

Evaluation Guidelines:

1. Introduction:

These guidelines are designed to encourage artists and projects alike to undertake evaluation because of the many positive benefits that a well designed and executed evaluation programme can provide.

They are also designed to explain and illustrate a wide range of techniques which can be used to create evaluation and documentation 'portfolios' that have benefits extending well beyond the scope and lifetime of the project itself.

Done well, this process will provide you with an ongoing stream of visual images, objective statements, quotable quotes and qualitative and quantitative information (See section on Interpretation of Results) that will help enormously when putting together future marketing materials and funding applications. Seen in a positive light, it is the most effective way of establishing 'track record' that there is. In the end, it will save you, the projects and artists, having to invent good things to say about yourselves, because you will have a growing bank of outside opinion to draw upon when you come to writing copy for such materials.

A balanced selection of physical evidence and written material, gathered throughout the life of any given project, helps affirm the value of the work on a variety of levels. It will also help you quantify and evaluate key aspects of the learning experience and other milestones on the journey from initial concept to finished product.

The key benefits of evaluation can be summarised in this way:

- **Quality** – thorough evaluation will help convey the quality of your work to others, and will provide material evidence of this.
- **Track Record** – the materials and opinions you gather will make it much easier for you to convince others that you have the experience to take on future projects successfully.
- **Clarity** – the discipline that evaluation imposes on the way you describe and document your work will make it much easier to pull together the information you need to communicate key ideas effectively.
- **Solid Foundations** - evaluation will help you create solid foundations of a physical and theoretical nature upon which to build. In effect, it will help support all future projects that you undertake.
- **All of the above will help underpin future grant applications and fundraising efforts.**

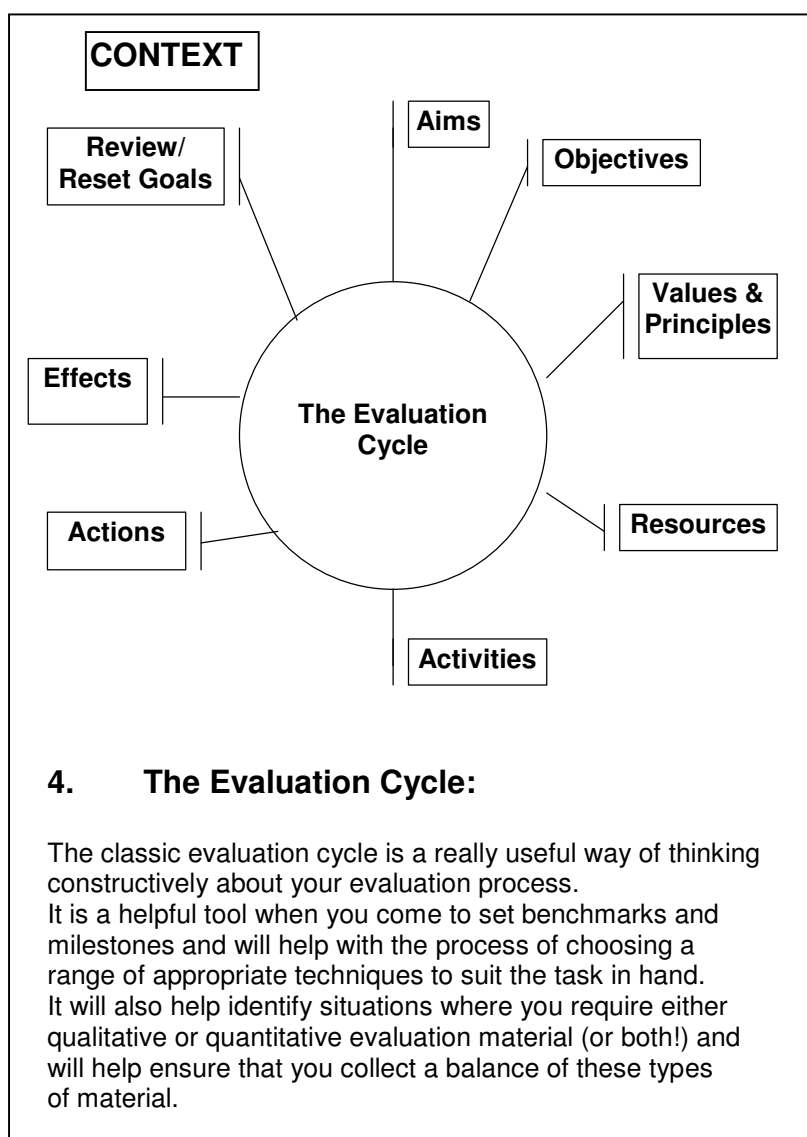
It is important that the evaluation process is not simply undertaken as a response to requests made by funders. You should view it as an opportunity to create materials and tools for broader use. The dissemination of really interesting evaluation materials, in addition to the obligatory 'project report', can spread the word about the value of the work and the experiences therein to a much wider audience. This will help ensure that the overall impact of the project is much longer lasting.

Funders are aware of the risks they take when funding innovative work. Rather than worry about the evaluation process revealing weaknesses, you should strive to engage fully with the process, to celebrate strengths, and capitalise on the learning opportunities that arise whilst doing so.

2. How to use the Guidelines:

These guidelines should be used selectively - that is to say, you are not obliged to use all, or even most of the suggestions given. The most powerful way to use them might be:

- To validate the choice of techniques for evaluation and documentation that you may already have made.
- To provide a 'Pick and Mix' range of options from which you can choose additional techniques to enhance the evaluation process further.
- To use the Evaluation Cycle as a way of helping you identify what you need to set down in the way of initial benchmarks, etc.



3. Benchmarks:

It is helpful to have a clear set of benchmarks or targets for yourself - solid reference points in respect of quality, methodology and precedent, against which you can measure your progress.

Even with the best will in the world, it is sometimes inevitable that the original path or plan you envisaged at the outset must change in order for the work to be successful. This natural process of evolution can sometimes be the source of the most powerful learning.

If and when things do have to change it is vital to be able to refer back to some really clear statements about the way you wanted to approach things at the outset. If you have done this, it is then much easier for artist, host project and participant alike to capitalise on the learning experience that comes from being able to accurately measure performance against targets.

If we think of the evaluation process in stages, then the earliest stages ought to be concerned with 'formative' evaluation - i.e. exploring and setting the parameters of the project against which subsequent evaluation can be measured, and later stages as being 'summative' evaluation - i.e. the ongoing process of measuring progress and drawing conclusions as the process evolves.

The Evaluation Cycle - continued:

To use this model of evaluation effectively, you should use it in a planning session at the beginning of the project, where you would write clear statements of intent against each of the headings. You should then revisit these later on a number of different occasions - in review sessions or discussion groups - to measure your progress, performance (and perhaps deviation from intentions) against each. This then gives you some very clear indicators of how well you might be doing in relation to each area. The various tasks involved in this should be shared out amongst artists, project hosts, and perhaps participants themselves.

Context:

Before going round the cycle, it is really useful to write some statements which describe the context within which you are working - Geographic, social and economic factors and the background of participants will influence the project, and it is useful to document and fully understand these.

Just what you might wish to write in relation to each part of the cycle is up to you, but here are a few suggestions:

Aims:

Your aims statement should be brief, but should encapsulate the overarching aims you have for the project. Try not to sound vague or over-general. People do make some wild and woolly claims within aims statements.

A bad example might be:

"We aim to raise awareness of the Arts within the Greater London area."

A good example:

"We aim to increase the involvement of young people aged 14-19 resident in Wilworth in the visual arts by running a series of media projects in youth clubs."

Objectives:

These should be a short series of much more precise statements about how you plan to deliver your project, with whom, and by when, stated in such a way as to be measurable, e.g.:

"Part one of the Wilworth Media Project will be a series of six pinhole photography sessions, led by Adele Smith-Rivers. These will take place at the Wilworth Chinese Community Centre on Wednesday evenings from 6 - 8 p.m. in October and November 1998. (Dates to be arranged)."

These general objectives should not be confused with the specific learning objectives for each session. (see Activities.)

Values and Principles:

This section gives you a chance to explore and state clearly things like equal opportunities objectives, working philosophy to do with access and ownership, the degree to which participants might be involved in the planning and evaluation processes, etc. This is a vital, but often overlooked, part of the planning process. An example of a typical Values Statement might be:

“The Wilworth Media Project aims to involve participants in the planning process and to take guidance on access issues from them. We hope that this will foster a greater sense of ownership of the project overall, and allow for much higher levels of participation.”

Resources:

It is often helpful to make a statement at the outset about the range of resources you will require. It helps you identify what you may already have in place, and what you need to secure in order to run the project effectively. Later on you can assess how accurate your original estimates were - this will help inform future planning processes.

Activities:

You should make some fairly detailed statements about the activities and sessions you plan to run, and how you foresee these working. It is also useful at this point to develop clear learning objectives for each session, and for these objectives to be SMART. This is one of those dreaded but really quite useful acronyms which aid planning - an explanation follows:

SMART Objectives:

Objectives need to be well defined and realistic if you are to achieve them - use this acronym as a checklist - they ought to be:

- S** **Specific:** (Clear, to the point, targeted, focused.)
- M** **Measurable:** (Will participants be able to demonstrate their grasp of session content at the end of the process?)
- A** **Achievable:** (Can it be done within time and resources available?)
- R** **Realistic:** (Are your overall expectations logical & reasonable?)
- T** **Time-bound:** (Have you thought about exactly how long each part of the process will take?)

The main thing is that the material effect of having SMART Objectives is that each part of them can be observed and measured. Sorting this out now will help you when you come to measure Effects and Outcomes.

Actions:

Sometimes it is useful to think in terms of individual actions - especially if you are introducing complex or technically difficult material. How well will individuals cope with the task - do you need to think about this in terms of 'bite size chunks?'

Effects or Outcomes:

What do you want to see in terms of project outcome? The fulfilment of your original aims and objectives, obviously, but there should be a range of other gains and learning experiences that you ought to be able to predict to a greater or lesser extent. What, for instance, might this prepare participants to do next? What expectations might be raised, and how are they to be fulfilled? Better to think about this sooner rather than later in the process...

It is possible to take this stage of the planning process one step further - translate your statements about effects and outcomes into a clear set of goals or targets which are stated in such a way as to allow you to make objective measurements against them both during the life of the project and at the end.

For example, you may decide that one of the measurable goals must be to have involved X young people, and run Y activity sessions during the life of the project. You can monitor this as you go, and produce numbers at the end which will tell you how successful you have been in relation to each goal. You will then be able to produce credible statistics to use in project reports.

Review/reset goals/plan next project:

At the end of the cycle, and having gathered as much information as you possibly can in relation to the categories above, you will be in possession of a fully comprehensive range of information about your project. This will allow you to reset goals mid-project if required, to evaluate thoroughly at the end and think about future projects in the knowledge that you know exactly what happened, where, when and with whom, and how effective each aspect of your work was in relation to targets set.

This is also the stage at which you may wish to consider setting up some means of collecting further information in six months or a years' time. Such retrospective evaluation is very useful for measuring the long term impact of your work, establishing how much has been retained, and what the initial input led on to in the way of further development, if any.

5. Handy Definitions:

Documentation, Evaluation and Monitoring are often confused with each other. For the sake of clarity, here are brief definitions of each, which ought to help you decide which to use at each stage.

Roughly speaking:

- Documentation is the physical evidence you might gather - examples of work, photographs or video, visual diaries, written comments etc.
- Evaluation compares the progress that is being made against the benchmarks that were set at the beginning. Evaluation is a way of measuring effect or performance from time to time throughout the project - not just at the end.
- Monitoring is a means of gathering information about the progress of the project at any given time. Monitoring measures things, actions, numbers, etc., and can be thought of as a means of 'spot checking' progress.

6. Techniques:

It is good to choose from as wide a range of tried and tested techniques for Monitoring and Evaluation as is possible. Choose a selection that will best suit your needs, and that will be most useful in providing materials that will have a really long shelf life, provide information and images that can be used in future publicity and funding applications, and that will help establish a powerful 'track record' for all who are involved.

The selection which follows is by no means exhaustive, but does highlight a range of techniques people have used successfully in the past.

- Written evaluation - Artist & Project reports, evaluation questionnaires, and direct written feedback from participants and support workers. This material should be gathered both during the residency (monitoring information) and afterwards (evaluation materials for fuller analysis).

When writing questionnaires, you should try to avoid leading questions and ones to which people will simply give a yes/no answer. Questions beginning Who, What, Why, Where, When and How cannot be answered with a yes or no.

It is also useful to incorporate numerical scoring into some of the questions - for example:

"How would you rate the Wilworth Photography sessions overall?"

Excellent 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 Poor

This will allow you to incorporate statistics in your final analysis e.g. :

“The average rating of the Wilworth Photo sessions (on a scale of 0-10) was 7.5”

Different people respond to particular questions in slightly different ways - it is useful to ‘test out’ your questionnaire with a sample group - then you can weed out questions that do not work particularly well.

Participants involvement in evaluation is really important, and should be a two way process. It is useful to gather feedback via **group discussion sessions**, where you will get strong indicators of how well participants have engaged with the task, how appropriate your work plans and methods were and how the group have worked together.

This should be balanced by **one-to-one interviews** which will give a much more personalised and microscopic view, allowing you to assess how well you have created a structure that allows for individual creativity and learning. Both of these methods should be used regularly throughout the lifetime of the project, and participants’ feedback used to refine your approach where necessary.

- Visual/Tactile evidence - documentation of the work and working processes. This can consist of photographic evidence, sketchbooks, drawings & constructions and visual or tactile ‘comment’ made by participants according to their needs and abilities. Participants with sensory disabilities need to be able to express themselves and record the process in the most appropriate way. Combinations of photographic and written comment - ‘photo stories’, are also really useful. These pieces of evidence can then be used within your presentations, exhibitions, documents, celebrations, etc.

It is worth considering building professional documentation into the project plan - especially if you are unlikely to have time to document things thoroughly yourself, or if you suspect that you are not the world’s best photographer/video operator!

- Videotape - Video is really useful, but care has to be taken to ensure that the process of recording does not intrude on the work itself. Watching yourself on tape after the event can trigger some excellent and often quite emotional or humorous response. It also allows artists and participants alike the opportunity to distance themselves from the process, and perhaps make some more objective observations than might otherwise be possible. In addition to ‘fly on the wall’ recording of events, ‘Vox Pop’ interviews, Video Diaries, or the construction of an automated Video Box within which participants can talk about their experience without an interviewer present, also allow for exciting material to be gathered.

In conjunction with this, audiotape recordings and ‘vox pop’ material from Artists, participants and observers can add substantially to the evaluation process.

This can add value to Tape/Slide presentations, or allow you to create environments with sound and large scale projections. It also gives you additional material that can be edited onto video soundtracks.

- Press photos and cuttings - it is worth saving these (and later, when you are reviewing material gathered over the years, avoiding the temptation to throw them away! The loss of an image which embarrassed you two years after the event will be mourned five or ten years on...). You should also actively send out press releases and invitations to journalists to attend in order to maximise your opportunities to collect these.
- 'Quotable' Quotes and testimonials - ask people to comment on what you have done. Make space on evaluation forms for them to do so. If they aren't likely to be asked to fill in a standard form, take the time to ask if they would give you a written comment - far from being a naff thing to do, people are usually delighted to be asked, and this can be a valuable source of comments to cull and use in future publicity. Personal recommendation is a powerful marketing tool, and people do read comments on publicity, especially if they have been made by someone they regard as a peer. If you need to impress the politicians, get the Lady Mayor to give you a quote. If you need to sway the opinions of local teachers, ask a head teacher or someone involved in school inspections - and so the logic goes...
- Existing Materials – it is perfectly legitimate to draw upon existing materials to support your evaluation processes – reports to management committees, extracts from annual reports, publicity materials, prior project briefs and the like. As long as the material you use is directly relevant to the current project, it may be a way of saving time – as long as you are not simply using it to cut corners!
- Try to interpret and present these materials so as to produce a document that is absorbing, which illustrates and celebrates the successes, and which you would be proud to send out with future publicity or fundraising packs. Visually, it might look like an annual report does, with images, text, graphics and quotes from those involved.

7. The Interpretation of Results:

At some point you will be making decisions about the balance of material within your evaluations. Different materials lend themselves to different uses. The best approach is to choose a range of techniques which will provide you with both statistics, quantitative evidence (the who, what, where, when, how and how much!), and qualitative evidence (the how was it for you and why?, questions). This will allow you to create a balanced report which will supply both all the objective factual information and some much more subjective, organic, and perhaps opinionative views - particularly from participants and observers.

8. Documentation:

Although the primary purpose of the intelligence gathering advocated in these guidelines is to document and evaluate the project, it will also help build a body of evidence that can be used by artists, co-ordinators and participants to communicate the scope of the project to a much wider audience.

The development of a portfolio of evidence should also be seen as a strategic tool - to help 'fine tune' professional practice, to help in future planning processes, and as an aid to marketing and fundraising efforts. The notion of evaluation as being an important part of the development of a dynamic 'Track Record' for artists, host projects and collaborators is crucial.

The quality of documentation produced will enhance the artists' ability to communicate key aspects of their work and working methods to future employers. It will also impact on host organisations ability to convince funders of their ability to run well managed projects which can hit key targets, and fulfil aims and objectives.

There are a range of ways in which documentary evidence can be presented. It is often useful to be able to present material in different forms for different audiences.

For example, it may be effective to have a combination of an illustrated project report, a folder of examples of work and photographs, and a website. With this combination, you can effectively mail material to people, talk constructively with them in meetings and have something to leave with them, and give people the opportunity of getting remote access to the information without even having to meet you - the website can be listed on any of the growing number of arts sites already on the web. You can even ask people to programme a live link from their site to yours - they then benefit by having even more interesting stuff associated with their site.

An ideal pack of documentary material would contain most, if not all, of the following types of material:

- Standard artists portfolios of work.
- A4 sized folders of evidence for use in meetings, and as archive material.
- Sketchbooks and Visual diaries
- OHP materials for presentation purposes.
- High quality portable Displays/Laminated panels.
- Audio Visual material/slide sets/soundtrack/Video
- CD Rom or Websites - the ultimate end product might be a project website linked to the Regional Arts Pages and globally accessible.

9. Retrospective Evaluation:

If you come to the end of a project, and find that your evaluation is light in certain areas, there are techniques by which you can fill in the gaps.

Retrospective written evaluation is relatively easy to obtain - make sure you get a balance of material from participants, artists, hosts, etc.

Visual material may be more tricky, but you will usually find that someone has taken photos or video that you didn't realise existed. You were probably too busy to notice at the time!

It is usually possible to locate and photograph work that was produced - it usually finds its way into the 'private collections' of the participants, project host archives, and proud parents, relatives, etc.

Once you have gathered together all of the above, and put it side by side with your own material, it ought to be possible to create a pack that will fit with one or two of the frameworks given in the 'techniques' and 'documentation' sections of these guidelines.

10. The Future - Project Legacies:

When projects come to an end, there is a real danger that evaluation material, reports and artwork simply disappear - into filing cabinets, portfolios, drawers and cupboards. There are alternatives which ought to be considered - ways of ensuring that the benefits of the evaluation process don't cease when the project comes to an end. The materials you have gathered deserve to be used to create opportunities for education, exhibition and wider public access to and appreciation of the work. They will also serve as a models which you can use to develop and promote your work and which others can use to create proven frameworks for projects of their own.

A key characteristic of successful artists and projects is that they will actually go out of their way to disseminate information, be open about successes and pitfalls, and share their learning with others. If something failed to work as planned, it is used as a valuable (and positive) learning experience.

Better quality documentation is much easier to publish & disseminate - it is more likely to grab the attention of those who have the resources and inclination to do so - people like the Arts Council, Regional Arts Boards, Artists Newsletter, Mailout magazine etc.

You could consider how you might use one of the following models, or other approaches, to spread the word more widely.

- **Production of computer based/digital records** which can then be developed into disk or CD Rom based materials, or used on the Internet. With the advent of relatively inexpensive digital cameras, this is now a much easier thing to do. There are many internet service providers who will give you free website space

and web editing software, meaning you can do this at virtually no cost if you or a friend already have a computer connected to the web. It is vital to market these sites effectively - by putting web addresses on letterheads and leaflets and registering them with search engines.

The 'Big Hand For' postgraduate course for artists at Nottingham Castle Museum & Art Gallery has created an evaluative website featuring three galleries of artists work, and comments from a range of people who were involved in the course - artists, tutors, external examiners and ACE officers. You can visit this site at: <http://art.derby.ac.uk/direct/>

- **Celebratory Events** - end of project celebrations can bring participants, artists, hosts, family and friends into contact with the work and documentation materials in a way that makes connections on a multitude of levels and provides for a quite inspiring and emotional response.
- These events can provide a means to communicate ideas and feelings about the process, the outcomes and the experiences within any given project to those who were not directly involved. In a school or institutional environment for example, they can be used as a way of including many more people. They are an ideal platform for participants to share their experience with their peers, for parents and family to become involved, and for learning and appreciation to spill over in ways that might not otherwise have been possible.

As the culminating event of a week long residency in a school in Birmingham, two visual artists commandeered the hall, turning it into part environment/part exhibition of everything that had been produced by the artists, participants and teachers. This then became the setting for a morning of celebration involving participants showing, explaining, being with their work together with their peers, parents and teachers. It brought the project alive for the whole community.

- **Exhibitions** - can emerge through the process of evaluation in a variety of ways. Materials the artist and participants have produced during the process may merit a wider audience and could form the basis of an exhibition. A selection of finished works with interpretative statements or images might be toured around associated venues. The possibilities for adding value to the project by lengthening the timescale and parameters in this way, and by providing opportunities for a wider range of viewers to come to grips with it, are almost endless.

One ceramic artist gathered together so much material within the timescale of her project that there wasn't enough room to display it all in the room - it spilled out into corridors and the reception area. The work, diaries and photographs had such a cohesive feel to them that they subsequently ended up touring a range of community venues, including the local library, as a fully fledged exhibition with supporting interpretative material.

- **Training Sessions/Seminars/Conferences** - are a wonderful way of spreading the word. If you feel that you have learned things that ought to be shared, then you should share them. This may be as simple as arranging an INSET session for teachers to let them know about what you have achieved and what the educational milestones were along the way. It may well be that this goes on to create opportunities for further work.

Let your Regional Arts Board art form officer, Local authority arts officer, regional and local gallery curators/education officers, etc. know about the material you have gathered. They may well want to work with you to disseminate the information. They are always on the lookout for really good examples of successful projects, and may well invite you to contribute to one of their seminars or conferences - spread the word!

11. Spreading the load

Evaluation is a task that should be shared. If the project is being planned and delivered as a team effort, all members of the team should be involved in the planning and execution of the evaluation. Wherever possible, the host project and participants also need to be actively involved. If everyone understands the process and benefits, it is much easier to get them to participate in the collection of materials. At the outset, you may have to invest a fair amount of time and discussion in this – actively selling the idea to them.

The time spent doing this will help ensure that evaluation is fully integrated into the life of the project, and that everyone plays a role. The tasks involved then become much easier – with each person dealing with their part of the process, rather than it all falling to one person and ultimately getting in the way of the creative process. Spreading the load this way also ensures that everyone understands the process and outcomes more fully than they might do if they are only passively involved.

Jubilee Arts, based in the West Midlands, ran an ambitious public art training programme that was a partnership of artists, architects, planning and community development staff. The evaluation process was so well integrated into the planning process that all participants were involved in evaluation on a daily basis. One of the planning officers from the Local Authority made this comment:

“I was really impressed by the way the organisational structure adapted to the process with almost daily review – this really stood out – the constant reflection, adaptation and ability to respond.”

12. Evaluation Checklist:

This checklist should help you, in your role as project evaluators, make informed decisions about what needs to be included within the range of your evaluation criteria. It should also help you with the process of benchmarking and encourage you not to ignore trickier areas of measurement such as Equal Opportunities.

Print out this form and then use it consider what needs to be done. You should then be able to establish any gaps that might need to be filled.

Area of Evaluation	Action required	Action taken	Review/ rethink
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Written Statements

Benchmarks & Context
 Aims
 Objectives
 Values & Principles (including Equal Opps.)
 Resources
 Activities
 Actions
 Effects and Outcomes
 Performance Indicators
 Review

Techniques

Questionnaires
 Group Discussion
 Individual Interview
 Tactile Evidence
 Video
 Photography/Slides
 Audiotape
 Press Coverage
 Quotes & Testimonials

Documentation

A4/A3 Folders of evidence
 Folders/Examples of work
 Tape/Slide sets
 Displays/Laminated Panels
 Computer Based evidence
 Existing Documentation/Reports

Project Legacies

CD Rom/Website
 Celebrations
 Exhibition
 Training Sessions/Seminars/Conferences