colourful / cheap way of getting people to share their comments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments need to be fixed strongly to the wall or they might be lost • Provide a posting box for people wanting to keep their comments anonymous
Drawings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are useful when writing skills are limited and may be more "fun" or engaging • Can be used in combination with written comments to aid analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are challenging to interpret without questioning and mediation
Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation can work well if participants "talk out loud" about their experiences while the observer walks around with them - an accompanied experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May need to be combined with interviews or questionnaires • If people know they are being observed their behaviour may be affected
Video	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is an appealing alternative to traditional comments cards - may be more fun and engaging for some users than writing comments • Is potentially a powerful tool for gathering evidence for advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of video may be time-consuming with too much material e.g. from a discussion • Needs to be edited properly

	purposes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not easy to set this up unless integrated into the design of a space
Role play\acting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It may stimulate people's memories by asking them to re-live it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some participants may be reluctant to act out their experiences so you need to introduce the idea of role-play carefully • Requires a skilled moderator
Photographs/Images	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can act as a memory aid to people • Can be used by people to convey their experiences creatively • Can be used with speech bubbles in a display to convey experiences to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be difficult to analyse if the context for the photograph is unknown
Artwork/Sculpture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be used in conjunction with other methods e.g. interviews and focus groups to obtain the context and help articulate the learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be difficult to interpret and analyse if the context is not known
Letters/Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters and emails can show evidence of outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpredictable and ad hoc source of outcomes • Analysis may be time-consuming
Case studies/Vignettes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be used as a stimulus to present different experiences to people in interviews or focus groups • Explore people's perceptions, beliefs and experiences in relation to a specific situation • Get people talking and to present a broader view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vignettes need to be chosen carefully so that people can relate to the experience • Not used in isolation as it may only give views about the experience contained within it rather than a reflection of their own experiences