IETM TOOLKIT

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LOOK, I'M PRICELESS!

Handbook on how to assess your artistic organisation

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Look, I'm priceless! Handbook on how to assess your artistic organisation

IETM Toolkit

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Foreword by IETM

'Evaluation' has become one of the key words in national, European and international cultural policies. Artistic and cultural organisations are increasingly asked to legitimize their public subsidy by providing concrete results – in quantitative terms, numbers of people reached and their social and economic impact. Often numbers do not reflect their artistic results (their 'core business'), while social and economic impacts are hard to measure on short term. Evaluation risks then to become a burdensome and not-so-useful process, relying on the unfair expectations that the arts should succeed where economic, educational and health policies have more or less failed in addressing complex social issues. Obviously, with less and less public funding available.

And yet evaluation can be much more than that. If properly conceived, and rightly supported (with specific funding), evaluation can be a key tool for self-understanding, building knowledge and taking brave decisions about the future; it can help organisations to develop stronger relations and mutual knowledge with their funders; finally, it can provide strong evidence to convince policy-makers, audiences and society of the value of the arts for individuals, communities and society.

The crucial difference between a burdensome and pointless evaluation and a meaningful one lies in the mutual agreement between funders (commissioning the evaluation) and artistic and cultural organisations on indicators, processes, values and desired results. Acting as allies, not as enemies, is key. Unfortunately this is rarely the approach.

Based on this concept of evaluation as a shared process, and on the concerns of its members for the 'evaluation mantra', IETM included evaluation as a key part of its activity plan 2014-2017. In 2015 we commissioned researcher Vassilka Shishkova a General mapping of types of impact research in the performing arts sector, that provides a large overview of international models; then we organised two Satellite meetings on The art of valuing (Brussels, 2015) and Valuing the arts (Paris, 2016). Building on the experiences and discussions collected so far, and on the exchanges during some of the sessions at our Plenary meetings, we are now proposing this new handbook for the self-assessment of artistic organisations.

This toolkit aims to guide you through the key steps of evaluation, whether you have chosen to do it yourself or if a funder or decision-maker asks you to do so and provides you with pre-conceived tools. In the first case, this toolkit can help you to design, carry out and use the evaluation; in the second, it can help you to identify the risks and traps along the way, and to control the process.

We hope you will continue to share your experiences and thoughts during our next meetings and on IETM website - and we hope you will use this toolkit and give us very concrete feedback on it!

Preface by the Author

The self-evaluation toolkit you are about to read builds on our belief that arts organisations need to be equipped with the right tools to defend their own agenda when it comes to define, measure and investigate what is the 'value' of arts to our troubled societies. That is why we have decided not to follow the typical self-evaluation toolkit pattern, that predefines the 'value' and elaborates allegedly universal tools to assess it. Instead, we think it is up to you to decide whether the focus of your evaluation will be 'innovation', 'participation', 'vibrancy', 'inclusion', 'artistic excellency' or anything else you consider important.

The first part of the toolkit provides you with an insight in the general principles that structure the evaluation process; the second part lists and explains the various tools you might choose to use for your evaluation; the Annex includes a blank template that you can adapt to your own needs, and a visual summary of the self-evaluation process.

Many of you have already adopted certain evaluation procedures, mostly following the guidelines of your funding bodies. Still, this toolkit can take you a step further, and maybe equip you to start a conversation with funders on how to approach evaluation in a different way.

The text includes external as well as internal links, to relate theory with practical examples and tools. Resources are abundant.

We also acknowledge that our readers work in very different contexts, and so the toolkit addresses both organisations able to commission evaluation to external experts and organisations willing (or obliged to) conduct evaluation in-house. To ease the read, the parts that refer specifically to **in-house** evaluation are highlighted.

We thank all the professionals who have shared their experience through the IETM online survey and in the 'Assess yourself' session at IETM plenary meeting in Valencia (November 2016). This allowed us to gather insight on existing practices in the UK, Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Russia, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Australia, Canada and more.

Special thanks to Walk the Plank and ACT Association for having invited me to study closely their evaluation processes. That was indeed helpful.

And finally, thanks to those of you who stated out clear and loud that art should not be reduced to a policy instrument and should not follow any agenda other than its own. That is the core principle that guided this publication too.

About the Author

Vassilka Shishkova is an independent arts and culture impact researcher based in Sofia, Bulgaria. Her quest for finding strong evidence of the impact of cultural projects in the NGO sector started in 2011 when she joined the Global Libraries Bulgaria Programme, an initiative funded by The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, under the management of UNDP and the Ministry of Culture of Bulgaria. Since then she has been engaged in the evaluation of libraries and cultural centres.

Vassilka has been collaborating with IETM for publications on the impact of the arts since 2015. For the purposes of this publication she has studied the examples of evaluation procedures at several IETM member organisations along with her work as a recorder at the RECcORD project (2016-17).

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SECTION 1

Understanding and planning an evaluation

1

Introduction

Art always redefines its own criteria of success, its own criteria of quality and value. It is innovative and autonomous in every precise sense… Every artwork establishes its very own criteria of quality and value. We, as artists, have to insist that art should apply its very own criteria. When it adopts foreign criteria it completely loses its power. It is a political struggle that we have to insist on the autonomy of the art to establish its very own criteria…

Michael Turinsky, artist and philosopher, IETM Valencia 2016

1.1. WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO CONDUCT AN EVALUATION?

While evaluation has been around for the last 50 years and is an established practice both in business and in the social and community sector, it is not until recently that it has become an instrument with rapidly expanding application in the arts and culture sector. Evaluation has been increasingly regarded by public funders as a tool for achieving efficiency and proving usefulness in an environment of constant funding cuts. Due to being, or striving to be, objective, consistent, practical and reasonable, evaluation has been regarded as a panacea for achieving fair distribution of constantly decreasing funds towards those who perform better, on objectives of greater value.

Here lies the biggest problem of evaluation, because (thankfully!) in the 21st century we cannot define a valid universal scale of values in the art and culture field.

If we are to evaluate a communal service like public transport for example, we can agree that achieving good performance means carrying as many passengers as possible, on time, using green energy and sustainable technologies, with optimal expenses, while keeping both passengers and public transport workers content with the service provision.

But we cannot evaluate art the way we measure efficiency of city infrastructure.

The last thing you would want from a public transport service is to surprise you, to bring you to new places or to make you ask questions. The last thing the driver would want is a bus full of inspired individuals willing to express themselves and letting their creativity flourish. Since this seems obvious, why do we still try to evaluate our art the same way? In arts and culture, 'more visitors reached' is not equal to 'better performance'. 'More tickets sold' does not necessarily mean 'new audiences', 'new audiences' do not always imply 'innovation and new aesthetics of artwork'; nor does innovation prevail over tradition in terms of artistic quality (or vice versa).

There are complex reasons why the attempts to quantify and to scale impact in the evaluation of arts in a straightforward and consistent way usually reach only partial – if any – success. One of them is that art is not a utility. It is not supposed to transport you from A to B. It is not supposed to satisfy. It is not supposed to educate, to integrate, to accommodate or to cure. Art is no service. It has goals in itself, merits on its own and intrinsic values that are free from any 'usefulness'.

At the same time art inevitably interrelates with and affects its audiences, thus influencing and causing changes in personal lives, in communities and in societies. These impacts of art, even though collateral, are a proper object for academic research and are being studied through a variety of approaches. It is the range of fascinating evidence of art's impact on personal and social well-being, provided by academic research, that has given grounds for attempts to justify art and culture policies and to secure budgets by applying evaluation of those impacts, in line with assessing the economic effectiveness of arts and culture as 'enterprise' or 'commodity'.

Usually then, it is the arts and culture budget spending authorities like ministries, councils, funds, who initiate evaluations of art organisations with the purpose of supporting their own political agenda. Especially in times of budget cuts for arts and culture, these bodies need proof of the usefulness of their domain compared to welfare, healthcare, infrastructure or defence. They ask all the organisations they would fund to provide all sorts of data and to measure outcomes and impacts. Some of these evaluation schemes might be sensitive to art's intrinsic qualities, while others might ignore them, or even hinder artistic processes and quality. In addition, when elaborated for a wide range of organisations, even the most thoughtful evaluation design proposed to you by your funding body might not quite capture those specific aspects of your work that are the major traits of your organisation.

Having said all that, you may also look at evaluation - as an artist or cultural professional - as a tool that you may want to use, either to assess your work (and eventually improve it), or to produce convincing arguments for your (public and/or private) funders and audiences – or both. In other words, evaluation does not necessarily need to be imposed on you as a burden or a potential threat: it can be an initiative of yours in view of improving your own work and your position in your context of reference.

If you decide to be proactive and to construct and conduct your own evaluation, you will step into a stronger position to define what is of value and what can be considered an impact in connection with your work.

You will be able to choose the paradigm, the approach, the logic which fits your needs best. You will be empowered to assert your own agenda.

This toolkit aims to guide you through the key steps of evaluation, whether you have chosen to do it yourself or if a funder or decision-maker asks you to do so and provides you with pre-conceived tools. In the first case, this toolkit can help you to design, carry out and use the evaluation; in the second, it can help you to identify the risks and traps along the way, and to control the process.

1.2. BENEFITS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF EVALUATION

By depicting a detailed, valid and credible picture, evaluation can foster *better understanding* for your organisation and your work: for you, for peers, for funding bodies, for your audiences, for communities, for society as a whole. Evaluation supports your *advocacy* and *fundraising* efforts and helps to raise the voice in defence of art and culture.

The process of evaluation gives you the opportunity to *get to know your audiences* (you may be surprised how different your own assumptions are to your audience's) and to build new connections. It can give a voice to those not usually heard. It can bring everyone closer together.

Evaluation helps to *identify potential problems* in the organisation so that they can be managed properly. Evaluation can help to make your organisation more *effective*. It gives you *evidence of what is working* and what is not and provides solid grounds for decision making.

Evaluation can help you to develop your *institutional memory* and lead you towards *new directions, perspectives, and crossroads*.

Evaluation findings can *inspire* your future artistic work. As a result of evaluation you can base your future decisions on evidence and knowledge. This may open new directions and perspectives for your organisation.

You will get feedback on your work from variety of groups: colleagues, peers, audience members, policy makers, researchers.

You will investigate your progress towards your objectives and the possible effects of your activities and projects.

Inevitably, there is a list of disadvantages that you have to consider before you start a self-evaluation.

In the first place, evaluation requires resources. It requires a dedicated budget even if you decide to develop it in-house. If you plan to hire external evaluators you will need an even larger budget, although you will spare time and people from your team working on evaluation tasks you would have had otherwise allocated.

Secondly, even if you do not conduct the evaluation in-house, it requires a lot of attention from your side, especially in the design and planning phase. It may therefore be challenging to follow the evaluation process if you are in the middle of other demanding activities.

Evaluations can take from one to three months from start to finish. In addition, to measure change and impact of your activities, you have to conduct a baseline, sometimes an intermediate and a post-action evaluation. Evaluation is not a single intervention but rather an ongoing process. In addition, it is best to plan evaluation activities in the early stages of devising your projects and plans.

You have to be prepared that evaluation needs time and money, and determination in order to be meaningful to your organisation[1].

In the following chapter we will give an overview of the different kinds of evaluations and their characteristics. In Chapter 2 we will elaborate further on how to define appropriate evaluation themes and approaches.

1.3. OVERVIEW OF DIFFERENT EVALUATION TYPES

Let us first make sure not to generalise about ongoing monitoring activities and organisational assessments, because these activities are quite specific for each organisation or project evaluated; they also have to comply with specific national legislation and adopted practices, to meet the requirements of the funders, etc. Both can be referred to as a formative type of evaluation (see Research vs. evaluation).

Monitoring activities are measuring your organisation's performance on activities and projects. The indicators you usually use are measurable and most often countable: number of visitors, number of events, number of cities and venues in a tour, number of productions, number of participants at a festival... the list goes on.

Monitoring is what you do on a regular basis. It is a routine collection of data and information that will allow you to measure if activities are being implemented according to expectations, and if changes need to be undertaken. Since monitoring data clearly shows if you have met your measurable objectives, it is generally used when reporting on projects. However, analysis of monitoring data is not equal to evaluation. Why? – Because they measure your outputs, not your outcomes (see Chapter 3.1 - Design). Data obtained through regular monitoring activities will later on feed into your evaluation.

1 It has been stipulated that if an art organisation took all the money and effort it puts into marketing, audience development, advertising (here we might add evaluation procedures as well) and invested them in art production and free tickets, it would generate audiences which are bigger in number and in variety, and have a greater impact on society. This might actually be an interesting hypothesis to test.

Organisational assessment is the assessment of your organisational structure, culture, productivity, workflow, development, human resources and other assets, i.e. the performance of your organisation. This type of assessment focusses on communication, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, growth. It explores business models, technical and administrative aspects of your organisation. Organisational assessment is actually a thorough audit of your organisation. It might incorporate an evaluation of the impact of your projects and activities, but this would unlikely be a central topic.

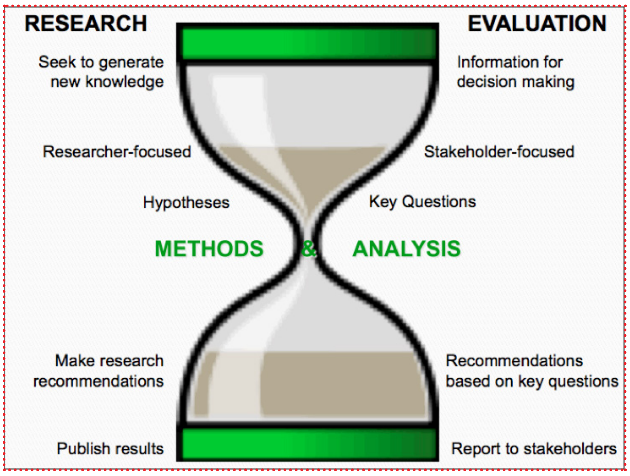
Although monitoring and organisational assessment measure performance and progress, they are not directly aimed at measuring change and impact. In addition, they are not the ideal tool to explore hypothesis or an assumption. For these purposes it is better to apply either social research or evaluation.

Research vs. Evaluation

Is there a difference between research and evaluation? Yes, there is.

Evaluation estimates value. Evaluation is what you usually do when you have implemented a program, and want to monitor (and evaluate) your performance, and explore if and how your program or initiative is making progress toward its goals. In such a case, you have at your disposal a set of predefined indicators to use.

Research seeks answers to questions aiming to generate new knowledge and understanding. Research looks for generalizable findings in a rigid scientific way, driven by an inquisitive mind. Research sets up a hypothesis which it then seeks proof to confirm or refute.



Research vs. Evaluation, John LaVelle (source: aea365 Daily Tips blog)

Sandra Mathison[1] concisely outlines the differences in the approaches of evaluation and research:

- Evaluation particularizes, research generalizes.
- Evaluation is designed to improve something, while research is designed to prove something.
- Evaluation – so what? Research – what's so?
- Evaluation – how well does it work? Research – how does it work?
- Evaluation is about what is valuable; research is about what is..
- Evaluation provides the basis for decision-making; research provides the basis for drawing conclusions.

Evaluation is inclined toward the instrumental and research is focused on the analytical, but they share the same methods to an extent. The clever diagram developed by John LaVelle[2] gives a visual expression of how research and evaluation approach the same phenomenon from different perspectives and use common methods to get answers and analyse data.

Yet, according to Mathison, there are methods applicable in evaluation that are not used in social research, like justification of feasibility, of economic viability or of prospects for sustainability. On another hand, both in social and artistic/cultural research evaluation makes use of peer and staff assessment, group discussions, and interviews with stakeholders.

The difference between research and evaluation is significant for both researchers and evaluators to define the boundaries of their disciplines, but it is of importance for you too in terms of deciding which would better match your goals.

On one hand, research opens an opportunity to investigate the unknown and thus stands closer to art; both can be perceived as an experiment, a leap into the anticipated unknown. The subjectivity of art perception, though, makes drawing out generalised patterns quite problematic. Hence, research will rely on qualitative methods like observation, in-depth interviews, etc. to get insight into 'how it works' types of questions (see Section 2, Tools - chapter B. Qualitative evaluation and the chapters related to each tool). Thus, research investigating a broad sample of organisations of the performing arts sector might reach meaningful and credible conclusions on various topics[3].If the research looks only at one organisation's activities its conclusions will stay isolated and anecdotal on a larger scale, but they could still be valid and meaningful for the organisation and its purposes. In this case however, the organisation may prefer to implement an evaluation.

1 S. Mathison, 'What Is the Difference between Evaluation and Research—and Why Do We Care?'
2 J. LaVelle, 'John LaVelle on Describing Evaluation'
3 For examples of such wide range research you might check: V. Shishkova, 'Mapping of Types of Impact Research', IETM, and Warwick Commission, 'Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth',

Evaluation will better meet your needs if your organisation receives public or private funding. It will enable you to report on your results and the impact of your activities to your funders; if you are implementing a programme or a project and you have a set of indicators according to which you monitor and report; if you want to investigate what works and how, and decide accordingly how to continue your work. This can be useful even if your funders do not request an evaluation.

The evaluation you need in order to capture your impact is not simply the measurement and numbers type. It is not about categorising what is valuable and what is not according to its efficiency. You need an evaluation which investigates phenomena in-depth and in their context. The aim is to capture the singular, the anecdotal, along with the quantifiable; an evaluation that considers the intrinsic values of art while looking into its impacts outside. We might say such an endeavour belongs to the area where evaluation and research intersect.

In the following chapters, the term 'evaluation' is used in relation to an approach that combines attention to impact with attention to intrinsically artistic value. Sometimes, for convenience, (self-)evaluation and (self-)assessment can be used interchangeably.

RESOURCES

A. Wilson, 'Differentiating between Research, Assessment, and Program Evaluation', in SACSA

S. Mathison, 'What Is the Difference between Evaluation and Research—and Why Do We Care?' in Fundamental Issues in Evaluation, Guilford Press, Oct. 2007

J. LaVelle, 'John LaVelle on Describing Evaluation', in AEA365 | A Tip-a-Day by and for Evaluators, Feb 2010

P. Rogers, 'Ways of Framing the Difference between Research and Evaluation', in BetterEvaluation, May 2014

V. Shishkova, 'Mapping of Types of Impact Research in the Performing Arts Sector (2005-2015)', IETM, Brussels, 2016

Warwick Commission, 'Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth', in University of Warwick, 2015

2

Preliminary steps

2.1. IN-HOUSE VS. EXTERNAL EVALUATION

Before we continue with the various aspects and tools of evaluation let us clarify the different options you have in choosing to work on your own or with an external evaluator.

Generally, the choice between an external or **in-house** evaluation depends on the scale of your organisation, the available resources (money, time and human resources), and the scope of the evaluation you're going to do.

Other factors that you have to consider are the availability of expert advice and guides supplied or approved by your funding bodies, and of robust data and statistics from your sector on a national level.

You have to consider country-specific traits for a well-conducted evaluation as well. Some social research traditions seem to be more open to alternative tools like autoethnography or case studies, while others (like for example in Germany and Austria) tend to be more conservative and trust more robust quantitative methods. The degree of objectivity which is acceptable in your case will also affect your choice of evaluators.

In-house evaluation

If your organisation is relatively small and you have executed just a few projects or have developed a narrow range of activities, and if your staff have the skills and time to carry out an evaluation (and/or you can ensure proper training for them), then you can perform the evaluation **in-house**.

In-house evaluation is an option if you need the findings mostly to fuel your advocacy efforts or to back-up your funding applications convincingly, rather than as a basis for costly decisions (like establishing a venue, for instance), i.e. if qualitative methods would prevail over quantitative data (see Chapters A and B in Tools Section).

If you can rely on the expert advice from your funding agency, and if you operate in a country with well-established national statistics in your sector that allow for good bench-marking, then you can conduct quite a consistent in-house evaluation.

The huge benefit of this approach is that you would achieve a high level of involvement and commitment from your team to implement the evaluation's recommendations afterwards. Many insightful evaluation reports have ended up unread in the waste bin due to a lack of interest among staff and stakeholders. Another benefit which you should not underestimate is that doing the evaluation in-house is a capacity-building process that will profit many of your other organisational activities too. Your audience development, advocacy, and overall communication efforts will be enforced by the new skills your team will acquire through applying the various tools of evaluation. Searching for respondents among your audiences and communities will give you a good opportunity to get to know them better.

In addition, the process would prepare you to collect data and to conduct evaluations on a regular basis.

In-house evaluation does not mean 'at no additional cost', though.

Do not underestimate the amount of time needed for the evaluation; make sure your staff agree and are not already overworked with their everyday tasks; make sure you can free some of their working time to allow them to carry out the evaluation. Depending on the scale of the evaluation you may need one or two people working on it full-time for up to three months (you may need less, of course). You would need to put some effort into ensuring volunteer help. In any case the whole team will be involved in the process. In addition, you would put time into self-education and training in the use of the various evaluation tools.

You would also need to allocate a budget for the specific steps of the evaluation, for instance hiring premises for interviews and focus groups, for snacks and drinks and incentives for the focus group participants, hiring independent moderators and interviewers, possible additional software or equipment to conduct the evaluation activities or for data processing... (see appropriate chapters in the Tools section).

Hiring an external expert/consultancy

If your organisation is complex in structure, if it implements various sorts of activities, if you execute several projects of great importance to you, if you do not have enough people to dedicate to assessment activities, if you need an insightful evaluation that is also supported by robust numerical data, or if you simply feel at a loss on how to develop your evaluation criteria and apply its methods, then hiring an external evaluation consultancy would work better for you. If you operate in a country that has less experience in arts organisation evaluation and fewer academic studies on the impacts of the arts in society, it would be a safer approach to appoint experts to develop the evaluation design and to conduct it.

Choose an agency that has a proven expertise in evaluation of art projects and art organisations. Alternatively, a strong social research portfolio could also suit the particular type of evaluation you require. Certainly, the agency experts will be skilful in writing questionnaires, sampling, moderation, interviewing, data processing, data validation and making the proper causation out of it so that you do not have to put additional efforts into training in those specific skills. Of course, hiring an external evaluator requires a specific budget.

Having external professional evaluators implementing the evaluation will increase the credibility of your report and statements. Importantly, you will have a say in what needs to be measured and evaluated, so the indicators of success will be relevant to the values and mission of your organisation. It is advisable to outsource the evaluation whenever objectivity would be considered of great importance. Also, an outsider's view might bring fresh perspectives to your work.

There are certain disadvantages, though. It might happen that you cannot find an evaluation agency specialised in the field of arts, as many of them are focused on programme and project evaluations in sectors with more established patterns of evaluation. This might cost you some extra hours of explaining your work and objectives.

However, in terms of resources it is arguable whether a successful partnership with an external evaluation agency would cost more than an ill-devised home-made evaluation gone wrong.

'I can tell you it cost us about 1% of our turnover last year. We don't spend any time doing it as we hired a consultancy to do the work for us. Naturally we spent a couple of hours with the consultants… And yes, it was worth it.' – **Dawn Walton, Director of Eclipse Theatre, UK**

How to choose the right evaluator

• Prepare a brief

Include all relevant information about your organisation: vision, structure, history, and field. If you have conducted previous evaluations, include information about the findings. Take your time to review all the data already collected and available. This will ease your work later in the evaluation too.

• Prepare detailed Terms of reference

State your goals for the evaluation. Define the topics you would like assessed. Outline the scope and the elements of the evaluation. State your expectations clearly but be open for changes and reformulation if needed (see Chapter 2.2 for further information).

Be as specific as possible; this will ensure that you receive more realistic quotes. Ask for proof of staff competency in social research and especially in art organisation assessment.

You should consider including a requirement for a short training on how to collect data consistently. You could ask for a toolkit for self-evaluation and data gathering that will be tailored for your organisation. This will give you the opportunity to carry on the evaluation regularly over time, and the next time you could opt to do it **in-house**.

Report elaboration is a must, but do not forget to mention assistance on presentation preparation, infographics and advocacy materials, because you will probably need some assistance in presenting the data extrapolations accurately. Include a requirement for various raw data formats.

In case you secure public funding for your evaluation in the frame of a certain project, make sure you are allowed to make some small amendments to the Terms of Reference, e.g. changing the scope or the timeframe of the evaluation, etc.

• Choose wisely

Sometimes the bigger agencies run quite demanding, large-scale projects, so they might assign your smaller evaluation to a less experienced researcher. The smaller agencies might not have the capacity to accomplish your assessment tasks if they are quite extensive in data gathering. Most importantly, choose evaluators who have experience in evaluations in the artistic field and whose idea of performing arts is not stuck in the 19th century.

When signing the contract, set timeframes and budget limits. More often than not, the biggest issue with evaluation is timing. Clearly define your requirements.

Mixed approach

As you might guess, the winning solution is to have the best of both worlds. Have someone from the team work closely with the external evaluators. Debrief your team on and engage them in the evaluation efforts in order to ensure their attentiveness to its recommendations. It is a good idea to negotiate for the external team to prepare guidelines that are especially tailored to your assessment needs.

In any case, make sure the whole staff is informed about the evaluation that is about to start, and that they're ready to be involved in one way or another; and make sure your advisory or governance body is on board with the evaluation as well.

For further elaboration on how to plan your evaluation in time see Chapter 3.2. - Plan your evaluation.

Whatever path you decide to take, this toolkit is intended to help you find your way into evaluation, and will honestly warn you about the bottlenecks you might experience.

Whenever suitable, the toolkit will advise on the different steps needed depending on whether you work alone or outsource to an external evaluator.

In general, what is standard procedure for an external evaluator is advisable for your in-house work too. Certain tools and operations are highly advised to be conducted by expert evaluators. If a task requires specific expertise this will be explicitly advised.

All alternatives for in-house work will be marked with bold charachters: **in-house**.

Once again, self-evaluation does not mean that you have to conduct all the activities yourself. It just means that you define the priorities and you set the topics of the evaluation according to your agenda.

The next chapter will show you how to define those topics and how to choose the evaluation paradigm that suits your purposes.

Shopping Teams: having a clear idea of your evaluation goals helps defining the scope, no? (picture: xkcd)

2.2. PARADIGMS, APPROACHES, CONCEPTS, NEEDS, GOALS, AND TOPICS

So, you have made up your mind to conduct a self-evaluation.

Your goal is (most probably) to obtain strong evidence and compelling stories about your current and future activities. What would you like to put in the spotlight? Is it your ability to activate new audiences? Is it about your artistic excellence or is it more about community work and participation? Or maybe you would have all aspects of your organisation evaluated? But then, do you have the time and the budget to do it?

Before you step into your needs assessment and definition of evaluation goals, it will be of help to acquaint yourself with the theoretical basis that defines various approaches in social research. This chapter will give you an insight into evaluation procedures, understandings, viewpoints and work.

You might refer to it as the *thinking* phase of your evaluation. In this phase you will dedicate some time (days, weeks) to understanding *what* you wish to accomplish with the forthcoming evaluation, *why* and *how*.

Remember, when it comes to self-evaluation, you choose what is right for you.

What would you need a paradigm for?

Paradigms are the fundamental models or frames of reference we use to organise our observations and reasoning. Therefore choosing the theoretical foundation that is in accordance with your outlook is never a waste of time, even if you consider evaluation a trivial operational activity. The paradigm you choose is what gives coherence to your choice of themes, approaches, methods, and analytical keys for the evaluation.

Consider paradigms as manifestations of the philosophical schools of thought that influence social science in the way it deals with the question of how we know about the world around us. Just to mention them here if you wish to further investigate:

Research paradigms	
paradigm	theoretical perspective
positivism	positivism, post-positivism
interpretivism	phenomenology, constructivism, deconstructivism, hermeneutics
pragmatism	pragmatism
critical theory	Marxism, queer theory, feminism
subjectivism	postmodernism, structuralism, relativism

Investigate whether your funding body can suggest any guidelines and expert advice and assistance. In the Reference section below you will find some links to such funding body guidelines. Note that they have been tailored to suit evaluation of specific programs and goals. If you follow a certain funding body's guide to evaluation, you are accepting the paradigm that it has chosen in concordance with its policies (and politics). Therefore, if you want to manage your own self-evaluation you should adopt a paradigm which reflects your politics.

So in the first place, look deeper into your organisation's mission and values and, equally importantly, into your art. Take some time to think over and try to get a deeper understanding of your own viewpoints and values.

Organise a brainstorming with your team. If you have opted for an **in-house** evaluation you will benefit from some expert help on this task, because this phase will define what approach, methods, themes, and topics you will use and which tools would suit your goals.

You could reach out for collaboration with a social research program at a university. Students and their tutors may be keen to put theory into practice by helping you define your views. Consider brainstorming with colleagues from other organisations who have already implemented an evaluation: even a chat around a coffee (or beer) can open your eyes to opportunities and traps you had not considered before.

What approach to choose?

'Approaches' refer to designs, methods of data collection or types of analysis applied in a research project.

Approaches, like strategies, might be deductive, inductive or abductive according to the main logic applied.

A deductive approach starts from a hypothesis that is derived from a theory and uses research to prove or disprove it. Deductive reasoning relies heavily on quantitative methods in order to achieve validity of conclusions.

An inductive approach starts with research questions, aims and objectives that need to be achieved during the research process. Qualitative methods such as observation and interviews follow the inductive pattern reasoning. You would mostly apply this type if you work with the in-house mode of evaluation.

Abductive reasoning involves deciding what is the most likely inference that can be made from a set of observations. It is set to overcome weaknesses associated with deductive and inductive approaches.

In the field of evaluation there is a pragmatic distinction between formative, summative and mixed approaches according to the evaluation goal[1].

Formative evaluations are aimed at improving the assessed object (e.g. the work of your organisation). They are usually conducted during the process and provide an opportunity for amendments. They are frequent, ongoing. Their main questions are: what is working; what needs to be improved; how can it be improved. Some examples of formative evaluation are: needs assessment, evaluability assessment, implementation, process evaluation.

Summative evaluations study the effects or outcomes of the assessed object to determine its overall effectiveness. Summative evaluation is judgemental. Main topics of concern are: what results are correct; whom do they affect; under what conditions; at what cost. Some types of summative evaluation are: outcome evaluation, impact evaluation, cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analysis. Most probably, if you decide to explore the impacts of your work, you would choose this type of evaluation approach.

The next step in the thinking phase will lead you to outlining the perimeter of your evaluation and to establishing its goals. Once you know what you want, it is easier to achieve.

1 Fitzpatrick, Worthen, Sanders, 'Program Evaluation: Alternative Approaches and Practical Guidelines'

What concepts?

Usually when we initiate an evaluation we strive to inform ourselves about many unknown ideas, topics and processes. Yet the bigger surprises are hidden in what we think we know well…

…act, acting area, actor, aesthetic, art, artistic value, artwork, audience, change, citizenship, commons, community, community building, community work, creation, creativity, cultural value, diversity, economic impact, empowerment, engagement, entertainment, ethnicity, experience, expression, freedom, gender, impact, inclusion, innovation, intangible, intrinsic, leisure time, participation, prosperity, quality, race, social impact, sustainability, vibrancy, vulnerable, wellbeing…

It is simple: you should understand what all these mean to you before you start to ask others.

Think about these concepts, or any others that are important to you as an artist or to your organisation. Analyse how you understand and define them. Compare your understanding with other versions - academic, policy driven and so on. Work out definitions for each concept and ensure they are agreed upon within your organisation.

Ask friends and acquaintances how they understand 'artistic vibrancy' for example. They probably think you are weird already, so your questions will not surprise them. Test your definitions with them. These other views and versions will be useful when you start to formulate questions for the assessment respondents.

You can organise a discussion with students or audience members on topics concerning your forthcoming evaluation. You can use such meetings as an audience development initiative as well as an opportunity to test your future questionnaires.

What to assess: needs, goals, and topics

That is the crucial question. You cannot assess everything, no matter how hard you try.

You might have a predefined agenda by the funding body you report to. Presumably in this case, the evaluation will be based on your funded project's logical framework, so that you can demonstrate the impact you have by investigating the measurable indicators you have set in the framework or on the objectives from your funding application. In this case, your evaluation design would follow closely your project design.

You might also decide to rely on your funding body's proposed framework for assessment / evaluation of arts organisations - if there is such a thing, as is the case in Norway, Canada, Australia and the UK for instance. That would be the clever thing to do, because these frameworks are coherent with current policies in your sector and the data and findings you obtain would most probably serve you in your future applications and reporting.

Take as an example the available framework for self-evaluation of art organisations devised by the Arts Council of England[1]. As well as being a useful toolkit for self-evaluation, it also mirrors the focus on business sustainability and economic impact that is typical of UK cultural policies.

Those of you not so lucky with well-devised, institutionally provided evaluation frameworks, or those who wish to explore different areas, have to do the thinking by yourselves and set your own areas and topics of interest.

What you define to be the focus of research will determine the evaluation approach (formative or summative) you adopt.

The other important consequence of your choice of goals concerns the methods and the questions you will use to achieve them (see next two chapters).

Therefore it is necessary to set goals that can actually be measured or assessed through various quantitative and qualitative indicators like the indicators of success, indicators of change, etc.(see Chapter 3.1 - Design your assessment wisely).

Here are some schematic examples of areas of interest that have proved to be relevant for evaluation, the goals associated with them, and possible ways for collecting evidence and for assessment:

- **Goal 1: To assess the economic impact of your activities.** This is feasible for festivals, carnivals and similar activities that have the potential to attract large numbers of people

  Topics: creating jobs; feasibility of investment; attracting audiences; revitalising places; effect and impact on local businesses; sustainability, developing talent; professionalization of artists, etc.

  Predominant evaluation method: quantitative methods - surveys, statistics, document analysis

  Example: Edinburgh Festivals 2015 Impact Study

1 Arts Council of England, 'The Self-evaluation Framework'

- **Goal 2: To assess how your organisation promotes artistic and audience diversity and social inclusion**

  Topics: programming; artistic staff structure; audience structure; minorities; disabilities; vulnerability; income; social inclusion; education; empowerment and so on

  Predominant evaluation method: quantitative methods – surveys, but also qualitative ones – focus groups, interviews

  Example: Equality and diversity within the arts and cultural sector in England

- **Goal 3: To assess how your organisation encourages participation**

  Topics: audience identification; audience analysis; attitudes towards art; willingness to participate, engaging and developing; communication; learning; participation, etc.

  Predominant evaluation method: quantitative: audience surveys, general population surveys and qualitative: focus groups, in-depth interviews, longitudinal studies

  Example: Young People, Creative Action and Social Change

- **Goal 4: To assess how your organisation develops artistic innovation and artistic quality**

  Topics: new ideas; creativity; innovative artistic approaches; professional recognition; programming; artistic quality; partnership; learning; vision, etc.

  Predominant evaluation method: qualitative: in-depth interviews, focus groups, discussions; also document analysis, case study

  Example: Evaluation Report: Creative Campus Innovations Grant Program

As you can see from these schematic examples, your evaluation may head in many different directions depending on what your objectives are.

Remember that if you decide to follow some predefined guides (e.g. provided by an Arts Council) you would probably adopt the paradigm and value system of their commissioner. If you assume the position of power and create your own evaluation, you have to be prepared to walk the extra mile – with or without expert assistance – to conceptualise the paradigm, approach, goals and topics of your evaluation.

Look for the main debates in your country or region: is it diversity or inclusion, is it sustainability or economic growth, is it national traditions or democratic openness? It is feasible to choose your evaluation theme and topics in correspondence with your local context (because there you will find the immediate audience and impact of your report)?

It is useful to attend IETM meetings (and read the reports) for interesting topics that are explored in-depth.

Even if you direct the evaluation towards your goals, you might still wish to connect with the general arts policy agenda of your country/region. You might have various reasons to comply: you might actually agree with those arts policies; you might wish to secure a certain level of comparability with other arts operators in your region in order, for instance, to join advocacy efforts; you might also need to avoid doing the work twice and use findings and evidence from your evaluation to report to your funding body or to apply for a grant.

Choose wisely but, at the same time, focus on what you feel passionate about. Also, be aware of what you are good at. If your programme features great innovative, experimental, avant-garde art, there is not much sense in delving into mass participation assessment. Researchers may frown upon taking this biased approach, but evaluation allows you to be pragmatic.

At the end of this conceptualisation process you will formulate your evaluation hypothesis which will reflect your goals and topics (your agenda). All the evaluation activities you then undertake will be for the collection of data which will prove or disprove your hypothesis.

In the chapters to follow we will examine designing and planning, which will cover considerably more practical aspects of preparing an evaluation.

RESOURCES

Funding bodies' toolkits

'Browse Toolkit' (a list of toolkits, adopted by different foundations and funding bodies), in Foundation Center

'Planning Your Impact and Evaluation', in NCVO Knowhow Nonprofit, December 2016

Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Canada, 'Program Evaluation Methods: Measurement and Attribution of Program Results' (3rd edition), in Centre of Excellence for Evaluation (CEE), Government of Canada, March 1998

Paradigms

M. Kramer, 'Shifting the Evaluation Paradigm', in FSG, March 2012

W. Trochim, 'Philosophy of Research', in Research Methods Knowledge Base, October 2006

J. Dudovskiy, 'Research philosophy', in Research Methodology, 2011

D. M. Mertens, 'Philosophical Assumptions and Program Evaluation', in SpazioFilosofico, issue 13 – Evaluation, 2015

Approaches

'Evaluation Approaches & Types', in Evaluation Toolkit of Pell Institute

'Research Approach', in NTNU (Norwegian University of Science and Technology)

'Research Approach in Research Methodology', 2011

'Themes' in BetterEvaluation

'Evaluation type quiz' in Impact Ready

'Approaches', in BetterEvaluation

Concepts, objectives and topics

I. Gilhespy, 'The Evaluation of Social Objectives in Cultural Organisations', in International Journal of Arts Management, Vol. 4, No. 1 (fall 2001)

K. Keating, 'Evaluating Community Arts and Community Well-Being. An Evaluation Guide for Community Arts Practitioners', 2002, in Creative Victoria

R. Hartsough, 'An Evaluation Resource Guide for Arts Programming', in Nevada Arts Council

M. Boorsma, F. Chiaravalloti, 'Arts Marketing and Performance Management: Closing The Gap between Mission and Indicators', in Proceedings of the 5th Conference on Performance Measurement and Management Control, 23-25 September 2009, Nice

J. Earl, 'Old Assumptions and New Realities', in Arts Professional, September 2016

'Step 1: Define Evaluation Objectives', in 'A Toolkit for Assessing IPM Outcomes and Impact', March 2015

3

Getting started

3.1. DESIGN YOUR ASSESSMENT WISELY

Evaluation literature sometimes refers to design as planning the steps of the evaluation, while in other cases it views design as the summarized, and often visualised, concept of what the assessment aims to accomplish, how it will do so, and how the findings will be used. This toolkit follows the second approach and distinguishes designing from planning: design employs higher levels of conceptualisation than planning does.

Designing is closely connected with choosing the right paradigm and approach (Chapter 2.2), planning the evaluation (Chapter 3.2), formulating the questions (Chapter 3.3), and identifying the sources of information (Chapter 3.4).

NOTE: If you work in **in-house** mode, you could benefit from expert advice on this part in order to ensure that the evaluation design suits the evaluation goals, and that appropriate tools will be applied to an optimal extent.

The logical framework: Inputs – Outputs – Outcomes – Impact

If you have implemented a project you have probably elaborated some sort of project framework to explain and visualise your project activities and the results you envisage to achieve. Ideally, if this project framework is consistent, it will be logical to outline the evaluation design accordingly.

It happens that project frameworks are revisited only at the time of writing obligatory reports for funders, but they are helpful in designing the evaluation for various reasons.

First, you can consistently and concisely present your project – as well as your evaluation goals – to any external partner in evaluation, be it a research institute, an evaluation agency or independent consultants or group moderators.

Secondly, by examining the framework, you can anticipate issues in data gathering like insufficient data or unmeasurable indicators, and address them in time.

Thirdly, this framework gives you the structure of the evaluation so that you can track your progress. It might also provide the structure and focus of the evaluation report you prepare at the end.

After you assess your project framework and develop the evaluation framework, after you examine your current indicators and define the evaluation indicators, you can actually design the evaluation in accordance with the themes and topics of your interest, and choose the right tools to gather the data you need. You may discover that you have set overambitious goals for your evaluation, or that your chosen approach will not allow you to collect the evidence you need. This is the time to reconsider your aims and reformulate your evaluation hypothesis.

What if you don't work in separate projects? Then you can consider your overall work as a project and synthesise its parameters into a logical framework. For clarity of speech your overall work will be referred to below as a 'project'.

When you structure your work you can also follow the Theory of change model or mind mapping alongside building a logical framework, as shown below. There is an abundance of guidelines on how to develop a framework, some of which are listed in the Resources section. These vary according to project management traditions adopted in a certain programme or region, as well as according to their suitability to a project type.

Elements of a project's logical framework[1]

- **Inputs** are the resources that go into your project: staff time, materials, money, equipment, facilities, volunteer time; also: talent; artistic proficiency.

- **Activities** are what you actually do: productions, workshops, residencies, discussions, contests, learning initiatives, community work, etc.; but also: playwriting, castings, rehearsals and so on.

  Some evaluation frameworks do no distinguish activities from outputs but, since action is the core of performing arts, merging will lead to misunderstanding and underestimation of important aspects of your work.

- **Outputs** are the direct evidence that you have performed the activities. They have numerical dimensions like number of shows performed, number of audience members, participants (attendance), number of artists participating in a festival, number of audience meetings and so on. Outputs are what your monitoring activities keep track of.

1 adapted from E. Taylor-Powell and E. Henert, 'Developing a logic model: Teaching and Training Guide'

Outputs cannot measure change, so they do not shed light on the outcomes and the impact of your work, they just quantify it. Often outputs are mistakenly reported as outcomes. Unfortunately, this is another major flaw in many institutional frameworks, as their analysis will only reach as far as 'counting the people in the hall' instead of trying to set more genuine criteria of value and success in the arts and culture field.

- **Outcomes** are the results or changes that your work is intended to cause, such as 'changes in knowledge, awareness, skills, attitudes, opinions, aspirations, motivation, behaviour, practice, decision-making, policies, social action, condition, or status'.

It is important to remember that we are talking about art, and not about social or agricultural projects. Despite all the evidence for the positive impacts of art on social or economic fields, art should not *be expected* to be useful. It is not supposed to be a means to an end. It is not a substitute or a double to welfare, social programs or healthcare. It must be free to have no other goals than its artistic ones.

In order to acknowledge the independence of art (from everything else) you should envisage and define some clearly artistic outcomes of your work. It is not uncommon when evaluating art projects to slip onto the 'path of usefulness' that is inherent to social projects in general. Therefore, always start your evaluation - and evaluation report - with a clear statement of your mission in order to clarify whether your organisation/project has artistic, social, and/or other goals.

- **Artistic outcomes** show what effects your artwork has on artists, art, and audiences. These outcomes should be the results, developments and changes your work has caused in your (and others') aesthetic and artistic pursuits. They should be coherent with your artistic manifesto and vision.

  Any outcomes may be intended and/or unintended (in terms of purpose), positive or negative (in terms of consequences), immediate, intermediate and final (according to their manifestation in time), and they are defined as short-term, medium-term and long-term (according to the longitude of their effect).

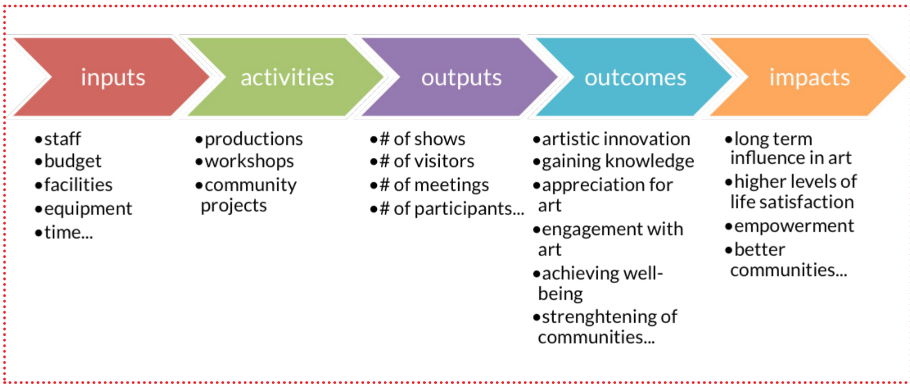
- **Impacts** are sometimes considered long-term outcomes. They are referred to as 'the social, economic, civic and/or environmental consequences of your work'.[1] They are also differentiated as being positive, negative, and/or neutral: intended or unintended.

- As for your **artistic impact**... although arguable, you might consider any substantial critical acclaim, awards, new artistic movements that are established by you, any evidence that you might have some artistic influence in the decades to come. Equally rightfully, you can arguably consider any of your work to have had an artistic impact if it goes viral on the Internet, or causes some widely noticed appearance and disturbance to society. It is also possible that your arts organisation is a well-established one, so that most of what you do has an impact on art in the arts world, and in broader terms in society. At any rate, there are many different avenues to consider when seeking the artistic impact of your work.

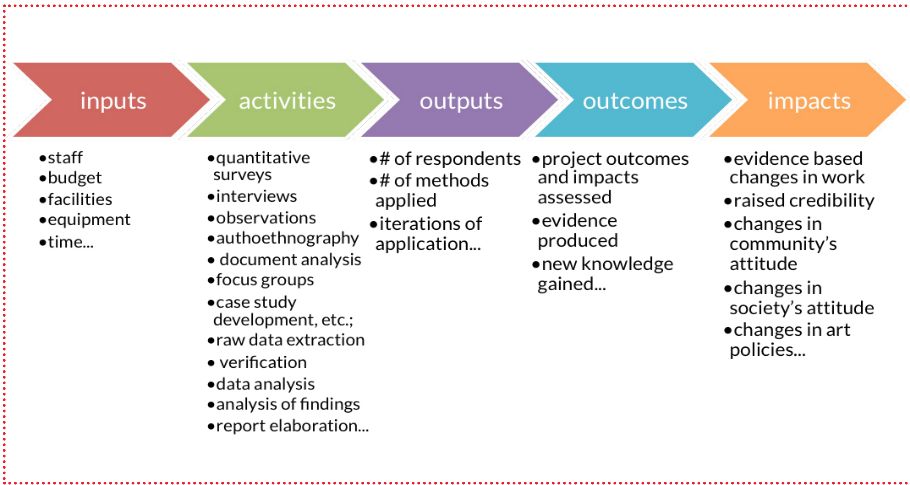
The pictures at the next page show a generalised example of a simple project logical framework, and the elements of an evaluation framework.

In other words, while your project's logical framework can trace accomplishment of goals in your work, the framework of your evaluation will give you a focus on the processes involved and the quality achieved.

1 E. Taylor-Powell, E. Henert, cit.



Example of a simple project logical framework



Elements of an evaluation framework

Let us take a closer look at the evaluation framework elements to help you identify your situation.

- **Evaluation inputs: budget, staff, time, equipment and facilities to conduct the evaluation.**

By considering these elements you will estimate how much you can invest in the evaluation. You might know that the *budget* of an evaluation can take up to 10 percent out of the overall budget of a project, although that amount varies greatly across project types, organisations, and countries. If you have allocated an insufficient budget you may not be able to cover the expenses of the evaluation.

Look at The Shortest Guide to Self-Evaluation (Annex 1). If your budget is small you can decide to skip some costly evaluation tools, opt for an **in-house** evaluation, work with volunteers, seek additional funding, and/or reformulate your evaluation goals accordingly. At any rate, it is wise to include your evaluation expenses when preparing your overall budget.

If you are doing an **in-house** evaluation, you have to be sure that your staff are not overworking, that they are not engaged with other important tasks so that evaluation activities may interfere with them, that they are trained and have the skills to carry out the tasks and, last but not least, that they are willing to conduct the evaluation endeavour.

If you commission the evaluation to an external agency, then they have to give you guarantees they have the necessary staff at their disposal.

The same applies to specific facilities and equipment. If you hire an external agency it is their duty to provide these. If you do the work **in-house**, then you need to make sure that you have audio and video recorders, data processing software, quiet and neutral premises and so on (you can check the details in the corresponding chapters of each evaluation tool).

Time and timing of an evaluation vary hugely depending on your working mode and the type of evaluation you choose.

The gold standard is to gather data before and after a phenomenon occurs or an activity takes place. Particularly when it comes to arts and culture which are known for their long-term impacts it is feasible to conduct longitudinal studies and to accumulate data over time (for example, Scandinavian countries have been keeping track of the arts and culture sector for the last 40 years, so each art organisation which reports to their research bodies has also accumulated their own data over time).

If you want to assess the changes your activities generate, you have to carry out a baseline evaluation at the beginning of the project, and then again after it commences, in order to track the changes it has caused. Sometimes studying a control group of respondents who are not affected by the activity may compensate for lacking baseline data but bear in mind that it is usually a costlier solution.

As for the actual time your evaluation endeavour would take, it depends on the scope and whether you work in-house or hire an external evaluation agency. If you opt for full-range quantitative and qualitative research by an evaluation agency it would most probably be fulfilled within about a two-month timeframe and some additional time to finalise the report.

If you have decided to do an **in-house** evaluation, it depends on the staff you can allocate and the tools you decide to apply (see Section 2 - Tools)..

- **Evaluation activities (tools)**

Evaluation activities (tools) are the evaluation tools you can actually apply in a survey: quantitative surveys, interviews, observations, autoethnography, document analysis, focus groups, case study development, etc.; raw data extraction, verification and classification, data analysis, analysis of findings, report elaboration; video, audio, photo processing. You will find these tools, their suitable application and the resources involved explained in the corresponding chapters. You are not supposed to apply all the tools, rather to choose the ones that suit your goals best.

If you go for an **in-house** evaluation, it is advisable to opt for tools that can be applied in a consistent manner and will provide solid data while being less demanding in terms of staff, specific skills and complexity.

- **Evaluation outputs: number of respondents, number of methods applied and iterations of application**

Outputs here refer to the scale of your evaluation. You need to estimate how many of the tools mentioned above would suffice to prove or disprove your evaluation hypothesis. You will find further information on sampling and scaling in Chapter 3.4. If you conduct an **in-house** evaluation it is worthwhile to seek expert advice from a funding body, a research institute or an independent expert on this issue. The right sample size depends on the size of your organisation, the activities you implement and the target population possibly affected by them. Even if you decide to skip the quantitative research and rely only on qualitative tools (interviews, focus groups etc.), it is not without significance whether you need 10 focus groups or if three would be enough. In addition, it matters if the target population affected by your work is homogeneous or not (in terms of social, economic and ethnic background).

Guidelines from your funding bodies and examples of similar evaluation projects in your region are good places to get more information.

- **Evaluation outcomes**

Evaluation outcomes are all relevant project outcomes and impacts are assessed in a consistent and credible manner; evidence for the project's functioning and its impact is produced; new knowledge about the project and the field of action is accumulated.

This should mean your evaluation endeavour was conducted in the best possible way, has met your goals, and produced credible evidence on your evaluation hypotheses. If you work **in-house**, following this toolkit, as well as any other suitable guidelines provided by your funding bodies will help you to achieve your outcomes. If you have commissioned an external evaluation agency, an outstanding fulfilment of the outcomes you define for the evaluation will indicate that they have done their job well.

- **Evaluation impacts**

Sound evidence and insights derived from the assessment can lead to changes in people's perception of the organisation's work, changes in decision making processes (based on new evidence), increased credibility for the organisation; new opportunities for collaborations/funding; changes in attitude towards the organisation and towards the arts, that affect communities and society as a whole; changes in arts policy.

Whether these impacts are achieved or not depends on the extent to which you are able to apply the evaluation findings to your daily work, strategic plans, and communication with stakeholders. It also depends on your policy-makers and how open and attentive they are.

For all the aspects and levels in your frameworks you need measurable indicators, or a clear vision of your goals, in order to detect and evaluate any change.

Setting measurable indicators

Indicators are 'a specific, observable, and measurable characteristic or change that will represent achievement of the outcome'[1].

Measure refers to quantitative or qualitative information relating to the object of assessment.

There is plenty of theoretical literature on indicators. Unfortunately, concerning art and culture, there is hardly any accord. Mostly, research is dedicated to identifying the indicators of the social impact of culture and the arts. This is probably a result of the fact that research in this field is commissioned mainly by arts councils, culture agencies or any culture funding bodies that compete for funds with other public sectors. In addition, there is a tendency to emphasise performance indicators (which are associated with formative evaluations - see Chapter 2.2 - Paradigms, approaches...). In the Resources at the end of this chapter you will find some relevant documents.

Strategically, it is wiser to stay closer to the currently established indicators in your region. Being brave and creative and reaching for new levels in understanding in terms of indicators is more than welcome, but if your proposal differs substantially from current practices you will not be able to use your data for anything else besides your evaluation. If the arts sector in your region works with a consistent set of indicators of effect, change, impact, you can join forces for a common cause. You can back up your funding bodies with stronger evidence of impact and together make the case for better conditions for the arts.

In the report 'Statistical Indicators for Arts Policy' by IFACCA (International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies - see Resources below) there is a list of national bodies which develop indicators for culture and presumably for the arts too. It is wise to contact your national body or a research centre for advice. In order to secure some comparability of data with other organisations from your sector you could make a joint effort to agree on certain indicators.

1 According to UWA, 'Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach'

At the next page is an example of outcome indicators developed by The Urban Institute, USA, as part of The Outcome Indicators Project, aimed at providing a framework for tracking non-profit activities. It suggests outcomes and outcome indicators, to assist non-profit organisations that seek to develop new outcomes to monitor processes or improve their existing systems. Performing arts organisations have also come into focus.

Framework for tracking non-profit performance - PERFORMING ARTS

Program Description: *To increase arts appreciation and social bonds in the community, these organizations provide either communal or specific performing arts programs in music, theatre, and dance. This program area includes both institutional value and social value. This program area does not include arts education or visual arts.*

	Common Outcomes	Program Specific Outcome	Indicator	Data Collection Strategy	Outcome Stage
1	Increased Awareness	Increased awareness of arts programs and activities	Number and percent of community aware of the particular performing arts opportunities	Citizen survey	Intermediate
2	Increased Access to Services	Increased access to diverse audience	Number and percent of community reporting that performances are too costly.	Audience survey after performance	Intermediate
3	Increased Access to Services	Increased access to diverse audience	Number and percent of community reporting that performances are too hard to reach	Citizen survey	Intermediate
4	Increased Access to Services	Increased access to diverse audience	Number and percent of community reporting that performances are inaccessible for disabled people.	Citizen survey	Intermediate
5	Increased Access to Services	Increased access to diverse audience	Number and percent of community (by population type) who report that they believe the particular performing art is sensitive to their culture	Citizen survey	Intermediate
6	Increased Access to Services	Increased access to diverse audience	Number of free tickets provided	Reviews or press and other media/venue records	Intermediate
7	Positive Benefit as a Result of Program	Achieve external recognition	Number and percent of favourable critic reviews/awards given by the media (or peers)	Reviews or press and other media/venue records	Intermediate
8	Increased Participation/ Attendance	Increased attendance	Number and percent of individuals (population type X) attending arts performances at least once per month; and/or average attendance at events (by type of event)	Survey of citizens/audience/ ticket stub count	Intermediate
9	Increased Participation/ Attendance	Increased attendance	Percent of facility capacity filled per performance	Ticket stub count	Intermediate
10	Increased Participation/ Attendance	Increased attendance	Number of subscriptions (seasonal, series, or annual)	Survey of clients/audience	Intermediate

	Common Outcomes	Program Specific Outcome	Indicator	Data Collection Strategy	Outcome Stage
11	Increased Participation/ Attendance	Increased attendance	Number and percent of renewed subscriptions as a percent of total sales	Survey of clients/audience	Intermediate
12	Increased Participation/ Attendance	Increased attendance	Percent of subscribers who are donors	Organizational records	Intermediate
13	Build Skills/ Knowledge	Increased knowledge	Number and percent of audience (by population type) who report gaining increased knowledge as a result of attendance/ program	Audience survey after performance	Intermediate
14	Develop Understanding about an Issue/ Topic	Increased appreciation for arts	Number and percent of audience/community residents (by population type) reporting increased appreciation of arts from the programs/ performances	Audience survey after performance /citizen survey	Intermediate
15	Develop Understanding about an Issue/ Topic	Increased appreciation for arts	Number and percent of audience (population type X) deciding to pursue additional arts programs after performance	Audience survey after performance	Intermediate/ End
16	Positive Benefit as a Result of Program	Enriched life experience	Number and percent of audience reporting enhanced/ enriched attitude, feeling, after arts performance	Audience survey after performance	Intermediate/ End
17	Positive Benefit as a Result of Program	Increased social bonds in community	Number of external programs/ services offered by arts group	Survey of community residents	End
18	Develop Understanding about an Issue/ Topic	Increased community meaning/ understanding	Number of community organisation partnerships; number of free performances	Organisational records	End
19	Client Satisfaction	Audience satisfaction	Percent of audience (by population type) reporting being very satisfied with their performing arts experience	Audience survey after performance	Intermediate/ End

This is just an indicative list of indicators. You are not expected to apply all these indicators or to follow the agenda implied by the commissioner of the indicator set. For instance, the last element in the table, which concerns 'client satisfaction', is so superficial and counterproductive that it probably didn't make it into the final version. There is also some confusion between outputs and outcomes. At any rate, this is a concise yet exhaustive example of what could be measured by your evaluation endeavours. The indicators you define will later underlie the questions you ask in your quantitative survey (see Chapter 3.3 - How to ask Questions and Chapters A2 and A3).

For the construction of your qualitative research tools you can have more freedom, but these decisions will also be guided by the indicators and the frameworks you have devised.

Once you have finalised the design of the evaluation in a way that meets your needs and intentions, it is a good idea to devise a document which summarises your decisions so far. Describe the project/organisation that will undergo evaluation. Give background information. State your evaluation purpose and hypothesis. Define the appropriate evaluation methods and include the plan for execution. Indicate deliverables and timeline. Assign a team, allocate resources and set the evaluation budget.

In conclusion of this chapter, the key point to consider is the importance of a well-designed framework and indicator set for stability and consistency in your evaluation endeavour. These are points to think about at the beginning of the development of your application or project. When you define your project's outcomes and indicators, consider what is measurable and what is required to maintain monitoring and conduct evaluation under the guidance of your project framework.

You can find a blank project framework and evaluation workflow templates in the Annex.

3.2. PLAN YOUR EVALUATION

If you are nearing the end of your project and only starting to plan your evaluation now, you have to be quite brave, optimistic and rich! But even so, you are running a bit late...

The optimal moment to include an evaluation in your plans is when you start designing the project you wish to assess. Firstly, in order to design a feasible evaluation framework (see Chapter 3.1 - Design) that can provide meaningful evidence, both quantitative and qualitative. Secondly, because you have to allocate money, time and human resources (whether external or internal) for assessment in your budget. And finally, because it will save time and money if you have collected baseline data and if your project outcomes are already defined in measurable indicators.

There is not much difference if you work with an external evaluator or in-house. In both cases you should adhere to best practices in evaluation in order to secure robust data, strong evidence and credible conclusions in your report. If you work in-house and/or with a restricted budget it is better to skip the components that shortage in resources and lack of expertise might compromise.

Final preparation

- **Prepare your organisation for the evaluation.**

If you have hired an external evaluation agency, appoint one or more contact persons within your team. Make sure they have an appropriate workload because evaluation is quite demanding. Be sure they are keen to learn and work on these tasks. This is even more vital if you develop the evaluation **in-house**.

Ensure that everyone in your team is aware of the evaluation that is going to take place and that they are motivated to assist and open to the evaluation's findings and recommendations.

Get the relevant stakeholders (board members, advisors, etc.) acquainted with your evaluation goals and involve them from the very beginning.

- **Debrief**

Debrief the evaluation team (be it external or **in-house**) about all your developments, ideas, goals, hopes and doubts.

Remember the document which summarises your evaluation design from Chapter 3.1? From now on it will become the roadmap of your evaluation workflow. Amend it with all the planning and budget arrangements in time. A blank template is available in Annex 1.

- **Work together**

If you have hired external evaluators do not leave them alone to decide all evaluation matters. While they have the responsibility for the expert decisions, and for the consistent and timely workflow and the quality of the achieved results, your part of the work is no less important. You provide valuable context details, clarifications on topics concerning your organisation and field, and contribute with comments and recommendations. You have the final word to approve or disapprove decisions.

If you carry out the evaluation **in-house**, your evaluation team will need support from everyone in the organisation. Make sure they get timely guidance from funding bodies, academic institutions or independent consultants wherever needed. Make sure they receive support for recruiting respondents, securing equipment and premises, post-processing of data and so on.

Work together on the framework, approaches and methods. Agree on goals and scope. Identify data sources together. Elaborate and approve questionnaires and guides for observations, discussions, focus groups, interviews, etc. (see Chapter 3.1 and corresponding chapters A and B for details).

Set the final combination of research methods, i.e. the evaluation tools you will apply in order to collect and retrieve data.

Planning and budgeting before starting

- **Schedule**

Make a schedule for all evaluation components. Evaluations can take about two months if conducted by an external evaluator applying both quantitative and qualitative tools. It might take a bit longer if you do it **in-house** depending on the staff you can allocate and the tools you decide to apply. Take care to plan the processes according to your particular case. Once again, plan well in advance. If you work **in-house** you can benefit from expert advice to set the milestones and define the processes in time. If you use external evaluators they will include a PERT chart or a Gantt chart to illustrate their timeframe plans. Ask them to explain in detail each process, its potential bottlenecks and delays; but also, at which points some time could be saved.

- **Respondents**

Secure the respondents. Make use of your audience database. If you work with an external agency assist them by suggesting peer participants in interviews and group discussions, and help with identifying interesting subjects for case studies; as you would have done if you worked in-house too.

Qualitative tools are what you will most probably apply if you have decided to develop the evaluation **in-house**.

Bear in mind that it takes longer to recruit respondents for qualitative methods even though fewer are required in numbers than for quantitative surveys. For instance, focus groups are sometimes harder to organise because you will require around 10 people of a certain profile to participate in each group, and you may need to organise several focus groups to collect your data. In addition, all qualitative methods – focus groups, observations, interviews, discussions – take longer, because you have to transcribe and analyse the narratives and responses (for further details see Chapter 3.5 - Sampling and Chapters B…).

Schedule pilot tests for questionnaires and guides and plan time for amendments.

Focus groups and interviews may be planned for the beginning, the middle and the end of the assessment depending on your design. In some situations you can carry out some of the focus groups in the beginning and others at the end of the evaluation.

If you work with external evaluators on this task, you have to advise them on the type of focus group participants and interviewees that would be interesting – either because they reflect the profile of your audience, community, and peers, or because they do not (e.g. your audience includes mostly middle-class middle-aged people, and you want to find out from younger and older people, from lower and higher income classes, why they don't attend your venue).

- **Venues**

Secure the venues. Focus groups, interviews and discussions are usually conducted on 'neutral ground' to counter bias (the assumption is that respondents might be less sincere in negative feedback while at your premises). You can use the venues of your evaluator or secure a place at a community hall or at the library. You need a quiet and calm space. Consider drinks and snacks for the focus groups, as well as group discussions and incentives like free tickets or free drinks to thank the participants for their time.

As for quantitative surveys, the development of questionnaires is the most time-consuming part. Bear in mind that this task requires a high level of expertise, and is challenging even for seasoned evaluators. If you work **in-house**, make sure an expert is contributing to ensure that the questions reflect your indicators and will collect the data you need in a valid, ethical, and not misleading manner (see Chapter 3.3 - How to ask questions).

Do conduct pilot tests of your questionnaires before you start the field work.

Even if you have decided to skip the face-to-face quantitative survey and opt for an online survey only, it is advisable to elaborate your questionnaires with help from an expert.

If you are working full-scale with an external evaluation agency which will conduct a quantitative survey for you, they will propose the right schedule for this task. Usually such surveys are done in bulk, with a team of several interviewers who administer the questionnaire to the respondents. An exception is when you assess an experiment/intervention and want to test the before-and-after with a baseline and a posterior study. If your evaluation design includes a survey among the general population alongside the one among your 'target users', these could be conducted in parallel. It is always a good idea, whenever you have the resources, to consider surveying control groups from the general population (further details on quantitative surveys in Chapters A).

- **Equipment**

Secure all necessary equipment for the fieldwork (photo, video, audio recorders, etc.). Data processing software is the responsibility of the external evaluation agency; if you have to carry out the data processing **in-house**, bear in mind that software licences are rather expensive, so try searching for an open source alternative.

On the field

- Your evaluators are likely to be seasoned enough to take care of the fieldwork without any effort from your side. If you conduct this fieldwork **in-house**, make sure you have enough people with appropriate training to recruit respondents in a consistent manner, carry out quantitative surveys and face-to-face interviews (if you have decided to apply the quantitative survey tool), administer online surveys, and moderate focus groups and group discussions.

- Comply with the Code of ethics for conducting surveys which is applicable in your region. You can search for it on the websites of locally operating marketing and sociological organisations' professional communities. Collect written consent from respondents to use their data.

- Implement pilot tests for each module.

- Strictly follow your approved working schedules to avoid delays.

- Organise raw data as soon as possible after you finish data collection. This is vital for producing accurate narratives from the qualitative assessment modules.

Postproduction

The typical case for evaluation agencies is to have quantitative and qualitative research teams working in parallel. This really speeds up postproduction times. If you conduct the evaluation **in-house** you might consider strengthening the team with more people to work on data processing tasks.

Raw data from quantitative surveys has to be processed. Interviews and focus groups need to be transcribed. Observations narratives have to be structured. All your data needs to undergo verification procedures (for details see corresponding chapters in Quantitative and Qualitative evaluation).

Report elaboration

- Revisit the design document of your evaluation which contains your outcomes, expected impacts, evaluation hypotheses, and main topics defined and sorted. This will provide a general structure for the evaluation report.

- The evaluation team responsible for the report, be it external or in-house, will offer you drafts. It is crucial that everyone in your team provides feedback and comments. Once your report is ready, it will be the main source of evidence for all your activities: management, planning, programming, public relations, project development (for details see Chapter 3.6 - The evaluation report).

- While you still have the evaluation agency working with you, ensure that besides the standard report and the executive summary, they will provide you with a visual representation of the findings which you can use in presentations, infographics or other promotional materials.

- Obtain your assessment data in various data formats. Prepare an archive of all the evaluation materials and keep a back-up too.

Acknowledgment and sustainability

Believe it or not this actually is the most important phase of your evaluation. Achieving acknowledgement will secure the positive outcome for the evaluation impact as defined in Chapter 3.1.

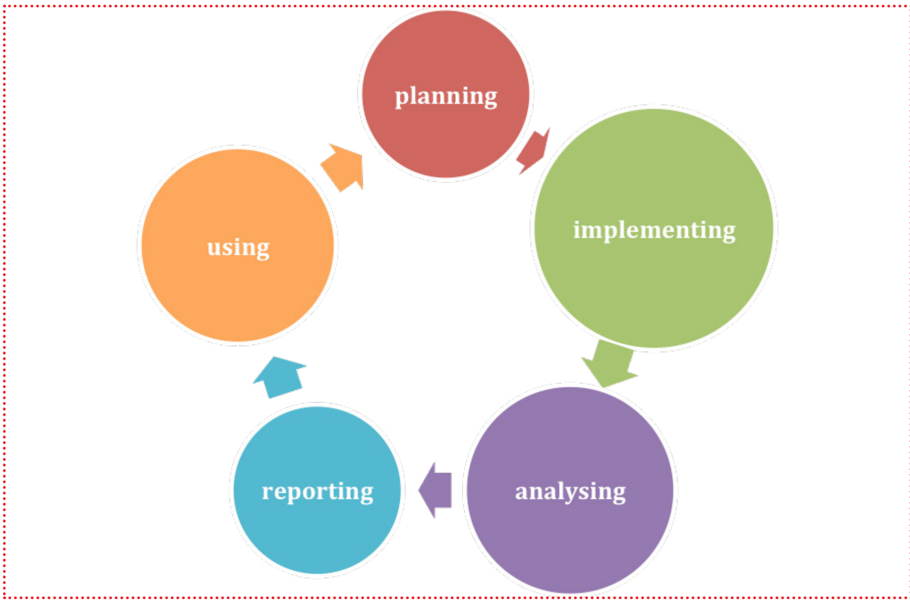
Do not rush this stage. Do not underestimate it. It is a common mistake to assume that the evaluation is concluded with the report approval. Especially if the evaluation has experienced some delays, everyone will be exhausted and ready to close this project and move on to the next one. More often than not the managers and members of the advisory board or other relevant stakeholders have a sweeping glimpse at the executive summary while the rest of the team only know about the findings from the Monday morning brief. The report is only consulted when funding applications are prepared, and for the annual report to the board. What a waste of time and money.

The findings and recommendations from evaluations are a useful tool for self-awareness and building knowledge towards positive changes. Therefore it is important to make everyone in the team aware of the results of the assessment.

Whenever possible, avoid scheduling the evaluation to finish just before another major event or activity such as a festival, project application, conference, tour, premiere etc. Leave some time for your organisation to focus on the evaluation results.

- Organise a group discussion or a team retreat centred on the evaluation findings. Specify the most important findings in the report. Determine the strongest evidence and proofs. Don't shy away from uncomfortable findings. Explain how factual statements are derived and validated. If you have commissioned training for data gathering and usage, just after the evaluation is a good time to conduct it.
- Analyse positives and negatives, potential for development and problems. Pay attention to the direct feedback (you can ask the evaluators to list all the feedback about your organisation in a separate document). Analyse the recommendations and gather your team comments in order to shape your change strategy together. Take pride and acknowledge your achievements.

A good evaluation is not only contained in the insightful report, or strong evidence to convince others of your causes. It is also in self-understanding, in building knowledge and in taking braver decisions with confidence.



The evaluation cycle

3.3. HOW TO ASK QUESTIONS

Can you remember the last time you spoke to a random person about your productions? Did you receive any critical feedback, or was everything positive? Was the person a frequent performing arts attender or was it a first time experience? Have they seen other productions of yours? In general, did they enjoy their time at the premises? What is their background, income, ethnicity? Were they sincere in their replies? Can you possibly compare these answers to other people's? Have you ever asked the same set of questions in the same sequence to dozens of people in a row?

If you have conducted an evaluation you will have gathered definite answers to some or all of the questions above. If you have never conducted a survey but you still have all those answers, you are probably not great at small talk.

Being consistent, asking well-formulated questions, asking follow up questions to clarify the subject, scaling the answers, double-checking with more questions, asking the same questions in the same sequence to numbers of people: this is what differentiates having a conversation from conducting a research.

In addition, questionnaires should be kept as short as possible, and all the questions should provide useful and necessary information to meet the goals of your evaluation.

The way you ask questions depends on whether you apply quantitative or qualitative tools; and ideally, you should combine the two. This chapter will guide you to build your set of questions in a meaningful way.

Developing a quantitative questionnaire

Devising a well-formulated questionnaire is one of the challenging tasks of a quantitative survey. Questionnaires are given out with the same set of questions that are asked in the same order and under the same circumstances, so that the same information can be gathered from different individuals, and the results analysed.

When you work with an external evaluation agency it is their responsibility to elaborate a balanced questionnaire, but you will have to confirm that it fits your agenda adequately.

It is rare for an organisation to opt for an **in-house** full-scale quantitative survey without being provided with appropriate questionnaires by an agency or an institution (if not repeating a previous survey). It is more advisable to devise a questionnaire in consultation with an expert when you do a baseline study, and later on, after the project has commenced, you can make the follow-up evaluation on your own.

Questionnaires have to be specific to the particular evaluation and have to cover its specific framework. For this reason this toolkit cannot provide you with a ready-to-use questionnaire.

Instead, in the hope that it will prove helpful, the following chapter will provide general guidelines for your method of work and what the challenges might be, and will offer as food for thought some examples of questionnaires which are designed for assessing performing arts audiences. The following guidelines are viable whether you outsource the evaluation to an external agency, or work **in-house** using expert advice.

Before starting to write the specific questions, identify with the evaluation team which evaluation outcomes from your evaluation framework (see Chapter 3.1) are suitable for assessment in a quantitative survey.

Address each outcome with a cluster of questions.

The purpose of quantitative surveys is to achieve generalisation, hence the questions should be closed and offer a balanced set of options for answers. Closed questions might be dichotomous (yes/no, agree/disagree), multiple choice questions, questions based on a level of measurement. In the latter case, ensure you provide balanced response codes (you can see some examples at page 34).

Avoid professional terms to ensure respondents can understand the questions. In general, write simple and clear questions. Rely on several questions to assess a complex issue rather than on a single question that is too intricate. Ensure the respondents will be able to give answers based on their experience, not on assumptions. Leave expectations, guesses and beliefs for qualitative methods to assess.

Ask neutral questions that are not suggestive of the answers you would prefer.

Test the questionnaire on a few test users before starting the actual evaluation, in order to clear up any issues of this kind.

If you have previously conducted a survey about your activity or the same project, include in the new questionnaire those questions that are relevant for your current evaluation. This way you can trace changes in patterns, behaviour, experience, expertise, etc. Do not forget to collect demographic information too. The typical questionnaire is limited to 20-25 questions maximum. Prepare to administer a shorter version of the questionnaire if you envisage surveying a general population sample.

Besides these types of questions the questionnaire might suggest a mood scale and a 'rate your overall experience' one.

There is the obligatory demographical block too.

In case you want to assess patterns of attendance, there should be a least three questions about this; if, in addition, you want to gather data on a specific project of yours, the questionnaire could become uncomfortably long. Therefore choose wisely when deciding what topics to cover with the questionnaire method, and what can be assessed using other tools of evaluation.

The length of a questionnaire is an especially sensitive matter when it comes to online surveys.

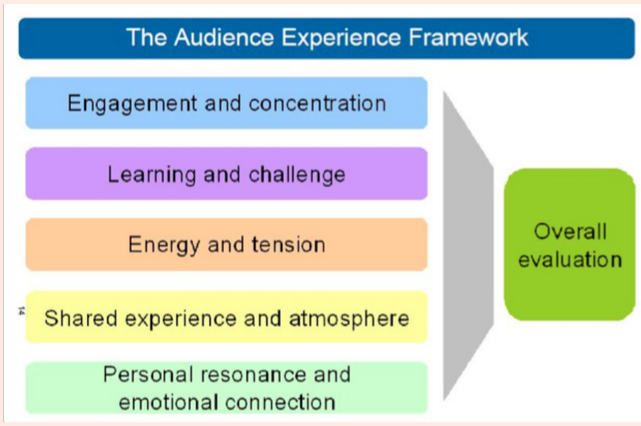
Example: 'Capturing the audience experience: A handbook for the theatre'

Let us take as an example a handbook on how to conduct a quantitative survey that assesses audience experience. 'Capturing the audience experience: A handbook for the theatre' was developed by nef (the new economics foundation) and commissioned by the Independent Theatre Council (ITC), The Society of London Theatre (SOLT), and the Theatrical Management Association (TMA, now UK Theatre) in 2005. The idea was to devise a tool to measure the impact of performing arts on people's well-being. In a several-step consultation process that included an online survey of 2,500 theatregoers and a series of interviews with theatre professionals, the handbook captured the main elements of a theatre audience's experience and transformed this into a conceptual framework which, while dating from 2005, still deserves attention for its comprehensiveness.

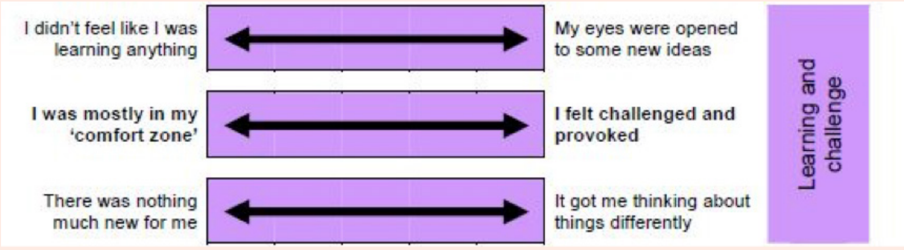
The questionnaire was then developed based on this framework (see picture on the right).

Each outcome was divided into scalable statements that would describe and exhaust it.

Then four questionnaires were devised: 2 longer (15 questions) and 2 shorter (5 questions). The questionnaires differ in the way the questions are formulated: either a five-point agree/disagree scale or a five-point differential scale.



The Audience Experience Framework (source: nef, 'Capturing the audience experience: A handbook for the theatre')



Core audience experience questions (3 of 15) (source: nef, 'Capturing the audience experience: A handbook for the theatre')

Here and at the next page are excerpt examples of the different formulations for one and the same question. The whole handbook is accessible for the members of Independent Theatre Council (ITC) and at SCRIBD after registration.

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Here are some phrases that people might use to describe the experience of watching a piece of theatre.

For each one, please rate how well it describes **your experience of watching the performance today**.

	Disagree strongly	Disagree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree somewhat	Agree strongly
I was completely absorbed by what was happening	O	O	O	O	O
My eyes were opened to some new ideas	O	O	O	O	O
I was gripped by the sights and sounds of the performance	O	O	O	O	O
I noticed a real buzz in the audience	O	O	O	O	O

Closed question in a 5-steps level of measurement (source: nef, '<u>Capturing the audience experience: A handbook for the theatre</u>')

Here are some phrases that people might use to describe the experience of watching a piece of theatre.

For each pair, please mark a point on the scale towards whichever is closest to **your experience of watching the performance today**.

My concentration was wandering	O	O	O	O	O	I was completely absorbed by what was happening
I didn't feel like I was learning anything	O	O	O	O	O	My eyes were opened to some new ideas
It didn't really get me going	O	O	O	O	O	I was gripped by the sights and sounds of the performance

Closed question in a flow level of measurement (source: nef, '<u>Capturing the audience experience: A handbook for the theatre</u>')

1. **In a typical year, approximately how many times do you attend [Name of Theatre] productions?** *(tick one)*
   - ❑ None - this was my first time at a [Name of Theatre] performance
   - ❑ Less than once a year
   - ❑ 1 or 2 times a year
   - ❑ 3 to 5 times a year
   - ❑ 6 or more times a year

2. **Whose decision was it to attend this performance?** *(tick one)*

   ❑ Mine ❑ My spouse or partner's decision ❑ A joint decision ❑ Someone else's decision

Multiple choice question (source: nef, '<u>Capturing the audience experience: A handbook for the theatre</u>')

Online survey questions

Online and face-to-face surveys share a similar logic in questionnaire development, so the general rules above are valid too. Bear in mind that online surveys are usually shorter than the face-to-face surveys. Therefore you have to select your questions wisely (see Chapter A.2 - Online survey).

- **Questions for qualitative evaluation tools**

Qualitative tools like interviews and focus groups (see Chapters B.3 - Interviews and B.4 - Focus groups) serve best when you wish to assess in-depth the reasons behind behavioural patterns, practices and attitudes demonstrated in the (online or off-line) quantitative survey.

Compared to quantitative research questions, qualitative research questions are open-ended in order to predispose the respondent to give more detailed replies and to share opinions. It is important the questions are not biased, suggesting directions and attitudes for the answers. Make sure you ask neutral questions. If you want to assess an event or experience, ask factual questions before opinion questions. Use probes as needed. Do not let anything to be assumed, all statements should be made explicit.

Interviews and focus groups are conducted with substantially smaller sample of respondents (see Chapter 3.4 - What is sampling, below and Chapters B.3 and B.4). The interviewer and the moderator have freedom to construct the conversation, but they have to follow consistent guidelines in order to cover all the themes the evaluation design has envisaged. Once again, refer to your project and evaluation framework in order to make sure you have included the suitable topics for interviews, for focus groups, and for group discussions (round tables).

Developing the guidelines is also part of the evaluator's or consultant's work, but being less rigid in execution and data processing, organisations tend to prefer qualitative methods to be implemented independently, as a stand-alone method, if you have taken the path of the **in-house** evaluation.

For qualitative methods as well as quantitative questionnaires, make sure the interviewer has rehearsed (tested) the guides/guidelines before the actual interview begins.

3.4. WHAT IS SAMPLING?

Clearly you cannot just hand out questionnaires to everybody. What you have to figure out is what number of answered questionnaires would suffice for a valid generalisation on the topics assessed. This is a central research question when it comes to applying quantitative tools of evaluation. In addition, it is important to draw the sample in such a way that other researchers can repeat the findings if they follow the survey's steps.

Sampling for quantitative tools

Sampling is a complex yet logical task that obeys the strict rules of statistics. Sampling is the means to optimising the evaluation expenses while securing the validity of generalisations based on the data obtained.

'Sampling is the process of selecting units (e.g., people, organisations) from a population of interest so that by studying the sample we may fairly generalise our results back to the population from which they were chosen.'[1]

Probability sampling methods (which means sampling that employs some form of random selection) are applied for the purposes of quantitative surveys. Random selection grants all individuals in a population an equal chance to be included in the survey.

The table at the next page reviews the main sampling methods, their advantages and disadvantages.

Although there are numerous online sample calculators to assist you in sampling, it is highly recommended to ask advice from a quantitative research specialist to determine the type of sampling that would be suitable for your particular case of assessment.

The biggest concern when defining samples for the needs of art and culture evaluation is that art and culture don't suit the notion of a 'standardised service' and their 'customers' hugely vary. Hence, when your consultants draw out a sample from the typical audience of arts organisations of your scale and repertoire, this sample may not accurately reflect your own, actual audience.

A possible solution is to draw a sample from your real audience members. In order to fulfil this purpose you would already have your audience database gathered together with explicit permission to be enrolled in your surveys (see ChapterA.3 - Audience database). Another option is to benefit from online ticketing information that stores demographic information for its customers. Thus you could at least get the stratification model of your audience.

1 W. Trochim, 'Sampling Terminology'

If you want to introduce a control group sample, you might either choose a general population sample, or draw a sample from the segment of arts and culture attendants – depending on the purposes of your assessment.

Online surveys, which you might conduct **in-house**, seem to be inherently ill-adapted to random sampling. Not everyone has access to the internet, not everyone's email account can be mailed with a participation request, and not everyone will respond. There is also the risk of bias due to respondents' inclination to engage with topics they like or have interest in.

You should have this in mind when you design your online survey and disseminate it through channels like your mailing list, social media profiles, and website. It is likely that you will get responses from those already particularly interested in you.

Type of Sampling	When to use it	Advantages	Disadvantages
Probability Strategies			
Simple Random Sampling	When the population members are similar to one another on important variables	Ensures a high degree of representativeness	Time consuming and tedious
Systematic Sampling	When the population members are similar to one another on important variables	Ensures a high degree of representativeness, and no need to use a table of random numbers	Less random than simple random sampling
Stratified Random Sampling	When the population is heterogeneous and contains several different groups, some of which are related to the topic of the study	Ensures a high degree of representativeness of all the strata or layers in the population	Time consuming and tedious
Cluster Sampling	When the population consists of units rather than individuals	Easy and convenient	Members of units may differ from one another, decreasing the techniques effectiveness
Non-Probability Sampling			
Convenience Sampling	When the members of the population are convenient to sample	Convenient and inexpensive	Degree of generalizability is questionable
Quota Sampling	When strata are present and stratified sampling is not possible	Ensures some degree of representativeness of all the strata in the population	Degree of generalizability is questionable

Sampling for qualitative tools

Being able to make valid generalisations is crucial for quantitative research, so getting the right sample is very important. Conversely, qualitative research does not give such importance to the number of respondents or the method of recruitment. What is important, is understanding the phenomenon in-depth and exhaustively. This contributes to considerably lower costs of qualitative tools and makes them recommendable for a low-budget **in-house** evaluation.

Sampling in qualitative research is of the non-probability type, which means it does not involve random selection. You have several options for recruiting participants in focus groups or interviews.

You can recruit people who are easy to find. This is a convenience sample. For instance, if you want a focus group of mothers with small children, you go to the playground; if you want to hold interviews with members of your audience, you look for them at the ticket booth.

You can find certain people who are willing to take part in your research and then ask them to propose other potential participants. This is called a snowball sample. If you want to make interviews, or a focus group, with a specific group of people (e.g. tattooed, middle-aged, low-income theatre goers), it would be easiest to first identify one representative of this group, who may then be willing to help you find more.

The quota sample is when you determine what the population looks like in terms of specific qualities (e.g. age, social status, income, etc.), then arrange quotas and select people from each quota so your sample mirrors the composition of the general population in a specific area. This method could be applied if your audience and/or the community you would like to assess are quite diverse.

Another option is to announce a call for participants and ask for volunteers to take part in your research. You can utilise your social media presence to summon participants for your qualitative research.

For a single focus group you would need up to ten participants, and you may have to arrange a substitute participant if someone does not turn up. For group discussions or round tables you would accommodate a maximum of fifteen participants.

As for the number of focus groups, interviews, round table discussions, there is no general rule. Some say that you have to conduct at least five interviews and hold at least three focus groups but it depends on the evaluation objectives you want to asses through a certain method. What matters is to get a deep understanding of the phenomenon you study.

Further details on focus group composition, round table invitations, and selection of participants for in-depth interviews or case studies are presented in the corresponding chapters (from B1 onwards).

3.5. WHAT IS VALIDITY?

In the previous chapter we examined various sampling methods; in this one we will look into the reasons why sampling is so important.

'Validity is concerned with the meaningfulness of research components. When researchers measure behaviours, they are concerned with whether they are measuring what they intended to measure.'[1]

Note that if you are working with external evaluators/consultants it is their core responsibility to secure research design and data reliability and validity. This may lead to frustration on your part, if some of your most exciting insights and generalisations are dismissed as being too bold.

What is it used for?

The design of your assessment, your choice of methods and, once the data is collected, the process of generalising and establishing causality, all happen according to the concept of validity.

There are four types of validity that researchers consider: conclusion validity, internal validity, construct validity, and external validity.

Conclusion validity is the degree to which conclusions about the relationship among variables in our data are reasonable. For example, is it reasonable to claim that there is a connection between social status and openness to experimental or innovative productions, or is this more closely related to another variable, like age for instance? 'Conclusion validity is the degree to which the conclusion we reach is credible or believable.'[2]

Internal validity is essential if you want to demonstrate evidence for the effectiveness of your activities. It seeks to validate the causality of the relationship, i.e. whether 'the observed changes can be attributed to your program or intervention (i.e., the cause) and not to other possible causes.'[3]

1 E. Dorst, 'Validity and Reliability in Social Science Research'
2 W. Trochim, 'Conclusion Validity'
3 W. Trochim, 'Internal Validity'

There are many threats to internal validity that stem from the design of the evaluation. For example, is it possible that your respondents gave positive feedback about your new production, because at the time you administered the survey there was a discount at the bar, or because it was Christmas and people's spirits were high?

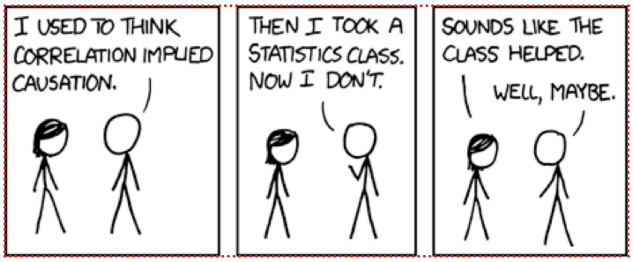
Construct validity is referred to as the 'the experimental demonstration that a test is measuring the construct it claims to be measuring'.[1] Constructs are those concepts you use to define the topics of your assessment, i.e. 'creativity', 'empowerment', inclusion', 'aesthetic contempt', 'artistic vibrancy' and so on. 'Construct validity is an assessment of how well you translated your ideas or theories into actual programs or measures.[2]

External validity implies generalisation of the valid relationships from the study to other people, settings and times. External validity should be a matter for larger scale studies. For example, election forecasts are considered more reliable if they can assure the external validity of their estimations.[3]

It would be rather bold to assume that findings from your assessment would be valid for other arts organisations, or for the sector as a whole.

How to improve validity?

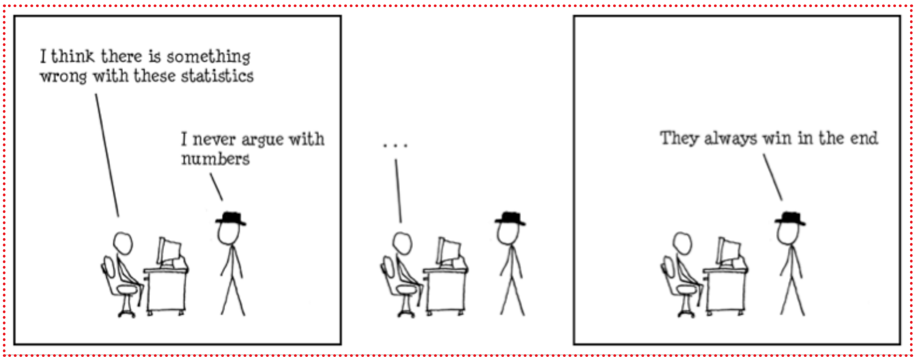
The pragmatic approach towards improving the validity of your data-based statements is to juxtapose the findings from the different research methods you have applied in your evaluation. The ground for this approach is that all research methods have strong and weak sides, and by comparing the findings of different methods, inconsistencies and biases can be ruled out.



Correlation: Everyone who goes to the theatre drinks water. Well, does drinking more water result in more visits to the theatre or rather, errr, elsewhere? (source: xkcd / CC 2.5)

Triangulation is the process of validation of data through cross verification from more than two sources. It is important to apply methods that equipoise each other, like quantitative and qualitative methods. For instance, you can triangulate respondents' statements for 'reasons to return' with the information shared by interviewees and comments within a focus group. You can compare the observations of several respondents or interviews.

Triangulation is not just about the credibility of your data driven statements and causality. It also deepens insight and understanding of the subjects in study.



They always win - Actually, not always. Do not put all your trust solely into quantitative data (source: xkcd / CC 2.5)

1 J. D. Brown, 'What is construct validity?'
2 W. Trochim, 'Construct Validity', in Research Methods Knowledge Base, 2006
3 W. Trochim, 'External Validity'

3.6. THE EVALUATION REPORT

Once the data from the quantitative surveys have been processed and verified, the interviews and focus group transcriptions have been summarised and the observations have been structured, it is time for analysis. Since interpretation of findings is within the obligations of the evaluators, they are responsible for the report elaboration as well (both in external and in-house evaluations).

However, you, as the prime user of the evaluation findings, have certain commitments too.

You can provide the evaluators with valuable background information and help to recreate the broader context of your work. Sometimes bias comes from overrating or misreading facts and relations.

Your contribution to the report should include a thorough reading, comments and suggestions, and verifying reliability and credibility of findings and suppositions.

In addition, you will further the design of the document by defining the target audience, the purpose of the report and the channels of dissemination.

Content design

The main purpose of the evaluation report is to inform you, your team, stakeholders like peers and partners, funding body staff, students, communities, individuals, etc. about the impact of your work and the difference your organisation makes. The style and design of the report will of course be adapted to target an external reader (your audiences, funders etc.) or the team and governance of the organisation.

The results have to be presented in a clear, consistent and reliable manner in order to give readers the opportunity to get acquainted with the findings and logic that underlie the statements in the report.

Evaluation reports usually follow a common pattern and subsequently feature the following parts:

- executive summary (a brief with the most important findings);
- introduction (a presentation of your organisation's goals, objectives, projects and any relevant context; also a presentation of the evaluation objectives);
- methodology (a justification of the logical framework of the assessments; the choice of methods, sources of information, methods of collection, sample sizes, any issues concerning reliability and validity);
- results (a comprehensive analysis of the findings of the assessment in relation to, and organised around, the core topics as defined in your assessment framework - see Chapter 3.1);
- conclusions and recommendations (an outline of the key statements of the assessments, i.e. the evidence of impact, lessons learnt and recommendations for future changes and development);
- annexes with statistical data, questionnaires, focus group composition and other relevant details.

Communication design

The greatest misery of an evaluation report writer is that it is rare for anyone to read more than the executive summary and, on a good day, the conclusions section.

It would be better, not just for the writer's ego, but for everyone's sake, if your report avoided this sad fate. Here's how to do it.

- Find the right channels of communication for the various target groups of your evaluation and design the message in an attractive and convincing way. Telling a compelling story through your case studies, interviews, and observations is sometimes just as convincing as showing robust numerical data proving impact.
- Besides the original, yet clear and contained, graphic design and layout of the document itself, it is feasible to devise visual representations of your data and findings. Infographics have proven to be attractive for general audiences and make a strong point in social media. Storytelling is also an option (see Chapter B.6).

But why stop here?

You could organise a conference, an exhibition, a workshop, a production, a parade, a flash mob. You could make it into art.

RESOURCES

- ***Survey design***

On frameworks

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F. O. Odhiambo, 'Difference between Inputs, Activities, Outputs, Outcomes and Impact', in Monitoring and Evaluation Blog, June 2013

H. Clark, D. Taplin, 'Theory of Change Basics', in ActKnowledge, March 2012

Indicators for Evaluation, in My-peer Toolkit

R. Hartsough, 'An Evaluation Resource Guide for Arts Programming', in Nevada Arts Council

On artistic outcomes

P. Thompson, 'Evaluating Artistic and Social Outcomes', in performing impact, October 2012

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International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA), 'D'Art report 18: Statistical Indicators for Arts Policy', May 2005 (features a list of national agencies which develop indicators)

'Candidate Outcome Indicators: Performing Arts Program', in The Urban Institute, Washington D.C.

Numbers, pictures, words, graphs: all of them make your story matter.(source: xkcd / CC 2.5)

- ***Planning the evaluation***

Charities Evaluation Services, 'Quality and Evaluation in Voluntary and Community Organisations', in Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Wirral

Evaluation plan template, in Arts Queensland, 2015

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W. Trochim, 'Interviews', in Research Methods Knowledge Base, 2006

- ***Sampling***

Sample Size Calculator, in SurveyMonkey

W. Trochim, 'Sampling Terminology', in Research Methods Knowledge Base, 2006

'Sampling', in SociologyGuide

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- ***Validity***

C. Phelan, J. Wren, 'Exploring Reliability in Academic Assessment', CHFA SOA section of University of Northern Iowa, 2006

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W. Trochim, 'Conclusion Validity', in Research Methods Knowledge Base, 2006

W. Trochim, 'Construct Validity', in Research Methods Knowledge Base, 2006

W. Trochim, 'External Validity', in Research Methods Knowledge Base, 2006

W. Trochim, 'Qualitative Validity', in Research Methods Knowledge Base, 2006

E. Dorst, 'Validity and Reliability in Social Science Research', in Education Research and Perspectives, Vol.38, No.1, July, 2012

'Triangulation', in BetterEvaluation, January 2014

'Data Triangulation: How the Triangulation of Data Strengthens Your Research', in Write Content Solution

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- ***Design the evaluation report***

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F. Odhiambo, 'Final Report Format', in Monitoring and Evaluation Blog, June 2013

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SECTION 2

Tools

A. QUANTITATIVE METHODS

'Quantitative methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques. Quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon.'[1]

Indeed, it is all about revealing the numerical dimensions of the phenomenon in study: how many persons attend your productions; how many are newcomers; how did they get to know about you (which communication channel is the most effective); how many are returning; for what reasons (which aspect of your work attracts/retains the largest number of your audience members); how many of them are between 18 and 24 years old and so on. Based on all this numerical data one can derive reliable and valid generalisations about what your audiences are like, what their patterns of behaviour are, what makes them different from the rest, and hence, makes you different, too.

Quantitative research is conducted by completing a questionnaire with a randomised sample of respondents. There are several administration modes: by telephone, by mail, face-to-face, online, and mixed mode. Besides quantitative surveys, you have experiments, quasi-experiments, tests, economic studies, etc. Ticket counting, audience counting and event counting are also examples of quantitative research, aiming at numerical data gathering.

Quantitative methods are robust in design. They rely on statistically valid sampling, structured research instruments and elaborate procedures to ensure reliability and validity of the conclusions drawn from the quantitative data. Their main advantages are that they provide comprehensive, statistically valid data, that they 'provide the numbers'. In addition, if collected using the same methodology, quantitative data can be easily compared over time and can measure change and draw out trends with accuracy.

In terms of shortcomings, quantitative research consumes a lot of resources; requires expert skills to elaborate, conduct and handle; requires regular repetition; its generalised conclusions lack in-depth insight and it doesn't provide for in-depth and detailed understanding of the phenomena in study.

The chapters to follow will present the basic aspects of the quantitative methods and what you should consider when applying them in your evaluation.

1 E.R. Babbie, 'The Practice of Social Research'; D. Muijs, 'Doing Quantitative Research in Education with SPSS'

A.1. Quantitative survey

The quantitative survey that is conducted through a well-composed questionnaire administered in a face-to-face or telephone interview to a randomised sample of respondents is the power tool of evaluation. This is a highly specialised tool for data mining and when applied in compliance with the best research practices, its numerical findings are widely accepted as valid and accurate. Hence, conclusions, causations and generalisations based on quantitative survey data are deemed to be true.

If you need solid data and bullet-proof arguments, if you have to make valid generalised statements: quantitative survey is your tool.

The questionnaires for this type of survey require both experience and expertise for composing and administering to respondents. For the latter, experienced interviewers are needed in case the survey is done face-to-face or via telephone (see Chapter 3.3 - How to ask questions).

Samples for quantitative surveys vary depending on the scope of your target audience, but usually you would need to assess a general sample as well, in order to outline the differences that might be due to your intervention. Certainly, both samples have to be randomised (see Chapter 3.4 - What is sampling?).

All the data from the questionnaire's responses has to be coded. Usually specialised software like IBM SPSS or free software packages for statistical analysis like GNU PSPP is used for this purpose. Then multistage validity checks need to be executed (see Chapter 3.5 - What is validity?).

The conclusions drawn from the survey quantitative data have to be verifiably true; anyone who administers the same questionnaire to the same sample population has to achieve the same data and reach the same conclusions. Therefore the survey report has to state the methodology of the survey, the sample composition and the data validation procedures clearly (see Chapter 3.6 - The evaluation report).

For all these reasons it is advisable to outsource the quantitative survey to an external agency with proven experience in the job. As you can see from the example of the Eclipse Theatre Company (next page) it can be good value for your money.

Working with an external agency

Congratulations! If you are reading this section, it is likely that you have secured enough resources for your evaluation.

Most probably you are hiring a specialised agency (in marketing, social research, or even one specialised in the arts field) to conduct a survey for you. You have reached agreement within the team on the key concepts (see Chapter 2.2 - Paradigms, approaches...), you have decided on the goals of the evaluation in accordance with your framework (Chapter 3.1 - Design your assessment wisely), you have elaborated clever terms of reference (Chapter 2.1 - In-house vs external evaluation), you have selected the best offer that meets your needs and now the agency is taking charge. However, your work is by no means completed here. In order to succeed with its tasks the external agency needs your help.

They need to work closely with you - and you should already have appointed a key contact person in the team for them.

They will ask for any relevant documents from your organisation.

They will benefit from your audience database.

They will need to verify with you the sample size they are proposing, the method (by phone, by email, face-to-face), the places for conducting the survey, and other logistic details.

Everything will seem fairly straightforward until the agency's experts start to send the questionnaires for your approval. In general, the experts are skilful in formulating the right questions to generate unbiased replies, which translate into hard facts and statistics to feed into the final report. Still, your contribution on wording and specific terms will be beneficial. Also, make sure that everything from your framework that you have agreed to be assessed in the quantitative survey is reflected in the questionnaire (while reviewing questionnaires you can refer to Chapter 3.3 - How to ask questions for some insights).

Do not forget to also give feedback on the guidelines for the qualitative survey elements, like focus groups and in-depth interviews (see Chapter B - Qualitative evaluation), if you outsource them to the same agency (which is usually the case, but the case study of Walk the Plank proves different). Thus you will make sure the questions are relevant to you and your organisation, and that they correspond across the range of tools so that verification procedures and double checks prove feasible when the data is examined (see Chapter 3.5 - What is validity?).

Request a pilot (test) of the questionnaire, and continuing fieldwork and data quality control.

Eclipse Theatre Company (IETM member), UK

http://eclipsetheatre.org.uk/

Eclipse Theatre Company is a black-led national touring company focused on bringing diversity to British theatres, both onstage and in the audience. Their core project is Revolution Mix (2015 – 2018), a three-year equality initiative, 'spearheading the largest ever national delivery of Black British stories in regional theatres'.

The project envisages collaboration with 11 partner venues and 15 writers, and will result in new work to tour across the UK, as well as two films and short dramas for radio. A national year-long festival has been planned for 2018.

To track and evaluate what change their activities bring, Eclipse has commissioned an evaluation to an external agency.

It cost them around 1% of their turnover (the equivalent of five working hours). As a result of the external evaluation they now have the actual figures of what they had known only anecdotally before the survey.

The quantitative survey was administered in four partner venues and investigated Eclipse audiences in comparison with the regular audience of each venue. Indicators of change were new/repeat attendance, geographical reach and diversity in audience profiles.

Initially Eclipse wanted to get evidence of changes in the audiences and the answer to the question 'how does it work ?' Now, the findings inform and support all of the activities: from fundraising, advocacy, audience development and marketing, to a strong argument to support their tour booking.

Eclipse is working to secure a bigger evaluation of the Revolution mix initiative.

The next step requiring your active support will probably be the research report elaboration. It may be a blunt generalisation, but be aware that at this stage, the element that is the professional agencies' strength could turn into their weakness. The good thing with agencies is that they follow professional standards, and that is how they secure data consistency. But when it comes to preparing the report, they might be at risk of falling into routine and just delivering the typical format. The report certainly has to contain a description of the situation and the methodology of the survey, but it is really not a good idea to have the report arranged according to the survey types (Quantitative survey findings, Focus group findings and so on), instead of considering the main topics of interest. Therefore, make sure the report has the right focus, and that it covers the areas of interest for you (for more ideas on how to make the right statement in a report, consult Chapter 3.6 - The evaluation report).

At the end, you should have all the data collected with you. Usually it is in SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) format, which is obtained from the specialised software the agencies use. This format is widely accepted and suitable for conducting any subsequent surveys, comparisons and the like. If you do not work with the specialised software (and you have no particular reason to do so), it is important to organise the data in some kind of spreadsheet, to make it easier to use.

Working on your own

So you need robust quantitative data, but you do not have the budget to hire an experienced social research agency. It is a complicated situation but you have several options to deal with it.

First, you could postpone your evaluation until you secure the necessary resources. That is what Eclipse Theatre Company is doing now, because they envisage conducting a bigger survey of their evolving project.

Secondly, you could reconsider your evaluation design and try to reshape it in a way that it would suffice to conduct an in-house online survey (see Chapter A.2 - Online survey) and the qualitative research components (see Chapter B - Qualiative evaluation). Take a look at the Shared Vision case study to see how an online survey was combined with focus groups and group discussions to shape the strategy of the independent art scene in Sofia.

Then, you might be able to cleverly negotiate with your funders to conduct the survey in such a way that it will serve both their goals and yours; and let them take care of it. This is what Walk the Plank did (see box on the right); utilising their funders' quantitative survey findings and deploying their own resources for in-house qualitative evaluation activities like interviews, observations, documentation.

Walk the Plank (IETM member), UK

http://walktheplank.co.uk - http://manchesterday.co.uk/

For eight successive years WTP has been the artistic producer of Manchester Day parade: a massive event with 2,000 participants and over 60,000 spectators. The core objective of the event is bringing the city communities together 'to celebrate collective pride, promote new skills and develop creative confidence'.

Funded by Manchester City Council, along with a list of private sponsors, and with additional investment from Arts Council England, the Manchester Day parade has been a subject of comprehensive assessment procedures.

Manchester City Council administers a face to face survey among spectators of the event, aiming to assess the economic impact of the parade for the city. The questionnaire is a comprehensive one and the survey covers a sample of at least 1,000 respondents.

Arts Council England is supporting the Elevate programme which brings emerging and established artists to work together on the Manchester Day parade. An online survey is sent out to the participants in the artist development programme (est. 40 participants) in order to collect feedback, to report back to funders, and to feed into the development of future programmes. The focus of the online survey is the topic of professional progression and empowerment. Since Manchester Day parade has defined an aim to achieve environmental sustainability, both surveys also include questions in this domain.

Since they have cleverly transferred the resource-demanding quantitative surveys to the funders who are so interested in numbers, WTP have focused their efforts on asking their own questions and following their own agenda.

WTP do not administer an additional structured assessment. Photos and videos of the making of floats/mascots and costumes, from the choreography rehearsals, an abundance of photo and video records from the parade as well as short interviews with the Elevate programme artists comprise the vast archive of the event (the three-month preparation process and the day of the parade). These materials feed mostly the promotional materials of the event. Being on the spot as organisers facilitates the team to collect informal feedback which later on guides their future decisions for the next edition of the parade.

In addition, WTP store a collection of all sorts of reusable artefacts from the parades.

A clever move is to join a bigger research project; one that might be initiated by your country's funding bodies, a research institute or a university. Any sectorial quantitative survey might serve as an example[1].

Although you cannot simply extract your organisation's numbers from the overall data, you can quote the research findings as characteristic of the organisations in the domain, including yours. You can ask the researchers for an excerpt of the survey conducted among your audience and your staff, if the latter complies with the survey's ethical commitments, of course, and utilise it for your internal self-evaluation.

You can also offer your organisation as a research field to a research group, as NauCoclea (see box on the right) did by joining the RECcORD project led by the Aarhus University, Denmark.

It is actually a great opportunity for research teams to find an organisation which is willing to host and test their methodologies. If you are proactive from the beginning you can make sure the topics of interest for you are well represented in the survey. In the end you can benefit from a full body professional survey at no or limited financial cost to you. That sounds good, doesn't it?

In addition, you have the option to choose to conduct some simple but feasible quantitative survey tasks which can be implemented **in-house** with minimal resources.

If you have sufficient staff or volunteers you could carry out the relatively straightforward task of quantitative observation yourself. Some data you can easily collect include:

- number of people attending a production / performance / exhibition,
- number of daily / weekly / monthly visitors to your venue and its services,
- number of tickets sold for each performance / exhibition...,
- number of unique visitors to your website and other statistics easily provided by Google Analytics,
- social media followers, likes, post shares and so on.

All the above 'items' would most probably be the indicators you track when you monitor your outputs progress (Chapter 3.1 - Design your assessment wisely gives you a framework).

1 You can find many examples in IETM's 'Mapping of Types of Impact Research'

NauCoclea, Catalonia / Spain

http://naucoclea.net/ - http://www.elgrandtour.net/

NauCoclea is an independent contemporary art centre which, among other activities, organises Grand Tour – an almost month-long journey by foot across Catalonia that meets its participants with artists and art. The focus is on performance and often the pieces are shown in unusual places: in forests, country houses or on the road. It is an annual event that started three years ago.

The project receives some institutional funding; therefore an extensive project report disclosing mainly numerical data: number of participants, artists, performances, etc. is being elaborated. But this cannot express the spirit of the Grand Tour… To capture the intrinsic aspects of the event, Nau Coclea relies on artistic documentation.

Numerous photos of places and routes made by all the participants are collected on the social media pages of the Grand Tour. Daily progress is indicated through online logbooks that leave digital traces in time. The poetic travel diary of one of the participant writers has been published too. A feature film of Grand Tour 2015 was screened and received acclaim both for the quality of the film and for the innovation of the activity. Grand Tour 2016 was documented by the visual travel diary of an illustrator who made a drawing for each day of the tour.

Recently NauCoclea decided to join the RECcORD project as a hosting centre, and as a result, has hosted a recorder who conducted a qualitative method assessment in the RECcORD methodology. RECcORD is the result of the efforts of several institutions: European network of Cultural Centres (ENCC), Association of Cultural Centres in Denmark (Kulturhusene i Danmark – KHiD), Aarhus University (AU), Cultural Production Center Godsbanen (GB). It is a large scale scientific project researching participatory processes in European Cultural Centres, and it actually uses participation as methodology.

The research team has equipped 20 cultural recorders with a set of qualitative research tools (interview guides, guides for conducting observations, autoethnography, participatory mapping) and has sent them out on a ten-day mission to various cultural centres across Europe.

It features an experimental research approach towards participation, which is both the topic and the method of research. The methods applied are of qualitative type with anticipated high levels of subjectivity. Findings are being cross checked with desk research data and documentation from the cultural centres in the assessment. The report is expected by May 2017.

You can conduct the observation manually or aided by any of the numerous technology solutions, such as online ticketing systems, web counters, visitor statistics, beeping gates or any other people counting solution that works for you. Although you cannot rely on this data solely, you can use it for planning your seasonal staffing or to present visitor numbers to your funding bodies. You can also use this data as a basis for your other surveys. For example, if you have a web counter you can measure what percentage of online visitors responded to your survey.

Postproduction

Regardless of whether you have outsourced the quantitative survey to an external agency or you have opted for some of the mixed options above, always make sure that you have secured all the raw data with you, that you have it in several executable file formats (SPSS, any spreadsheet file format) and that you have back-ups of everything.

Raw data, sample composition, and methodology applied are the real treasure of your quantitative survey. Certainly, those obtained from qualitative tools are of great significance too; but in regards to quantitative methods, without raw data, sampling, and methodology applied, your report has no evidential value. The reason is that in terms of qualitative surveys, anyone should be able to reach your results and conclusions when following your research steps; this proves your conclusions are valid, or at least plausible. In addition, you would want to repeat the same survey design after a certain period of time in order to measure if any changes have occurred due to your intervention. So keep your treasure safe.

Acquiring validity of the assumptions you make based on the quantitative data is not an intuitive task. Chapter 3.5 - What is validity? outlines the topic of how to reach valid conclusions and avoid overgeneralisation or false causation. It might be worth consulting even if you expect the external experts to present you with a report of valid conclusions.

A convincing report with a clear focus and message will make the data 'speak'. In the social research field, and especially in the field of the arts, no report will be even remotely complete without giving a voice to the intrinsic, the untypical, the exceptional. Therefore, make sure that findings from qualitative tools have an equal share in the report composition. Include photographs and videos along with charts and graphs (For more recommendations on the elaboration of the report see Chapter 3.6 - The evaluation report).

How to use the findings

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, quantitative surveys are the power tool of evaluation. You might say that they produce the strongest arguments because they are backed up by systematic numerical data that forms valid generalisations and conclusions. So thus formulated, you can use these findings any time you need to. What quantitative tools miss can be found by applying the tools of qualitative research. Remember, it is your agenda, your evaluation, your data.

Make sure to use it correctly though. For example, always mention the reporting population (i.e. 70% - 70 out of 100 respondents or 700 out of 1000) for each question. Do this also when you summarize, for instance, a positive attitude. Using the same example, you could state that 70% or 70 out of 100 respondents strongly liked or disliked the last production they saw. In a chart it could look like the picture at page 48.

A.2. Online survey

The definition on Technopedia of online / Internet / web-based survey states that: 'an online survey is a questionnaire that the target audience can complete over the Internet. Online surveys are usually created as Web forms with a database to store the answers and statistical software to provide analytics. People are often encouraged to complete online surveys by an incentive such as being entered to win a prize.'

If you have decided to conduct an online survey and you are searching for the right tool, this is the description to look for. Once you have found one, you will see listed a number of advantages of online surveys: easy to use; cheaper than other survey methods; offers flexible design, simplicity and speed in gathering and analysing data. Most importantly, you can manage it by yourself, and if you opt for some of the numerous free online survey creators, it won't cost you anything.

You would be right to assume that an online survey is your tool for conducting an **in-house** quantitative survey. Certainly, you may decide to outsource it to an external agency and benefit from their professional online tools and much broader respondent base; but unlike other quantitative surveys, the online ones can be well conducted even without expert assistance: the online tools make up for it.

However, before you start jumping with joy you ought to take into account the limitations of this internet based method of administering a questionnaire.

You usually invite your respondents by sending a link for the online survey to email addresses in a database you have and/or by publishing the link on websites and in social media. Thus you reach potential respondents only amongst those who have access to the internet – and pay attention to your messages (particularly difficult on social media, unless you use paid advertising). This means that you miss out on significant parts of the general population.

Also, it is harder to apply probability sampling when you have the restrictions of an email database or visits web counter (see Chapter 3.4 - What is sampling on the importance of sample composition in quantitative surveys).

Then, there is the possibility of a low response rate to your online surveys. While the response rate to a face-to-face mode of survey is estimated to be 80-85%, the average response rate to online surveys is 30% or even lower. One of the reasons is the rapid increase of all sorts of online surveys people are being invited to take. The shortened attention span of people online is reflected in lower response rates, especially to longer questionnaires.

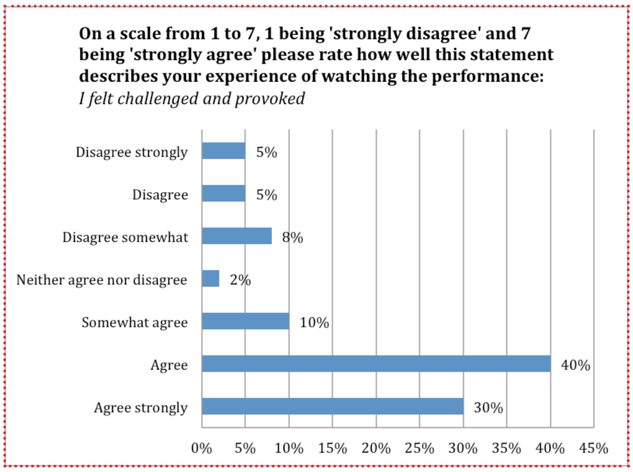
But in the end, if you administer coordinated measures to counteract these limitations (such as restricting IP addresses for resubmitting the answers, setting a time-frame, preparing lighter questionnaires, offering a desirable incentive, but above all, genuinely valuing the respondents' opinions) you could succeed in securing data consistency and statistical validity that are comparable to those of other quantitative survey modes, like a face-to-face or telephone interviews.

Suitable application

Even though an online survey cannot substitute full-range quantitative research (mainly because achieving a valid sample of respondents is harder), it can be a useful instrument in your evaluation. Online surveys work well in smaller pre-defined groups, such as your staff members, volunteers, peers, members of a focus group, etc. (see the example of Shared Vision at the next page). In addition, close-targeted online surveys are perfectly fit to conduct using free online tools in an **in-house** evaluation with limited resources.

You can successfully conduct an online survey among your staff/employees because the online mode can secure their anonymity. You can identify problems and issues within the team, collect feedback for management policies or ask for new ideas to be shared. If you wish to extend your knowledge further or need to ask more questions, an in-depth interview (see Chapter B.3 - Interviews), preferably with an external interviewer, would serve your purposes better.

Online surveys are suitable for collecting feedback from the volunteers you work with or from any other small homogenous group that is closely connected to your organisation and is willing to share their opinions with you.



On a scale from 1 to 7, 1 being 'strongly disagree' and 7 being 'strongly agree' please rate how well this statement describes your experience of watching the performance: I felt challenged and provoked. Base: All who have visited the theatre (100)

Independent Theatre Association (ACT) (IETM member), Bulgaria - Shared Vision

http://actassociation.eu/?page_id=612

'Shared Vision' is a municipality funded project aiming to define realistic short-term and long-term goals for developing the independent scene for visual arts, theatre, dance, music and literature in Sofia (2016 - 2023). It is an initiative of ACT Association.

In order to base the strategy on solid grounds, the initiators raised an appeal to the independent arts sector to share their ideas and experiences. A needs assessment was conducted to research the potential and the needs of the independent arts scene in Sofia. It applied several different tools: focus groups with 93 participants were moderated and in addition, 8 public discussions with an overall of 282 participants were held. But the core data came from the online survey which was conducted for a period of three months in the summer of 2016, and collected 377 responses.

The result of this joint effort is a strategy for development of the arts scene that is driven by the sector and is widely accepted and supported by independent arts operators and artists in Sofia.

The online survey from the Shared Vision case study example (see box above) collected 377 responses which were estimated to be around a 60% response rate. In terms of an online survey, this is quite a success. The questionnaire opened with a question that separated the professionals and non-professionals onto two survey paths. The 'audience path' investigated the visibility of the arts scene and had fewer questions. The 'professional' questionnaire was quite extensive, comprising 11 core and 3 additional questions, most of them with multiple sub-questions. There were no incentives offered; there was no special campaign to disseminate the survey: there were mostly just links in social media and in emails and the request to share the link with others. So what contributed to this high response rate?

In the first place, it is the clear target for the survey. It was aimed to collect responses from persons who are professionally engaged with or passionate about the independent art scene in the city of Sofia. The snowball strategy (those who are suitable for the survey share it with others alike) worked well to reach many respondents. In addition, when you have a shaped idea of whom you wish to assess through the online survey you can choose your channels of dissemination more precisely. In this case, the link to the survey was posted in social media groups of art professionals and contemporary art lovers, and in some online cultural media too.

Indeed, targeted surveys achieve better response rates, but the key to the success of this online survey was its clear message which stated a goal that brought the sector together.

Although it is possible to administer short online questionnaires to peers it may be more useful to organise in-depth interviews, focus groups or round table discussions with representatives of the peer group or with stakeholders. An inspiring exception is the example of Shared Vision (above).

If you enjoy a lively online community on your website and social media, you can go for a brief online survey. It is better to keep your community interested, or at least not overwhelmed with the length or the complexity of your questionnaire. You may not obtain much statistically valid data through this mode but you can get valuable insights that you can deepen further in your research. It is a good idea to ask for a valid email address, and thus as a side effect update your database too.

Suitable topics could be redesigning your brand/logo, feedback on organisation of an event, patterns of visits, amounts spent on visits or any matter you find suitable to investigate with five to ten questions. You can ask your audience for feedback on a particular show/exhibition too. It is a suitable tool to test the response to new activities you plan to implement; under the condition that you can obtain a reasonable amount of sincere responses.

In general, online surveys work well when you wish to inform your operational management decisions, or get feedback on certain activities.

If you do get a good response rate (over 60% at least) from an appropriate sample, you could use the online survey findings in a similar way to how you use the data obtained through telephone, mail or face-to-face surveys. At all times, be explicit about the number of responses and the methodology applied.

Design the online survey

You may have noticed that we stressed the terms 'brief' and 'short' in defining the questionnaire for an online survey. This is because that's the way they ought to be designed. Research[1] has found that in general, higher response rates are achieved when the respondent spends up to ten minutes on your survey. Converted into questions, this means you can count on a maximum of five questions besides the standard demographic panel (i.e. personal questions about age, gender, location etc.). This limitation is especially valid when you ask questions in the arts and culture domain which are far more complex than any market research on detergents, beverages or diapers. Inevitably, all this restricts you in collecting meaningful responses from a broader community on complex topics like artistic quality, innovation or future programming schemes. You certainly couldn't cover all these topics in one survey. Therefore, you have to choose wisely which outcomes from your framework you asses using the online survey tool (see Chapter 3.1 - Design....).

Let us assume you wish to ask your audience if they would like to see more 'feminist plays'. To start with, you need to find out whether the respondent has visited your productions, and if yes, how often. You have to introduce the term 'feminist play' with a comprehensible definition. Then you can ask if they are curious/interested/willing to see this kind of play, giving options from 'yes' to 'no' and 'not sure'. If you already have such plays in your repertoire, you would ask the respondents if they have seen them. If the answer is affirmative, you might like their opinion about it (bear in mind that you cannot simply ask 'did you like it?'). You may wish to double-check with a question like, 'How likely are you to come back if there are more plays like X'... and then your questionnaire is already too long for an online survey. How much easier it is to ask straightforward questions like, 'Why do you like this beer?' and offer multiple options such as taste, price, brand name and reputation, interest, and other...

You can administer considerably longer online questionnaires among groups that are directly engaged with your organisation and your cause as shown in the example of Shared Vision, but with broad-spectrum respondents it is better to keep it brief and factual. Also, have in mind that generally these respondents are not experts in the field of arts and culture; they might never have been to an arts event, yet. Therefore it is better to abstain from questions that might make them feel incompetent, or are too overwhelming on an online survey form.

If you need to know about emotions, perceptions, insights, it is better to ask for further contact with those willing to share, and invite them to take part in a meeting / focus group or to have an in-depth interview (see Chapter B - Qualitative evaluation).

So, keep both the wording of the questions and the instructions simple.

Keep the visual appearance of the online survey clean and tidy too.

Try to keep the demographic panel down to the most essential information. The demographic information request is usually placed at the beginning of an online survey to serve as a 'warm-up' panel or to screen different groups of respondents and to administer questions accordingly (see the case study of Shared Vision). If this panel is too extensive, your respondents may lose interest. Additionally, and this is the case with online surveys, people are reluctant to share too much personal information over the internet. You can find some further recommendations on questionnaire design in Chapter 3.3 - How to ask questions. Keep in mind your specific case and your evaluation agenda.

As for your choice of online survey technology, there are plenty of options. Free options would probably suit most of your needs, but make sure to check the number of responses allowed and the design features. In the Resources section below you will find a comprehensive online survey guide with a detailed comparison of free online tools and their features to help you choose what suits you best.[2]

When you are ready with the survey design and the survey form is online you should test it with some volunteers. Does the link open correctly; are the questions and the instructions clear; is the order logical; is the survey too long; do the skip logic and the required fields work correctly; is the response saved and sent properly; does your survey base accumulate the responses?

Once you have checked on these issues you are ready to disseminate the link to your survey. Use all media channels available. Explain clearly the reasons why you are asking the receiver to spare some time to respond to your survey. Indicate the deadline.

Conducting online surveys

In order to complete your survey the respondents will follow a link that usually opens in a new browser. Make it clear that your organisation is issuing the survey in the very beginning. Briefly state the purpose of the survey and the estimated time it will take to fill it in.

Make a clear statement on personal data confidentiality in compliance with the regulations of the State you are operating in.

1 C. Brent, 'How Much Time are Respondents Willing to Spend on Your Survey?'

2 A. Wadia, D. Parkinson, 'How to Design and Use Free Online Surveys to Collect Feedback on Your Services'

Don't forget to thank your respondents at the end of the survey. It is nice to send them a follow-up report. People are usually curious to compare their opinions with others.

Market researchers usually suggest shorter terms for online surveys, but for arts and culture this is different because of the field specifics: you are not just surveying a product, a service, a brand, an experience. As with art itself, surveys on art require a bit more of an effort. You might administer a shorter term for the response completion, such as two weeks; but if you notice there are hardly any responses you will have to extend the survey timing and prompt your respondents about it once more. As an indication, one month is a recommendable time-frame.

To be on track, monitor closely the responses you get, especially when you promote the survey through various channels. It is acceptable to remind your social media community about your survey, but it can get annoying if you send several emails to your database contacts. You could solve this by making the extra effort to resend the message only to those who haven't responded yet, in case you decide to prolong the survey terms.

Many guides for online surveys suggest offering an incentive in order to boost the response rates. Indeed, you can promote your survey by offering free tickets or discounts for your events, but you could end up with respondents who answer the survey only to get the reward or who skew their answers in a way they think you might like more.

Indeed, there is a certain contradiction between objective evaluation on one hand and audience development and advocacy activities on the other, so in an ideal situation these should be kept separate. Practice has proven that the moment you start to ask questions about your work (even if you have hired independent researchers), your respondents become more positive towards you. So do not be too rigid about securing the objectivity of your respondents and look for solutions that work for your situation. If free tickets will bring you considerably more responses, then offer some. But also keep in mind that there are equally strong altruistic motivations that provoke people to take part in your survey. Among all the reasons that motivate a person to respond to a survey, the perception of the importance of the topic and knowing that their opinion counts is a big motivation to take part[1].

Therefore, in all cases, take care to inform your respondents in a follow up message about the response rate and the findings. If appropriate, you can send a link to the survey report too. Be truly thankful and appreciate the time your respondents have dedicated to your survey.

Feedback and recognition for their contribution are even more critical when you conduct a survey among staff/volunteers/peers or any other highly engaged group.

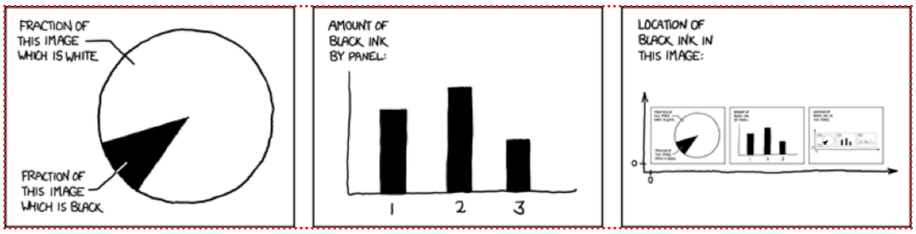
Postproduction

When the deadline arrives, remember to close your survey for responses to secure a final dataset. Online survey tools organise collected data into a database which you can download for further analysis, thus saving you a lot of time and expert effort. (Remember to keep several copies of the original database collecting responses!)

Some online survey tools offer the option to generate summaries and graphics that are downloadable. Using these you can make your online survey report quite impressive with lots of charts and pies, and colourful diagrams. What is more important, you will get all the data calculations completed by correct algorithms; **in-house** and without the need for expensive professional software.

How to use the findings

Keep in mind that online surveys give you insight into a certain research topic rather than a robust set of arguments for a definitive conclusion. Therefore, to demonstrate validity in your evaluation report (see Chapter 3.5 - What is validity?), combine the findings from your online survey(s) with results and insights from qualitative research tools like focus groups, observations, interviews.



Any data looks more 'professional' in a chart (source: xkcd / CC 2.5)

1 E. Singer, 'Why People Respond to Surveys'

Provided you have collected enough responses, you may use your findings whenever you need some numerical data to support your arguments.

Be careful with generalisations, as your sample could be skewed and/or insufficient (see Chapter 3.4 - What is sampling?).

Keep in mind that the number of responses may be different for each question. It is best always to indicate the number of responses to a question for an estimation of a percentage.

All the charts and diagrams that the online survey tool generates for you are handy to use in presentations. A case study would also benefit from 'the numbers' that are aggregated through an online survey.

Online surveys in brief

Here are the Top 10 recommendations from Survey Monkey, one of the top platforms for online surveys; with some comments:

1. Clearly define the purpose of your online survey – choose what can be assessed and leave the rest for other tools to reach.

2. Keep the survey short and focused – five questions for broader targets, some more for engaged groups like staff, peers, volunteers.

3. Keep the questions simple – at all times.

4. Use closed ended questions whenever possible – online surveys are not suitable for in-depth investigation.

5. Keep rating scale questions consistent through the survey (see Chapter 08 How to ask questions for detailssee Chapter 08 How to ask questions for details).

6. Logical ordering – start with broader questions and then narrow down the scope.

7. Pre–test your survey – make sure you are not the only one who understands what it is about.

8. Consider your audience when sending survey invitations – do not send questionnaires that are too specialised to the general group.

9. Consider sending one or two reminders – if people wish to respond, they will.

10. Consider offering an incentive – tickets, a behind the scenes tour, a catalogue, a round of free drinks...

Most of all, be grateful for the time your respondents have spent to participate in your evaluation. And let them know.

A.3. Audience database

It has to be clear from the beginning that keeping an audience database is not an evaluation tool; it is a solid base for further evaluation or audience development efforts.

Your audience database is the primary source for sampling respondents for your quantitative survey (see Chapter 3.4 - What is sampling?).

It is something that you probably already have, and it is one of the simplest tasks you can perform **in-house**.

Marketing people like to make a distinction between the persons who have actually bought a product or an experience and those who might be interested in buying or in hearing the company's message. They call the first group customers and the second audience. Since you are not selling goods but producing/sharing art, you might refer to all of them as audience(s) – factual or potential – no matter what issues surround this term in contemporary arts theory[1].

So, who is your audience? What are your potential newcomers like? These are typical opening questions for any audience development discussion and for many of your grant application forms. And the more accurate your answers, the better.

A customer/audience database is a unified collection of information that is gathered for each person who is in connection with your activities, be it an audience member, a participant in a project of yours, or anyone who has expressed consent to receive information and messages from you.

Your audience database is definitely a precious item in your Outputs list (see Chapter 3.1 - Design...), but you would be surprised to know how many organisations don't maintain even the simplest database of their audiences.

How to design your database

The basic requisites of an audience database are name and contact information (preferably an email address). Such a database will work for mailing lists, but can give you no other information (especially if the names in your region are not distinguished by gender). It is more useful if the data collected encompasses contact information, demographics (age, gender, education, marital status, ethnicity, income, address, etc.), behaviour patterns (attendance to arts events, tickets bought for your productions), and willingness to engage in further contact with your organisation.

More specifics can give you an option for a detailed segmentation later on, although asking for these may easily wear out the good will of your respondents.

At all times, make sure that you have obtained permission to collect, store and use personal data according to the state regulations. Of course, you need the individual's consent as well.

How to collect data

You might already have realised that if you wish to use it as a tool for audience development and planning, your audience database has to present a mixture of your ticket buyers and fans together with a general congregation of arts attendants. The latter group presents people who are generally interested in your field, and including them gives you the opportunity to engage future audiences. Be mindful to have these persons' explicit consent to receive information from you.

You can buy a customised arts audience database like this one. Make sure that the supplier has permission to sell this personal data to third parties. Refer to your local legislation for details. It is worth checking if there are any membership organisations, non-governmental organisations, state or municipal agencies that maintain arts audience databases in your area. By obtaining such a database you can reach a broad audience contact base, counting usually at least a thousand if not several thousands of entries. The biggest convenience of buying a database from a legal provider is that you don't have to take care of the maintenance and actualization yourself. The downsides of such a broad database might be that it could be difficult to spot those who are already your audience, or that they aren't divided into segments to suit your specific needs.

Once again, make sure that the supplier does not violate any local personal data regulations that are applicable to your region. Usually, the data you obtain is aggregated so that you cannot retrieve a person's complete profile; but in any case, check whether - legally - you need any specific permission to store and use this data yourself.

You can build your own database **in-house**, including the people who buy tickets for your productions, who follow you on social media and who register on your website. While there are numerous devices and procedures that can help you in this endeavour, you still have to be prepared for a bulky task.

You might ask audience members to fill in a short questionnaire when they are at the venue – then you have to digitalize the written responses into a database. Or you could just ask for their email addresses and then send a brief survey online. The latter is easier to transform into a database afterwards. In either case, you will get fewer entries than you expected. Here too, you can boost the response rate a little by offering some sort of a present: free tickets

1 For further delving into the term 'audience' and its meaning and connotations you can refer to G. Tomka, 'Audience Explorations: Guidebook for Hopefully Seeking the Audience'

or a discount, membership status, free drinks. This is not because your audience comprises only spoiled consumerists, but because people like to feel important and special; and they're giving you some of their time.

If you are on good terms with modern technologies, and more importantly, if your audience uses them, you can benefit from any online ticketing system which collects user data from those who purchase tickets for your productions/venue. If you have enough resources, you can also devise a clever mobile app that will collect basic data from its users, again while keeping to all requirements concerning personal data collection and usage.

Social media data is a whole other issue.

The majority of arts organisations which have established their online presence have already launched their pages and profiles on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Snapchat, WhatsApp or any of the current numerous social media. The basic precondition for using your social media data for evaluation purposes is that your followers are genuine (not bought or artificially boosted).

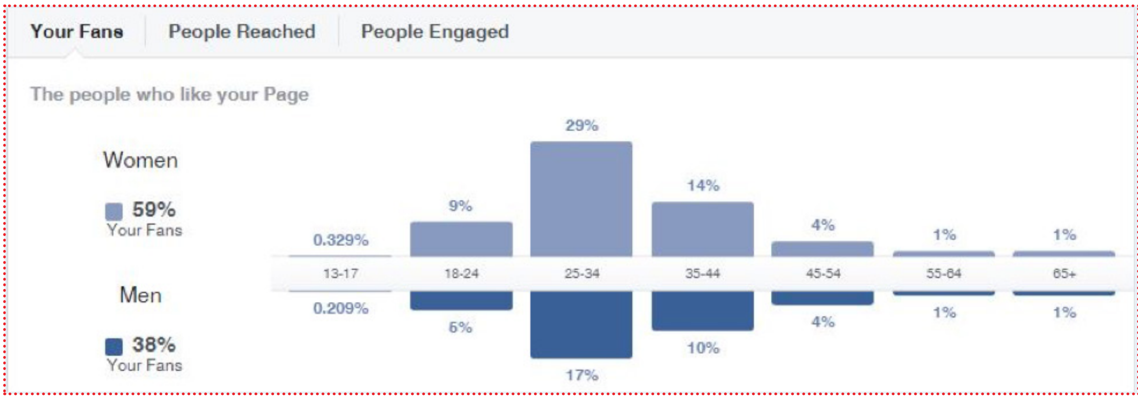
Although the trend of innovative transmedia performing art productions is gaining strength[1], social media profiles are mostly used as communication channels with what is called 'the audiences'. When you consider your social media audiences you have to acknowledge they are not equivalent to the audiences of your productions. They are a specific mix of people who have seen your work, who wish to see it, who are interested in your type of work, who are generally interested in the arts or who have liked a random post of yours and have decided to 'like' you. These characteristics of social media audiences make social media a suitable channel for audience development activities[2].

Concerning database aggregation purposes, you have to bear in mind that you would be working with generalised data of the profiles that follow you. For example, on Facebook you can estimate demographic characteristics like gender, age, geographical region, preferences etc., but you would not be able to match this information to individual profiles with their specific characteristics.

Regarding evaluation purposes, you could use the database (see Chapter C.1 - Document analysis) to analyse the effectiveness of your communication strategies and the potential of your social media channels for audience development.

How to maintain the database

Although it isn't rocket science to build and maintain an up-to-date audience database, the exercise does require a lot of work. The initial build-up is definitely the most extensive part, but then you will want to update your database at least once a year. A clever initial design of the set of data to collect would ensure your data is consistent across time. You and your staff might need some technical training depending on the software solution you choose for your database (it can be any type of spreadsheet software or you might opt for a database management system). You can allocate this task to any technical staff or interns you might have, or you can outsource it to a suitable data processing agency. At all times adhere to the personal data protection rules that apply for your country. If there are a lot of people working with the database you might set log-in credentials to monitor usage and modifications. Make frequent backups of your database on different file locations (this may seem obvious but is easily omitted and bitterly cried about afterwards).



Facebook page likes profile

1 For further information see J. Burgheim, 'Live Performances in Digital Times: an Overview'

2 See G. Tomka, 'Audience Explorations'

Suitable application

A well-designed audience database is a good starting point for any evaluation endeavour. You can reach your audience members for a survey, or any evaluation tool you choose.

You can utilise your social media channels and mailing lists to invite people to participate in your quantitative and/or qualitative assessments, but you can also invite them to contribute with their own content for your artistic documentation (see Chapter C.1 - Artistic documentation) or autoethnographical endeavours (see Chapter B.2 - Autoethnography).

Through your database you can contact your peers (if you collect data about them) and invite them for interviews or round tables.

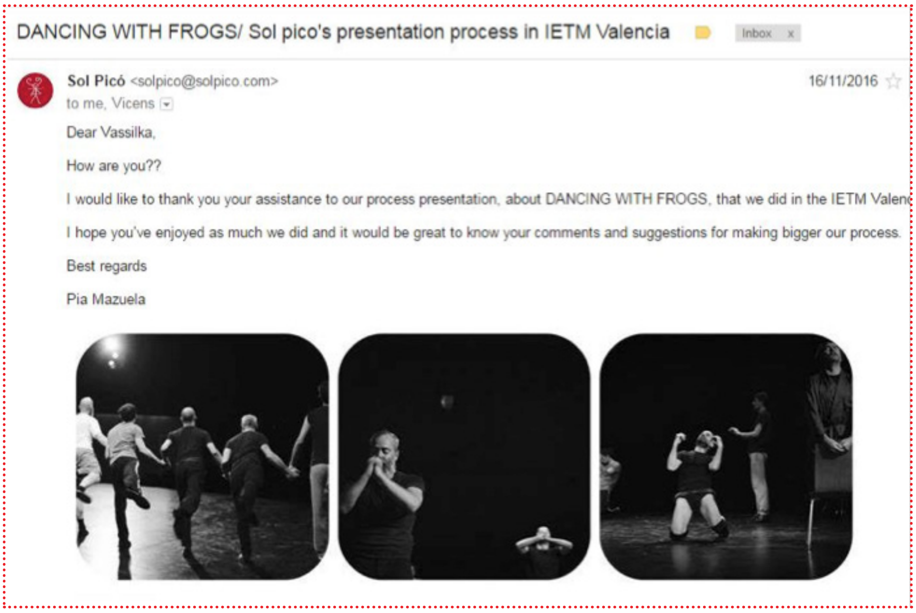
Marketing and communication activities of all sorts, as well as any audience development and engagement programmes, can build on what you already have in your audience database by segmenting and analysing the data and then choosing tools accordingly. (Don't underrate the potential of a personalised message to your current and future audience members.)

Another way to use your database, although it can be a bit tricky, is to carefully draw out some fact based arguments for negotiating tours or for your project applications. Bear in mind that an audience database is not in any way equal to an audience survey. Point this out when you present any findings resulting from a database.

On any occasion, building and maintaining an audience database is a first step to getting to know – rather than just having a general idea about – who your audiences are. It is a common and straightforward tool, used in many industries, whether easily outsourced or maintained **in-house**.

Remember to comply with all regulations about personal data collection that are applicable to your country. Always ask for explicit consent to use personal data for marketing and evaluation purposes. If you intend to share your database with third parties (for example other arts organisations, arts agencies, etc.) specifically ask for the person's consent.

Adhere to best practices in personal data protection and take care to preserve your databases in the best possible way.



DANCING WITH FROGS/ Sol pico's presentation process in IETM Valencia Inbox x

Sol Picó <solpico@solpico.com> 16/11/2016

to me, Vicens

Dear Vassilka,

How are you??

I would like to thank you your assistance to our process presentation, about DANCING WITH FROGS, that we did in the IETM Valenc

I hope you've enjoyed as much we did and it would be great to know your comments and suggestions for making bigger our process.

Best regards

Pia Mazuela

Email correspondence screenshot after a Sol Pico performance. A customised email feels better than the general impersonal letter to anonymous members of a database.

RESOURCES

- **Quantitative surveys and data sample**

'Probability sampling', in Social Research Methods

G. Iarossi, 'The Power of Survey Design. A User's Guide for Managing Surveys, Interpreting Results, and Influencing Respondents', The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, 2006

'Random Sampling Explained', in Verint blog

'Sampling Methods', in Learn Marketing

Analyse This!!! Learning to analyse quantitative data

- **Online surveys - Design**

A. Wadia, D. Parkinson, 'How to Design and Use Free Online Surveys to Collect Feedback on Your Services', in M & E Consulting, 2010

'Online Survey Design Guide', in Human/Computer Interaction Laboratory of Department of Psychology at the University of Maryland

'Using Employee Attitude Surveys', in SmartSurvey

- **Online surveys - Sample size**

'Response Rates', in Faculty Innovation Center of the University of Texas, Austin,

Sample Size Calculator, in SurveyMonkey

E. Liana, 'Random(ish) Sampling: Balancing the Ideal and the Real', in SurveyMonkey Blog, Sept. 2012

- **Motivation to respond to a survey**

E. Singer, 'Why People Respond to Surveys', in Survey Research Center Institute for Social Research University of Michigan, March, 2010

S. P. Poon, G. Ablaum, F. Evangelista, 'Why People Respond to Surveys', in Journal of International Consumer Marketing 16(2):75-90, January 2003

A. Mayfield, 'Survey psychology: The psychology of respondents', in Optimal Workshop, March 2013

S. Smith, 'Why do People Participate as Respondents in a Survey?', in Qualtrics, April 2012

G. Tomka, 'Audience Explorations: Guidebook for hopefully seeking the audience', IETM, 2016

J. Covert, 'New app gives Broadway goers a discount', in New York Post, June, 2015

R. Zafarani, M. A., Abbasi, H. Liu, 'Social Media Mining: An Introduction', Cambridge University Press, Cambride, 2014

B. QUALITATIVE EVALUATION

Instead of giving a single definition of qualitative research, Robert Yin[1] lists the five main features of this approach:

1. Studying the meaning of people's lives, under real-world conditions;

2. Representing the views and perspectives of the people;

3. Covering the contextual conditions within which people live;

4. Contributing insights to existing or emerging concepts that may help to explain human social behaviour; and

5. Striving to use multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone.

So, let us assume you have calculated from robust quantitative data that around 20 percent of your audience returns to see another production of yours. In the typical quantitative fashion, you have administered a questionnaire concerning reasons to return and have supplied the respondents with a set of options like trust in quality, amazement, amusement, innovative approach, etc. This data can lead you to a generalised conclusion; for instance, that most of your members return to see your other work because they feel amused by your productions. However, for a deeper understanding, try turning to some of the numerous qualitative research methods.

While quantitative surveys provide insights such as what, how often and how much, qualitative research methods such as focus groups and interviews delve into the reasons behind certain perceptions and behaviour patterns. Qualitative methods reveal people's perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes, as well as insight into the motivations behind them.

The opponents of qualitative research argue that it lacks the robustness of quantitative approaches; however, numbers are simply not enough to study opinions, feelings and experiences – which is crucial for the arts! If elaborated and conducted under a well-structured design, qualitative methods can provide data that is just as robust, credible and confirmable as quantitative methods can.

Qualitative research and qualitative evaluation share the same tools to achieve their goals.

In the chapters to follow you can find more information on the variety of methods associated with qualitative evaluation: field observations, in-depth interviews, focus groups, round table discussions, case studies. All these are tools that you can rely on for your **in-house** self-evaluation. They are scalable, flexible and able to change because it is not the numbers that matter and it is not about making valid generalisations. The main objective of qualitative tools is to gather enough feedback in order to achieve understanding of the phenomenon and to describe the context in detail.

RESOURCES

'The Qualitative Debate', in Research methods knowledge base

'Qualitative Validity', in Research methods knowledge base

R. K. Yin, 'Qualitative Research from Start to Finish', Guilford PRess, 2010

1 R. K. Yin, ' Qualitative Research from Start to Finish'

B.1. Participant Observation

Observation is probably one of the easiest qualitative tools, because it does not require any special skills besides following a few simple rules, and because it can be done on any scale: from a one-person observation to a team of observers, from one hour each day for a week to a years-long observation. It is completely suitable to be developed **in-house** and it can be conducted even if you are not implementing any other evaluation tools, or if you are not envisaging evaluation at all.

Observation is a robust method of data collection in qualitative research. Whether participating or non-participating, the researcher observes a certain group of people, their actions and interactions, for a certain period of time. Marshall and Rossman define observation as 'the systematic description of events, behaviours and artefacts in the social setting chosen for study'[1]. These descriptions are gathered in field notes (although recorders might also be used). According to the extent of the researcher's involvement, observations may be participant or non-participant, or they might vary. If there is a predefined plan for what is to be observed, the observation is structured; it is direct if the researcher is present at the scene and indirect when s/he observes recorded events.

The major limitation of this method is the extent of objectivity the researcher is able to achieve in his or her descriptions. Some ethical concerns, like whether to inform the group that it is the subject of an observation, carry the risk of introducing another bias; people may start to act unnaturally if they know they are being observed. Keeping track of all phenomena is another issue because documentation relies on the alertness, memory and diligence of the observer.

Whichever type of observation you choose, it is a valuable tool to apply from the beginning of the evaluation, because through observation you will acquire insight and knowledge of your subject that could open unexpected perspectives and generate new research questions.

Observation offers an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in its natural setting, thus providing the opportunity to verify data collected from other research methods such as interviews, focus groups and quantitative surveys.

Although it follows certain rules, observation as a qualitative evaluation method is not highly specialized and can be applied by a wide range of people (contrary to focus group moderation for example). It is very flexible: you can conduct large-scale observations or concentrate on a tiny phenomenon like the convenience of your ticket booth for instance. It is also a cost-effective tool.

North West Turkish Community at Manchester Day 2016 (rehearsal and parade participation). It is more productive to conduct consistent observation of a certain pattern than to spread your attention over multiple events (pictures: © Vassilka Shishkova)

Suitable application

Observation is a great tool to test your evaluation hypothesis and to amend your research question. It is essential for verifying data from other research methods, especially if you can apply both on the same subject. Respondents might claim they behave in a certain way but your observation of them in the corresponding situation will help you verify their statement.

Applying observation as a research method is especially suitable when you wish to assess a homogenous group of people engaged in a particular activity – be it a school class visiting a performance, attendees at a festival, visitors at the café on your premises, participants in a workshop or an educational session; or just the regular audience at your productions. A project involving community work is also an excellent opportunity.

1 Marshall and Rossman, 'Designing Qualitative Research'

If your aim is to draw a general picture you can observe the flow of people at the arts venue: at the ticket booth, the hall, the café area, in front of the site of the performance; before and after the show.

Of course, you can also conduct observation of how people respond to what they experience during the show too.

You can compare the observation of your target group to observations of other groups: at other performing arts venues, museums, galleries, shopping malls, the metro.

Once again, this tool is flexible and scalable. You can apply it even if you are not planning to conduct an evaluation of any kind.

Preparatory phase

You should define your major focal points for the observation task you are going to carry out. You can set out on an observation open-mindedly, but having a certain structure in advance will spare you time and effort. Additionally, starting the overall evaluation with an observation, and with your main research topics in mind, is a neat way to test whether your research design is working and amend it accordingly.

Then you should identify the groups, sites and situations it makes sense to observe. You'll make different choices depending on whether the focus of your evaluation is on your impact on local communities, exploring your audience; or on networking, innovation and developing your professional field.

You also need to accumulate knowledge about the group you are going to observe. This could spare you some useless field note remarks and misleading conclusions (see box on this page).

You have to decide whether you will be a participant or non-participant observer depending on the specific group and phenomena you are going to research. On occasions when your role as an observer will be disclosed you have to establish a field of trust with those you are going to observe. You should be unobtrusive towards their normal activities, yet sincere in your intentions in order not to compromise the ethical commitment you take as a researcher towards your subjects.

On field

The observations are written down in field notes. You will find it easier if you prepare a template in advance. This also secures data consistency when you conduct several observations or involve several observers. Write down the date and the time. The observation should last ideally one hour; write down its exact duration too. Describe the venue and estimate participant number, as well as gender, average age and ethnicity.

Last summer I was on the streets of Manchester, UK, at The Manchester Day Parade 2016, produced by Walk the Plank. I was taking notes and interviewing members of the audience of the city parade. Thankfully someone had explained to me that the English are quite reserved in such situations. Otherwise my South European background would probably have led me to think that the majority of people weren't enjoying the parade and I would have ended up with a surplus of interviews by tipsy people just because they were the ones who were jumping and dancing.

Describe anything you observe that can be meaningful for your research: events, group or individual behaviour, relationships, conversations and interactions or the lack of them, impressions of mood, feelings, atmosphere.

If you wish to use codes and abbreviations, make sure you will be able to decode them later. Drawing out maps is helpful.

Indicate if there are certain participants or situations you would revisit for a follow up interview or observation.

Make sure you differentiate between descriptions and interpretations.

Be open.

You can organise several observations during different phases of your evaluation process.

Data processing

One of the disadvantages of this method is that it relies on the researcher's memory; therefore it is essential to type up your field notes while they are still fresh in your memory. Another limitation of observation is its potential for observational bias due to prejudiced interpretation; so cross checking with other researchers' observations and triangulation with data from other survey methods will help counterpoise the findings. Analyse and summarise your findings in a structured and validated report.

How to use the findings

Like the other qualitative tools, observation is not aimed at getting you statistically valid quantitative data besides the number of people at a certain site. Instead, it will bring you knowledge to understand what you observe.

Observation is an unparalleled method for improving the design of other methods, because the last thing you would want is to enter a focus group or an interview with all the wrong questions. In addition, it can help you spot noteworthy informants or participants for the other qualitative methods you intend to apply. Observations will also provide you with context for your other data collections, and they are invaluable for filtering socially agreeable answers or other inconsistencies by verifying data obtained through other methods. Observational findings need to be triangulated with other data.

Observation findings may also inform your direct management and organisational decisions.

Paperwork. Sometimes a change of scenery boosts the researcher's memory (picture: © Vassilka Shishkova)

Observation in brief

You can conduct structured and unstructured observations, you can utilise them in an evaluation or use them as a standalone tool for self-assessment. You can do observations in-house or use outside researchers to carry them out. You can have one person to observe or collect the findings from several observers. You can do it as a one-time exercise or repeat it on a regular basis. In any case, keep the field notes format similar, be open, and differentiate between what you really observe and what is interpretation.

RESOURCES

J. Li, 'Ethical Challenges in Participant Observation: A Reflection on Ethnographic Fieldwork', in *The Qualitative Report* Volume 13 Number 1, March 2008

'Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide - Module 2: Participant Observation', in Office of Assessment, Duke Trinity College of Arts & Sciences

B. Kawulich, 'Participant Observation as a Data Collection Method' (81 paragraphs), in Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 6(2), Art. 43, 2005

J. Sauro, '4 Types of Observational Research', in Measuring U

Calculators, in Measuring U

J. Sauro, '5 Types of Qualitative Methods', in Measuring U

B.2. Autoethnography

Here is an interesting tool which you can easily adopt for an **in-house** evaluation, but you might also ask other practitioners to apply and share the results with you.

Autoethnography is that particular case when the researcher and the subject of the research coincide. Rather than trying to objectify the observations, autoethnography investigates the context by focusing on the subjective perceptions of the researcher. 'Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*)'[1].

Advocates of the method insist that describing the researcher's own perceptions, reactions and reflections leads to a better understanding the general picture. But its high subjectivity has provided ground for criticism and resistance to accepting autoethnography as a scientifically valid research method[2]. Some ethical issues arise from exposure of feelings and thoughts, as well as disclosing facts that concern other people[3].

Indeed, these considerations hamper the application of autoethnography on equal terms with the other qualitative methods, at least in mainstream academic research. But what if the researcher is not an academic? What if the researcher is from inside the community? What if the researcher is you?

'When researchers write autoethnographies, they seek to produce aesthetic and evocative descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience'[4]. So it is subjective, it evolves through aesthetics and communicates a story… Sounds like something close to art, so why not give it a try?

Suitable application

The biggest advantage of applying autoethnography in an arts evaluation is that it can capture what the methods struggling for objectivity would omit: the subjective, the individual, the intrinsic, the emotional, and the evasive. Through autoethnography you can tell all the personal stories and details that are usually left outside of the research report[5].

1 C. Ellis, T. E. Adams, A. P. Bochner, 'Autoethnography: An Overview'
2 A. Ploder, J. Stadlbauer, 'Strong Reflexivity and Its Critics. Responses to Autoethnography in the German-Speaking Cultural and Social Sciences'
3 M. Mendez, 'Autoethnography as a Research Method: Advantages, Limitations and Criticisms'
4 C. Ellis, T. E. Adams, A. P. Bochner, cit.
5 Autoethnography was one of the methods applied by the RECcORD project in studying participation at cultural centres across Europe. The report will be available in the second half of 2017 at HYPERLINK "http://www.reccord2017.eu" www.reccord2017.eu

Autoethnography is story-telling, and thus could make for a strong collection of anecdotal examples that reveal various subjective and unexpected facets of your research topic.

It is an honest way to share what you feel about art or about a specific production or performance, and ask others to share too. If you decide to include colleagues, audience members, community members and so on, you can create a compendium of personal stories about art. Would it be representative of the way certain communities/audiences perceive your art? Definitely not. Would it be sincere, personal, engaging, thought provoking? Hopefully, yes.

How to conduct autoethnography

Since the core of autoethnography is the subjective, there is no real recipe for how to 'conduct' it. The length of the autoethnography piece is also undefined: it can range from several sentences to a book, as the example in the Resources section shows. The piece is presumed to be a written text, but autoethnography may also use video or audio recordings.

According to Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) an autoethnographic piece is sharing an eyewitness account; it is engaging, evocative, tells a story and allows for 'experiencing the experience'. It might be presented in the form of a written text, a video, a play. It can be created from one person's perspective or a collaborative work. In any case, it makes sense to study some autoethnography pieces to help you decide which forms suit you the best.

In terms of your evaluation, creating autoethnography pieces with your team is a good way to begin. This attempt has the potential to outline your feelings and attitudes toward your work, your organisations, the team, your activities, the premises. It is a good starting point for a team building, if you do not envisage an evaluation at this stage.

If you work with an external evaluation agency it is worth asking them to give it a try too. Besides providing an outsider's view this exercise may help your researchers to outline their attitudes, presumptions, feelings.

If you decide to try it with audience/community members you should start with a workshop where you explain the basics of the method as well as your research topic and what you wish to achieve. For self-evaluation purposes it is better to have several shorter pieces (like a half page text or a five minute video). You can request a general perception perspective (how I feel here) or focus on a particular production or on certain aspects of activities (a community workshop, online communication, artistic quality or novelty, etc.).

It is suitable to be introduced as a tool during educational classes, behind the scenes tours or any other interactive audience development activity[1]. Since autoethnography is highly subjective anyway, it is one of those rare occasions when mixing evaluation with audience development will not add much bias (to what is already there).

Whatever approach you choose in encouraging others to contribute with their pieces, don't forget to gather demographic information and consent for disclosure from the participants. Once ready, harmonise the format of your collection.

How to use the findings

Obviously you would not report that three elderly women were deeply moved, one child felt anxious and six outcast teenagers became determined to pursue their dreams after seeing a production of yours. More often than not you do not derive conclusions from autoethnography pieces. Instead, you will revisit your video or text collection in search of the poetic provocation it brings into your research project. The highly subjective and vulnerable voices you have gathered will remind you that art is beyond numbers and measurable outcomes; it is surprising, provoking and inspirational.

You can use these pieces to juxtapose the overall objective stance of your evaluation and to bring out the voices that would otherwise remain unheard. Autoethnographic pieces, being an emotional testimony, make for an engaging advocacy campaign and powerful case study to support your main theses. It is a quality check for authenticity of the findings achieved through the other research methods you apply.

If it suits your artistic practice, this could evolve into a documentary theatre piece too.

Even if you decide to exclude these findings from your evaluation, autoethnography is useful for achieving self-understanding and for building relations with others.

In brief, for an autoethnography piece, keep your senses alert, get in touch with your feelings, reflect on your sensations and put down your subjective thoughts and reflections.

RESOURCES

P. Averett, D., Soper, 'Sometimes I Am Afraid: An Autoethnography of Resistance and Compliance', in The Qualitative Report, 16(2)

N. P. Short, L. Turner, A., Grant (ed.), 'Contemporary British Autoethnography', Sense Publishers, Boston, 2013

T. Gretencord, 'How to Write an Autoethnography', in Teaching in Allentown , Sept. 2012

C. Sansburn, 'Autoethnography: Revealing Yourself from the Inside and Outside', in Eastern Michigan University people

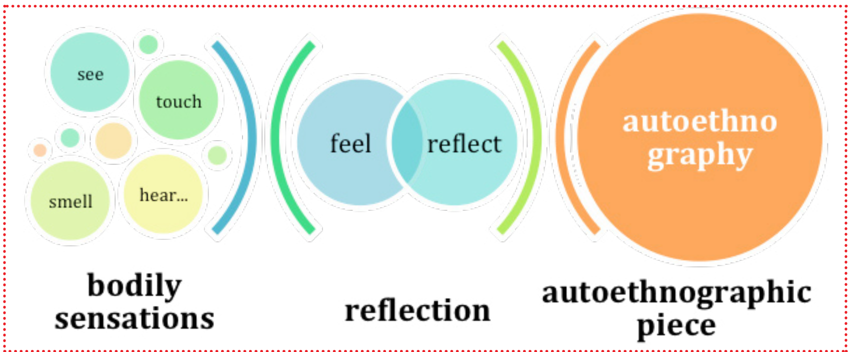
S. Wall, 'Easier Said than Done: Writing an Autoethnography', in International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 5 (2) June 2006

S. Denshire, 'Autoethnography', in Sociopedia.isa, 2013

C. Ellis, T. E. Adams, A. P. Bochner, 'Autoethnography: An Overview', in Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 12(1), Art. 10

A. Ploder, J. Stadlbauer, 'Strong Reflexivity and Its Critics. Responses to Autoethnography in the German-Speaking Cultural and Social Sciences', in Qualitative Inquiry 22(9):1-16, August 2016

M. Mendez, 'Autoethnography as a Research Method: Advantages, Limitations and Criticisms', in Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal, Dec., 2013



Autoethnography at a glance. This approach is deliberately aimed at the subjective experience

1 G. Tomka, 'Audience Explorations'

B.3. Interviews

Interviewing is a qualitative research method that implies asking respondents open ended questions (in a one-to-one setting), thus allowing investigation of their experiences, feelings, beliefs and conceptions. Like most qualitative tools it can be applied in an **in-house** evaluation at lower effort and cost.

Interviews are a powerful tool when you want to assess certain topics in depth and with as many nuances as possible. It is also appropriate to conduct one-to-one interviews for sensitive or confidential issues. Interviews are better than focus groups when you want to gather some expert opinions or assess individuals who are not representative of a group, but who will make a valuable contribution to your evaluation. While focus groups serve to assess the group attitude, interviews help you capture the individual dimension of your subject. Interviews are also easier to schedule than roundtables and focus groups, and may require less specific training.

Regrettably, the freedom and openness of the interview form, its main assets, can lead to some of its disadvantages too. Transcribing the interview can be quite an exhausting procedure. If not conducted properly the interview can be biased by the interviewer or influenced by the interviewer's projections and expectations. Interviews will give you the individual perspective, but they cannot provide valid generalisations, even if you conduct dozens of them.

Depending on whether a predefined interview scenario is applied, interviews might be structured (asking the same questions in the same order to a number of people; thus resembling a quantitative survey), unstructured (a free-flowing conversation) or semi-structured (a general canvas that can be adapted to the specific respondent).

If you use interviews to complement a quantitative survey, you would most probably use a semi-structured in-depth interview to achieve your goals. This means that you would prepare a guide with open ended questions on the topic of your research, but the conversation might take another direction and explore different aspects as they are disclosed.

Being liberated from the necessity to 'count numbers' while conducting an exhaustive quantitative survey themselves, Walk the Plank, the producers of The Manchester Day Parade (see box page 45), invested effort into making series of interviews with different formats and purposes. They conducted structured video interviews (asking the same questions in the same order) of approximately 8-minute duration with the artists who worked with the community participants in the workshop to produce the floats/mascots and other structures/puppets for the parade. They held semi-structured interviews with the city council's representatives and with management members at Walk the Plank. During the parade they posed ad hoc questions to random people visiting the event. In addition, several in-depth interviews of 40 minutes or so with artists and participants in the parade were held, along with a series of short interviews with people in the streets on the day of the parade. The overall corpus of interviews was intended to provide feedback and to inform and inspire future decisions at Walk the Plank. Some of the short videos (like this and this) have been used in the promotional video for the event. The interview excerpts pinpoint the outcomes and contribute to the overall credibility of the message.

Suitable application

First of all: in-depth interviews are good for obtaining personal views and perceptions on a topic, while acknowledging the individual levels of expertise and the personal background of the interviewee. The opportunity to ask follow up questions can bring unparalleled depth to your understanding. In assessing artistic and cultural projects and activities, interviews can help you delve into highly subjective notions like 'value' in the arts.

One-to-one interviews are the most appropriate qualitative method to apply to sensitive subjects because the person can speak more freely than in a group, and you can guarantee anonymity, like in a quantitative questionnaire.

Comparing findings from interviews can further verify conclusions based on other qualitative research tools such as focus groups and roundtables. They furthermore contribute to those findings by opening up new topics and aspects.

If conducted regularly, or over a long time, in-depth interviews can provide you with a history of change, as well as of the impact of each of your individual works.

How to conduct an interview

- **Preparation phase**

Firstly, you need to outline the particular aspects of your evaluation topic you wish to assess by means of an interview. Once again, look at your project and evaluation framework (see Chapter 3.1 - Design...). It could be topics concerning artistic innovation and excellence; or the feeling of empowerment, or community building. It can be any topic you need to see in detail and in depth, or for which quantitative data is inadequate. It might equally be sensitive issues concerning the working environment: certain aspects that are controversial for the community cultural/art practices; anything concerning the personal lives of your respondents like love, family, sex, health issues; or any subjective or hard to tackle aspects of art and its reception, etc. As you see, in-depth interviews are quite a versatile tool.

After defining what you would address through in-depth interviews you would then define the points of interception with other evaluation tools that you can use later, when you analyse the findings, in order to validate them through triangulation (see Chapter 3.5 - What is validity?).

Your next step is to identify the most suitable people to interview according to your initial design. These would probably be stakeholders, including audiences, experts in your field, peers and colleagues whom you may prefer not to assess through group discussions. Other desirable people on your list will be those who you know have a story to share. You can decide to interview random people too, whether they are participants in your activities or not.

The number of interviews depends on your evaluation plan and budget, but you would need at least 3-5 of them (taking about 30 to 45 minutes each). Try and ensure a balanced sample of interviewees in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and physical condition (especially if you aim to gather feedback about the relevance and accessibility of your work/venue).

You can conduct the interview either face-to-face or by telephone, messenger or email; although it is best to do it in person because you can interact fully, monitor body language and achieve a higher level of understanding of the answers.

Give yourself some time to schedule the interviews (knowing that it will be easier than planning focus groups or group discussions). It is also easier to find a suitable venue for the interview as it might be conducted at the interviewee's office, home or wherever is convenient. Bear in mind that you will need a quiet place for a quality audio recording of the session.

It is crucial how you ask questions for an in-depth interview (see Chapter 3.3 - How to ask questions for further details). Prepare a guide of open ended questions and prompts. Be aware of leading questions, i.e. questions that imply the desired answer. They should be reformulated or balanced out. Here is a simple example:

Interviews are prone to bias and the face-to-face form can easily incline responses towards what you would find pleasant to hear. Thus you might end up with a promotional interview instead of one that is fit for an evaluation. If you are not sure that you could obtain sincere answers you should invite an external skilled interviewer to conduct the interviews for you.

It is good to gather some background information about your interviewees in advance, in order to pick out relevant themes and topics.

Test the guide and do practice interviews before your sessions start.

- **During the interview**

Make sure your audio recorder is working properly. If you are going to video record the interview or take pictures of the interviewee, make sure they are comfortable with this, and that you have their explicit consent to do so. This is necessary because, in this case, you might disclose their identity.

Welcome your interviewee warmly and in accordance with their age, status, etc. Introduce yourself, the overall aim of the research and the aim of the interview.

In particularly sensitive cases, you may request written consent from the interviewee. Some respondents will insist on staying anonymous while others prefer to be cited with their names, so by having a signed consent form you can always check their preference. Then you can open with some introductory questions.

Continue with the questions in your guide once you are both happy with the interviewee's answer. Ask supplementary questions, give probes, skip questions if they have become redundant or ask alternative questions. Take a note on body language too. Be open to what your interviewee says, and amend your guide accordingly. In a good interview your questions are brief. The answers of your interviewee are rich, original and specific. The interviewee ought

leading question	neutral question	balanced out
Do you like it at the theatre?	How /what do you feel at the theatre?	What do you like and what do you dislike at the theatre?
Did your attitude towards X change?		What did you think of X before? What do you think of X now? Why?
Do you agree that we need to make more community projects?	What do you think of the community projects?	

not to feel interrogated but to enjoy your interest and to be eager to reflect and delve deeper into the topics. 'You are knowledgeable, structuring, clear, gentle, sensitive, open, steering, critical, remembering, interpreting'[1].

Have a 'catch all' question as your last question (for example: Is there anything else that you would like to add?). Close the interview by thanking the interviewee and making clear how you are going to use the interview. On some occasions it is a good idea to send the transcribed interview to the respondent for a final confirmation.

In any case, follow strictly the Code of Conduct which applies in your region. Be especially considerate when interviewing children, young persons or any vulnerable persons. Make sure you have consent from the interviewees in terms of use of the findings. Usually, you do not disclose the identity of the interviewee unless it is necessary (e.g. reporting on interviews with experts), and only with their explicit consent to do so.

- **After the interview: transcription and report**

Make sure you have saved the audio recording in satisfactory quality. Prepare the transcriptions as soon as possible while your memories are still fresh. An hour long interview might take a day to transcribe.

Once you are ready with all your interview transcriptions you can start to summarise, search for patterns and analyse. The outcome will be a written analytical text with citations and paraphrases from the interviews that can either become part of your research report or function as a separate text. Another option is to prepare a collection with the transcribed interviews.

It is wise to keep a database of categorised citations from the interviews (also from focus groups, discussions, etc.). You can use these as arguments or catchy remarks in various texts like research or annual reports, project proposals, marketing and promotional materials, and advocacy campaigns.

How to use the findings

Comparing findings from other research tools with interview statements can give you the chance to delve deeper into the topic and create a richer picture of both the subject and the social environment in which you operate.

You can use interview findings as anecdotal evidence to support arguments in your research report. You can use interview quotes to make a stronger statement.

1 S. Kvale, 'Doing interviews'

You might also use excerpts from interviews (especially video recorded ones) for your promotional materials, as long as you have the explicit consent of the interviewee to use their contribution for purposes other than evaluation.

Interviews in brief

Invite to interviews those people whose individual voices you want to be heard. Ask questions about topics and aspects you wish to assess in depth. Devise your interview guides so that you can explore all the topics you are interested in while keeping flexibility and openness. Formulate your questions in a non-leading manner. Ask for your interviewee's consent and comply with the Code of Ethics applicable to your region. Transcribe interviews as soon as possible and summarise findings.

RESOURCES

C. Boyce, P. Neale, 'Conducting In-Depth Interview', in Pathfinder International Tool Series Monitoring and Evaluation – 2, 2006

'In-depth interviews', in Good Questions, Better Answers, California Department of Health Services and Northern California Grantmakers AIDS Task Force, 1998

ROCARE/ERNWACA, I – 'Interviews', in Excerpts from Guides on Qualitative Research

E. Taylor-Powell, 'Quick Tips 34: Probing Questions in Interviews', in American Evaluation Association, March 2009

A. Weinstein Agrawal, 'Conducting In-Depth Interviews', in San Jose State University

R. Maietta, 'SI11 Session 24: Qualitative Interviewing: Asking the Right Questions in the Right Way', in American Evaluation Association, July 2009

S. Clarke, M. Long, 'Digging Deeper: Using Cognitive Interviewing to Identify and Resolve Data Collection Problems', in American Evaluation Association, October 2013

S. Kvale, 'Learning the Craft of Interviewing', in Doing Interviews, SAGE Publishing, Londeon, 2008

S. Kvale, 'Ten Standard Objections to Qualitative Research Interviews', in Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 25, No 2, 1994

CODEX, The humanities and social sciences rules and guidelines for research

B.4. Focus groups

Focus groups are among those quantitative tools that you can apply in an **in-house** evaluation with some preparation and additional training in moderating. Alternatively, you can hire a professional moderator to conduct the focus groups, although you can still develop the guides and process the findings internally. Or you can outsource the focus group component to an external agency, together with the overall evaluation.

Amongst the abundance of definitions of focus groups as a qualitative research method, this one stands out with its brief comprehensiveness: 'The basic idea of the focus group method is to generate a discussion on preselected topics of interest to the researcher among a small group of individuals from a target population defined in terms of characteristics relevant to the research topic'[1].

In terms of evaluation, focus groups are one to two hour discussions among a homogenous group of usually six to ten participants. They are moderated by a facilitator who guides it through open-ended questions, encourages everyone to participate and monitors the duration of the session to ensure it does not exceed the predefined timeframe. There are no right answers, nor is the group expected to arrive at a consensus. Albeit guided, the conversation is a flexible and free-flowing exchange among the participants.

One advantage of focus groups over interviews is that new ideas are generated among the focus group participants, thus opening space for unexpected fresh perspectives towards the evaluation topic. In addition, they are less expensive. They can be conducted at various stages of the evaluation process and can also serve as feedback on the predefined topics and questions, thus helping prepare the other evaluation components like individual interviews, surveys and so on.

Suitable application

Focus groups are a proper tool to understand and to get the in-depth dimension of why people think and act in a certain way in connection with the topic in question. Most probably art plays a central role in your life, but what about your audience's lives? You can acquire a lot of information if you ask the participants of a focus group why they never come, or why they come so often to see your productions; what they like most about your venue and why; how passionate they are about your work; whether they would miss you if you closed; what the meaningful things, people, relations, ideas in their lives are; what they like and dislike, and why.

1 J. E. Knodel, 'Focus Groups as a Qualitative Method for Cross-Cultural Research in Social Gerontology'

A healthy focus group atmosphere is one where everyone feels secure and accepted (picture: IETM Campus Lublin 2016, © Maciej Rukasz)

Remember though that results from focus groups are not quantifiable, nor could conclusions drawn from focus groups be generalized and attributed to all representatives of a certain group. Hence, you cannot make up for quantitative data by conducting lots of focus groups.

How to conduct a focus group

- **Preparing for the focus group**

To start with, you should choose which outcomes from your framework (see Chapter 3.1 - Design...) would be feasible to assess through focus groups. Any topic related to art could easily evolve into quite a complex matter to discuss. However, the aim is to get an insight into what art means to the people (in your focus group), so it is usually a good idea to prevent the discussion from getting too heated or controversial. To this end, carefully chosen topics and well-designed open-ended sets of up to eight questions – a topic guide – are an essential part of the preparation phase (see Chapter 3.3 - How to ask questions). The formulations in the topic guide have to be considered according to the various focus groups they would serve.

The number of focus groups varies depending on your evaluation design and what kind of communities you wish to cover. For example, if your audience includes children and adults, then you have to conduct at least two focus groups with different age groups. In certain evaluations it is feasible to assess groups from outside and groups from inside cities, while others, usually those assessing projects with a stronger focus on social work, call for focus groups with people at risk or in a vulnerable position. Once again, when applying qualitative tools, we are not aiming at making valid generalisations, but at acquiring an in-depth understanding of a certain phenomenon.

As you can see, the most time-consuming part of a focus group is recruiting participants and composing the groups.

Bringing a heterogeneous group of people together may not lead to a meaningful discussion because the individuals might suppress their sincerity if they feel too different from the others in social status, professional experience, ethnicity, religion, etc. In addition, in a heterogeneous group you could end up with people who are well acquainted with art and know your work, and others who have never been to a production of yours or who have no experience with art; and all the combinations in-between.

Therefore, be prepared to conduct several focus groups (at least one for each target group) and for each focus group, invite people of similar backgrounds, age, attitudes and experience (see Chapter 3.4 - What is sampling?). Even with these similarities, people are still likely to have a variety of different opinions, so this shouldn't reduce the likelihood of a lively discussion.

A good choice would be to have about six to eight participants, and to invite about twice that number, since some people will not show up. Try and ensure a balanced group in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and physical abilities (especially if you want to gather feedback on the relevance and accessibility of your work to different groups in society). Confirm with each participant a couple of days before the focus group, provide clear instructions to reach the location and explain how long the experience will last (usually two hours, but it depends on the specific case). Provide information about the accessibility of the venue, even if none of your participants have particular needs (e.g. stair-free access to the room and facilities).

It is typical, especially in marketing research, to give certain incentives to the participants to encourage enrolment. You can consider applying this practice too, but be mindful that gifts like free tickets, a tour behind the scenes, promotional materials and merchandise might skew participants' views. Aside from the fact that you cannot give free tickets to all of your audiences...

Carefully choose your focus group moderator. It is desirable that he or she is someone external to your organisation, but you can also work **in-house** with someone in your team who has acquired moderating skills. Bear in mind that the participants may not feel comfortable discussing topics concerning your work and your organisation in front of you. In addition, it is crucial that the moderator does not take part of the conversation. It is better if he or she does not demonstrate expertise in the arts field, because this could silence even confident participants. In an effective focus group the participants are the ones who make the conversation and they speak from their own expertise. The moderator should be skilful in facilitating the group discussion using a number of tactics, including keeping the tone of the conversation respectful, sticking to the schedule and guiding the discussion towards the preliminary set of topics while remaining flexible and open to the ideas as they spring out.

The moderator usually works together with an assistant moderator who takes care of writing down the notes and audiotaping the discussion.

It is better to choose a neutral venue to accommodate the focus group. This should prevent creating any bias in participants. At any rate, make sure the venue is quiet and comfortable and that the participants feel at ease.

Secure your equipment. Typically, focus groups are audio recorded. In addition, have consent forms ready to hand out to all participants to sign that they have been informed of the purpose of the focus group and what their information will be used for, and that they give their consent for participation and being recorded. Typically, focus group participants remain anonymous.

- **Conducting the focus group**

There are plenty of guides on how to conduct a focus group and almost all of them are helpful and applicable. At least, they seem so until the conversation tilts in a completely new and unexpected direction. Then all you can do is hope your moderator is skilful enough not to drown the boat trying to drag it out of the unknown seas, but instead steer it with trust, curiosity and mutual respect in the general direction of the initial intention. All this while keeping the crew open-minded, conversational and in good spirits. If your guide covers all the relevant evaluation topics while remaining open to changes, your endeavour is very likely to succeed.

On the day of the focus group the moderator and their assistant should arrive before the participants to check if the premises are ready. As participants arrive, the moderator should set the tone for a comfortable, enjoyable discussion with a warm welcome (food is always an asset!). The moderator should introduce the facility team, the rules of the focus group and the means of recording the session.

The general purpose of the evaluation and the concrete goal of the focus group have to be clarified before the discussion commences. The conversation should start with a neutral introductory question and then the moderator should follow the predefined script while making space for spontaneity in the discussion.

The moderator takes care to facilitate a lively, fluid discussion balancing dominant speakers, encouraging shy participants, averting the conversation from off-topic issues and asking some follow-up questions to probe deeper into a topic.

The assistant moderator takes notes both on participants' statements and the overall atmosphere of the discussion, the non-verbal language and so on. He or she is responsible for audio recording the whole session, collecting participants' written consent forms and other administrative details.

In a well-conducted focus group everyone has an equal opportunity to participate. The focus group participants should be accommodated to feel at ease and to share sincerely and openly their ideas. The focus group is not only about participants contributing to your understanding of the topic; they should feel empowered and gain knowledge from it too. Collect their feedback on the session and make sure to share your findings with them. Focus groups are not meant for building special relationships with your organisation, but if done right they might win you supporters of your cause; even more successfully than any incentives offered.

- Data processing

Organise a debriefing for the evaluation team after the focus group has ended. Make sure the audiotapes are transcribed as soon as possible. Don't schedule more than two focus groups in a day to avoid getting them mixed up in your memory.

The output from the focus group sessions is typically a written report of the findings. It is based on the transcript of the conversation and features a lot of exact quotes from the participants without disclosing their identity.

Once again, it is preferable for a skilful moderator who is external to your organisation to lead a focus group. However, if you wish to conduct a series of focus groups, or to carry them out on a regular basis, you might decide to use someone from your team. In this case, do dedicate resources for their training and plan a practice focus group. Make sure that the person in charge feels confident with their skills as well as prepared to be objective and unbiased towards the topics of the discussion. You will find links to various guides and tips for focus group moderation in the Resources section of this chapter.

How to use the findings

Focus group findings are most appropriate when you want to analyse the topic of your evaluation not by the simple facts or manifestation of certain behaviours, but by the reasons behind them. A survey would provide you with the grounds for a numeric estimation of how often a certain demographic group comes to see your work, while a focus group will give you an insight on the reasons why some people are interested in you, what they think and feel about your work, and what matters to them.

Focus groups are not exchangeable with in-depth interview findings. In focus groups the statements on individual perceptions, ideas, feelings, and patterns are influenced by the group dynamic.

You can validate findings from focus groups with those from in-depth interviews (and vice versa) and thus enrich knowledge derived from quantitative surveys with a deeper level of perceptions, ideas and reasons.

Focus groups in brief

Take your time to compose the focus group guide and find a skilful moderator.

Be careful when recruiting participants and composing focus groups. Make sure that the groups are homogenous but that different focus groups cover the spectrum of your target audiences.

Secure a comfortable environment, recording equipment, possible incentives. Consent forms are important.

While conducting the focus group, the moderator ensures an atmosphere of mutual respect and takes care that everyone's opinion is heard. The moderator follows the guide in a responsive and flexible manner so that the envisaged topics are covered but the natural flow of the conversation is not hindered.

After the focus group, make sure that transcripts are made in the swiftest manner.

When you prepare the report on the focus group findings, quote the participants, but do not disclose their identity.

Use your focus groups to acquire in-depth understanding of the phenomena you are researching.

RESOURCES

J. E. Knodel, 'Focus Groups as a Qualitative Method for Cross-Cultural Research in Social Gerontology', in Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology, 1995

N. Grudens-Schuck, B. Allen, K. Larson, 'Methodology Brief: Focus Group Fundamentals', in Extension Community and Economic Development Publications. Book 12 , Iowa State University May 2004

Audiences Wales, 'Learning on Demand. User Friendly Arts Marketing Training Guides', in CultureHive, May, 2015

R. Kruger, M. Casey, 'Participants in a Focus Group', in Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research, SAGE Publications, New Delhi, 2015

The Market Research Society, 'Code of Conduct', in Market Research Society, Sept. 2014

L. Boughton, '10 Moderating Tips To Follow For Successful Focus Groups', in Angelfish Fieldwork, August 2016

A. Pickering, C. Watts, 'Case Study: The Role of the Moderators in Focus Group Interviews: Practical Considerations', in Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies, 2003

T. L. Greenbaum, 'Moderating Focus Groups', SAGE publishing, 1996

H. Hoets, 'Moderate a Focus Group Discussion or Depth Interview', in Focus Group Tips.com -

B.5. ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Roundtable discussion is a meeting format that allows for an in-depth conversation on a certain topic in a small group of experts.

Depending on the topic and the design, roundtable discussions allow for a composition of a group of experts from one or several fields of expertise. It is more common to disclose the experts' identity than it is with focus group participants.

Like focus groups, roundtable discussions are also moderated and recorded.

The usual practice is to prepare information materials to acquaint the discussion participants with the topic to be discussed. In this case, it might make sense to offer tickets to your productions and behind the scenes tours, in order to introduce the experts to your activities. Experts are less likely to alter their attitudes as a result of an incentive of this kind, while getting them more closely acquainted with your work contributes to a more focussed discussion afterwards.

With the above in mind, it is more suitable to design and conduct this qualitative evaluation tool **in-house** than to outsource it to an external agency.

Suitable application

In terms of evaluation, roundtables are suitable for receiving targeted expert feedback on topics of your interest. Look at the frameworks you have designed and outline which outcomes would benefit from expert feedback and discussion.

You can use roundtable discussions to evaluate certain strategic documents, or as a reflection on certain policies and events.

You can foster expert discussions on topics and themes your artistic work deals with, on particular art forms you explore, on certain activities of yours (like festivals, educational programs, community work), on matters that concern your professional domain, on topics that matter for your community or for the whole of society.

Themes that could positively gain depth and credibility by utilising this tool are: artistic quality, artistic innovation, well-being, community building, diversity, audience development.

You can use the evidence gathered through a roundtable discussion to support or – on the contrary – to refute certain statements of yours. As you can see in the Shared Vision Case Study, peer discussions are an excellent tool for consolidating vision and advocacy efforts within the sector.

When you organise a roundtable discussion as a qualitative tool for your self-evaluation purposes, you have to announce this in advance and obtain the participants' consent for audio recording and citation for that purpose. Hence, a possible disadvantage of this tool could be the reticence of some participants to discuss sensitive topics. For such matters it is better to choose the in-depth interview which allows you to keep the anonymity of the interviewee.

A roundtable discussion focuses on a particular theme and participants are chosen for their expertise on that theme (picture: IETM Satellite Brussels 2015, © Vincent Chartier)

How to conduct a roundtable for evaluation purposes

- **Preparation**

Depending on topic and purpose, you would invite peers, stakeholders, experts from different domains or all of the above. It is best to select one evaluation focus about which you would like to hear some expert opinions, and prepare a brief introduction and a set of evaluation questions before you start to select and invite the desired participants.

Create a list of suitable participants and contact them for their consent. About ten to twelve participants are optimal for this format. Choose participants wisely: as long as they will stand with their names, it is good to try to engage strong and reputed professionals. Try and ensure a balanced group in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and physical abilities (especially if you aim to gather feedback about the relevance and accessibility of your venue/work).

Prepare and distribute any suitable information materials so that participants are up to date with your activities before they take part in the roundtable discussion. Plan production visits and on the spot tours if appropriate.

Choose a skilful and competent facilitator to moderate the discussion if you prefer not to do it yourself. You need moderation to make sure the focus doesn't shift from your evaluation topic. Secure an appropriate venue, catering, accessibility of the room and facilities for people with special needs (even if nobody explicitly asks – for example, everybody prefers to avoid stairs if possible). Give the invited participants at least a month's notice of the date, time and location of the roundtable discussion. Find substitutes for those of your invitees who are not available. Depending on your specific conditions it might take a few weeks to schedule and prepare the event, so allow enough time and be persistent with the invitations.

- **During the roundtable discussion**

Typically, roundtable discussions last up to 90 minutes, but if you think you will need more time you can break the discussion into smaller sessions.

On the day of the roundtable discussion, check the venue and make sure everything is ready and working. Distribute all materials, hand-outs, consent forms and set up audio-recording equipment, etc.

Moderation is crucial for a successful roundtable because you need to make sure that everybody has contributed equally to the conversation and that your main topics of interest are discussed in a way that will provide evidence for your further analysis.

Most importantly, stimulate the participants to discuss among themselves, not with the moderator or with you.

Make sure the discussion is recorded and that you have a back-up option ready. By the end of the event, confirm that you have gathered everybody's consent to use their contribution. If you intend to publish pictures, make a video recording or cite statements and disclose the participants' names, make sure you have obtained explicit consent to do so.

Create a list of suitable participants and contact them for their consent. About ten to twelve participants are optimal for this format. Choose participants wisely: as long as they will stand with their names, it is good to try to engage strong and reputed professionals. Try and ensure a balanced group in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and physical abilities (especially if you aim to gather feedback about the relevance and accessibility of your venue/work).

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- **Postproduction**

Similarly to processing focus groups, you can either prepare a verbatim transcript of the discussion, or a summary report. It is important to prepare the transcripts and the report as soon as possible after the end of the discussion.

Double-check the statements you have decided to cite in the report with the participants concerned.

How to use the findings

You can use the knowledge and expert opinions you have gained through the roundtable discussions to inform your decision making, to draw a bigger picture of the topic you are interested in and to view it from a different perspective.

If you decide to schedule the roundtable at the beginning of your evaluation, the findings may serve as a basis for your further research.

Expert opinions can be a powerful tool to support your advocacy efforts and to raise awareness on certain issues in your agenda.

Roundtable discussions in brief

Carefully choose which topic in your agenda you wish to explore through an expert discussion.

Make sure you invite the right experts and allow them to acquaint themselves with your activities prior to the discussion.

Moderate the roundtable discussion so that everyone has the opportunity to contribute in a respectful atmosphere.

Record the discussion and prepare the transcripts as soon as possible. Prepare a summary report which outlines the key findings backed up by citations form the discussion.

Remember to collect the participants' consent for using their contribution and disclosing their identity.

RESOURCES

A. Warren-Payne, 'How to Moderate a Roundtable Discussion', in Medium, Oct., 2014

K. M. Konaté, A. Sidibé, 'Conducting discussion groups', in Excerpts fromGuides on Qualitative Research

B.6. CASE STUDIES

In essence, case studies are stories. If we loosely follow the famous formalist Vladimir Propp[1] in trying to define what a good case study is, we could say that it has to feature a prominent character, there has to be a specific problem and a solution has to be sought; and, after a fight, a quest, after overcoming all obstacles, the character will win, will cause a change, and we will all learn something in the end. (You can find more on this in the Resources section at the end of this chapter).

In the light of this, it would seem appropriate to develop your own case studies **in-house**. But if you need to get an outsider's view, or if you want to produce a more demanding case study format like a video or a feature film (see below), you can outsource this task as well. Depending on your purposes, your case studies might be promotional, showcasing your productions or activities, they might be educational, engaging audiences, they might aim to boost your fundraising and advocacy efforts. They might equally be a part of or a stand-alone piece in your self-evaluation - and this chapter elaborates more on this particular case.

By the beginning of the 20th century, case studies had found their place in social research methodology, and in recent decades they have gained popularity in evaluation. As with many of the qualitative research methods, a lot of controversy surrounds case studies. First, there is doubt whether they are a type of qualitative research, or a method, because they can combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Then, there is the question whether case studies are eligible as a research tool only when they assess a theory or a hypothesis; and not when they describe or explain a specific/real case (the latter being common in evaluations).

Many critics of this research method argue that case studies just present anecdotal evidence of a certain phenomenon; that they are subjective; that they don't provide sound ground for generalisations, hence cannot serve as valid proof for assumptions. If these objections are difficult to ignore, why has the number of case studies been rising in recent years? Perhaps the reason lies in the case study's high versatility.

An influential proponent of the case study as a research method, Robert Yin, defines it 'as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used'[2]. Basically, case studies delve into a particular case of interest – be it a person, an organisation, a project, a program, a period of time or a particular community – in connection with a specific topic of interest.

1 V. Propp, 'Morphology of the Folk Tale'
2 R. K. Yin, 'Case Study Research: Design and Methods'

Still from the Norwich Theatre Royal case study (source: Vimeo, © Julie's Bicycle Ltd.)

You can implement a case study over a single case or over several cases. You can arrange it as longitudinal observation or as a short-term snapshot. Robert Stake differentiates intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies.

The first type is focused on 'a unique case, deserving to be studied on its own right'.

The second type asserts that even though the case is unique, it gives insight into 'other situations or cases'.

Collective case studies, as the name suggests, refer to sets of several cases: events, people, projects, etc.[3]

In terms of approach, you can choose to develop an exploratory, a descriptive or explanatory case study (Yin, 2009).

The exploratory type is usually developed in the initial phase of the research with the aim of exploring the phenomenon to test the research hypothesis and to prepare to implement the study design.

The descriptive case study is set towards a methodologically valid description of the studied phenomenon and hence, it is close to observation as a research method.

If you go for the exploratory approach, you should scrutinise your case in depth and propose an explanation of the observed phenomena.

3 R. Stake, 'The Art of Case Study Research'

Whatever your case study type is, the data gathered would be represented in the form of a narrative, more readable and engaging than the typical evaluation report (see Chapter 3.6 - The evaluation report). If you opt for a video format, then the result is usually even more persuasive. You might say that a good case study is somewhere between impact evaluation and advocacy; and systematically revealing what difference you make, while telling the story in an outstanding way, provides a strong base for any argument.

Suitable application

The persuasiveness of the narrative, together with its focus on the particular, its limited prospects for valid generalisation, and its proneness to bias, raise some coherent arguments against using case studies as a valid method for evaluation.

But what is a disadvantage for rigorous academic research might be just right for your evaluation needs. The holistic approach of case studies allows you to consider the context while delving into the particular case. They are flexible enough to let you incorporate any new meaningful findings. Being focused on an exact phenomenon and exploring it in-depth, they allow for making valid conclusions at least within the frame of the explored case.

Regarding evaluation in the arts, the main advantage of the case study method is that it correlates with the highly individual way each of us experiences and is affected by art. Thus it allows us to tell the compelling story of the intangible human-art interaction.

The case study method serves best when your goal is exploring 'either a descriptive question (what happened?) or an explanatory question (how or why did something happen?)' (Yin, 2009).

It is also relevant to develop a case study when you prefer to apply an in-depth exploration of a particular phenomenon, or to make a particular case an illustrative example of your overall research.

A case study is most suitable when you want to tell a story and to share it with various audiences. It is your tool of choice if you are not hesitant to look into the deeper meaning of the particular – just because in the arts each case is different.

How to develop a case study

Let us take a real-life example of a case study and try to identify the features mentioned so far. We will look only into the case study structure and will not delve into content details or into how the data was gathered.

For ease of reference, the example is a short video case study (2'55") that is easier to grasp than a text narrative.

The case study presents the efforts that Norwich Theatre Royal (UK) is making to reduce their environmental impact; an undertaking that has been consulted by an agency called Julie's Bicycle, which has developed the Creative Green programme to help arts organisations enhance their environmental sustainability. The three-minute video is part of the overall case study page of Norwich Theatre Royal on the consultant's webpage, which features a collection of case studies of all sorts of arts organisations and businesses they have consulted on reducing their environmental footprint.

The next page provides two different ways to look at the case study.

So, if we analyse this video case study as a story, here is what we have:

the kingdom	Norwich Theatre Royal
the king	Chief Executive of the theatre
the hero	the nice environmental champion
the problem	the evil of energy wasting, ecological threats and higher expenses for the theatre
the quest	to reduce energy consumption and recycle as much as possible
the helpers	the green team; the wardrobe department that recycled restaurant curtains into costumes; the sets and scenery department that builds decors and scenery from old materials
the fight(s)	installing movement sensors in the toilets; separate bins for recycling; replacing an old boiler; switching to LED; reducing water usage; raising recycling up to 77%
the change	using less energy and water; recycling more; switching to 100% renewable energy tariff; printing all events brochures on FSC approved paper; turning sustainability from campaign into routine.
the prize	a three star Creative Industry Green rating - the theatre is sustainable and has a reduced environmental impact. Live theatre will be here for the years to come
the lesson	if there is a will, there is a way; and the way to sustainability is made of little steps that make the difference

And here is a classification of the case study observed as a tool for evaluation:

timeframe	at least one year period of intervention and monitoring
scope	a case study of a single case
type	intrinsic, 'a unique case, deserving to be studied on its own right', although it could give insights into similar situations and cases. In fact, the main source has a collection of further case studies on introducing sustainability to the creative sector
approach	the story of securing sustainability is told retrospectively. The approach is a combination of a descriptive case study (describes the measures and efforts undertaken and points out their effect over time) and an exploratory one, which proposes an explanation of the observed phenomena.
methodology	a combination of a qualitative approach (showing examples like the old hoovers which were used as part of sets for performances); and a quantitative approach (Hellen Tully, the environmental champion, cites the exact values and percentages of water saving and recycling volumes. In addition, an infographic is featured at 01:09)

When you plan the scenario for your case study, be it a written narrative or a video like the example above, you will consider these matters of structure and approach. To get a clearer idea, you can analyse other examples from the collection of actual case studies in the arts in the resources section below, in IETM's 'Mapping of Types of Impact Research', in the IETM mapping 'Creation and Displacement', or from your own practice.

- **Preparation phase: case study design**

If you decide to work **in-house**, and if you plan to use case studies not only as promotional material but also as a reliable component of your evaluation, you should take precautions against possible overgeneralisation and methodology inconsistencies. Be prepared to spend a few extra hours reading theoretical writing on the topic. If you find this an overwhelming effort that wears out your enthusiasm, you may be better off choosing the relatively lighter approach of the exploratory case study type.

Regardless of what type of case study you choose, or whether you work **in-house** or hire a consultant, a carefully prepared case study design is pivotal.

First of all, decide whether you will develop the case study as a stand-alone project or make it a part of your evaluation methodology along with other evaluation tools. The latter case implies a 'lighter' version of a case study and the former a more detailed and in-depth one.

Of course, you have to decide on the format of your case study report in advance. If you wish to produce a film you would apply quite different – and more expensive – data gathering techniques than those you would employ for a trivial written narrative report.

The target audience of your case study piece (written report or a video film) should be taken into consideration, as well as the possible multiple uses of your case study: impact evaluation, promotion, audience development, advocacy, etc. (more on this in How to use the findings, below).

Then you have to determine the research focus. Examine your project's framework (see Chapter 3.1 - Design...) and decide which outcomes are suitable for assessment through case study. You can choose to examine an event, a project, or a person's relationship with your work. You can try to find the reasons for these manifestations or you can try to identify how the phenomenon you observe changes due to your intervention. In addition, bear in mind which aspects can make it a good story to tell.

You can find many tutorials on how to develop a case study, which are helpful despite referring chiefly to the health care and educational fields.

The focus you choose will lead you to your what, how and why questions. These evaluation questions you ask in order to get data from the field will serve as the backbone of your case study. It is especially important to be consistent if you choose to prepare a collective set of several case studies.

Select wisely the cases you will examine. For instance, if you wish to demonstrate how a particular project of yours involves certain people from a specific group, would the people involved agree to share their story? If you decide to present a case study of a festival you host and how it affects the local community, would you be able to collect enough data to prepare a consistent case study? Determine whether you would need multiple case studies to investigate your assumption or a single one. Also, choose between instrumental or intrinsic types of case study (see above). Once again, look for the story.

One of the advantages of the case study tool is that you can apply multiple data gathering methods, both qualitative and quantitative, to analyse your cases. You will certainly apply observation and interviews, gather documental evidence, implement a survey to obtain quantifiable data and so on. The challenge with case studies is that you have to determine your data gathering methods in advance and adhere to them strictly throughout the collection phase, no matter how many case studies you have to collect.

Starting from the design phase, you must seek to guarantee the validity and reliability of your case study endeavour (on this crucial research topic see Chapter 3.5 - What is validity? where you will find a list of readings accompanied by the advice to seek expert support on these issues).

Another important thing to deal with before you go out into the field is to secure a consistent data collection routine for each method, each case study and each researcher in the process. Everyone in the research team has to share common concepts, methods, techniques fixed within established guidelines for data gathering. Databases for categorising data should be prepared in advance.

- **Fieldwork: data collection phase**

You should make sure to follow the correct procedures that are applicable for each particular research method you employ, be it interview, observation, focus group, survey or other (see the corresponding chapters in this section for more details). If you have already collected your field material you will then make a selection according to your case study scope and criteria.

Note that if you have decided to conduct a case study focused on a particular person or community, you will need their permission and consent not only for interviewing but also for taking photos, video recording and subsequent publication. Always comply with the regulations regarding personal information that apply to your region and make sure you work in the frame of the Code of Ethics and the best practices of conduct.

- **Case study production: analysis and reporting**

The reporting as well as the fieldwork on case studies is quite specific to the type of case study you have decided to implement. Still, there are some generic points that are worth mentioning.

Since various research methods will have been applied, the case study provides you with the opportunity for consistent validity checks of the raw data acquired (see Chapter 3.5 - What is validity?).

You should apply all the methods for validation you envisaged during the design phase of the case study (see Chapter 3.1 - Design...). Then you have to arrange your data so that it gradually reveals the aspects of your research topic and, of course, in a way that it tells a convincing story to its audiences.

Unlike other research methods, case study reports are not supposed to follow a strict structure, thus opening space for creativity.

Perhaps you will find it easier to convey the case by following the chronological path. If you have opted for a collective case study, you can either prepare separate chapters on each case or organise all cases around your research topics.

Keep your research questions as a backbone.

Aggregate data and outline your conclusions in a convincing yet reliable and consistent manner.

Do shed light on counterarguments too.

Take the opportunity to inform your audience about the overall context of your case.

Once again, keep in mind the audience of your case study, and what their goals and expectations are. Do not forget to open the report explaining your goals for conducting the case study and the methodology applied. It is a good idea to include a literature review if you are preparing a more academic written report on the case study.

Once your piece is ready, share it with as many respondents and peers as possible. Their testimony on the correctness of your data and conclusions is crucial for validating your case study. If you are preparing a video presentation of your case study it is a good idea to conduct this check while things are still on script.

A few final amendments, and hopefully your narrative will end up being a compelling, convincing and inspiring story, and at the same time a careful study with just and valid conclusions.

How to use the findings

Let us turn back to the case study from our example. We know that the consultancy agency, Julie's Bicycle, uses it to showcase its work. In addition, the collection of case studies on their webpage serves as a sort of best practices educational compendium which can be quite useful for many arts organisations and businesses striving to become more environmentally friendly.

But what about Norwich Theatre Royal? What use do they make of their environmental case study?

Already from looking at the theatre's webpage it is apparent that they take environmental issues seriously, having started their green programme back in 2008/9. The environmental impact takes up a whole page in the theatre's annual 4-page Social Impact leaflet stating figures that show a gradual reduction in wasted energy and supplies. The 'About us' section features a page dedicated to the theatre's Environmental work. Alongside the bullet point information on the progress so far, there is a link to a short case study report, to the video case study, and to a 26-page report with lots of numerical data. Which of these do you think collects the most views?

It is only fair to admit that case studies – especially in the arts and culture field – are unlikely to achieve the callous objectivity of quantitative surveys, or even the levels of reliability of observations and focus groups. Therefore it is better not to rely solely on the case study, but to employ other methods too, in order to demonstrate fully the impact of your activities. On the other hand, no other part of an evaluation report would have the freedom and scope to be as convincing as the case study.

You can disseminate your case studies through all your communication channels because they are more suitable for broader audiences. If you tell 'real stories about real people' and if it feels as if you are sharing your story honestly, you might appear more approachable and open for dialogue; which might attract new audiences to get to know your work better. Your case studies can be used with equal success in official presentations to your public funders and in informal conversations at fundraising parties, because they are versatile and adaptable.

The media are usually more responsive to good stories than to dry reports, so case studies will make it easier for your cause to be heard.

Last, but not least, the next time someone provokingly asks you why their tax money should go into your art, you will have an unexpected new story to tell.

Case studies in brief

Look for a compelling story to tell.

Tell it well.

Do not forget to actually put data into it.

Share it!

RESOURCES

- **On stories**

V. Propp, 'Morphology of the Folk Tale', Publications of the American Folklore Society, Austin, 1968

'Propp's Morphology of the Folk Tale', in Changingminds

'Literary Theory: Morphology of the Folktale (1928) by Vladimir Propp', in The Narratologist, June 2014

- **Case studies design**

M. Shuttleworth, 'Case Study Research Design', in Explorable, 2013

S. K. Soy, 'The Case Study as a Research Method', in Universoty of Texas School of Information, 2006

C. McNamara, 'Basics of Developing Case Studies', in Free Management Library

University of Leicester, 'Other forms of qualitative research', in Introduction to Research

R. K. Yin, 'Case Study Research: Design and Methods', SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009

'Why Culture Matters, Advocacy toolkit', in Art Council England

- **Case study as a research method**

E. Milliot, 'Case Study as a Research Method', in Adelaide Business School (In English, with references in French)

R. Stake, 'The Art of Case Study Research', SAGE Publications, 1995

R. O'Sullivan, 'SI11 Session 11: Case Study Methods for Evaluators', in American Evaluation Association, August 2011

A. B. Starman, 'The Case Study as a Type of Qualitative Research' in Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies 1/2013

- **How to create case study reports**

A. Zantal-Wiener, 'How to Write a Case Study: The Ultimate Guide & Template', in HubPost Blog, Feb. 2017

'8 Tips For Creating a Great Case Study', in Kissmetrics Blog

Case Study Template in demandmetric

'Writing a Case Study', in USC Libraries

A. Shepard, 'Tell a Story! A Guide to Storytelling', in Aaron Shepard's Storytelling Page, 1996

- **Case studies from the arts field**

The following list is exemplar for state of the arts in case studies in the field and not as exactly good practices to follow. As a matter of fact, some of them are rather not.

'Case Studies', in The Results Group for the Arts (TRG Arts), 2017

'Case Studies', in Arts Council of England, 2012-2017

'Case Studies', in World Cities Culture Forum

'Performing Arts Case Studies', in Slover Linett Audience Research

'Case Studies', in Luna Dance Institute

W. Siegel, J. Jacobsen, 'The Challenges of Interactive Dance: An Overview and Case Study', Computer Music Journal Vol. 22, No. 4 (Winter, 1998), pp. 29-43

S. Young, '"It's a Bit like Flying": Developing Participatory Theatre with the Under-Twos--A Case Study of Oily Cart'

'Case Studies Exploring the Competencies of Artists and Creative Practitioners', in Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE)

T. Janke, 'Minding Culture. Case Studies on Intellectual Property and Traditional Cultural Expressions', in WIPO

C. DOCUMENT ASSESSMENT

Studying your organisation's documents in a structured manner will contribute to your evaluation by adding background information and revealing aspects of your work that usually go unseen. In addition, document analysis serves for validity checks of certain findings, statements and assumptions that arise from the data you have collected through other evaluation tools.

C.1. Document analysis

Keeping your documentation in order is by all means healthy for your organisation. Knowledge of what you have in terms of documents becomes even more important when you start to think about conducting an evaluation. Assessing your collection of documents is the first step towards your evaluation. It is a task that can be managed entirely **in-house**.

Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material[1]. This definition gives the impression of something quite disconnected from anything that concerns art; but is it really so?

More often than not, only the 'piece' that the audience perceives is considered 'art(work)', although it is only the tip of the iceberg, with much more work 'behind the scenes'. This work can be traced in the documents of your organisation.

Governing documents that would enter your document analysis list include: constitution or rules, mission, vision, goals; codes; artistic manifesto statements; operational rules and procedures, financial documents, procurement contracts, staff records; funding applications, project proposals, contest applications; monitoring reports, studies, survey papers; memberships, workshop and conference papers, network cooperation documents; production documentation, repertoire development; programming schemes, PR and marketing documents, press clippings, audience development.

Do not forget to collect data and documents from your (international) tours and the – overall less accessible – data on audience numbers, press clippings etc. collected by your host. This can be a time-consuming task if it has not been stated as a condition in your contract that they should supply you with this information within a certain timeframe.

All data from your routine monitoring activities should be utilised in full: the number of productions, visitors, tickets sold, i.e. all the items from the Output section of your conceptual framework (see Chapter 3.1 - Design...).

A pivotal section of your documentation is your artistic documentation. It can be in written, audio, video, visual form (see Chapter C.1 - Artistic Documentation).

It is a good idea to add any external documents that would add to revealing the background of your work, like arts and culture policy documents that are relevant for your region; statistic data on your sector; documents that are relevant for your target audiences; documents that concern your region of action. Any documents that inspire your artistic work should probably be part of your artistic documentation archive (see next chapter).

Social media data is also appropriate to enter your document collection and become a subject for your document analysis. The reason is that your social media presence is a separate 'product' that offers a specific 'experience' to its audience.

This should also be the case with your audience databases and website visitors (see Chapter A.3 - Audience Database).

Social media data should enter your document collection and become a subject for your document analysis.

Suitable application

Document analysis is a good starting point for your self-evaluation. This preliminary check of what you have so far will inform your overall evaluation goals and topics. It will set the context of your evaluation.

Document analysis is often used in combination with other research methods for methodological triangulation, i.e. combining more than one research method to study the same topic and thus 'reduce the impact of potential biases that can exist in a single study'[2].

1 Bowen, 'Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method'

2 Bowen, cit.

How to conduct a document analysis

You might consider outsourcing it but document analysis is a task that can be done **in-house** mostly without additional effort.

Nevertheless, the last thing you need is to drown yourself in an endless sea of documents, and have no time left for much more exciting evaluation methods like interviews, surveys or observations. Even worse, this could keep you from practicing your art for quite a while.

Therefore it is important to set clear goals in compliance with your overall evaluation framework. For example, if you aim to research whether and how your artwork affects certain community groups, it is hardly of any use to go into the details of your internal organisational documents. In general, the depth of your document analysis depends on the extent to which it reflects your research questions. Develop a checklist and criteria to rate your documents according to their relevance.

If you make audience the main focus of your survey, you should pay specific attention to your audience communication materials: press releases, brochures, editions, photo and video materials, channels for online communication, etc.

Bear in mind that analysing your social media followers will not provide valid information for your audience. Rather, you will assess the qualities of your social media presence, the communities of followers you get there and, possibly, how your online content interacts with them. Here, once again, 'likes' do not necessarily mean they like you or your content - they may just mean that you have emitted suitable content at the right moment.

If your evaluation aims to reveal the levels of artistic quality, innovation, inclusiveness, etc. of your artwork, you may want to examine in detail your press clippings with critical acclaim, peer review, nominations and awards.

If you want to tackle issues of sustainability, carbon footprint and so on, then a lot of procurement documents, maintenance procedures, etc. will find their place in your collection.

A special case of document analysis is the analysis of your repertoire or programme. It can be focused towards problems of artistic essence as well as broader issues like diversity, inclusion, sustainability.

How to use the findings

A survey report based predominantly on document analysis would not make for an interesting read (apart, probably, from a repertoire analysis). What your document analysis can add to your evaluation is broader context and background. It can also make up for insufficient quantitative data. For example, if you use an online ticketing system that can track how many times a certain person has bought tickets for your productions, you can then skip the question 'How often do you visit us?' from your questionnaire.

You can use document analysis findings to double check and validate your conclusions based on results from other qualitative and quantitative methods of your assessment as well (see Chapter 3.5 - What is validity?).

RESOURCES

G. Bowen, 'Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method', in Qualitative Research Journal, vol.9, No 2, 2009

C.2. Artistic documentation

As we have seen in the chapter above, working with collections of documents is a standard method which usually accompanies other research endeavours and provides evidence and opportunity to cross-check findings.

Performing arts are ephemeral in time (and no two performances are the same). If you want to preserve a performance, to 'carry' it through time, you have to document it somehow. Therefore it is hard to imagine any performing arts organisation that does not keep an archive of some kind. It is the memory and at the same time, it is the body of their work.

It is a task that, in one way or another, you perform **in-house** in your daily work. But you can also turn it into a tool for your evaluation.

Artistic documentation can be in written, audio, video or visual form. Besides all the press materials and other ephemera that surround a show, it includes documenting the performance itself, mostly via photos and video clips, as well as some rehearsals and preproduction meetings. Sometimes audiences are documented in eye-catching atmospheric photos and videos. Depending on the organisation's workload, some productions get more attention than others. Some are not documented at all.

This leads to the major disadvantage of relying on documentation for your analysis: an uneven, inconsistent archive would allow only partial analysis. Therefore, if you want to do research work with your archive (well, why wouldn't you: it is an inexpensive, relatively straightforward task that can provide some good arguments and evidence for issues concerning your work), it is important to structure and diversify the collections and to feed them systematically with documents from your work.

How to document your work

First of all, you should decide what research topics your artistic documentation would address, to help you work out what to document (categories of documents). The typical case is to document the performances on their première and not to bother with anything else. It is a pity, however, to let good quality evidence to simply disappear undocumented.

A lot of work during rehearsals goes unnoticed, but if you want to address for instance the theme of development of artistic quality, it will be beneficial to have rehearsals documented. Designing and building a scene or a set, the costumes, castings, creation of posters, printing processes, marketing briefs, touring and traveling; any of the behind-the-scenes processes are worth archiving, along with the documentation of the show itself .

Oswald Road Primary School kids prepare their costumes for Manchester Day 2016. Behind the scenes is no less interesting for an evaluation than the performance itself. (© Vassilka Shishkova)

Documents from your audience development activities or your work with communities will add to the findings you acquire through other research methods. Open doors days, discussions, gatherings, contact with communities etc. are good sources of material for building the context of your work.

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As you can see from the example of NauCoclea's Grand Tour, you can team up with other arts professionals like photographers, filmmakers, writers, illustrators to work on your artistic documentation.

Your audience can be a wonderful resource for input through social media, email, your website or on-the-spot when you show your work. They may well be glad to contribute with their footage either for free or for incentives like tickets, meeting the artistic team, behind-the-scenes tours, etc.

1 You can find a representative collection of performing art archives in J. Burgheim, in 'Live Performances in Digital Times' (chapter 'Documentation - Archiving – Conservation't)

At the same time, this interaction may offer good opportunities for audience engagement and for amplifying your social media presence.

Once your archive starts to build up you will need a system of tags and keywords to simplify searches.

Needless to say, you should protect your archive and make regular backups.

How to use the findings

You will certainly use your archive to provide evidence for your activities and to inform your artistic decisions. In fact, you can create a story – a case study – out of your artistic documentation and use it to show what is important about your organisation.

In your evaluation, your artistic documentation will provide the natural context of the phenomena you examine and will serve as a cross-reference for the rest of your findings.

Decide who would be your target audience (your board members, funders, peers or broader audiences) and what would be your channels for dissemination. Choose the right professionals to recreate your story from your artistic archive or initiate a dedicated project.

Unlike the analysis of your overall organisational documentation, your artistic archive can serve to make standalone material: a video or photo collection, a feature article, a catalogue. It is an effective way to tell your story (just make sure you distinguish between research and promotion).

An audiovisual ethnography study can develop into a poetic, emotive and inspiring story that stays closer to art than to evaluation; and on this sole occasion, this will not be a drawback.

Opening performance at Grand Tour 2016. Those moments when the artist and the audience become one... (© Vassilka Shishkova)

RESOURCES

Resources for Performing Arts Cataloguers, in UKOLN, 2013

'Performing Arts Collection', in Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

A. Weitz, F. Fitztgerald, 'DIY Guide: Top Tips for Documenting Your Projects', in Trans Europe Halles, 2011

I. Berbain, C. Obligi, 'Preserving Theater Ephemera, from Programs to Websites', in Hybrid, Jan. 2014

J. Burgheim, 'Live Performances in Digital Times', IETM, 2016

Tanzfonds Erbe

Asia Art Archive

Archives of American Art

S. Pink, 'Doing Ethnography: Images, Media and Representation in Research', SAGE, London, 2001 - Review by L. Mullen

S. Pink, 'Doing Visual Ethnography', SAGE, London, 2014

W. Shrum, R. B. Duque, 'Film and Video in Qualitative Research', in The World Science Project

C. Caffe, R. Hikiji, 'Vibrant: Virtual Brazilian Anthropology', in SciElo Brazil

Visual Ethnography Journal

D. SOME ADDITIONAL NOTES

If you want to obtain valuable knowledge and insight into your work from a different perspective, there are some options you can carry out entirely by yourself and without the need to venture into any kind of evaluation.

D.1. The power of data

Regardless of whether you have committed to conducting an assessment or not, systematically collected data is always useful.

For instance, if you have developed the habit of taking pictures of the audience in the lobby before they enter a show, and you have been doing it for some time, that photographic evidence may help you notice things, like the entrance-blocking ticket booth, which you might then move to a place where it won't bother the flow. Or if you decide to issue a brochure for acting classes, you might make use of photos you have taken at rehearsals.

There is a general rise in picture-taking at the workplace for various uses: the whole smiling team for Facebook, a glimpse of the ticket queue for Twitter, your feet on stage for Instagram, and so on. This is all very nice and effective, but will more likely feed promotional materials than your research data archive.

For an archive of that kind you need to design and establish a system for data gathering (see Chapter C.1 - Document analysis). Decide what to photoshoot and what to take videos of. If you systematically conduct an hour long observation; decide when and on what subjects. Aesthetic qualities or the advertising potential of the material are not an issue. You have to be as objective as possible.

Similar rules apply for paper documents: brochures, posters, programmes, project proposals, and so on.

D.2. Know the people

The people who come to see your productions are not just audience. They are persons. They might live in the neighbourhood or travel to watch you. They have their own lives, families, professions, memories, attitudes. They certainly have their own views on art and on your work too. It is worth getting to know them and what matters for them. Not that it has to affect your artistic work in any way, but it is bound to give you a different, evidence-based perspective if you start to ask questions. (Normally people are eager to share their opinions.)

Once in a while you might distribute short (three questions, not more) questionnaires before a show – some audience members may be willing to volunteer.

You can organise a meeting after the show: either in the hall or in a bar. You can organise an informal feast gathering in the neighbourhood, or join one.

In a casual atmosphere, with something tasty to eat and drink, you might start a conversation about art and other things. You might test your concepts or get feedback on a questionnaire. You might look for unusual persons to make a case study about.

Some researchers might argue that organising informal meetings could create bias because people would tend to be more positive in their attitude towards you. Those researchers are best left to their concerns. (Even with an experimental intervention there is doubt whether it is the intervention that causes the impact or the mere fact that someone is doing something.)

Being calm, relaxed and open to any comments may not be easy, but it will be rewarding in the end. It will give you an insight into other people's views; and bring you knowledge and self-understanding.

Who knows, maybe it will help you gain new audiences, and people who care about you and your work. You too might bring something new to their lives – by letting them get to know you.

ANNEX

Annex 1 - Templates

Project Logical Framework - Blank template

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts

Evaluation Logical Framework - Blank template

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts

Annex 2 - The shortest guide to self-evaluation

If you only consider conducting evaluation but have no specific idea, plan or obligation:

- set up your monitoring procedures: count people, events, projects
- consolidate your audience database
- organize your documents
- shape up your documentation practices
- start to look at people around you (performers, workers, audience members) and to collect stories

Then, if you decide to conduct an evaluation:

- define what you want to evaluate
- align with your core activities / projects
- plan an indicative budget (funding source) and a timeframe

What's your intention?

If you will publish your evaluation report and distribute it widely, if you will use it as evidence for your impact; if the evaluation has been publicly funded; if your funders have specific requirements: **you need a full body evaluation** (plan A)	If you will use the evaluation internally, for advocacy purposes, for fundraising: **you can use a mix of evaluation modules to make your point** (plan B)

Consider your resources, design your evaluation & decide your tools:

plan A: full evaluation		plan B: evaluation mix	
if you have a budget: it is better to select an external evaluator	if you have no budget: It is better to wait until a budget is available OR proceed with plan B instead	if you have a budget: consider hiring an external consultant for certain elements of the evaluation	if you have no budget: consider which tools are more relevant and which ones you can skip

your tools: (plan A, if you have a budget)
quantitative survey
online survey
focus group
group discussion / round table
in-depth interview
observation
case study
document analysis
art archive

your tools: (plan B, if you have a budget)
online survey
focus group
group discussion / round table
in-depth interview
observation
authoethnography
case study
document analysis
art archive

your tools: (plan B, if you have no budget)
online survey
in-depth interview
observation
authoethnography
case study
document analysis
art archive