SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE ARTS EVALUATION TOOLKIT FOR SOMERSET

APRIL 2009

Annabel Jackson Associates
The Priory
54 Lyncombe Hill
Bath BA2 4PJ
Somerset
Tel: 01225-446614
Fax: 01225-446627
Email: ajataja@aol.com
Website: www.AnnabelJacksonAssociates.com

Contents

INTRODUCTION

Writing the evaluation toolkit

Somerset County Council with Sedgemoor District, Mendip District, South Somerset District Councils, Taunton Deane Borough Council and Artlife (Cultural Development Agency for West Somerset) and Arts Council England, South West have commissioned Annabel Jackson Associates to carry out a review of social impact evaluation in the arts, produce a toolkit and carry out case studies of key arts organisations. This document presents our first draft of the evaluation toolkit. The evaluation toolkit is based on earlier evaluation toolkits written for the Arts Council of Northern Ireland in 2004 and the Arts Council of Wales in 2006. The toolkit has increased the consistency of evaluation work, enabling individual arts organisations to better understand and explain their effects, but also helping the entire sector to make a stronger case to the Government in difficult times. This is a draft which will be refined following our five case studies of arts social impact (to be completed in Spring 2009).

Principles

The toolkit was designed according to the following **principles**:

- The toolkit should ask questions of interest to arts organisations and participants. These should be questions the answers to which have the capacity to change lives and elevate communities.
- The toolkit should make evaluation as easy as possible. The text should be action oriented. Explanation should be relegated to an optional reference section.
- The toolkit's evaluation framework should compress the largest amount of meaning into the smallest amount of work. It is essential to respect the time of staff, volunteers and participants.
- The toolkit should respect the variation in arts organisations. It should be flexible enough to suit arts organisations of different sizes, art forms, cultures, functions and stages in their development.
- The toolkit should operate at different levels. We provide optional questionnaires for different areas of social impact.
- The toolkit should be mixed method: quantitative and qualitative. The method should be chosen according to the question being pursued, not according to a pre-existing ideology.
- The toolkit should respect the values of the different arts organisations. It should value the process as well as the product.

The evaluation toolkit is aimed at helping arts organisations to increase their own capacity for evaluation. **Self evaluation** is helpful because it puts you in control. You know your organisation best. Self evaluation puts you ahead of your funders' demands rather than on the back foot.

The evaluation toolkit shows you how to **integrate** evaluation into your day to day operations. Linking evaluation to management systems minimises the amount of work required. It is easier to collect information as you go along rather than leaving all the paperwork to do at a later stage. Reporting is more useful because you get feedback live rather than after the event. This process of integration is as relevant to an organisation with one employee as one with five or ten employees.

Evaluation links to **other information systems** in your organisation. You will still need to monitor your financial performance, your relationship with stakeholders such as funders and members, and any staff that you have. The skills that you learn in evaluation will help you with these tasks.

Evaluation can form the foundation for your organisation's **business plan**. The evaluation tools explained in this toolkit will help you to clarify your objectives, assess your organisation's strengths and weaknesses, and set your priorities.

There is no one way of doing evaluation. You should be able to find an approach that matches your culture and resources. The toolkit is designed to give you the skills to **customise** an evaluation approach to your own needs and circumstances.

Contents

The evaluation toolkit contains three sets of resources for arts organisations:

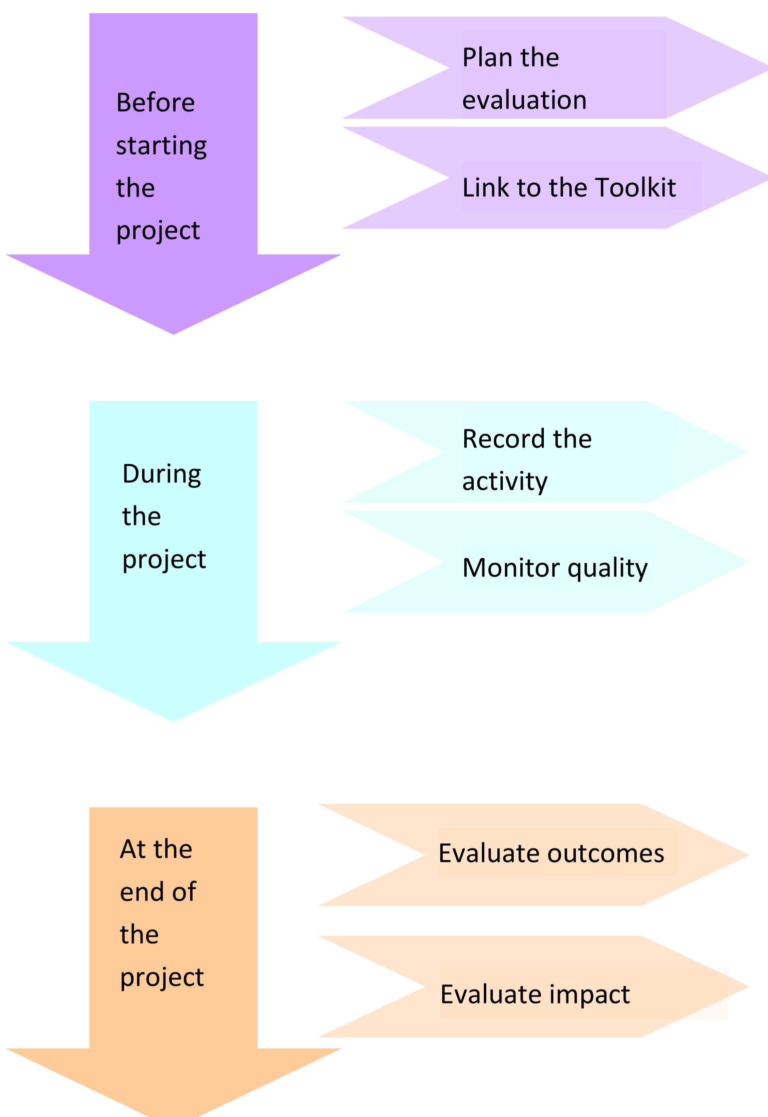
- **The main text**. This describes the stages necessary for building an evaluation culture, where evaluation is integrated with day to day operations and resources, and there are systems for managing and using evaluation findings.
- **A reference section**. This answers common questions about evaluation for arts organisations, for example, the advantages and disadvantages of using an external evaluator versus internal evaluation, the strengths and weaknesses of different evaluation methods, good practice in drawing a sample, writing questionnaires, analysing data and writing an evaluation report.
- **Quickguide**. This summarises the toolkit and contain standard questionnaires.

INTRODUCTION TO EVALUATION

Stages in evaluation

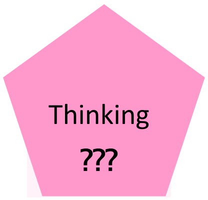
There are three stages to evaluation: before you start your project/activity, during your project/activity and after your project/activity.

The rest of this toolkit uses the word "project" to apply generally to the work of an arts organisation: whether self contained, like a project, performance, screening or concert; or continuous, like a series of classes.

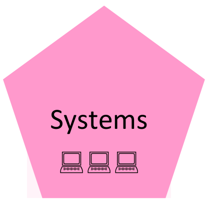


Aspects of evaluation

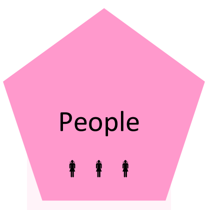
Each evaluation stage requires you to ask yourself questions, set up or apply systems, involve people and take action. The toolkit uses these **headings**:



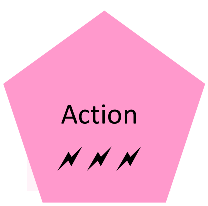
Framing, focusing, conceptualising, interpreting, synthesising



Planning, gathering data, entering data on a computer, analysing data, disseminating information



Motivating, training, involving, reassuring, listening, informing, influencing



Making recommendations, implementing recommendations

All four elements are important. If you neglect thinking, you might be missing out important issues. If you neglect systems, you might be collecting weak or incomplete information. If you neglect people, evaluation might generate resistance rather than interest. If you neglect action, valuable insights from evaluation might be lost. Most organisations are naturally better at one of these four. One of the purposes of this toolkit is to give you practical support so that you can do each satisfactorily.

BACKGROUND ON EVALUATION

What is evaluation?

Evaluation is the art of asking interesting and provocative **questions**. Evaluation provides guidance to help you to frame precise, unloaded questions. Evaluation can help you to see through the mass of mundane or "interesting but not very useful" questions to find the true, fundamental questions at the heart of your work.

Evaluation is about **evidence**. Evaluation draws on a whole host of research methodologies that can give you a different way of seeing your work. Quantitative information (data) can reveal patterns that are not obvious, for example where particular groups of participants have benefited significantly more than the average. Evaluation is not a replacement for intuition. However, it can help you to test and explain your intuitions.

Evaluation is about **causation**. Evaluation is at its best not when it is describing or summarising your work, but when it is investigating what is achieved, why, how and when. Evaluation can help to explain the constraints and contextual factors that affect your work and therefore to help to ensure expectations (yours and your funders') are realistic.

Evaluation is about different **perspectives**. Even the simplest project or activity can benefit from asking different stakeholders (participants, artists, partners and funders) about their experiences and perceptions of your work.

Evaluation is about **reflection**. Evaluation can provide a structure to prompt and record feedback on your achievements. You probably already have observations about what works and what doesn't work in projects or activities. Evaluation helps you to make the best of these observations so that they are not lost in the busy day-to-day life of your organisation.

Evaluation is about **learning**. Evaluation is a continual process of questioning, seeking evidence and reflecting on the findings. Through time this will allow you to improve your work and ensure that you make the best use of the resources that you have available. Thus evaluation not only measures, but also contributes to success.

Benefits of evaluation

- Evaluation can help to make your organisation more **effective**.
- Evaluation can make your organisation more **confident** in telling funders what works and what doesn't.
- Evaluation can help funders, participants and other stakeholders to **understand** your organisation better.
- Evaluation can make **fund raising** easier and faster.
- Evaluation can help you to develop your organisational **memory** so that lessons are not lost.
- Evaluation can make your organisation more **customer-focused**.
- Evaluation can help you to **anticipate** problems in the organisation so that they can be dealt with early on.
- Evaluation can help you to **motivate** staff and participants.

Myths about evaluation

Evaluation is about **proving** the value of your work. On the contrary: evaluation is more interesting and powerful if it asks broader questions about what your work achieves and how. Evaluation information can feed into advocacy but evaluation questions should be neutral rather than slanted by advocacy.

Evaluation is only for **funders**. On the contrary: funders tend to have fairly broad requirements of evaluation. The most meaningful and useful evaluation system will be that designed to investigate your own questions. Information for funders should be generated as a side product from this.

Evaluation is all **numbers**. On the contrary: most evaluation mixes qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Evaluation is **retrospective**. On the contrary: evaluation is more useful if it runs alongside your work. This means that early conclusions can provide feedback to allow you to fine-tune your work.

Evaluation reduces **creativity**. On the contrary: smoothing the organisational tasks can leave more time to focus on the art.

Evaluation is **negative**. On the contrary: evaluation can celebrate achievements as well as highlighting gaps between expectations and reality.

SUMMARY

Thinking

???

Ensure you have a clear idea of what your project or performance is intended to achieve. In particular, you need to think about:

- **What are the resources of the project or performance?** Include human, financial, organisational and community resources.
- **What are the activities of the project or performance?** Include processes, events, technology and actions that are part of the project. This includes the number and type of outreach events or other publicity, the number and type of sessions and the number and type of performances or exhibitions. Be aware of the choices that you have made at each stage in the project and, by implication, of the alternatives that are possible.
- **What are the intended outputs?** Generally this is the number and type of participants in an arts project and the number of visitors or audience members. However, it is relatively common to see the term “outputs” used to describe what we have listed here as activities as well as outputs.
- **What are the intended outcomes?** This refers to changes in the behaviour, aspirations, knowledge, skills or attitudes of participants.
- **What are the intended impacts?** Impacts are community-wide benefits whether in social or economic terms.

Arts organisations don’t tend to have tightly prescribed intended outcomes like other programmes that are explicitly designed to avoid teenage pregnancy or reduce crime. However, arts projects still have broad outcomes, such as helping participants to increase in confidence and helping them to express themselves. These outcomes can contribute to wider social issues in the local authority area.

The Quickguide contains four standard questionnaires for arts organisations:

- **Activity forms for projects.**
- **Activity form for performances/concerts/screenings.**
- **Activity form for exhibitions.**

Other questionnaires were used during the pilot, but are not contained as the ongoing work should concentrate on the core elements of the system.

People

You need to ensure that evaluation is taken seriously in your organisation. This will greatly affect the quality of the data that you receive and therefore the value of the process. Consider whether you need to:

- Train staff, freelancers and committee members in evaluation.
- Tell users/participants that you evaluate your work. Explain evaluation to them in a positive way, emphasising the way information is used for organisational learning.

- Have internal feedback sessions, or an agenda item for evaluation in existing staff meetings.
- Recruit an evaluator for specific tasks or on a retainer.
- Include time to complete feedback forms in the timetable for events.
- Put evaluation or performance measurement on the agenda for your management committee.
- Put evaluation in the job descriptions for staff or contractors.
- Include a budget for evaluation in project proposals or funding applications.
- Purchase additional software for data analysis.
- Allocate a specific file (in your computer and in your filing cabinet) for feedback forms and other evaluation data.
- Think about how to ensure that evaluation data is kept confidential.
- Talk to other arts organisations about how they do evaluation.
- Have a wall chart, poster or other visual showing recent achievements.

Whatever your internal arrangements, you will need to tell participants and staff early on that the project will be evaluated.

Action

It is important to translate the finding of your evaluation into recommendations about practical ways to improve your project. You also need to allow time and perhaps resources to put these recommendations into action. You can't improve all your work simultaneously. It is sensible to focus your effort. For example, you could identify two key improvements to make if you re-run your project.

BEFORE STARTING THE PROJECT

Plan the evaluation

Thinking
???

Planning the evaluation can enable you to make the best of the skills and resources in your organisation. Good planning will increase the quality of the data produced, smooth the workflow and ensure that results are useful.

It is better to have one coherent set of questionnaires than to keep going back to participants to ask them additional questions that were missed out of earlier evaluations. Similarly, it is better to have accurate information on a small number of key questions than to have incomplete or biased information on a large number of questions. A common guideline is that you should dedicate 10 per cent of the resources of a project to evaluation.

Evaluation should be proportional to the scale of work. Don't expect to measure change from a single workshop.

A key element of the planning process is to consider how the evaluation proposed in this guide fits in with any existing evaluation that your organisation already carries out.

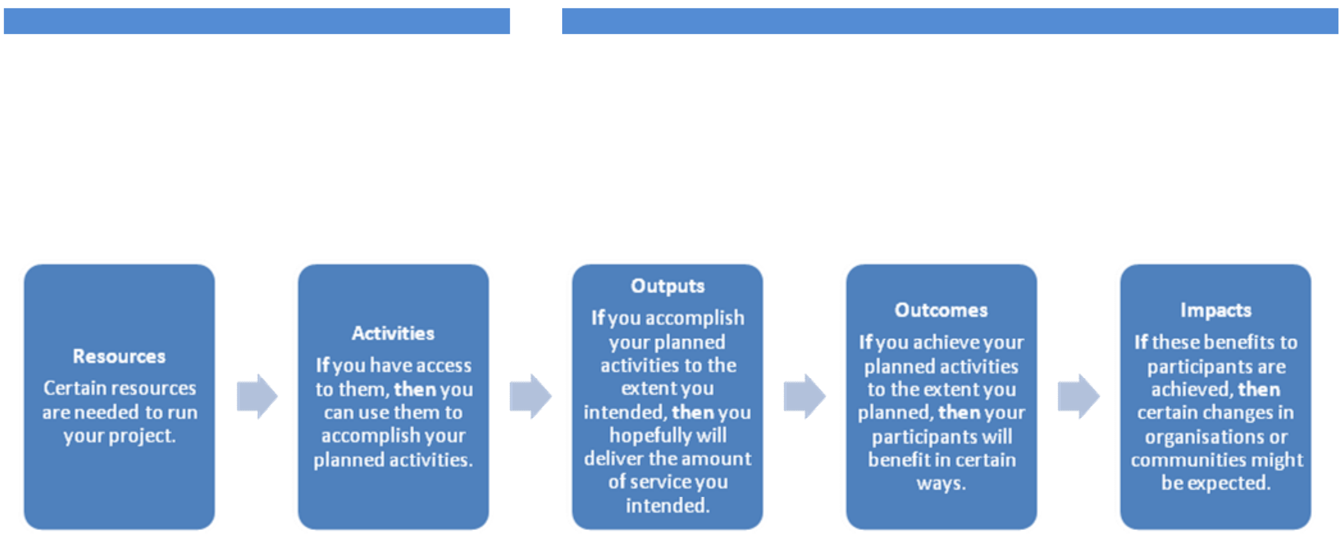
There are two Thinking tasks:

Draw the Project Logic

A logic model is a picture of how your project works. It gives a visual presentation of the assumptions underlying your work, in particular the assumptions about how activities lead to outcomes. The logic model is a simple but very powerful tool that can help you clarify your thinking, measure progress along the way (through intermediate indicators) and communicate your objectives to different stakeholders. Logic models help funders and other stakeholders to understand the practicalities of projects and therefore to temper their expectations.

The Kellogg Foundation, which developed and popularised logic models, explains them as follows:

Your planned work **Your intended results**



For an example of a completed project logic model see page 21.

Logic models are read from left to right, as in this diagram. However, the best way to design them is to start with outcomes and work left.

To construct a logic model you need to ask:

▪ **What are the intended impacts?** Impacts are community-wide benefits whether in social or economic terms.

▪ **What are the intended outcomes?** This refers to changes in the behaviour, aspirations, knowledge, skills or attitudes of participants.

▪ **What are the intended outputs?** Generally this is the number and type of participants in an arts project and the number of visitors or audience members. However, it is relatively common to see what we describe here as 'activities' under the heading of outputs.

▪ **What are the activities of the project?** Include processes, tools, events, technology and actions that are part of the project. This would include the number and type of outreach events or other publicity, the number and type of sessions and the number and type of performances or exhibitions.

▪ **What are the resources of the project?** Include human, financial, organisational and community resources.

Arts organisations don't tend to have tightly prescribed intended outcomes like other programmes that are explicitly designed to avoid teenage pregnancy or reduce crime. However, arts projects still have broad outcomes, such as helping participants to increase in confidence and helping them to express themselves. These outcomes can contribute to wider social issues in the local authority area.

In order to draw your logic model you might want to ask yourself:

▪ **Why was the project developed?** What is the problem or need it is attempting to address? The rationale can be positive (increasing creativity) as well as negative (reducing isolation).

▪ **Who are the stakeholders?** Who are the people involved in the project? Are there people who would be interested in the project who are not involved?

▪ **Who are the intended participants?** Why were they chosen and to what extent has the project been tailored to their needs?

▪ **How will the projects achieve the intended benefits?** What is it in the project that will benefit the participants? In evaluator's language this is asking about the **mechanisms** whereby outcomes are achieved.

Don't make your logic model too detailed. It should fit on a page or it will be difficult to read.

Test the Project Logic

Once you have drawn the project logic you can consider whether you are on solid or weak ground, for example:

▪ **Where is the initiative for the project coming from?** If it is coming from funders then does it match your experience of what users need?

▪ **Are the resources sufficient?** Is the budget right? Are there elements missed out, like evaluation or training? Are you trying to do too much? Do you need other skills or resources? How could you obtain these? Do you need more partners? Are the time lines realistic?

▪ **Is there a need for this project?** Have users expressed a need for this type of project before? If not, do you need to do a survey to check need? If users have expressed a need for this type of project before, how many? Is this enough to support the project? You might want to investigate the terms on which potential participants want the new project: for example the preferred delivery conditions – most desire is conditional. There are two main methods for analysing need: written questionnaires or focus groups. You can also use other evidence of need such as waiting lists, responses to previous evaluation questionnaires and requests from other organisations.

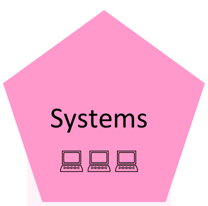
▪ **Do different stakeholders have different expectations of your work?** Are these compatible or do objectives need to be re-negotiated? Are stakeholders clear about what you are doing? How important is your work to their objectives?

▪ **Are the activities likely to lead to the outcomes?** Are there any barriers that could prevent your target participants from using or benefiting from your proposed project? What could you do to remove barriers? This could include preparatory work or publicity to ensure take up. What could you do to increase the benefits?

▪ **Are there external factors that could affect your ability to reach your outputs or outcomes?** You might like to make a list of the main external factors or risks that could affect your project and think about whether you can control or monitor them.

▪ **Is the project right for your organisation?** Does the project match your organisation's skills and resources? Does the project match your picture of where you want the organisation to be in the future? Is there synergy with other projects, either from your organisation or another organisation? Could you capitalise on this more?

▪ **How does this project fit with other organisations' work?** Are other organisations already doing similar or complementary projects? Do they have information on the needs and delivery preferences of participants that would help you target your project? Could they help with recruitment or delivery?



There are two Systems tasks:

Produce an Evaluation Framework

Your logic model should help you to identify the issues you need to evaluate. For example:

▪ **What resources have been deployed in each stage of the project?** Are resources available at the right time and in the right form for the project? Are the resources constraining what is possible in the project?

▪ **What activities have been carried out?** What are the key choices that have been made in delivering the project? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each of these delivery options? Does experience suggest that these delivery options need to be reviewed?

▪ **What outputs have been produced?** What is the level of activity? What is the level of take up? What is the background of project participants?

▪ **What outcomes have been achieved?** Have participants changed their behaviour, aspirations, knowledge, skills or attitudes? What percentage of participants has changed in each possible outcome area? To what extent can these outcomes be traced to the work of your project? How does (what are the mechanisms whereby) your project achieves these outcomes? How does the pattern of outcomes differ over the short, medium and long term?

▪ **What impact has been achieved?** Has the project had an economic or social impact? How did external factors reinforce or counter the impact of your project? How could the impact have been greater?

An evaluation framework outlines what methodology you are proposing to adopt to address your evaluation issues.

A possible structure is:

Structure for an evaluation framework

	Participants	Staff/volunteers	Evaluator or peers
Resources		Management accounts Time sheets Appraisal information Questions to artists and other project operators about the support they received	
Activities	Questions on outcomes questionnaire	Postal questionnaires or group discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of the project and key issues	Observation forms
Outputs	Questions on background included in outcomes survey	Attendance forms Activity forms Session records	
Outcomes	Telephone or telephone survey	Postal questionnaires or group discussion	
Impact	Follow up questionnaires	Compile figures on staffing from the output questionnaire	Independent sector evaluation

Produce an Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan helps you to see the work associated with evaluation. It should show:

▪ **Tasks**. What are the tasks required for each evaluation method? Appendix One gives a list of the tasks involved in each of the main evaluation methods.

▪ **Responsibilities**. If you have staff, think about who will do the work. You should think whether they have the skills and qualities to carry out the tasks. Clerical tasks, such as entering data, require precision, IT skills and the ability to respect confidentiality. Interviewing is a highly skilled task that requires the individual to suspend their own views and listen to the interviewees.

Observation might require additional expert knowledge in order to make quality judgements.

▪ **Deadlines**. Ensure that you have sufficient time so that tasks are not squeezed out or compromised. Identify any tasks that have a lead in time and ensure these are given priority. Deadlines need to be realistic. Relate these to the rest of your work. Check that the times of heightened activity don't clash with other pressures on the organisation. For example, you might like to prepare and print out the evaluation questionnaires before they are needed. You might want your evaluation report to be ready for a specific conference or event or committee meeting, in which case you should set deadlines by working backwards from the required reporting date.

▪ **Targets.** Set rough targets for response rates and outcomes. This is a way of being precise about your expectations. Be realistic. Telephone surveys should aim for a 90 per cent response rate, but postal surveys sometimes only receive 20-30 per cent of the questionnaires sent out. Appendix One gives guidelines to increase the response rate for written questionnaires.

▪ **Any expenditure**.

Ensure that your plan is realistic. For example, consider:

▪ **How far do you want to go?** It is better to do a modest amount of evaluation well than to take on too much and find that the data is incomplete or inaccurate.

▪ **What are your organisation's strengths and weaknesses in evaluation?** You could think about this in terms of the four elements used in this toolkit: Thinking, Systems, People and Action.

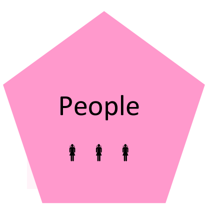
▪ **What are the barriers to the plan being implemented?** What do you need to do to overcome them?

Evaluation might seem difficult at first because you have to think about each stage. It will become much easier as it becomes part of the way you automatically go about your day-to-day work.

Structure for an Evaluation Plan

TASKS	RESPONSIBILITY	DEADLINES/TARGETS	EXPENDITURE
Write or copy evaluation forms. This might include piloting and amending forms			Depending on the method: paper, stamps, envelopes, telephone costs
Distribute and collect evaluation forms. Set the sample, introduce the forms, collect them back, answer questions about			Files to keep questionnaires

the forms			
Enter data on the computer			Spreadsheet software and possibly expert help
Analyse the data			Spreadsheet software and possibly expert help
Write up. Translate findings into recommendations			
Disseminate the findings. Provide feedback to funders and respondents			Email, poster, newsletter, website, annual report
Launch the findings			Depending on the type of event: paper, venue, food
Implement the recommendations			



There are two People tasks:

Ensure Evaluation is Treated Seriously in Your Organisation

Consider whether you need to:

- Train staff, freelancers and committee members in evaluation.
- Have internal feedback sessions, or an agenda item for evaluation in existing staff meetings.
- Recruit an evaluator for specific tasks or on a retainer.
- Include time to complete feedback forms in the timetable for events.
- Put evaluation or performance measurement on the agenda for your management committee.
- Put evaluation in the job descriptions for staff or contractors.
- Include a budget for evaluation in project proposals or funding applications.
- Purchase additional software for data analysis.
- Allocate a specific file (in your computer and in your filing cabinet) for feedback forms and other evaluation data.
- Think about how to ensure that evaluation data is kept confidential.
- Talk to other arts organisations about how they undertake evaluation.

▪ Have a wall chart showing recent achievements.

Involve Interviewees

Most of your data will come from interviewing individuals. You will be asking people to allocate some time to this research, for example by completing questionnaires or taking part in a focus group. You need to ensure that planned interviewees know about the evaluation.

There are four ways in which you can involve interviewees:

▪ **Tell them about the evaluation**. It is good practice to tell organisations and individuals about the evaluation at the earliest possible moment. Ideally, you should mention at the beginning of the project that evaluation is an integral part of your work. Be sure to introduce evaluation in a positive light – for example, as part of your organisation's commitment to excellence and customer focus. The way you present evaluation affects the quality of the data that you receive. You really want to avoid the vicious cycle whereby evaluation is seen as a mindless bureaucratic exercise, which leads to respondents giving superficial answers consistent with a mindless bureaucratic exercise, and thereby reinforces their negative views of evaluation.

▪ **Ask for their permission to use information**. There are two levels of notification:

- **Organisations**. Partners with which you are working, such as schools, might have formal procedures for approving surveys of staff or participants. You might need to apply for permission to compile data. You should also tell your partners when the evaluation will take place and you should offer them a copy of the final report.
- **Individuals**. When they join the project participants (or parents/guardians for children) should sign Data Protection Act forms agreeing that information can be used for evaluation purposes. Participants should be told why the data are being collected and the use to which the results will be put. Most evaluators give and honour assurances that individual data will be confidential and that no personal repercussions will result from survey responses. You will need to remember this assurance when you are writing the evaluation report.

▪ **Minimise disruption to participants and participation**. Think about the best stage to apply the questionnaires and allow time for this to happen.

▪ **Feedback conclusions and actions taken as a result**. Keep people informed about how findings are used. If nothing ever changes as a result of evaluation then participants and staff won't want to continue filling in the forms.

If they are told about the purpose of evaluation, consulted about the research methods and possibly involved in the research design, involved in respectful and non-threatening ways and given feedback about conclusions then you will find that most people are happy to be involved in evaluation. Asking stakeholders' views of a project is one way of showing that you value them.

Action

There are two Action tasks:

Monitor Your Evaluation Plan

This has two components:

▪ **Ensure work is completed on time**. Tick off each task in your evaluation plan when it is completed.

▪ **Ensure the quality of work is consistent**. Check that interviewers are not suffering from burnout. This is noticeable from skipped questions, fewer probes or fewer open ended comments in interviews, and more transcription errors in data entry. Review the data every month to check that people are asking and recording questions consistently.

Evaluate Your Evaluation

At the end of each cycle of evaluation consider:

▪ **Whether you need to fine-tune the evaluation methodology**. You might need to reword questionnaires, give more explanation, remove questions that were not useful, or include new issues that arise from the work.

▪ **Whether you need to change the way evaluation was carried out**. Make notes on anything that needs to be changed in the future, for example, ensuring contact details are up to date so that interviewers do not have to spend time tracking participants.

▪ **What your organisation gained from evaluation**. Be sure to keep notes of any benefits from evaluation so that you can use these as examples when you are motivating staff in the next cycle of evaluation.

Simple form to evaluate your evaluation

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Planning		
Choosing evaluation methods		
Compiling data		
Analysing data		
Writing up		
Communicating results		

Link to the Toolkit

Thinking

???

There are two Thinking tasks:

Setting the Level of Detail for Evaluation

Think about how much evaluation your organisation wants to do: whether you will:

- Do the minimum. This would involve using the activity and outcomes questionnaires.
- Use some of the specialist questionnaires as well as the generic questionnaires.
- Add further subjects that are not in the toolkit. If this is the case, you might need further guidance on how to use methods and write questions (Appendix One).

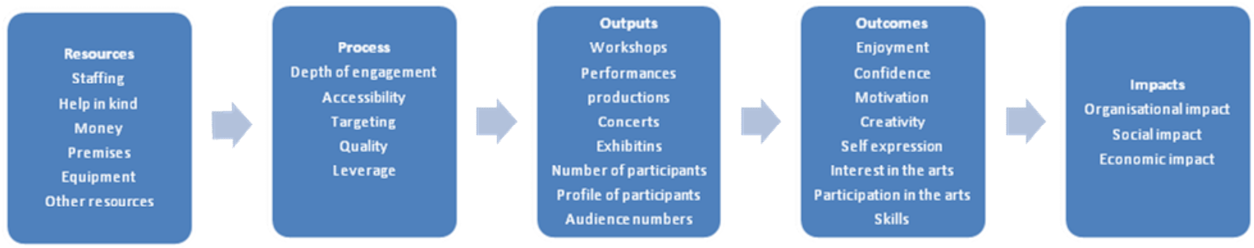
Your choice will reflect:

- The size of your organisation.
- The proportion of your work that is arts-related.
- The sophistication of your existing evaluation systems.
- The range of your work. Organisations that are continually developing new projects might want to do more evaluation than organisations with one consistent product.

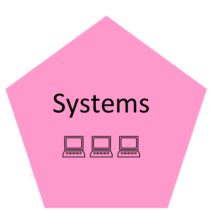
Note the Overlap with the Toolkit's Logic Model

The logic model assumed in the toolkit is:

Evaluation Toolkit's Logic Model



Outcomes will inevitably vary between projects and organisations. No project is expected to achieve all possible outcomes. Ideally, over time arts organisations and their funders will grow to understand what kinds of projects generate which types of outcomes under which circumstances. This could produce different logic models for different types of projects. However, the logic models will always be speculative rather than predictive. Arts projects evolve organically during the artistic process. Arts projects are not production lines to produce fixed outcomes.



There are two Systems tasks:

Link to the Toolkit's Evaluation Framework

We have drawn this toolkit as widely as is reasonable. However, you might have other evaluation requirements, especially from other funders. You need to combine these two sets of requirements so that you only have one set of evaluation questionnaires for each project.

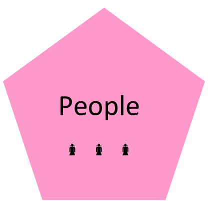
The approach that we are suggesting is probably a bit more quantitative than most arts organisations would come to naturally themselves. Please give quantitative methods a chance: a few numbers can save you a lot of words and will have greater credibility with funders. With a little care quantitative methods can be as meaningful and sensitive as qualitative. For example, the proposed forms look at the depth as well as the breadth of participation.

The evaluation methods that we propose are:

Evaluation Toolkit's Evaluation Framework

	Questionnaires/Sources
Resources	Time sheets Appraisal information
Activities	Observation Form
Outputs	Attendance Sheet for Individuals Attendance Sheet for Groups Activity Form*
Outcomes	Outcomes Questionnaire
Impact	Independent evaluation across the sector

* Draft questionnaires in Quickguide



There are two People tasks:

Decide Whether to Use External Evaluators

If you are intending to expand your evaluation beyond that in the draft questionnaires then you might need additional expert advice. Guidance on using external evaluators is given in Appendix One.

Plan Evaluation Training (to be rewritten)

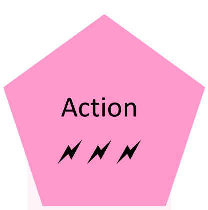
Four areas of training are important:

▪ **Random sampling**. Random sampling selects specific individuals for interview from an overall population of participants. Data collectors should work hard to contact the named individuals rather than giving up too soon and selecting another name on the list.

▪ **Consistency**. Data collectors must ask the questions in the same way over time and across organisations.

▪ **An open mind**. Data collectors must suspend their own judgments during the interviewing process. Even very experienced evaluators find that respondents frequently surprise them: that their opinions are not what they expected. Data collectors must allow the space for these new views to be expressed.

▪ **Being positive**. Data collectors must communicate to respondents that the evaluation is important, their response is valued and the interview is not a test to which there is one right answer.



There is one Action tasks:

Management Committee Approval

It would be helpful to seek and receive your Management Committee's approval and support for your work on the evaluation toolkit.

DURING THE PROJECT

Record the activity

There are two Thinking tasks: recording inputs and outputs

- **Inputs** are staffing, money and help in kind.
- **Outputs** are workshops, performances, exhibitions or publications.

Recording Inputs

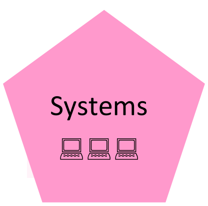
You will probably already have information on inputs from your internal management systems.

Recording Outputs

Keep track of activity as you go along. It is much more difficult and time-consuming to try and reconstruct a description of your work after the event. Record what happened, **not** what could have happened, might have happened, should have happened or will happen.

This information is simple but very useful. It is surprisingly common for arts organisations not to know how many participants they have or had. This puts them at a great disadvantage in raising funds: if you have done the work, you should take the credit for it.

The Toolkit has been designed to measure the depth as well as the breadth of participation. This means that even if you do not have large numbers of participants, you might still have a good story to tell in terms of your intensive, detailed participation. The evaluation can communicate this.

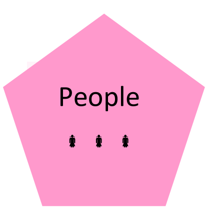


Please review, adapt and adopt the standard questionnaires:

- **Activity forms for projects.**
- **Activity form for performances/concerts/screenings.**
- **Activity form for exhibitions.**

Getting Feedback on the Forms

It is worth having a brief discussion in your organisation about the output evaluation. For example, ask project staff and volunteers:



- Do they feel involved in, and clear about the purposes and benefits of the evaluation?

- Are project organisers completing the forms consistently? If not, do you need to give further guidance on how to complete the forms?
- Are the data accurate and timely? If not, do you need to give further explanation about the value of the data?
- Do the figures make sense? Are there other factors that need to be taken into account in interpreting the figures?

Action

There are two Action tasks:

Interpret the Findings

Look at the figures from the output evaluation and consider what they mean, for example:

Were the inputs too low?		Did the project expand from its original conception? Did you underestimate the resources needed for the project? Did your resources change during the project?
Were the inputs of a poor quality?	Why?	Do you need to do more planning? Do you need to work with other organisations more? Do you need to raise money for future projects?
Were the inputs too late?		Were there problems from the terms of funding?

Was the number of outputs lower than you expected?		Do you need to increase marketing? Do you need to strengthen partnerships?
Were some target groups under-represented?	Why?	Do you need to increase outreach? Do you need to fine tune publicity or delivery?
Was the drop out rate high?		Do you need to provide more information to potential participants or partners for recruitment? Do you need to change the location, timing

		or other aspects of the delivery of the project? Do you need to provide incentives for participants to continue? Do you need to change the type of activity offered?
Was the project over-subscribed?		Do you need to expand the project?
Was there a slow start in take up?		Do you need stronger recruitment? Do you need a longer lead in time for setting up the project?

Act on the Findings

You need to consider whether the project is on schedule and on target. Low levels of participation will inevitably affect the outcomes achieved. This is one of the messages from the Logic Model.

Monitor quality

Thinking

???

Think About Organisational Quality

What does quality **mean** to your organisation? Think about things that you value, or aspects that you take for granted that would impress funders. This discussion will take more time if you have new staff or new projects. It will be more straightforward if you have a fairly standard product and a small consistent team.

A **quality form** is useful because:

▪ It helps to define who you are as an organisation (your unique selling point), what is different between what you do and what other organisations do.

▪ It shows that you care about quality.

▪ It allows you to make the best of any time you are observing a session. The form provides a few pointers, drawing your attention to aspects of quality, which helps when you are busy.

▪ It helps to depersonalise criticism.

Possible **aspects** of quality could include:

▪ **Was the project well organised?** Was the project well publicised? Did everyone know what was going on? Did the different parts link together? Did the different parts occur at the right time?

▪ **Was the project fit for purpose?** Was the content appropriate to the participants? Was the content at the right level of difficulty?

▪ **Was the artistic quality high?** See the next section.

Think About Artistic Quality

Comedia suggests that artistic quality has five components:

▪ **Technique**. Technical competence or sophistication.

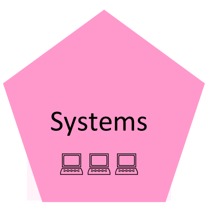
▪ **Originality**. The newness of the content as well as the mode of expression.

▪ **Ambition**. The extent to which the art challenges creators and viewers to extend themselves beyond the norm.

▪ **Connection**. Relevance to the audience.

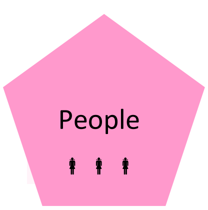
▪ **Magic**. Ability to provide non-rational responses, inexplicable and inexpressible reactions that stay with the audience.

We are not suggesting that you measure these five in your outcome evaluation. However, it is helpful to think about which ones are most important to you during any quality monitoring that you do (i.e. by getting project managers or peers to evaluate your project on them). No one project can excel on all five simultaneously.



Quality Focus Group

You could use a focus group instead of a questionnaire. Focus groups can be useful for providing feedback on the quality of your project. Guidelines for conducting focus groups are given in Appendix Two. The discussion can be informal if you are a small group. However think about how you might want to change this as you grow. For example, you might want to have separate sessions for artists and project managers.



You need to revisit your People tasks during this stage:

▪ Encourage people to take part.

▪ Reassure them and encourage them to be honest. Explain the data will be confidential and only aggregate findings will be recorded.

▪ Ask for ideas of how they would improve the project.

Action

There are two Action tasks:

Fine tune Your Project/Activity

Think about these questions:

- **Is this the right activity for your organisation?** Does it match your resources and abilities? Does it match your ideas for where the organisation is going?
- **Are there any problems bubbling up?** Are people, resources or groups of participants being stressed? Is the project sustainable?
- **Are there long term tasks that are being neglected?** Arts organisations are often over-stretched which means there is little time for research, developing new projects, advocating for your sector, finding out about new sources of funding or strategic planning.
- **What have you learnt?** Are there any barriers to applying your new knowledge? How do you ensure the lessons are applied? Could your lessons help other arts organisations?

It is worth having an internal discussion about how the project should be **improved**. You can’t improve all your work simultaneously. It is sensible to focus your effort. For example, you could identify two key improvements to make to your project if you re-run it.

You might like to give individuals responsibility for following up specific areas of improvement. This could include doing research on the Internet or talking to other arts organisations.

AT THE END OF THE PROJECT

Evaluate outcomes

Think About Your Outcomes

Outcome measurement sounds intangible and difficult but you don't need a high level of detail, so it is relatively straightforward. For example, it is enough to ask whether participants increased (or decreased) their confidence as a result of the project, not by how much their confidence increased.

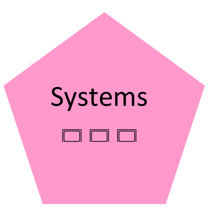
The use of social outcomes is an attempt by funders to better match the objectives of arts organisations, to move away from a reliance on economic impact evaluation. It might sound mechanistic or instrumental, however, the arts do have strong effects on people. We hope that recording what already occurs can show the sector in a stronger light as well as opening some interesting discussions within the sector.

All outcome evaluation should involve talking to project participants. However, you might also like to collect information from artists and other session organisers, partners and funders.

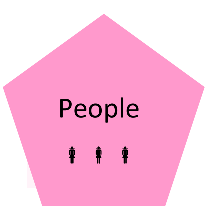
You need to ensure that the effects can reasonably be said to come from your project rather than from other events in participants' lives. The approach that we have taken in the Outcome Questionnaire is to ask participants which effects come from your project. This is the simplest approach. You can also explore the role of your project by comparing participants' questionnaire responses before and after the project, and by using a control group (similar group of participants who did not take part in your arts project).

Projects often produce outcomes not anticipated in the funding proposal, positive and negative. Evaluation needs to be flexible enough to include these.

If you want to ask participants for their feelings towards the wider community then you need to think carefully about which community you mean. People might trust others in their local neighbourhood but not trust people across the whole city.



Please develop and pilot your outcome questionnaire.



Revisit the People issues mentioned in the first section:

- Explain to those giving out the forms the importance of the information.
- Take the forms seriously.
- Encourage honesty.

▪ Collect a complete set of responses.

▪ Introduce the forms confidently. Don't be apologetic.

Action

There are two Action tasks:

Interpret the Findings

How good is good? It is arguable that all outcomes from arts projects are a bonus. However, it can also be interesting to compare your project with other projects from your or other organisations. What evaluators tend to find is that different types of projects consistently produce different kinds of outcomes and no project excels on all outcomes.

Summary statistics can help you to compare your projects or your organisation with similar organisations, although they do not, of course, tell the whole story. You might like to look at unit costs, for example:

▪ **The average cost per participant**. The total cost divided by the number of participants.

▪ **The average cost per session**. The total cost divided by the number of sessions.

▪ **The average cost per outcome**. The total cost divided by the number of participants who experienced an outcome such as increased in confidence.

Unit costs need to be interpreted alongside other figures, especially average contact hours and levels of outcomes. High unit costs can be good (indicating intensive support) or bad (indicating low participation or waste of resources).

Look at the figures from the outcome evaluation and consider what they mean, for example:

Were outcomes at a lower level than you expected?		Was this because the measurement didn't match your work, or because the take up/outputs were lower than expected, or because the quality was lower than needed?
Were outcomes of the kind expected?	Why?	Do you need to increase outreach? Do you need to fine tune publicity or delivery?
Were there unexpected negative or positive outcomes?		Do you need to expand your questionnaire to include unexpected positive outcomes? Do you need to change your project to reduce negative outcomes or to be more selective about participants?
Did some participants achieve		Do you need to target your project at

higher outcomes than others?		participants who gain the most from it?

Act on the Findings

Consider the following issues:

▪ **Value for money**. Are there ways you can increase the benefit without increasing the cost? Are there ways of decreasing the cost without decreasing the benefit?

▪ **Was your logic model accurate and complete?** Was the impact on the participants as expected? Were there any unintended positive or negative consequences?

▪ **Was the project implemented as planned?** Did the project reach targeted groups? If not, why not? Was the take up sufficient? If not, what could you do about it? Did partners do their bit? What were the critical success factors? What contextual factors helped or hindered the project? If the project was not implemented as planned, was this because of unanticipated problems?

▪ **What have you learnt?** What would you do differently next time? Most arts organisations have informal debriefing sessions. If you don't write the conclusions down then they might be lost. Evaluation gives a systematic form to do this. You can include recommendations about how funders can improve their programmes.

▪ **What is the role of the project?** What is unique about your project? Would the project suit other communities? Should it be rolled out or replicated?

Evaluate impact

Thinking
???

There are three elements of impact:

▪ **Organisational impact**. This is the impact of projects or activities on your organisation's skills, reputation, innovation and its financial sustainability.

▪ **Social impact**. This is the impact of projects or activities on the wider community, including but not limited to project participants and audience members.

▪ **Economic impact**. This includes the number of jobs created and income generated directly or indirectly from your organisation's work.

If you have collected the information the toolkit recommends then measuring impact should be relatively straightforward. You should have most of the data you need. What remains it to:

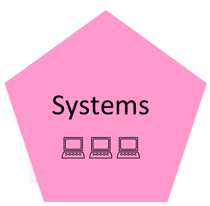
▪ **Add together your different projects**. This needs to be done without double counting, which is relatively straightforward as your data are kept at the individual level.

▪ **Take account of the role of other organisations**. You should not take the credit for their work. In practice outcome measurement doesn't claim that arts organisations have sole responsibility for the outcomes. Rather it claims that arts organisations **have contributed** to positive outcomes.

- **Consider external circumstances that affected the impact achieved**. These could be circumstances that contributed to or counterbalanced your achievements.

- **Link to wider research about the impact of the arts on non-participants**. The toolkit assumes that it is not the job of individual arts organisations to evaluate the overall impact of artistic activity on the wider community.

These issues are considered in further detail in the review that was prepared alongside this toolkit.



There are two Systems tasks:

Compiling Data for Social Impact (to be expanded)

All the outcome measures in the Outcomes Questionnaire can be turned into performance indicators of the form "Percentage of project participants who had x outcome".

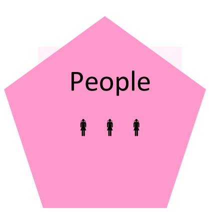
Compiling Data for Economic Impact

Economic impact is likely to be carried out by an external evaluator. However, there is a lot you can do to compile the data they need for their analysis, for example:

- **Keeping clear accounts of income and expenditure**.

- **Keeping figures on the people employed on your projects**. This information is on the Activity Form.

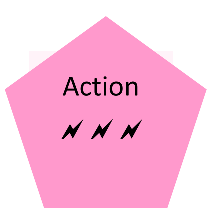
- **Noting whether your suppliers are local or outside your area.**



There is one People task:

Discuss Organisational Impact

Did the project develop or deplete your organisation's skills, partnerships and resources?



There is one Action task:

You might like to compare your results with other arts organisations to see if you can learn from each other. Evaluators tend to find that all projects have strengths and weaknesses.

APPENDIX ONE: REFERENCE

What are the types of evaluation?

Summative evaluation typically takes place at the end of your project and makes a judgement about the overall success of your work. If you think of goals as the overall effects you wish to achieve from your project, then summative evaluation examines your progress towards your goals. Summative evaluation typically looks at outcomes and impact.

Formative evaluation takes place during your project and provides feedback on whether you are making progress. If you think of objectives as the means to achieve your goals, then formative evaluation examines your progress towards your objectives. Formative evaluation typically looks at process measures, outputs and intermediate indicators.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of doing evaluation in-house versus using external evaluators?

The advantages of doing evaluation in-house are:

- **Knowledge of internal culture and process**. You might have a better understanding of the information that you need as well as the practicalities of applying evaluation in your organisation.
- **Organisational learning**. Learning about evaluation techniques and insights gained from the evaluation stays in the organisation.
- **Commitment**. You might be in a stronger position to implement recommendations that come out of your evaluations.

The advantages of using external evaluators are:

- **Specialist skills**. An external evaluator might have long experience in tasks such as writing and analysing questionnaires.
- **Independence**. Reports produced by external evaluators might have greater credibility with funders.
- **Distance**. An outsider might bring a fresh perspective to your work.
- **Knowledge of other areas**. An external evaluator might know about good practice in other areas, whether in evaluation or project delivery.

In practice, your access to external evaluators is likely to be determined by your resources. If you wish to use external evaluators then you will need to build their fees into your budget from the beginning.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of different evaluation methods?

There are seven broad methods available. Which evaluation method is appropriate will depend on:

- The type of questions to be answered.
- The time available.
- The resources available.
- The technical skills of the evaluation team.
- The intended audience for the evaluation and what methods they consider credible.

Evaluation methods can be broadly classified into:

- **Quantitative methods**. Data that can be represented numerically.
- **Qualitative methods**. Narrative descriptions or images.

These are better thought of as two ends of a continuum rather than two discrete categories. Open questions, which are by nature qualitative, can be coded to produce quantitative data. Closed questions, which are by nature quantitative, can include space for comments. The two are complementary. Quantitative data helps with generalisation. Qualitative data helps with interpretation.

Arts organisations often feel that evaluation is mechanistic because it relies on numbers. There is an assumption that numbers are restrictive, simplistic and rigid, but this does not have to be the case. In fact, numbers can be deeply creative, radical, even anarchic. It is a matter of fact that the human brain works by simplifying reality: it sees what it expects to see or concentrates on the most vivid or recent occurrences. Numbers can help us see past our own expectations or experiences. When properly used, numbers tell the story as it is. Numerical data helps organisations to detect trends or occurrences that are not obvious on their own. Thus, instead of just drawing attention to what the most vociferous participants think, numbers can tell an organisation what the silent majority think.

There are usually trade-offs between breadth and depth. All methods have strengths and weaknesses. Ideally you should use two or more methods which have complementary features. This is described as “triangulating” on the research subject because it gives you different perspectives, rather like taking spatial measurements from two different points.

The task lists given in this section do not include the generic tasks, such as notifying respondents, which are relevant to all evaluation methods.

Observation

Observation is a holistic method that can give the evaluator a vivid picture of the operation of a project, especially with regard to group behaviour. The complexity of observation is a weakness as well as a strength. Some form of evaluation questionnaire is helpful to steer observation. Otherwise there is a distinct risk that different observers would come to different conclusions (low reliability).

Strengths and weaknesses of using observation

Strengths	Weaknesses
Dense information source	Small sample of behaviour
Immediate	Lack of understanding of preceding events: can be difficult to interpret or categorise seen behaviours
	Reliance on observer's skills
	The visit alters behaviour (the Hawthorne Effect)

The tasks in organising an observation session are:

- Consider the aims of the observation sessions and the information that you would like to obtain. It might be helpful to think about what you would expect to see (good behaviour) and what you would not expect to see (bad behaviour).
- Consider the number of sessions that you would like to have observed and the length of observation. This is likely to be determined by your resources.
- Think about a general sampling framework: whether you would like to include different types of activities, different staff members, different types of participants or different times of year.
- Notify the session organisers about the planned observation and think through the logistics, for example, whether the observer should take an active part in the session.
- Produce an observation schedule. Drafts are given in Appendix Three.
- Observe the session and take notes during or immediately after the session.
- Discuss any queries or other relevant issues with the session organiser.
- Produce a short summary of the findings from observation sessions over a set period of time e.g. six months or a year.

Written surveys

Written surveys are useful for compiling simple factual information across a relatively homogeneous population (homogenous in terms of background or outcomes). They are particularly successful where the subject is well understood so that the questions can be coded. They are not applicable for complex or conceptual issues. Nor are they suited to situations where respondents vary widely and would therefore need to answer different parts of the questionnaire. The response rate can be maximized by personalising the letters and questionnaires (including the name of the person addressed and a reference to the event or project covered), including stamped addressed envelopes, and issuing at least one reminder letter or email. Written questionnaires should always be tested using a small pilot survey, which can be administered face-to-face. Postal surveys demand more skill in questionnaire writing than telephone or face-to-face surveys because they lack the opportunity to check responses with respondents.

Strengths and weaknesses of using written surveys

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Cheap	Low response rate
Large numbers do not greatly increase the cost	Biased response
Provide uniform information	No assurance the questions were understood
Data entry is simple	No assurance the addressee was the one who replied
Can be anonymous	Responses can be difficult to interpret
Self-administered	People often express themselves better orally than in writing
	Limited personal contact to motivate a response
	Assume a level of literacy

The tasks in organising a postal survey are:

- Consider the aims of the survey and the information that you would like it to address.
- Check your contact details for planned respondents. Correct any information that is incomplete or out of date.
- Draft the survey questionnaire.
- Pilot the survey questionnaire by getting three or four potential respondents to fill it in and then tell you if the questions were clear, applicable and in the right order.
- Amend the survey questionnaire with insights from the pilot.
- Write a covering letter explaining the aims of the survey and the purpose to which information will be put. Include reassurances about confidentiality.
- Copy and post/distribute the survey questionnaires. Consider including stamped addressed reply envelops.
- Send out a reminder, as appropriate.
- File and number questionnaires as they come in.
- Produce a database structure, enter and analyse the questionnaires.

Face-to-face surveys

Face-to-face surveys provide detailed, personal interaction with interviewees. This is a strength because of the potential for empathy and probing to explore answers and a weakness because of the scope for personality conflicts and manipulation. Face-to-face surveys are expensive and best applied when the number of people to interview is relatively small or concentrated in one area.

Strengths and weaknesses of using face-to-face surveys

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Personalized	Expensive
In depth, free response	Time consuming
Empathy can motivate a longer and more complete discussion	May intimidate some groups
Flexible and adaptable	Open to manipulation by the interviewer
Gives visual cues	Vulnerable to personality conflicts
Can combine open questions with pre-coded responses	Requires skilled interviewers
	Might be difficult to summarise findings
	Might involve the interviewer travelling to unsafe areas

The tasks in organising a face-to-face survey are:

- Consider the aims of the survey and the information that you would like it to address.
- Consider whether you need a full response or a sample and if the latter, what size sample is appropriate. All samples must be random (e.g. every 10th participant) not personally selected.
- Draft the survey questionnaire.
- Pilot the survey questionnaire by getting three or four potential respondents to fill it in and then tell you if the questions were clear, applicable and in the right order.
- Amend the survey questionnaire with insights from the pilot.
- Fix appointments with the planned respondents and carry out the interviews. You should take full notes during the interview to complete the questionnaire but also record any vivid comments and new issues raised.
- Check the questionnaire at the end of each interview to ensure that all questions are answered and the writing/coding is intelligible.
- Produce a database structure, enter and analyse the questionnaires.

Telephone surveys

Telephone surveys combine some of the advantages of postal surveys (relatively low cost) with some of the advantages of face to face interviews (personal interaction).

Strengths and weaknesses of using telephone surveys

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
High response rate	Can be difficult to contact people
Empathy can motivate a longer discussion	Problem with time differences
Scope for checking meaning	Inappropriate for people without telephones
Scope for following leads	Inappropriate for children and non-English speaking people
Cheaper than face to face	Respondents might lack privacy
Interviewee is relaxed in their own environment and tends to be more candid	
Lead-in time to start the survey is short	
Contact with the interviewee is used productivity rather than in chasing up written forms	
Can combine open questions with pre-coded responses	

The tasks in organising a telephone survey are:

- Consider the aims of the survey and the information that you would like it to address.
- Draft the survey questionnaire including introduction and confidentiality undertaking.
- Pilot the survey questionnaire by getting three or four potential respondents to fill it in and then tell you if the questions were clear, applicable and in the right order.
- Amend the survey questionnaire with insights from the pilot.
- Telephone the respondents. If you are telephoning using a random survey, make at three attempts to telephone each numbered respondent. Track planned interviewees if their contact details appear to be out of date.
- Check the questionnaire at the end of each interview to ensure that all questions are answered and the writing/coding is intelligible.
- Produce a database structure, enter and analyse the questionnaires.

Focus groups

Focus groups collect data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. Focus groups provide an excellent method for seeing how your clients think and what issues are important to them. They help to generate questions but not answers. Results need to be tested using a larger survey to produce generalisations. The group setting means that individuals have to wait for a time to talk which can reduce rather than increase the number of ideas generated. The value of focus groups is strongly affected by the skills of the facilitator.

Strengths and weaknesses of using focus groups

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Group interaction	Small sample
Group consensus	Not representative/random
In depth discussion	Responses are not independent: Group format fosters conformity: differences might be suppressed or polarized Vulnerable to manipulation by a skilful member. Affected by group cohesion (compliance, identification, internalization)
More efficient than one-to-one interviews	Questions are not asked the same way each time/research method is not replicated
Democratic process in having the researcher/moderator outnumbered by the participants	Difficult to quantify
Relatively immediate	Not suited to potentially sensitive issues

The tasks in organising a focus group are:

- Clarify the purpose and questions to ask.
- Think about the number of focus groups to run.
- Decide on and invite participants. A general guideline is to have eight to ten participants per focus group.
- Book a room. It should be accessible, of the right size and private. The group should not be disturbed during the session.
- Organise and brief the facilitator.
- Organise and brief the note-taking.
- Organise the room. Ensure that seating promotes group discussion e.g. in a circle. If some people do not turn up remove empty seats.

- Ensure the meeting starts and finishes on time. You might like to set some ground rules for the group, for example, participants should talk to each other not the moderator, there should be only one conversation at a time and everyone should have a say. Remember that the role of the meeting is to understand how the participants think and what matters to them, not to reach a consensus.
- Analyse the results. Describe the nature of the discussion and identify patterns or themes. A summary should be written from this account, not from memory. It is better to write up notes from the meeting while the impressions are still fresh rather than some time later.

Art works, video and film

Art works, video and film can provide evidence of the achievements of a project. Visual materials are vivid, but not always easy to interpret. They can be enhanced by some form of structure or commentary that explains how the group worked, the role of the artists versus the participants and the level of skill that participants had before joining the project. They can also be more effective if kept short.

Strengths and weaknesses of using video and film

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Vivid	Expensive
Consistent with artistic values	Impression can be affected by the quality of filming rather than the quality of the project
Motivating for participants	Time consuming
	Dependent on the skills of the viewer

Checklist of tasks for producing video or film evidence:

- Obtain the necessary permissions from individuals you are planning to film.
- Consider including an introduction describing the content and summarising the main conclusions from the video. This will motivate the viewer to look at the video and provide them with key information if they do not watch the whole thing.
- Consider including interviews with key stakeholders rather than just a film of the final presentation.

Records

Records are existing sources that have been compiled for internal management uses. Examples include application data and client databases. Arts organisations are not likely to use records as a source of information for their evaluation: this heading is included purely for the sake of completeness.

Records can be useful for giving background information. At their best they give an historical series of data that is difficult for an evaluator to compile after the event. At their worst they are inflexible, incomplete, inconsistent and subject to hidden rules about how the data are recorded.

Strengths and weaknesses of using records

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Cheap	Often incomplete, inaccurate and out of date
Time series	Not usually compiled for this purpose
Non reactive	May have confidentiality restrictions
Do not interrupt the project	Changing rules might make comparison invalid
Set down at the time of the project not retrospectively	Can be misleading unless the rules are explained
	Factual only: no values or attitudes

The tasks in using records are:

- Check that you understand the purpose for which the records were compiled and any limitations that arise from this intended purpose.
- Look through each field of data in order to identify any gaps or anomalies.
- Produce tabulations for each field of data.
- Allow time to read and reflect on the tables.
- Produce cross-tabulations for any areas of particular interest in the data.

How do I write questionnaires?

Questionnaires are helpful for all evaluation methods. Following up or clarify comments made by respondents can be useful, but a totally free form interview can end up concentrating on recent or memorable issues and thereby miss out other important subjects, (for example those that are taken for granted).

Questionnaires ensure that:

- You are clear about which issues you wish to investigate.
- Questions are not missed out by accident.
- Each individual or group is interviewed in the same way.

There are four stages in writing a questionnaire:

- Think about the issues that you need to investigate.

- Translate issues into questionnaires.
- Fine tune each question.
- Check the layout and presentation of the questionnaire.

Defining evaluation issues

Evaluation issues should be:

- **Important**. It is better to address a few key issues well rather than to dissipate energy attempting to pursue all the issues relevant to your project.
- **Precise**. It might take some time to see the exact issue that you want to investigate. For example, a question “did we reach our target participants?” might be honed down to a question “did boys join and stay with our project?”
- **Relevant to you**. Some of the broader or more theoretical questions might be better answered by Arts Council research or by a joint evaluation project shared by several arts organisations.
- **Actionable.** Think about what you will do with the answers. Don’t ask for information that you can’t use.
- **Rounded**. Include “why” and “how” questions as well as “what” and “how many”.

Translating issues into questions

The issues that you want to investigate need to be translated into questions to be posed to interviewees. All evaluation methodologies benefit from a clear understanding of the questions to be answered. Guidelines for translating issues into questions include:

- **Write questions from the point of view of the respondent**. Ensure the wording and focus is related to their objectives. Don’t ask respondents to express an opinion on which they have no evidence. It is generally not good practice to ask respondents to tell you their opinion of the opinions or experiences of other people. The exception to this rule is for teachers or parents in educational projects.
- **Use mainly closed rather than open questions**. A list of specific questions about the project is better than one question about “What did you like about the project”. The latter is ambiguous and dependent on the perception, memory, character and mood of the respondent. Closed questions provide more usable information and are faster for the respondent to complete. Include one or two open questions at the end, such as what they liked or what they think should be changed, so that you can find out about any issues that you might have missed in the specific questions.
- **Keep the questionnaire short**. One to two pages should be sufficient.

Writing questions

A good question is one that is insightful rather than trivial, and one that can be communicated precisely to the people from whom an answer is expected. Check each question against this checklist:

- **Ensure questions are clear**. Do not use double negatives. Do not use questions with complicated qualifications. Do not use jargon or abbreviations. Use plain English.
- **Ensure questions are precise**. Do not ask about two things at the same time. Give time periods if necessary.
- **Ensure questions are relevant to the respondent.** Do not use questions based on suppositions. Do not use questions that assume respondent have knowledge that they might not have. Do not ask respondents to speculate about other people's attitudes or behaviour (except for youth arts).
- **Ensure questions are simple**. Do not ask respondents to perform calculations – ask for the data and calculate the sums yourself. Do not ask questions requiring generalisation or memory. Do not ask questions that require respondents to summarise events that happened over a long period of time. Do not ask questions that require respondents to remember events that happened more than six months ago.
- **Ensure questions are neutral**. Do not use loaded questions. Do not infer that a particular answer is expected. Always keep response codes balanced (an equal number of positive and negative codes).

Balanced response codes

29. Would you like to be involved in more of the organisation's projects?	☐ Definitely yes ☐ Probably yes	☐ Definitely no ☐ Probably no

Imbalanced response codes

29. Would you like to be involved in more of the organisation's projects?	☐ Definitely yes ☐ Probably yes	☐ No ☐ Don't know

Proof read the questionnaire. Get other people to read it through to check that it isn't ambiguous. You should also pilot the questionnaire: ask three or four participants to fill it in and then tell you whether the questions seemed clear, appropriate and complete. Piloting is necessary:

- To check that the questions produce the information needed.
- To check that interviewees understand the questions.
- To check that the questionnaire can be applied in the context intended. E.g. how long it takes.

Checking the layout and presentation of the questionnaire

It is important that you obtain complete questionnaires where each question is answered and respondents are motivated to reply honestly and with thought.

- **Introduce the questionnaire**. Motivate respondents to complete the questionnaire. You should explain why the information is important: generally that it will help your organisation to improve. You should also reassure the respondent that individual responses are confidential.
- **Number the questions**. This makes it easier for the respondent to see when they have missed out a question.
- **Code response options**. i.e. give each option a number or letter. The data entered can then type in responses straight from the questionnaire.
- **Ensure the respondent has enough information to answer each question**. Tell the respondent whether they should tick one answer only, tick all answers that apply to them or write an answer in the box.
- **Ensure the order is appropriate**. A common approach is to start questionnaires with factual, uncontentious subjects that get the interviewee talking/thinking, then to move on to more intangible questions about feelings or attitudes and finish with personal/demographic questions which are often perceived as boring or intrusive.
- **Ensure that you have routed respondents past irrelevant questions**. If an answer to one question renders the rest of that section irrelevant then direct the respondent to the next section.
- **Ensure that there is enough room for responses**. This is especially the case for open questions.
- **Ensure the structure is logical**. Group similar questions together. Ask general questions after specific, so that you have already led the respondent to think about the issue before putting forward overall views.
- **Ensure the questionnaire is easy to read**. Avoid changing the response type. If you are going to use “agree” “disagree” as well as “yes” “no” responses codes then try not to skip back and forth between the two.
- **Check page breaks**. Do not break questions in the middle.
- Thank the respondent.
- **Remind the respondent about how they can return the questionnaire**. Even if you are planning for respondents to fill the questionnaire during a session, you should still include your address on it in case they take the form home.

The layout we use is designed to simplify data entry: the person entering the data onto the computer only has to read the right hand column instead of having their eyes darting all over the page.

How do I draw a sample?

The toolkit assumes that all samples should be random. Random sampling reduces the bias in your survey and therefore reduces the need to interview large numbers of participants.

The procedures for drawing a random sample are:

- Decide on the total number of responses that you would like. This should take account of your resources, but also of the types of questions you would like to ask. If you would like to compare different groups of participants (e.g. different ages, sexes, projects) then you ideally need to have at least 30 respondents in each sub-category.

- Translate the number of responses into a number of questionnaires or interviewees. Postal surveys can have very low response rates, so you might need to send out 5 or 10 times the questionnaires you need. Telephone surveys have high response rates and you only need 2 times the target response number on your contact list.
- Select your contact list randomly. For instance, if you have twice as many participants as you need to contact then choose every second participant or every other project.
- Make three or four attempts to contact each person on your contact list.
- When you have finished the survey, compare the characteristics of your sample with the total population of participants. For example, does your sample have more older participants in it? If younger participants are under-represented in your survey, then this will affect the kind of claims that you can make about your results.

How do I analyse data?

Analysing data is a bit like doing a jigsaw puzzle in which the pattern gradually emerges. There are five stages to analysis:

- **Enter the data**. It is relatively easy to construct a spreadsheet with columns for questions and rows for respondents. If you have pre-coded your responses then all you will need to do is to key the response code (response a,b or c etc) into the spreadsheet or database. Open questions might need to be classified before they can be recorded, or to be summarised as a text field.
- **Clean the data**. Read through the questionnaires and check for any answers that are inconsistent or unlikely. If there are anomalies then check the questionnaires to see if this is a coding error.
- **Analyse the data**. You might have to analyse the data in stages. Start by producing tabulations and averages. These might suggest further questions, such as whether some types of sessions were more likely to produce some types of outcomes. You can follow these questions by doing cross tabulations. Be careful that you have enough data in each subgroup. A rule of thumb is that a minimum of 20 cases is needed in each subgroup.
- **Reanalyse the data**. Note any new ideas, patterns or themes in the first analysis, for example, whether different groups hold different views, whether different outcomes peak at different times in the project or whether different types of participants have different outcomes. You might want to follow these up with further analysis.
- **Present the data**. You should include tables of the survey data, whether in the main report (for key issues) or in an appendix (for background questions). Provide enough information for the reader to understand the data. For example, you should state the number of respondents to each questions. Avoid using percentages where the total number of respondents is less than 20. You can use quotations of comments made by interviewees to communicate key points in the data.

Don't throw away the data after the report has been written. You might like to re-analyse the data in the future as new issues emerge.

How do I write an evaluation report?

Evaluation reports need to be clear, coherent, rigorous and concise. You need to think about the style, content and process.

Style

With a bit of effort you should be able to write an evaluation report that looks professional. Here are a few guidelines on style:

- **Be precise**. Use the active not the passive voice: say "the project co-ordinator ran a follow up session" not "a follow up session was run". In the second the reader is left wondering if your organisation or someone else ran the follow up session. Avoid vague terms like "some".
- **Concentrate on fact**. Describe what happened clearly. Keep speculation about what might have happened or will happen in the future to a separate part of the report. If the two are mixed up the reader might lose sight of what you actually did.
- **Be balanced**. Totally positive reports are not credible. Don't forget to celebrate the strengths of your project in full – don't take them for granted. However, also be honest about the weaknesses of your project. Explaining problems that you have had can be one of the best ways of arguing for increased funding.
- **Don't shy away from using numbers**. A little quantitative information can be vivid and can save you a lot of writing. Evaluation reports work best where they combine numbers and discussion.
- **Respect confidentiality**. Make sure that quotations or comments cannot be traced back to individual respondents. If there is a possibility that respondents could be identified, then you should get their permission to include their comments.
- **Depersonalise criticism**. Talk in terms of the tasks and outcomes that were not achieved, not the people who failed. There are many reasons for outcomes to be missed that are not connected to the individuals concerned (for example, poor project logic, resource constraints and changes in the environment).
- **Integrate data sources**. Your main report should bring together findings from different evaluation methods to address your research questions. Use both figures and words to describe your findings.
- **Reconcile inconsistencies**. Sometimes different evaluation methods yield different results. Where this happens, you should give an explanation for the discrepancy, whether due to weaknesses in one set of data or differences in the circumstances of the two sets.
- **Take a dynamic view**. Evaluation tends to take a snap shot at one period in time. In your interpretation, you should place this snap shot in context. Remember that many of the subjects you

are measuring, especially outcomes, change over time. Some outcomes (such as confidence) tend to go down during a project, as participants increase in self awareness and raise their aspirations, and then peak at the end of the project, especially after a final performance. Some outcomes (such as social outcomes) take time to build up and might peak some time after the project has finished.
- **Use your logic model**. You might like to consider where in the chain of reasoning any weak links lay. For example, was the project not implemented as planned because of resource constraints or were the outcomes not achieved because the logic was faulty?

Content

There are really only four broad questions that you need to answer in your evaluation report:

What did you do?

You need to describe what you did and what other partners did.

This section could include:

- What were the objectives for the project?
- What were the needs that the project was intended to address?
- Who was involved in the project?
- Who organised the project?
- Who initiated the project?
- Who funded it?
- What was the project?
- When did the project take place?
- What activity was carried out?
- What were the resources (financial and non financial) involved in delivering the project?

What did you achieve?

This should be mainly about the benefits to participants, but also include benefits to your organisation such as capacity building.

This section could include:

- How many participants took part?
- What was the profile of participants (age, sex, location, ethnicity, indicators of social exclusion)?
- What were the outcomes for participants?
- Did some participants benefit more than others?
- How were these outcomes achieved?

- Were any problems experienced in delivering the project?

What is the evidence for those achievements?

This should consider the evidence that benefits are due to your project rather than to other events that happened to the participants. You don't need to have a complicated experiment with control groups to prove cause: it helps if you can explain the mechanism for the effect: what it was about your project that produced the stated benefits.

This section could include:

- What evaluation was carried out?
- How were outcomes measured?
- How were data analysed?
- How were the data interpreted?
- What are the conclusions from the evaluation?
- What steps did the evaluation take to avoid bias?
- What are the limitations on the evaluation methods?

What are the implications for future work?

This could include:

- Were the objectives appropriate? Did they change during the project?
- Was take up as high as it should have been? If not why not?
- What key decisions were made in the project? What criteria were applied? In retrospect, should different criteria have been applied or the same criteria applied differently?
- What was good about the project?
- What lessons should be applied in future projects?
- Where there further questions that the evaluation could not answer? Is further work needed?
- You should include a summary that picks up the key points in this list. You can include copies of survey questionnaires, data tables and lists of organisations consulted (if relevant) in appendices.

Process

It is worth producing a draft and getting colleagues to comment on it.

How do I disseminate an evaluation report?

General guidelines are:

- Evaluation reports should be freely available. For example, if you have a website, you might like to make full reports or summaries available on your website.
- Customise reports to different audiences.
- Deliver reports in time to be useful.
- Use different media, for example conference presentations and workshops, video or poetry as well as written reports.
- Use partners' communication media, for example include a summary of your evaluation in their newsletters.
- Remember to communicate your findings to respondents who participated in your evaluation. This is courteous and helps to ensure their cooperation in future work.

What is a good evaluation?

A good evaluation is:

- Meaningful.
- Accurate.
- Fair.
- Useful.
- Practical.

The last four of the five headings map onto the criteria advocated by the American Program Evaluation Standards (*Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation*, 1994): accuracy, propriety, utility, and feasibility.

A good evaluation is meaningful

Evaluation should focus on the most important and topical issues facing the organisation, not just the ones that are easiest to measure. A good evaluation helps the organisation to think about what they are doing, the assumptions they are making, and the different perspectives of different stakeholders. A good evaluation is clear in its thinking.

You can help to make the evaluation meaningful by:

- **Thinking about why you are doing the evaluation**. It is not a good use of money to employ evaluators for questions if the answers will not change the organisation's way of working.
- **Being focused in your objectives**. Evaluations tend to work best if they focus on a small number of connected issues rather than a ragbag of unconnected issues.

A good evaluation allocates time for thinking about which questions should be explored before starting the research.

A good evaluation is accurate

Accuracy standards require an evaluator to base their conclusions on sound information. To meet these standards, you should:

- **Describe your methods in your evaluation report**. The methods and findings of the evaluation should be presented in enough detail in the report so that the adequacy of information can be judged. It is not sufficient to present the conclusions without explaining how they were derived.
- **Choose and apply methods to ensure the validity and reliability of data**. You should not place reliance on biased, partial or spurious data. Survey data should not be derived from a small or biased sample. Questions should not be leading or loaded.
- **Analyse the findings systematically**. Each piece of information should be examined and interpreted.
- **Explain and justify conclusions**. You should describe your conclusions separately from your findings in such a way that the link between the two is evident.
- **Report findings and conclusions impartially**. The language or presentation of the report should not presuppose a particular conclusion.

A good evaluation has a logical track from the choice of methods, through the results to the conclusions.

A good evaluation is fair

Propriety standards require evaluators to be lawful and ethical, respecting the rights of people involved in the evaluation.

You should:

- **Respect the dignity of human subjects**. Evaluators should not be adversarial or blinkered.
- **Report the conclusions in a fair and balanced manner**. Most activities have strengths and weaknesses. An evaluation report should comment on both.
- **Deal with any conflict of interests openly and honestly**. Evaluators should not hide or ignore any conflicts of interests they have in evaluating the organisation.

Evaluations are expected to draw their conclusions independently, without any external pressure.

A good evaluation is useful

Utility standards require evaluators to be informative, timely and influential.

A good evaluation:

- **Considers the intended use for the report from the beginning**. For instance, the evaluator should ask about whether the report is aimed to provide general insight about the area of activity, or specific guidance about improving practice.
- Keeps the client informed about decisions and emerging issues in the evaluation. A “no surprises” approach works best.
- **Presents relevant information clearly and in a timely fashion**. Recommendations should be practical and able to be implemented.

It is good practice to provide different presentations of the evaluation for different audiences.

A good evaluation is practical

Feasibility standards require evaluations to be realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and economical. They specify that evaluators should cause the minimum disruption to the program being evaluated, should be sensitive in their involvement of stakeholders, and should be mindful of the cost of the methods they are proposing.