Doing a basic evaluation

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Evaluation can be a powerful tool to help you develop and improve your engagement activity, but if tacked on as an afterthought, it can produce data which is not useful and never used.



Doing a basic evaluation

Why are you doing an evaluation?

- It might be to improve future events, or to see whether to activity was a success. Find out more about the different reasons for evaluating here
- Evaluation should be worked into your project from day one as it can help shape the project as it progresses. If you will never use your evaluation, ask yourself whether it is necessary.

Do you know what you want to find out?

- What was the overall aim of your event? How you would know if you had achieved it?
- Don't try to find out everything in an evaluation, focus on key questions.
- Here is a useful possible evaluation framework.

Have you thought about your audience?

- Tailor your questions to the audience. Children will enjoy a simpler structure – like drawing pictures, or saying one word that describes the activity..
- Audiences who have some experience of the area (eg. patients) will be most able to give detailed comments.

Have you thought about the environment?

- If the activity has lots of short interactions, a long questionnaire or 'before and after' questions won't work – this is better suited to a longer intervention.
- The space may be too crowded/noisy for your evaluation, so make sure there is room for the format you choose.

Have you decided on the format of the questions?

- If you can, try to align your evaluation with the format of your event., in terms of length of interaction and level of interactivity.
- See some examples of evaluation formats here.

What are you going to do with the results?

- Consider sharing the results of the evaluation so others can learn from your project, for example on the CPE website.
- Make sure that you know what data funders want to see.

Want more information? Look at the reading list here.



Evaluation ideas

The planetarium at Winchester Science Park uses corks to evaluate their shows. All visitors are given a cork, and asked to put into one of 5 buckets, labelled from awful to great. It's a cheap, innovative way to compare different shows.

One option would be to create a Top Gear style 'cool wall'. Participants could draw pictures of the event and pin it on the part of the wall corresponding to how good they thought the activity was.

If you are hoping to show what a success your event was without undergoing a long quantitative evaluation, vox pops (short videos) can capture the feel of the event as well as opinions about it.

Don't forget to do the basics – like recording audience numbers and keeping track of the type of audience that you engaged with, such as age groups and genders. This can tell you a lot about your activity.

Ask people to tell you a story about the activity. Storytelling can be a powerful resource, especially when evaluating change in longer term interventions. If you'd like to know more, there are several resources and guides here.

Ranking things on a scale is a common technique, but people often get confused with whether higher means better or not. Why not try colour coding, or drawing smiley faces for them to choose?

If you do questionnaires, think about how much data you want to collect, and whether you will be able to process it. Having touch screen devices where people can input their own data gets around this problem!

