

Creative & Credible

DEVELOPING AN EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

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Evaluation needs to be planned and managed in the same way as any other project, with attention to budget, resources, timeline and milestones throughout. In this section we show how to develop an evaluation plan that will describe the evaluation approach and how it will be undertaken. We discuss the benefits of working with an outcomes framework to examine changes and benefits that might arise from an arts process. Further information can be found in the separate downloadable case study, Developing and Outcomes Framework for Arts and Older People.

Evaluation Planning

- The rationale for the evaluation (why you are doing it)
- The project aims and those that have been prioritised for the evaluation
- The questions the evaluation seeks to answer
- A description of the evaluation approach
- A description of the data collection methods that will be used and the process for analysing the resulting data
- The ethical considerations and procedures for obtaining consent, minimising risk and safeguarding participants' privacy and confidentiality
- A proposal for how the evaluation will be reported and disseminated
- A budget
- A timeline

Working with an Outcomes Framework

The evaluation plan is shaped by the type of outcome and the level of impact that the project seeks to have. The majority of arts and health projects seek to assess 'soft' outcomes. These are observable changes, such as increased self esteem or empowerment in participants, enhanced quality of care or increased job satisfaction for staff. They can include artistic outcomes as well as improvements in health or wellbeing.

Not every evaluation seeks solely to identify outcomes: it can be equally important to assess process, such as what went well and what barriers were encountered during project delivery, as well as subjective impacts and the experiences and views of participants. One difficulty in arts and health evaluation is that of language and terminology, with words such as 'outcome'

being used to refer to quite different things depending on the context. In health research, the term outcome is often used specifically to describe an effect, usually a quantifiable and measurable change that can be attributed to an intervention. However, within arts and health evaluation, broader definitions are often adopted. The Charities Evaluation Service defines outcomes as:

'... the changes, benefits, learning or other effects that happen as result of services and activities provided by an organisation'

The CES website provides useful resources including evaluation planning frameworks and a planning triangle which explains the relationship between aims, objectives, outcomes and outputs:

- *Impact* is a reflection of the project's broad, overall aims
- *Outcomes* relate more specifically to measurable aims.
- *Outputs* include the artworks, music or other outputs from the project.

<http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/tools-and-resources/planning-for-monitoring-evaluation/ces-planning-triangle/index>

Many projects will wish to engage with outcomes evaluation, as it is increasingly important to identify outcomes from arts and health activity that are relevant to commissioners and contractors. This can be a minefield to negotiate, especially for smaller projects or those that are at an early stage of development. One way to think about outcomes is to consider the domains in which they sit. A recent report by Arts Council England on the intrinsic benefits of arts for health and wellbeing identifies five domains of engagement, emotional resonance, learning, aesthetic growth and social connectedness (Carnwath & Brown, 2014). Although these dimensions reflect intrinsic qualities of arts, it is interesting that they resonate with the New Economics Foundation's Five Ways to Wellbeing, a set of evidence-based actions which promote people's wellbeing (Aked, et al. (2008). The five ways are: connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give. These activities are simple things individuals can do in their everyday lives and they can inform a range of arts and health outcomes. The Arts Council

England has also produced a report on the intrinsic benefits of arts for health that can be useful in mapping outcomes according to different domains (Mowlah et al. 2014).

The National Foundation for Youth Music has produced a useful outcome framework (NFYM, 2014) which identifies outcomes at different levels including:

- *Musical* or arts specific outcomes, such as improving skill
- *Personal* outcomes, such as expression and the ability to communicate
- *Social* outcomes, such as making the community aware of participants' achievements
- *Workforce* outcomes such as increasing facilitators' knowledge
- *Organisational* outcomes, such as new measures to reduce barriers to participation or changes in policy.

Some arts projects may seek to deliver clinical outcomes in line with existing health priorities. These seek to address the needs of people experiencing specific conditions such as depression, Parkinson's disease, COPD, dementia and long term mental health conditions. This kind of evaluation usually involves quantitative measurement of the effects of an intervention. It often relies on validated scales and cannot proceed without baseline measurement of the condition or status that the project is designed to improve. This is a challenging task and not every arts project will seek to evidence outcomes in this way.

Distance travelled

The notion of distance travelled is often used in evaluation to describe the progress made by an individual from their particular starting point. Indicators of distance travelled may be 'soft' outcomes, or they may be similar to those used in outcomes measurement, but they are used to show individual progress rather than provide scientific evidence.

Capturing Outcomes

The evaluation plan needs to be developed using a clear framework that sets out the various impacts and outcomes, showing how each will be measured or assessed. It may not be possible to capture outcomes quantitatively, often assessment makes use of a mixture of methods including observation, feedback, interviews and reflection. If one set of information is limited, the overall picture can be strengthened by the use of mixed methods. The Youth Music outcomes framework includes a recommendation that each outcome is assessed by at least two indicators in order to access a range of evidence. Various methods are suggested for capturing outcomes, including recorded observation of participants, self-assessment questionnaires, diaries, notes, interviews, focus groups and audio or video recordings of participants' work at different stages (NFYM 2014).

Conclusion

The evaluation plan may include any or all of the following: assessing subjective experiences using qualitative approaches; measuring attitude or behaviour change using validated and

non validated scales; and capturing project outputs using film or photography. It is important to bear in mind that different kinds of evidence allow different claims to be made. For example, it is not possible to support a claim that a project improved participants' wellbeing using anecdotal evidence from a small group of selected participants who have not been recruited using some form of sampling. Hence it is important that the aims of each evaluation activity are clear and that the methods used for collecting and analysing data match the evaluation aims.

References

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Creative and Credible is a knowledge exchange project between the University of West of England and Willis Newson, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. www.creativeandcredible.co.uk