



Arts Council Response to Quality Metrics trial

We welcome the publication of these reports that provide useful insight into the Quality Metrics national test phase. They demonstrate the exciting potential for this approach to engage cultural organisations, artists, and the public; and importantly highlight the challenges that need to be overcome for the framework to achieve its full potential.

Quality Metrics is a sector-led metrics framework that uses self, peer and public assessment to capture the quality of arts and cultural work. The framework takes its inspiration from a project initiated by the Department for Culture and the Arts in Western Australia in 2010 and Arts Council England has been supporting its development in England since 2013.

In September 2015 Arts Council England gave a grant of £300,000 to Counting What Counts Ltd, to support a diverse range of 150 National Portfolio Organisations and Major Partner Museums to test the Quality Metrics evaluation framework across three events, exhibitions or performances between November 2015 and May 2016. Counting What Counts also supported 20 organisations to further develop and test a set of participatory metrics that closely align with our CYP Quality Principles. We contracted Nordicity to complete an independent evaluation of the project.

Our thanks go to the arts and cultural organisations that gave their time and hard work to the project, to Counting What Counts Ltd for supporting them through the process and providing such an interesting report on the aggregate data, and to Nordicity for helping us understand the challenges organisations faced throughout the trial and providing practical solutions to overcome them.

The project has produced the largest ever anonymised standardised dataset on the quality of cultural experiences in England. The data gives all arts and cultural organisations, the academic community and other interested parties the opportunity to explore and learn from the trial. This will greatly increase the value of the project.



The trial has given us confidence that there is sufficient support within the sector to examine the quality of work in an exciting, contemporary way, enabling us to now support a wider roll out the quality metrics. We believe the metrics will help organisations that we invest in to understand more about what their audiences and peers think about the quality of their work and support the development of artistic and cultural peer-to-peer networks. They will also help the development of data culture across the arts and cultural sector to directly support artistic decisions, allowing for a full debate about what quality means from the artists' perspective. It will help us all understand and talk about quality in a more consistent way.

We will therefore support all National Portfolio Organisations to adopt the framework over the 2018-22 investment period. This will only be a mandatory requirement for organisations in Bands 2 (£250k - £1m) and 3 (£1m +) of the portfolio although we will positively encourage all NPOs to adopt it. Organisations will be required to use a specified system to complete an agreed number of evaluations each year and support each other by providing peer reviews. We will support the peer review process by helping organisations broker relationships with peers and providing access to a number of national specialists.

We will now use a competitive process to appoint a service provider to deliver the quality evaluation framework using standardised quality metrics developed by the sector since 2013 and which are in the public domain. We aim to have that organisation in place by the middle of 2017. This will give NPOs the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the framework in advance of the new funding agreement coming in to place in April 2018. We will work closely with the sector and supplier during this period to address issues and challenges highlighted in the evaluation. This will ensure that the framework is practical and useful for all funded organisations and that the full potential of a standardised data set, linked to other open data sources, is realised. This will include support for further testing of the participatory metrics.



In the meantime, keep up to date with quality metrics work around the world. The framework is currently used by organisations funded by the Department of Culture and the Arts in Western Australia with further pilots having taken place in Queensland and Victoria. The framework was used to evaluate the Glasgow 2014 Cultural Programme. There are plans for further trials in China and Singapore and significant interest from funding bodies in other countries.