

# PROJECT & PROGRAM EVALUATION

When you set out to do something in a community, you want to know what you've done, how it worked, what you can improve for the future, and what impact it's had. This guide helps outline the basics of project & program evaluation.

## WHY EVALUATE?

*Evaluation informs stakeholders about the outcomes and impacts of a given project.*

It is critical for art, design, and cultural projects to be evaluated for a variety of reasons including:

- Acknowledging lessons learned
- Improving projects and programs
- Knowing what you've done and its impact
- Providing funders with proof of impact of initiatives
- Demonstrating impact to change policies
- Participating in scholarly discourse about practice through critical evaluation and consideration

## RESOURCES FOR EVALUATION

*No matter what, you don't have to go at evaluation alone.*

### Annual Collaborator Survey

Each year, the Office for Socially Engaged Practice surveys collaborators who worked with courses, research initiatives, or other programs in the Sam Fox School to gather their feedback on the relationship. This survey typically goes out immediately following commencement.

### Evaluation Consultations

We can help you design a custom evaluation approach for your course or project based on your needs and how you plan to use the data. Contact the Office for more information.

### Internal Review Board Support

Depending on the circumstances including planned use of the data, evaluation, and/or use of identifiable information from partners or stakeholders, you may need prior approval from the WashU human research protection office before beginning evaluation activities. Visit [hrpo.wustl.edu](http://hrpo.wustl.edu) for more information or contact Chad Henry ([chenry@wustl.edu](mailto:chenry@wustl.edu)).

## TAKE STEPS TOWARDS EVALUATION

*The following might be the standard steps of evaluation, but they may not work for all types of creative projects. It's best to plan for evaluation while planning your project so you can capture critical insights and data along the way, not just at the end.*

**1. Understand resources required:** What support will you need from: students, community partners, and the Office for Socially Engaged Practice? What time can you dedicate to this assessment? Do you need additional funding to execute?

**2. Define your stakeholders:** Who are the people involved? Involve them in clarifying objectives and providing feedback.

**3. Describe the project or program:** Articulate what your project or program is, what you want to accomplish, and what activities you'll take on to pursue these goals.

**4. Focus the design of your evaluation:** An evaluation can consider process, means, resources, outcomes, activities, or outputs. Define the question you are trying to answer, how the information will be used, and the methods that are best suited to collecting this information.

**5. Gather evidence:** Using qualitative or quantitative methods, collect evidence that helps answer these questions.

**6. Draw conclusions:** Using the data you've collected, analyze based on the questions you defined. You may need to make comparisons to show where you sit relative to targets or other programs.

**7. Disseminate findings & develop recommendations:** Finally, share your conclusions with others on your team and those who can grow from your critical self-assessment.

## SEPARATE PROJECT EVALUATION FROM LEARNING ASSESSMENT

*Project and program evaluations separately assess the content, work, and/or process through the outcome and impact in the community.*

*Student learning and faculty performance, while essential to engaged teaching, are separately evaluated. Student learning is assessed through in-class assignments and grades, while faculty performance is assessed through course evaluations.*

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## EVALUATING CREATIVE PROJECTS

*Evaluating a creative project may be complex, but that's no reason not to try. The results can be powerful indicators of the value of your teaching or practice.*

### Challenges for creative projects

- Many community-based creative activities intentionally challenge the idea of a single, pre-defined idea of value, which is frequently not reflected in evaluation frameworks or processes.
- Cultural activities are often complex and unfold in non-linear, unpredictable ways, posing challenges for evaluation, particularly where resources are limited.
- Partnerships between arts and non-arts agencies can mean differing assumptions about success and measurement.

### For creative projects, consider:

- + Who participated in the process and what was that like for them?
- + What are the new tangible skills learned by those who participated?
- + What was the response to the work created (in person, online, etc.)?
- + What were the goals of the process and the outputs? Were they accomplished?
- + What resources did you use and how did you get access to them?

## CONSIDER THE VALUES OF YOUR PROJECT OR PROGRAM

*A framework of values may help you organize your thoughts about what you want to evaluate and assess.*

*Artistic Values:* visual/aesthetic enjoyment, design quality, social activation, innovation/risk, host participation, challenge/critical debate.

*Social Values:* community development, poverty and social inclusion, health and well being, crime and safety, interpersonal development, travel/access, and skills acquisition.

*Environmental Values:* vegetation and wildlife, physical environment improvement, conservation, pollution and waste management, air, water and ground quality, and climate change and energy.

*Economic Values:* marketing/place identity, regeneration, tourism, economic investment and output, resource use and recycling, education, employment, project management/sustainability, and value for money.

Framework derived from Ixia's "[Public Art: A Guide to Evaluation.](#)"

## THOUGHTFUL EVALUATION DESIGN

*A good evaluation is carefully designed to respond to the context and experiences of the people involved. Be sure to address:*

*Sensitivity:* be clear in purpose and context of the assessment tool, assure participants in anonymity, and be respectful of the participants' identities and lived experience.

*Inclusivity:* provide equal access to individuals and groups regardless of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, etc.

*Cultural Competency:* be aware of your own cultural beliefs, values, and biases and how these may be different than the cultures in which you are working.

*Privacy and Confidentiality:* protect your participants through anonymity and secure management of the evaluation material.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods could be quantitative (numbers), qualitative (description), or mixed (both).

Quantitative Methods:

- Counting (how many people attended, how long did it last, how many flyers were taken)
- Measure (steps taken, biometric responses, distance covered, area utilized)

Qualitative Methods:

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Observation
- Pre/Post Tests (measuring beginning and end of project/program)
- SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis
- ORID (Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, Decisional) Analysis

## REFERENCES

*These resources may be useful as you develop methods for evaluating your own projects.*

The [Georgia Council for the Arts Evaluation Guide](#) also provides an introduction to the different elements of project evaluation in the arts.

The [Createequity webpage](#) has a list of potential indicators of success that could be used for arts project evaluations.

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