

ARTS COUNCIL NATIONAL LOTTERY PROJECT GRANTS

# Evaluating your project

Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants is our open-access programme for arts, museums and libraries projects.

Published 12 February 2018



This information sheet relates to Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants.  
See [our website](#) for more information about Project Grants.

In this sheet, we will talk about the following.

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## Evaluating your project

Evaluation is a valuable tool for learning. If you apply to Project Grants, you will be asked to tell us how you plan to evaluate your project and you must complete a final activity report form at the end of it.

Evaluation involves gathering evidence before, during and after a project and using it to make judgements about what happened. The evidence should show what happened and why, and what effect it had.

## Evaluation helps you or your organisation

There are clear benefits to you if you evaluate your work. Your evaluation can help you to:

- plan your project, as it makes you think about what you're aiming to do, how you will do it and how you will know if you've succeeded
- keep on track and avoid potential disasters
- adapt/change your project as you work through it
- prove the value of what you are doing
- record your contribution to the field you are working in and inform others working in the same field
- report back to anyone with an interest in the project, such as any participants or other funders
- improve what you are doing during the project and inform what you might do next time
- support future funding applications using any evidence you collect

## Evaluation helps us and others working in your field

Your evaluation tells us how you feel your project went. We can use this to inform how our funding helps support the arts, museums and libraries in England.

It also helps others to think about their work, develop new ideas, and learn from what you did.

For these reasons, being honest about the results of your project is very important. You should explain any problems you met and things which weren't as successful, as well as showing what the project achieved.

Don't worry if you didn't achieve everything that you set out to do. In this case, tell us what you did achieve, any lessons you learned and how you might do things differently in future.

## What type of evaluation?

Evaluation takes time and resources, and it is not possible to evaluate all projects in the same way and in the same depth. Evaluation can be formal, informal, detailed or less so, to suit your project.

Evaluating the process you went through to deliver your project is as important as evaluating what your project achieved. Your evaluation should explore the quality and impact of both.

The way you approach evaluation will depend on the type of project you are doing, and whether you are an individual or an organisation. For example:

- if you are an individual working on the research and development of a creative idea or a new way of working, your evaluation may involve just you. It could involve others too, such as anyone working with you on the project or people outside the project who give you feedback on your work. You may make creative judgements about process, materials, form and content
- if you are an organisation, your evaluation might include any artists, producers, curators, directors or any other project staff within your organisation as well as any partners you work with. It should involve creative judgements and might include an assessment of the impact on your organisation and its audience
- if you run a project involving participation, your evaluation might include project staff, including artists and those participating in the project, whether they are young people, schoolteachers, adults, or other individuals or groups

- if you work in partnership with other people, they should always have the chance to say how they feel about a project through the evaluation. This applies to everyone, from funders to venues to participants in a community project

## Planning your evaluation

Start thinking about evaluation when planning your project. The focus of your evaluation will differ, depending on whether you achieved what you planned to do. It could focus on your artistic or creative aims, audience figures or other targets. You should also build in checks to ensure that any unplanned outcomes are not missed.

You can carry out an evaluation yourself or you can ask someone else to do it for you. In either case, you need to include it in your budget, as whoever does the evaluation will need to be paid for their time.

The things you need to consider when planning an evaluation include the following:

- what kinds of information or evidence you are going to include in your evaluation – for example, what people say, what they have done (process and finished work), what you have done, how your audience has responded
- what questions you are going to ask
- how you plan to answer those questions. Do you need numbers (for example, 50 people attended 10 workshops) or information with more depth, such as artistic or creative feedback? Useful evaluation usually combines both types of information
- when you should collect the information. As a minimum, you need to collect information at the end of your project but if you can ask questions at the beginning of the project, you will have a 'before' picture against which you can look at the 'after' picture to assess change

- how you will collect the information. You may already have some of the information you need, perhaps from previous evaluations or findings from market research. There are many ways of collecting information, e.g. – keeping a register, asking people to fill in a questionnaire, asking them to video their thoughts about a project, keeping a diary, taking photographs, etc.
- how you are going to make sense of the information you have collected
- how you are going to present the results of the evaluation
- who you are going to share it with, and how

## Further Information

We've developed a [Self-Evaluation toolkit](#) for people, companies and partnerships in the arts, cultural and creative sectors.

[Arts Victoria](#) (Australia) Evaluating Community Arts and Community Well Being. This guide presents a complete approach to evaluating community arts work, using a framework based on process, impact and outcomes. It has practical guidance on planning, conducting and presenting an evaluation. There are lots of sample tools, such as sample evaluation indicators, a focus group outline, a sample participant questionnaire and project journal guidelines.

[UK Evaluation Society](#) provide many online evaluation resources.

[Funding Central](#) have some useful generic "what is evaluation and why is it important" information on their website

[CultureHive](#) is a free resource to help you discover and share best practice in cultural marketing. The website features evaluation case studies, toolkits and research articles:

## Contact us

Phone: 0845 300 6200, 0161 934 4317  
Textphone: 0161 934 4428  
Email: [enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk)  
Website: [artscouncil.org.uk](http://artscouncil.org.uk)  
Post: Arts Council England  
The Hive, 49 Lever Street  
Manchester  
M1 1FN