Creative & Credible

USING FILM AND VIDEO IN ARTS AND HEALTH EVALUATION

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There is increasing interest in using tools such as film and video in arts and health evaluation. These tools are seen as enlivening reporting and enriching participants' stories. When carefully produced, they can be a really effective way of illustrating what happens inside arts projects, and this is particularly valuable when working with commissioners and funders who may be unfamiliar with the arts

While film is undoubtedly useful as a dissemination and advocacy tool, careful consideration is needed before using film and video at other stages of the evaluation cycle. A number of questions arise in relation to film making as evaluation

What is the evaluation question and how can film or video best support its exploration

The use of media such as film or video, like any other evaluation tool, needs to be framed by a question. In evaluation, best practice requires looking at every aspect of a project, including what went well and what didn't go so well. Film can be an excellent way of capturing a range of outcomes and representing these in a nuanced fashion. However, in practice it can be sensitive to include this kind of information, especially if the information is intended for the public domain. Participants and service providers may be more exposed in film or video than they may be in other forms of documentation. It may be difficult to completely anonymise participants in a film and therefore informed consent issues need to be carefully considered

How will participants be sampled for inclusion in the film/video

If film or video are being used for data collection then there needs to be a sampling frame guiding the selection of participants. This needs to be informed by the evaluation question. Best practice in evaluation may require looking at a broad range of experiences, including what works, what doesn't work, for whom and in what circumstances. Film can be an excellent way of representing such nuanced information. However, sensitivities apply if the information is intended to be viewed by the public. This kind of film making may be most appropriate for internal process evaluation rather than for dissemination and advocacy

What resources are needed.

Film making can be time consuming and costly. It also relies on technical skills that may not be present within the project delivery team. The costs, time and resources need to be carefully weighed up along with the benefits and compared with other available methods such as interviews, observation, surveys and participant feedback. Other considerations include data protection, data storage, and the evaluation team need to ensure that the process is compliant with current requirements

Who produces the film/video

Most evaluators do not possess skills in filming and editing. However, in order for the film making process to be true to t
evaluation aims and questions there must be close communication between evaluators and film makers. In film, there may be a significant amount of 'raw' data. As is the case when editing text, film editing procedures serve as a form of sampling of the material that can significantly shape the final message, with the risk of bias. The team needs to agree on the overall approach, including validity procedures, when using film as evaluation

In conclusion, careful consideration is needed to decide whether film is the most appropriate vehicle for evaluation. It might be more useful to look at a film as a version of the evaluation report, rather that a film of the project as a whole. This clearly differentiates between film as a form of advocacy or dissemination, for which it is well suited, to film as an evaluation technique, which is more complex