

Evaluating Your Arts

What is Evaluating?

Evaluating is about taking the time to assess your activities and encouraging others to assess your activities. Evaluation can involve the participants, staff, volunteers and anyone playing a part in the project. It is about not only getting feedback but, determining what this feedback means.

Why Evaluate?

There are always opportunities to become better and to learn more, and this keeps us motivated and inspired. Evaluating your arts projects and activities is a necessary part of professional and creative development.

How To Evaluate?

How do you know if your project was a 'SUCCESS'?

How did your project go? How can you tell what parts of your project worked and what parts didn't? Did some participants get more out of the project than others? Did you do what you set out to do? What was the community response?

Unless you decide what you want to achieve from your project at the beginning, you will get to the end, scratch your head and ask yourself: "what was that all about?" If, on the other hand, you set some goals for yourself, you will be able to jump up and down with glee when you achieve them. So, before you start, sit down and think about what it is that you are hoping for...

Coming up with your own 'measures of success'

Therefore, the first step is to determine how you will measure your success. What goals do you hope to achieve? Goals can be both qualitative and quantitative. For example, you may hope to get a minimum of 20 people involved in your project. This is a quantity that can be measured. You may also want the participants to find the experience fulfilling – this is a qualitative measure and could be determined by asking people to write down how the project made them feel. (You may hear people refer to goals as 'aims and objectives'.)

When you are coming up with your 'measure of success' ask yourself the following questions:

- What outcomes do you want for yourself, the project participants, the general community and any other organisations that are involved?
- What outcomes do you want and expect during the project, immediately after the project, and in the long term as a result of the project?

State your goals in specific and easily measurable terms, for example – rather than saying the goal is: "to run lots of workshops", be more specific: "to run at least 7 workshops". This way, you can clearly see whether or not you've met the goal.

A useful layout could be:

GOAL	TARGET	METHOD OF MEASURING	WHO	WHEN
To run workshops in preparation for performance	6 workshops	Ongoing survey	Coordinator	June 2004

Although each project is different, it is helpful to think about evaluation in 4 stages:

1. Planning - Who is managing the evaluation process? What resources are available? What are your aims and objectives – use these to help you decide what data to collect.

2. Documenting - (or collecting data): Be aware of research ethics – for example, make sure you get permission to use someone's quote – and make sure participants feel comfortable with the process.

3. Analysing - Ask questions such as – were the aims and objectives achieved? Think in terms of participants, the project and the general community. What worked? What didn't work? Were there any unexpected outcomes? What resulted from the project processes? Think about immediate and long term outcomes. Use your 'documentation' to help you answer these questions.

4. Reporting - Use all of the information you have gathered, and the answers to your questions, to put together a report. Think about who will see this report and present it in the most suitable way. For example, is the report for your own group, is it going to be given to a funding body, will the public see it?

You will find at the end of the evaluation that you have learnt a lot about yourself, your participants, your community and each other! You will never be the same again!!

When to Evaluate?

To be effective, evaluation needs to take place from the very beginning of a project and needs to continue throughout. Think about how you will evaluate your project while you are planning it, so that the processes are incorporated into your project. This will make it easier for yourself and everyone involved.

Where to From Here?

Other info sheets from our set that might be of use include: 'Documenting Your Arts', 'Youth Arts Best Practice', 'Youth Arts Projects – A Step By Step Guide'

A great resource is *Evaluating Community Arts & Community Well Being: An Evaluation Guide for Community Arts Practitioners* – this can be found at

www.arts.vic.gov.au/arts/publications/publications/evaluatingcommunityarts.htm



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