
Evaluation from the outset: five simple steps

1. Think clearly about your objectives at the start of your project – for example why you are undertaking a particular engagement activity, the process you are following and what you want out of it – for you and for your audience – sometimes called *formative evaluation*.
2. Set some questions that probe these objectives.
3. Think about how you would ask these questions – and what information you need back to judge the activity – called the *summative evaluation*.
4. Ensure the activity encompasses the evaluation process in a manageable way – the SMART objectives below are useful for this.
5. Be sure to analyse your feedback, assessing the activity against its original objectives, and documenting any learning from the evaluation process.

SMART objectives

SMART objectives are often used by organisations and individuals to keep their monitoring and evaluation processes fit for purpose and on track. The SMART acronym stands for:-

1. **Specific** – make clear unambiguous goals.
2. **Measurable** – ensure your goals can be properly assessed.
3. **Attainable** – avoid unrealistic goals or over-ambitious stretch targets.
4. **Relevant** – your goals should matter to your activity.
5. **Time-sensitive** – helps define a timescale for your activity.

Generic Learning Outcomes

Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs) are popular in the arts and education sectors where the learning outcomes and benefits that people will gain from the engagement process are of importance. There are five GLOs:-

1. **Knowledge and Understanding** – increasing understanding and learning new things through your activity.
2. **Skills** – developing communication, creative or other 'how-to' skills.
3. **Attitudes and Values** – empathy and understanding, perceptions and motivations.
4. **Enjoyment, Inspiration and Creativity** – the fun, innovative and bespoke factors in your activity.
5. **Activity, Behaviour and Progression** – the journey experienced through your activity and any changes perceived or recorded.

Common sense

Above all, ensure that evaluation adds value to your engagement activity. It can be difficult to do robustly and for large projects you may want to enlist professional help. But you can also over evaluate. Think about what you really want to achieve. Interactive approaches such as a 'thoughts wall' can sometimes be all you need.

1. Don't baffle your audience with huge evaluation forms – keep written feedback simple.
2. Open questions giving qualitative feedback and useable quotes can be better than large amounts of quantifiable data which can often be ambiguous or subject to methodological questioning.
3. Employ minimalism where possible – e.g. do you need to ask a gender question at an event if a colleague could simply scan the audience and make a reasoned assessment?
4. Try innovative approaches such as comments boards, mind maps or pictorial feedback. A simple show-of-hands to a few multiple choice questions can get 100% audience return on some key questions.
5. Think far and wide with your evaluation. For instance, if you have collaborators, what do they want to know? Reflect on experiences personally too, adding to audience feedback. What worked? What might you change?