

**EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT EVALUATION,  
BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK...**

# An Evaluation Resource Guide for Arts Programming



**ARTS EDUCATION BEGINS WITH YOU**



## EVALUATION

Evaluation is an essential component of any quality arts program. While most organizations typically conduct evaluations in order to provide feedback to their funders, the real merit in evaluation lies in its ability to help organizations reflect, evolve, and improve the programming that they offer to the public.

*“Even if evaluations weren’t required, they make good sense. Evaluations tell you how well your programs are doing and how well they meet people’s needs. Evaluation helps make a case for support for programs and services, and provides evidence that fuels advocacy. Evaluation results provide crucial information to help planning to improve programs and develop new ones.”*

—FUNDAMENTALS OF ARTS MANAGEMENT

At the end of your funding cycle you will be asked to answer a number of questions, however *the evaluation process should start at the beginning of your program planning*. By using this guide as a starting point, you will save considerable time and effort in your final reporting process, and also be more intentional and mindful as you plan, conduct, assess, and evaluate your program activities. Please carefully review the details of your specific final report, and familiarize yourself with your program’s requirements so that they are in the back of your mind throughout the duration of your program.

This document will explore the ins and outs of evaluation—what is it, why do we do it, and how it can support the work that we do. It will help you take the necessary steps to create a basic evaluation, know where to find additional resources, and understand how these steps can positively impact the work of your school or organization.

Examples are presented in [teal](#) throughout this document in order to better illustrate the concepts surrounding evaluation. Please use these ideas in your own organizations and programs in order to make your evaluation process a smooth and easy one. Good Luck!

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# WHAT IS EVALUATION AND WHY DO WE DO IT?

In the simplest terms, evaluation is a process for determining if a program is successful. Evaluation examines whether a program is achieving its goals and objectives by looking at its results. Program providers need to be able to clearly demonstrate results—this may be in the form of attendance numbers, improved test scores, personal narratives, or increased memberships, but it must be able to be quantifiable in some way.

We conduct evaluations in order to improve programs and services—to better design, manage, and monitor their impact on our communities; and to be accountable to staff, leadership, funders, artists, teachers, and other stakeholders. Evaluations tell a story about the work that we do; shedding light on its influence on our families, homes, and neighborhoods.

## FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE EVALUATIONS

The terms formative and summative are commonly used to describe different types of evaluation. Formative evaluation focuses on the process while summative evaluation focuses on the outcome.

*“When the cook tastes the soup, that’s formative; when the guests taste the soup, that’s summative.”*

—BOB STAKE

Formative evaluation typically is:

- On-going, and used to continually improve a program while it is in-progress
- Process-oriented in that it looks at how the learning process is going, and what needs to be modified to improve the outcome
- Based on internal criteria and goals to gauge program progress. Is the program living up to your own expectations?
- Less formal

**FORMATIVE:** A teacher holds an informal class discussion to see how students liked the first day working with an Artist in Residence, and uses this feedback to plan the next day’s activities according to the students’ interests.

Summative evaluation typically is:

- Conducted at the end of a program to gauge the quality of a completed project
- Product-oriented in that it looks at the finished product—what has been learned or accomplished

- Based on external criteria such as grades or educational standards as a means of measurement
- More prescribed and formal

**SUMMATIVE:** At the conclusion of the same Artist in Residence program, the teacher administers a final evaluation to each student. The results of this questionnaire will be tabulated and turned into a final report, which will help guide if and how an Artist in Residence program will occur the following year.

*“Measurements are not to provide numbers, but insight.”*

—INGRID BUCHER

Formative and summative evaluation both play an important role in the evolution of any exemplary educational program. Here are a few examples:

- Standardized-test scores might indicate that students within a certain demographic are not performing well in reading and language arts. To address this problem, a local arts agency might team up with a language specialist to create after-school, arts-based workshops that promote literary skills while also building an artistic vocabulary. Since this would be a pilot program, the administrators would want to conduct informal formative evaluations periodically to see how the program is going. These could consist of small group discussions with the participating students and their parents and teachers, or assessments of their works in progress, both in school and in the workshop. At the end of the program, a more formal, summative evaluation could look at completed work of the students, as well as any statistical changes in their test scores to measure the impact of the program and determine if it was indeed effective.
- A regional Opera company designs a community-based enrichment program—a free lecture series on the history of opera. The program is offered as a way for the organization to share its passion and love of opera with the general public. While this is not designed to satisfy a problematic deficit, as in the previous example, it still fills an important role in the community. More highly educated citizens are better patrons of the arts, and by strengthening their knowledge and love of opera, the company is building a stronger arts-base in the community. In order to most effectively implement this program, they will utilize both formative and summative evaluation techniques. A brief survey will be taken preceding the first lecture, gauging the current knowledge of both opera and arts patronage.

evaluation

# WHAT IS EVALUATION AND WHY DO WE DO IT? CONTINUED

This formative process will be used by the instructor to provide the appropriate level of discussion to this particular group. At the conclusion of the series, a summative evaluation will be administered to collect data on the participants' perceived educational experience, as well as any changed attitudes about supporting the arts.

## BASIC CONCEPTS

There is a lot of jargon surrounding the evaluation process, and it can get quite confusing. Here are the basic ideas that are important to keep straight as you plan, conduct, and evaluate your own program:

### Input

The resources that go into a program. These can include money, man power, and the actual educational material presented in a program.

**INPUT: a professional poet made a presentation on various forms of poetry.**

### Activity

The programs that participants actually do. Activities can include concerts, arts classes, poetry readings, exhibits, artist-in-residence workshops, professional development opportunities, etc.

**ACTIVITY: a hands-on poetry writing workshop was conducted.**

### Output

The results of program activities. These do not describe the impacts or outcomes (see below). Outputs are purely numerical and describe what happened, such as attendance at a concert, class, workshop, etc. They are not measures of changed behaviors or skills, but merely reporting on how many people participated or what happened. A common mistake that people make when evaluating programs is that they report outputs when they really mean to report outcomes.

**OUTPUT: 125 students participated in a poetry workshop.**

### Indicator

Measurable (countable) and observable proof that an intended outcome has been achieved, indicators are also sometimes called performance measures (as in education standards). Indicators might include documentation like photographs, writing samples, portfolios, video, or interviews; answers

from evaluation forms, focus groups, tests, or questionnaires; observations by a teacher, evaluator, or participant observer; or archival material such as attendance records, report cards, test scores, grant panel scores, or journalistic reviews.

**INDICATOR: 125 students created a personal haiku.**

### Outcome

Specific results, benefits, or changes to individuals or groups participating in an activity that can be directly attributed to your program. The impact of outcomes can be short-term, intermediate, or long-term. Objectives = intended outcomes, and outcomes = achieved objectives.

**OUTCOME: 125 students learned how to write poetry.**

Note the difference in reporting on the output versus the outcome. Instead of reporting that 50 teachers attended an arts education training program (output), report that 50 teachers learned how to create interdisciplinary lessons that incorporated arts with other core academic subjects (outcomes).

Creating and conducting an evaluation can be straightforward and relatively painless. Don't forget to integrate the evaluation early in your planning process.

At its core, an evaluation asks the simple questions.

Follow these steps to conduct a well-planned evaluation:

**1. DETERMINE YOUR OUTCOME.** How will you know if you have achieved that goal?

As you are designing your programs and its evaluation, consider the following questions:

- Who should your program serve?
- What are the needs of this audience or demographic?
- How can these needs be met?
- What does the outcome look like when it occurs?
- How do you know it has happened?

Some typical outcomes might be stated like this:

- Students participating in the Artist in Residency program will be able to create original illustrations based on lessons in their humanities curriculum.
- Artists participating in a marketing workshop will know how to write a press release, contact an arts editor, and develop a personal web site.

concepts

# THE EVALUATION PROCESS

- Public advocacy efforts to the state legislature will result in a 10% increase in funding to the arts.
- A Board development campaign will result in a more diverse board of directors.
- A public arts awareness campaign will result in the approval of a local bond issue to support increased art installations.
- An after-school theatrical improvisation workshop will result in improved self-esteem among participating teens.
- Interactive interpretive materials in a museum gallery will result in longer visitor stays and greater retention of educational information.

**2. PLAN YOUR ACTIVITY.** Determine what you will do and how this will address your desired outcome.

Be ambitious, but realistic about what your program can accomplish. Consider the following:

- How many can you successfully include or serve? How will you recruit this audience?
- Do you have adequate resources to carry out your activity from start to finish?
- Have you planned for publicity, marketing, and other ancillary components?

**3. PLAN YOUR EVALUATION.** Define your evaluation questions and strategy.

As you are planning your evaluation, consider the following questions:

- What questions will your evaluation answer? Are your outcomes being achieved?
- What do you want to learn about your program? Identify the indicators that will inform this process.
- When will the evaluation take place?
- Who will participate in the evaluation?
- Who will conduct the evaluation?
- Will you use program staff, which will save you money, but may provide less objective reporting, or a professional outside evaluator, which may be more credible, but also more expensive?
- Have you budgeted for the necessary expenses?

**4. DEFINE SOURCES OF INFORMATION.** Decide what kind of information you will collect and what instruments you will use to gather this data.

Here are a few sources for gathering data on your programs:

- Documentation of class or group discussions or focus groups
- Test scores, report cards, interviews, teacher feedback
- Research conducted by participants
- Artwork or performances presented by participants
- Writing assignments or participant surveys
- Class rubrics
- Participant interviews or personal reflections
- Comment book, guest book or exit interview
- Organizational records: attendance, annual reports, community assessments, strategic plans
- Grant documentation: proposals, review panel comments and scores, final reports
- Ticket sales, test scores, demographic reports

**5. IMPLEMENT YOUR PROGRAM.** Conduct and assess activity, monitor its progress, and collect data.

To keep programs on track, ask:

- Is the program being implemented as it was intended?
- What impacts can be seen as it is in-progress?
- What could be modified to improve the program?

**6. CONDUCT EVALUATION.** Collect and analyze data. Determine if proposed outcomes have been achieved.

As you assess and evaluate the results of the program, ask:

- What impact has the program made?
- Has the program achieved its intended goals?
- Did students learn what was intended? If not, what exactly did they learn?
- Describe the arts learning that occurred in your program.
- What knowledge, skills, or appreciation of an arts discipline or disciplines were taught?
- What improvements would you attempt to implement if you were to do a similar project again?
- Did you try to reach new audiences/participants? If so, how and were you successful?
- What student reactions were observed?
- What was the most successful part of the program?

**7. CREATE FINAL REPORT.** Present findings and distribute results.

process



# THE EVALUATION PROCESS CONTINUED

Final reports can be powerful advocacy tools for your program or organization. Share the results with stakeholders and the community through:

- Annual reports
- Board memos or parent newsletters
- Conference presentations
- PTA meetings or school site council meetings
- Letter to school board or principal
- Report to City Council
- Arts/education publications

**8. IMPROVE PROGRAMS.** Use evaluation findings and results to improve activities and gather support for continued programs. Be careful to identify valid information and not draw any big conclusions from results that aren't directly related to your program.



You will be surprised by the many ways in which you may already be conducting evaluations of your organization's activities. Here are a few techniques that you may already be using:

## Artist in Residence

Complete a final evaluation with participating students and teachers, artist, Principal, and even parents. Make sure that those being surveyed have had enough contact with the program to make informed responses. Conduct video interviews about the best/worst parts of the program. Ask students to write about what they are most proud of accomplishing during the residency.

## Performing Arts

Conduct exit interviews with audience members leaving the theatre. Organize a targeted follow-up survey. You might consider offering some kind of incentive to audience members for completing a mail-in or on-line survey, such as a reduced-price ticket for a future performance (which also encourages them to return). Hold de-briefing sessions with volunteers after a fundraising event. Sell season subscriptions at a variety of community events and venues and see if higher sales are generated in response to any particular factors.

## Museum Exhibit

Conduct exit interviews with visitors leaving a specific exhibit or the museum. Provide a comment book or guest log in a gallery. Present a survey conducted by docents or other volunteers. At a related lecture, ask for a show of hands to answer questions about trial marketing strategies. Conduct mail-based surveys.

## Arts Education Outreach

Conduct final evaluation surveys with student/teacher/community center participants, hold meetings with community-based arts teachers about their programs in recreation centers, conduct annual performance reviews of staff. Survey parents or caregivers to see what services or opportunities they would like to see for their children and families.

At the completion of your project, the results should be compiled into a final report. This can be very official or less formal depending upon the project and the evaluation requirements. The report should summarize your findings in clear and concise language, using numerical data when available, and provide a summary of the achieved outcomes. If outcomes were not achieved, the report should address this and explain reasons or possible explanations for this occurrence (such as budgetary issues, lack of attendance, weather restrictions, poor organization, etc.). A final report does not need to be complicated, but should include or address the following:

### Inputs

- What did the project set out to do? What did you hope to achieve?
- What and how much did you use? What kinds of materials, spaces, and personnel were needed to accomplish your program?
- How much did your project cost? Was this as expected based on your projected budget? If not, how did it differ?

### Services/Activities

- What did you do? Describe your program and related activities.

### Outputs

- How many did you serve?
- Who was your audience and what was their demographic?

### Outcomes

- What was the impact or benefit of this project for your target audience?
- Was this as you had planned? Were there any unintended outcomes?
- Compare data from the beginning of the project or from a previous period. For example, did students' grades go up after they participated? Was test-based knowledge increased as a result? Did attendance figures increase? Was there a marked difference in technical ability?

reporting

# CREATING A FINAL REPORT

- Interpret the results and make recommendations for future programming. What did you learn, and how might you use this to improve your program or create new organizational activities?
- Instead of offering a numerical approach to how many people participated, describe the result by how many changed—rather than 200 children participated in an after-school dance program, state how many children learned to hip-hop.

Final reports may be used for a variety of purposes. Obviously, they will need to be provided to a sponsor or funding source who has requested this information. They are also useful, however, for publicizing programs both within your organization and in the community. Reports may be used to acquire additional funding for future programs, and as a means to share the results with local stakeholders like parents, PTAs, artists, school faculty, and other students.

Don't forget to include photographs, video, and documentary narrative when available and appropriate, as these will help bring your program to life for those who didn't get to witness it in person.

Finally, the evaluation process is your friend, and should never overshadow your actual program. It is meant as a support tool to help programs and organizations be the best that they can be, so view the process as a positive one. Even if your results are not as you anticipated, use this as a positive learning experience for your organization. Be open to hearing critical results and using them to constructively improve the programs and services that you offer to your community.

## RESOURCES

### WEBSITES

Americans for the Arts YouthARTS Toolkit, chapter on Program Evaluation  
<http://www.artsusa.org/youtharts/evaluation/>

American Evaluation Association  
<http://www.eval.org/>

Harvard Family Research Project  
<http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation>

Measuring Joy: Evaluation at Baltimore Clayworks  
<http://www.nea.gov/Grants/apply/out/joy.html>

National Endowment for the Arts/Outcome-Based Evaluation:  
A Working Model for Arts Projects  
<http://www.nea.gov/Grants/apply/out/index-out.html>

Survey Monkey  
[www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)

Survey Suite survey generator  
<http://intercom.virginia.edu/SurveySuite>

What is Program Evaluation? Produced by the Global Social Change Research Project <http://gsociology.icaap.org/methods/evaluationbeginnersguide.pdf>

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KRA Corporation. *The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation: An Evaluation Handbook Series from the Administration on Children, Youth and Families*. Washington, DC: Administration on Children, Youth and Families. (Undated).

Wholey, J.; Hatry, H.P.; and Newcomer, K.E. (Eds.). *The Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass (1995).

resources

## NEVADA ARTS COUNCIL

The Nevada Arts Council, a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, was created as a state agency in 1967. Charged with supporting Nevada's arts and cultural sectors and expanding access to and public participation in the arts, The Nevada Arts Council (NAC) receives funding from the Nevada State Legislature, the National Endowment for the Arts and other private and public sources.

In partnership with schools, arts institutions and communities, NAC actively works to bring artists, a diversity of art forms and audiences together in Nevada's metropolitan centers and most isolated rural towns.

From folklife festivals to youth artwork projects, and concert series to visual arts exhibits, NAC's support of a breadth of public programs provides residents a rich quality of life – contributing to the health and diversity of Nevada's economy and workforce, increasing tourism, strengthening communities and fostering education through the arts.

### Our Vision

That Nevadans understand the impact and central role of the arts in our lives, our communities and our state.

### Our Values

That we work together to strengthen the environment for artists and arts organizations to accomplish this vision.

### Our Outcome

A culturally vibrant state, from the most isolated and small rural communities to the urban centers of Reno/Sparks and Las Vegas.

### Our Mission

To enrich the cultural life of the state through leadership that preserves, supports, strengthens and makes excellence in the arts accessible to all Nevadans.

### Our Goals

- Increase public access, participation and investment in Nevada's arts and culture.
- Incorporate the arts as an essential element in the educational experience of all Nevadans.
- Strengthen the environment in which artists' work and contributions are valued and supported.
- Encourage and support diverse organizations that produce, present and promote excellence in the arts.

*Jim Gibbons*  
Governor, State of Nevada

*Michael E. Fischer*  
Director, Department of Cultural Affairs

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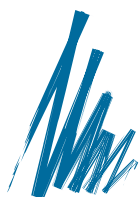
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