Creative People and Places

Project Evaluation Guidance

This guide sets out potential areas and questions to think through and help in conducting local evaluations for Creative People and Places (CPP) projects. It aims to help clarify the benefits of evaluating your CPP project, how to do so and what needs to be included to inform the national CPP programme evaluation and meet the local evaluation requirements. The core of any local evaluation should be focused on the extent to which the programme is delivering against the three research questions:

1. Are more people from places of least engagement experiencing and inspired by the arts?
2. To what extent was the aspiration for excellence of art and excellence of the process of engaging communities achieved?
3. Which approaches were successful and what were the lessons learned?

Evaluation tests whether the project or programme being implemented solves the problem being addressed

Arts Council England (ACE) supports and recognises the need for evaluation to be undertaken both by ourselves and by the projects we fund in order to help us and the sector:
- Understand the impact of the project or programme
- Identify if objectives are being met, what is working well, what is not working well, for who and why, to learn from mistakes
- Inform decision making and policy development
- Improve implementation and delivery of the project or programme
- Provide ACE with further evidence to support our goals and outcomes

Planning your evaluation

Your project evaluation should be conducted independently to allow for a fair and objective evaluation and should be part of your project plan from the very beginning to ensure the full impact of your project is understood and there is data from the start to compare to for evidence. When commissioning an evaluator, it is best practice to go out to tender for the opportunity. **Defining the project objectives, targets and intended outcomes**

Objectives and intended outcomes
This helps be clear about the what, why, who and when of your project. A logic model or theory of change is a useful visual tool to setting out this information and how the project activities will lead to the outputs, outcomes and impact – all of which are defined below.

Activities	Specific elements which make up the project i.e. resources invested; staff, partnerships, orgs or

processes which are used to bring about the projects intended change

Outputs
Direct products of the activities which are required to achieve the outcomes of the project and normally are measurable i.e. no. of events, no. of participants, no. of commissions etc.

Outcomes
The expected changes/changes needed to drive the overall project impact. These can be split into

short term outcomes (change during the project) e.g. awareness, knowledge, learning and skills and long-term outcomes (change towards the end of the project and into the future) e.g. behaviours, ways of working, policies and decisions

Impact
Reflects the overarching aim of the project and the long-term change or goal the project is intending to achieve

SMART targets
An important part of the CPP projects is fully understanding and responding to the demographic of your place. Setting clear targets and a baseline for audience, participation and engagement from the beginning of your project will be crucial for benchmarking your project and in fully demonstrating your projects impact.

The outputs from your logic model can be a helpful starting point for thinking through appropriate targets for your projects which should be:
- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**ealistic
- **T**ime-limited

Setting SMART targets at the beginning of your project which are observable and measurable will enable monitoring and evaluation of your project to be undertaken throughout. Examples of targets could be; increases in audience engagement levels, delivery of activities or events, or the effectiveness of engagement in the delivery of your project's activities or events. It is important to understand how you will demonstrate you are meeting these targets and what data is available to enable quarterly monitoring of your progress against the targets.

Developing your evaluation plan
There are many questions which you should consider when starting to develop an evaluation plan, such as:
- What questions will your evaluation answer?
- How will you undertake the evaluation?
- What methods do you plan to use to capture evaluation data?
- How will you evidence performance against your audiences and participants targets?
- Will any emerging lessons be fed back into the work of your project and if so, how?

- How much budget is available for the evaluation? Is this proportionate to the scale of the project?
- How will any evaluation reports or results be communicated to stakeholders and the public?

All CPP projects <u>must answer the 3 core research questions</u> (directly and separately from any additional research that your project carries out).

Time and resources for evaluation

Your evaluation should be conducted from the start of your project right through to the end. You also need to ensure that you have set aside an appropriate budget to both undertake and manage your evaluation. It is your responsibility as the project to conduct the evaluation, ensuring independence, objectivity, transparency and value for money. . Some of the main questions to think through at this stage are:

- Who will be responsible for project management and quality assurance of the evaluation?
- When does the data collection need to take place, what methods will be used and who will do it?
- When will the evaluation begin and end?

Data Collection

Setting a baseline
Setting a baseline to show progress against your targets is important to do before you begin your project. Datasets such as Active Lives and Audience Finder can help identify and understand what the baseline level of engagement is within your place. Additionally, understanding the local demographic and the relevant local needs to your project is required such as health and wellbeing data or data around the engagement of children and young people.

Data collection areas
Additionally, there are several other areas of interest which your CPP project evaluation should consider capturing data on to help inform the overall CPP programme evaluation and help you understand what your project has delivered and the impact. These include but are not limited to:

- Progress against your CPP project business plan and whether or not you have met your targets and the context, this should include data on audiences and participants and performance against targets
- Learning from delivering your project (both positive and negative)
- Examples of how your CPP project has involved the community in shaping the project and the programming of the project
- Additional outcomes of your project
- Legacy examples

- Partnerships
- Project Grant applications supported
- New organisations established

An important part of this is identifying whether your project is capturing the data to answer the above criteria and the 3 main CPP research questions. Some of these areas will be drawing on data submitted to ACE, via your quarterly data return and quarterly and annual narrative submissions, as part of the CPP programme and some will need to be captured through your own project evaluation using data collection method(s) you feel are best suited.

Data collection methods

Choosing the best data collection method should be based on what your evaluation is aiming to find out and the resources available. As a CPP project, there are several data resources which you have available and which will need to be utilised to feed into your evaluation including: Audience Agency data, the Impact and Insight toolkit and your individual narrative reports and quarterly data submissions. Other sources of data might be available and appropriate for you to consider, your Relationship Manager can advise on additional data sources you may wish to incorporate into your evaluation.

It is important to understand what data your project is already collecting and reporting through these sources and if there are any gaps. If there are gaps, what other information is available and/or what data collection methods are best suited to fill these. The key questions to be thought through in doing so are:

- What level of robustness is required for the evaluation?
- What is needed to be known about the difference the project has made or how is has been delivered?
- Who is responsible for data collection and what processes need to be set up?

Evaluation findings and conclusions

There are several specific areas which need to be captured and reported on in your CPP project evaluation. These are required both to help you understand the impact of your project but also to help ACE and other stakeholders understand what has been delivered, the impact of your project along with what has worked well and what hasn't and key learnings. The key questions to think about and report on are:

- What are the findings of the data collection?
- What conclusions can be drawn from the findings about what the project delivered and what impacts can be identified as a result?
- How was the project delivered?

Reporting and dissemination

As a CPP project, there are various elements which your evaluation report needs to include, these are:

- Highlights from the project

- Progress against your business plan and whether or not your project has met your targets and the context (you may not have met your targets but what have you learnt and how has that influenced your future plans?)
- What did you learn? This could be positive and negative, and what would you do differently? Have you shared your learning within and beyond the CPP network and how?
- Your progress against answering the three research questions
- Examples of how your project has involved the community in shaping the project and having a say about the art that is programme in their local community? What worked well , what worked less well in this context?
- Partnership data and evidence including; how has partnership working impacted on your project? Have you created significant new partnerships that have enabled you to work in a different way and programme or create work that you have not done previously? What is the legacy of the partnerships that you have created?
- Information on any Project Grant applications that you have supported and/or any new organisations that have been established through your project
- Any additional outcomes from your project i.e. joint commissions, has any work that you have commissioned toured?
- Examples of the legacy of your project (supply and demand)
- Summary/overview of your future plans and next steps where appropriate
- How the evaluation findings have been/are to be shared and disseminated to stakeholders? And how the results of the evaluation are to be/have been acted upon?

A final evaluation report is required to be submitted to ACE to meet your final payment condition and will be assessed in terms of meeting the requirements set out above in this document.

Useful Links

W.K Kellogg Foundation – Logic Model Development Guide

W.K Kellogg Foundation – Step by Step Guide to Evaluation

Better Evaluation

NCVO – Impact and Evaluation