

EVALUATING COMMUNITY EVENTS:

A PRACTICAL GUIDE



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WHY EVALUATE YOUR EVENT?

Evaluation is a great way to run better events, and can take as little or as much time as you have to give. It can help you:

- reflect on your event, and understand what happened
- explore why things happened the way they did – what choices were made and what was unexpected?
- think about what you learned and how that can help when planning your next event
- share what you've learned with others such as funders, fellow event organisers, your community and stakeholders (people with an interest in the event)
- make the case for these events to be run in the future.

HOW TO USE THESE GUIDELINES

There are three parts to this resource:

1. A template for you to complete as you read through the guidelines, which at the end will form a detailed evaluation plan
2. A four-step guide, with questions to help you fill in your template
3. Additional information, including links to other evaluation support and examples, to help you explore different aspects of social value and consider different evaluation approaches you might use.



WHAT IS SOCIAL VALUE?

Throughout this guidance our focus is on measuring social value. By this we mean anything that isn't economic value, although both are important and interconnected. Social value relates to ways that events affect people and communities by contributing towards greater social cohesion, opportunities to build communities, social networks and support, and civic pride (some of these things are sometimes known as social capital). Social value might build up at an individual or at a group/community level. For individuals, social value might be a better

quality of life, being inspired, or improved wellbeing. There is no complete list of what social value covers, but all you need to remember is that it relates to benefits which are not economic.

If you are interested in the effects of your event on your community, the people in your community and how they relate to each other, these guidelines will be useful. If you are interested in measuring the economic benefits of an event, check out <https://www.eventimpacts.com/impact-types/economic>



SHORT ON TIME?

Finding the time to evaluate is hard, particularly when there's a whole event to put on! We hope that this guidance might help you make decisions that save time, perhaps giving you confidence to throw away long feedback forms if you don't have time to read them and they don't tell you anything you didn't already know! But to be worthwhile, you do need to invest some time upfront in planning.

Make sure you are happy that the evaluation you want to do is proportionate to the event itself, and be ruthless about focusing on what you want to know and why you want to know it.

We suggest the following three options, depending on how much time you have:

NEXT TO NO TIME

If you don't really have time to run a full evaluation, just think about completing **step 1 in the following section**, [on page 6](#).

You could do this in a single meeting with event organisers, or by yourself in 30 minutes. Even if you don't go on to check whether you did achieve your aims with an evaluation, crystalising your aims and how you will get there will help you focus on the outcomes.

NEXT LEVEL

Try and complete all four of the steps in section 2, focusing only on the day of the event itself. It is much easier to evaluate when the event is fresh in people's minds, and when you have a captive audience!

THE WORKS

This will take more time, and planning, but it's the sweet spot for evaluating your event. Using the same model, focusing particularly on steps 3 and 4, factor in longer-term evaluation as well as evaluation on the day of the event.

Tracking the impact over time, and demonstrating medium to long-term social value will help you make a stronger case.

It's important that you're realistic about what you can achieve here, as contacting participants after the event can be a challenge, especially

as the time between the event and the evaluation increases. Choose one or more intervals (such as one month, three months, six months or 12 months), a cohort of participants, and determine what you want to find out at the same time as you're planning your event-day evaluation. To make sure the data you're gathering is valid, the questions and respondents need to be consistent. It's a good idea to cast the net widely, as you'll lose engagement from some of the participants along the way.

the short-term social value, you'll be well-equipped to move to the next level.

FOUR STEPS TO EVALUATING YOUR EVENT

STEP 1: DETERMINE WHAT YOU WANT YOUR EVENT TO ACHIEVE AND HOW IT WILL DO THAT

1 Determine what you want your event to achieve and how it will do that

2 Decide what you want to find out from your evaluation

The evaluation template is a simple 'logic model'. It is a simple way to capture the plan you have for your event, but it can also help you to think about what the relationship is between what you put into your event, how you deliver it, and what happens. This will help you to focus on why you think your event will have the impacts you hope it will have.

The best time to use the template is when you are in the early stages of planning your community event. You might still be thinking about what resources and approaches you want to use, and this exercise will help you to reflect upon what choices you are making, and why.

There is already good evidence about the social benefits events can have. You can read examples of typical benefits and see if any of them fit with your aims ([on page 18](#)).

3 Identify what evidence you need to find out, and make a plan for when and how to get that evidence

4 Decide what you will do with the evidence once you've got it

STEP 1: Determine what you want your event to achieve and how it will do that

There is no right or wrong way to use the template. You can print it off or download and use a digital version. You can take it to a meeting to chat through the questions with other organisers. Use notes or bullet points – whatever works for you. You can go back and update any section if your plans or ideas change.

However, here are some tips on how to approach the questions:

Q1: WHAT ARE THE AIMS?

What do you want the event to achieve? You can choose ideas from our section on common benefits of events (on page 18), or list your own.

Q3: WHAT WILL YOU PUT IN?

List the resources you need, such as funding, venues, time, people or marketing. Review the list and ask yourself if you have the right resources, and, importantly, enough of the resources to achieve your aims.

Q2: WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND?

Your aims probably relate to a need or an opportunity you've identified; perhaps there's a set of circumstances or specific reasons that led to you planning your event or activity.

Acknowledging the context in which an activity takes place is important. If your event or activity is part of a wider programme (but you're not planning to develop an evaluation plan for the whole programme using this template) then you can talk about that here.

Write down the background to your event. If you know a lot about the need or opportunity you're addressing, you can include specific details, or refer to other places where that's already captured. You might be capturing the previous history of your event, which could be useful if you're planning to do something different this time. Or you might be putting new activities in place, and want to say something about how you identified the need for those new activities.



Left: Bay Create (Photo: Whitley Bay Big Local)

STEP 1: Determine what you want your event to achieve and how it will do that

Q4: WHAT ACTIVITIES WILL YOU DO, AND HOW?

Like the previous step, recording what activities you will do and how they will happen is a useful record of the choices you are making. Again, this can help you reflect on why you have chosen the particular activities or approaches which you have selected – what do you hope they will achieve?

This is the place to write down what you plan to do, and the processes or approaches you

Q6: WHAT WILL HAPPEN ON THE DAY?

It's important to consider what you think will happen immediately, as a direct result of the event or activity which you are running. It might be very straightforward, for example, that you run an event, a number of people come along and they have a great time. It might be more complex, for example, that people who wouldn't normally do so, mix with each other.

This is the place to write that down. The focus here is what happens 'on the day' – what are your expectations?

Q7: WHAT OUTCOMES ARE YOU AIMING FOR?

What do you want to happen after the day? For example, people might feel prouder of where they live or that they are better connected to their neighbours.

This is the place where you create 'social value'. You can go back to our list of examples for ideas.

Q5: WHO WILL GET INVOLVED?

Who are you hoping will come to, or get involved, with your event? Are you expecting that some people will get involved in different ways, for example as participants, audiences, or volunteers?

What's the event capacity? Is there a limit on numbers? Do you have targets you're trying to meet? Are you trying to reach particular groups within your community? If you want the audience to be representative of the community, do you know the demographic breakdown (such as age, race, ethnicity, income, gender, education level, or occupation) of your community?

STEP 2: DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT TO FIND OUT FROM YOUR EVALUATION

Before you start, decide what activities you want to evaluate. If your event is a one-off, takes place annually, or only occasionally, you might just look at the event on its own.

If it takes place more regularly, or as part of a wider programme of activities, you can either focus on the single event but take context of others into account, or include other events or activities in your plan.

Then think about why you want to evaluate. This may be to:

- help you and your fellow organisers understand what it is that you are aiming to achieve with your activities and whether an event has had the impacts you'd hoped it would have
- understand who came to your event and whether there were any groups of people that you hoped would come but did not attend
- support you and your fellow organisers to reflect upon the choices you made when running your event
- help you to share the value of the activities with other people in your community, so that they know about the positive things which took place
- celebrate how people who participated in your activities feel about it
- demonstrate the impact of your event in future funding applications.

Now you've set out what you are hoping to achieve with your event and how you think that will happen, you will need to think about what you want the evaluation to tell you. You might want to tell the full story of your event, but be realistic, if you don't have the resource to capture everything which you have set out in your logic model, identify a couple of priorities this time round, and build up your future evaluations from there.



STEP 2: Decide what you want to find out from your evaluation

WHAT ACTIVITIES WILL YOU DO, AND HOW?

Think about who you are planning to share your evaluation with. Who might be interested? This could include:

- you and your fellow organisers
- people who volunteer, participate and come along
- people who don't yet engage with your event, but who you hope might do so in the future
- partners who help you deliver your event

- funders and contributors who put money or other support into your event
- other stakeholders, who might include potential future funders or partners.

Although it might be tempting to pick 'all of the above', these audiences might be interested in quite different things. Be realistic about how much time you have to put together the evaluation.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

Thinking about who you are planning to share the learning with, what are their priorities? What questions do they need the answer to? What information would be meaningful to you in this evaluation?

Consider whether the evaluation you want to do is proportional to your event. By this we mean something which is appropriate to collect and ask others to contribute to.

For example, if you are running a short, one-off event, say for a couple of hours, it may only be appropriate to ask attendees for a small amount of feedback because their involvement has been relatively short.

If you have limited resources to run your event, you need to reflect on whether you have enough time and skills to make sense of all the evidence you've collected. You might find that when you've been all the way through the template, you need to adjust some parts of your plan to make sure that it is proportional to your event, the way in which people will engage with it and the resources which you have available for evaluation.

If you're thinking about different kinds of social value, check out [page 18](#) for an example of six areas where events can create social value.

STEP 2: Decide what you want to find out from your evaluation

WHAT KINDS OF DATA AND FEEDBACK DO YOU ALREADY COLLECT?

Make a quick list of any data and feedback you already collect. If you've run this event before, what did you collect last time? If you run other events, what do you normally collect? If you're in the planning stages, what information do you already have? Data and feedback might include:

- Information which told you about the need or opportunity for your event
- Management information, including budgets, records of volunteer roles and time, inputs (cash and/or in-kind) from partners
- Attendance information, such as ticketing, registration, or head-counts
- Feedback opportunities – these might be as simple as volunteers hearing comments from participants, or perhaps you already collect feedback through forms or surveys.



STEP 3: IDENTIFY WHAT EVIDENCE YOU NEED TO FIND OUT, AND MAKE A PLAN FOR WHEN AND HOW TO GET THAT EVIDENCE

AIMS

EVIDENCE YOU NEED

Look back at your aims. Which are the key ones that you want to be able to explain with evidence?

Remember that evaluations are also useful because they tell us about unexpected outcomes, and things that do not go as well as we expect.

PLAN FOR GETTING IT

Your aims section should be very similar to your outcomes section – the main purpose of the evaluation is to help you understand if you've met your aims.

So, do this section last. Read back the aims from Section 1 and bring together your evidence to see if you've achieved them.

BACKGROUND

EVIDENCE YOU NEED

What evidence is there about the context for your work? This might include things like prior evaluations, feedback, learning from other events or activities, or other evidence of need or opportunity – for example, a local survey saying people want more things to do for families, or information from the council about high rates of loneliness.

PLAN FOR GETTING IT

You might already have most of this information to hand as it formed the reason why your event was set up. Think about whether you want to consult with possible attendees and/or the community about what they want from the event.



STEP 3: Identify what evidence you need to find out, and make a plan for when and how to get that evidence

INPUTS & ACTIVITIES

EVIDENCE YOU NEED

Your evaluation will briefly explain the 'inputs' to show what it took to put on the event. As well as helping to tell the full story of what happened, it should help you make decisions about future events (Did you have enough volunteers? Was the catering value for money?).

In the activities section, you can explain why you chose to deliver a particular activity, or why you chose to do things one way over another.

PLAN FOR GETTING IT

The evidence for this is often called 'management information' – budgets, schedules, records of the number of hours given by volunteers. You might also have minutes of meetings that help show how you came to different decisions.

Think about why you made those choices. Was it based on feedback from consultation? Expert opinions? Trial & error?

WHO GETS INVOLVED?

EVIDENCE YOU NEED

What do you need to know in order to find out if you engaged the people you thought you would?

Have different groups engaged in different ways? For example, volunteers, audiences, participants, performers? What do you know about who your participants are, and what their experiences were before the event?

PLAN FOR GETTING IT

You might have lots of information from tickets or registrations or be looking to gather information through exit or entrance surveys on the day. You need to find a balance between getting the information that will help you understand if you've reached your intended audience, with not overwhelming people with a request for lots of personal data.

It might be worth focusing in on things that are particularly relevant for your aims. For example, if one of the things you wanted to achieve was bringing people together across generations, you need data about age groups. Does it matter to you if more women attend than men? If not, perhaps don't ask for this information.

STEP 3: Identify what evidence you need to find out, and make a plan for when and how to get that evidence

WHAT HAPPENED?

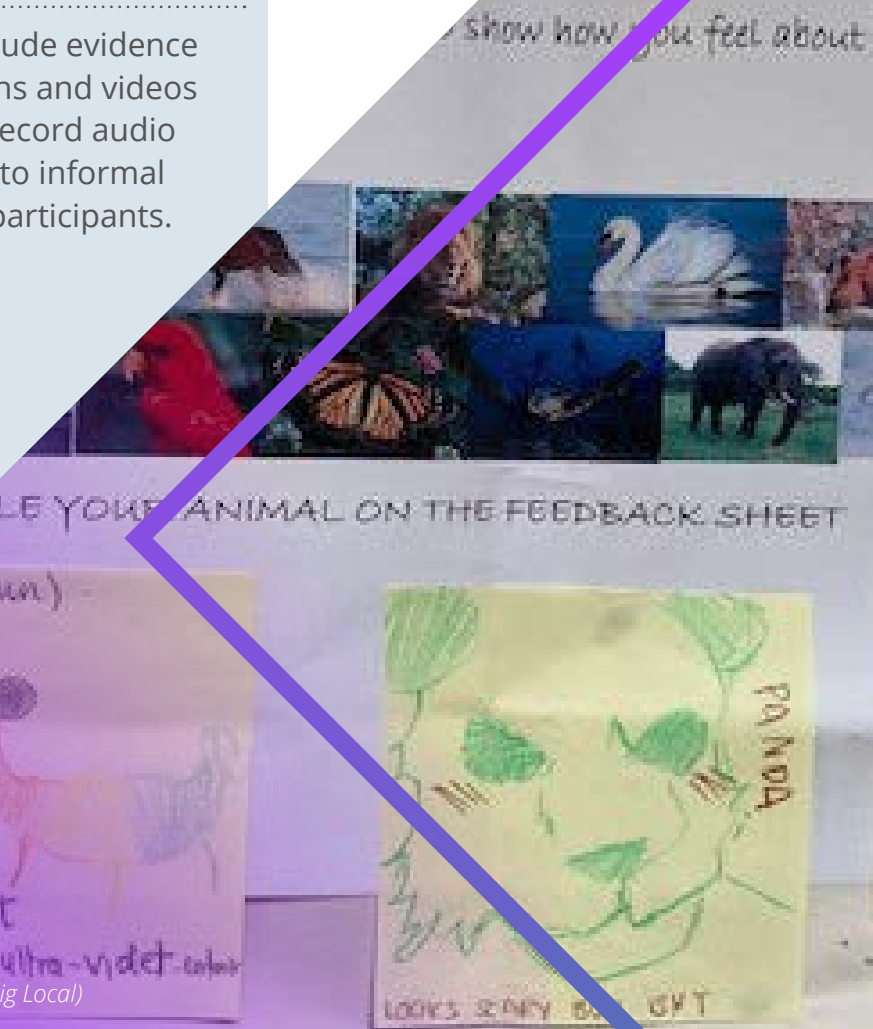
EVIDENCE YOU NEED

What do you want to know about what happened? What do you want to know about the participants' experiences of the event? How many participants will you have engaged, and – if it's meaningful to know – what was their level of engagement? How will you know if the outputs you expected to happen, happened? Remember, things might not happen the way you expect them to. What can you collect or measure that will help you understand this?

PLAN FOR GETTING IT

As well as number of attendees, you probably want to ask about their experience. Depending on the length of your event, you could aim for a short survey on a postcard, or post-it note feedback on boards near the exit. You could send an online survey via email – though you are likely to get fewer responses than if you can catch people on the day.

You can also include evidence from photographs and videos of the day, and record audio clips of answers to informal interviews with participants.



STEP 3: Identify what evidence you need to find out, and make a plan for when and how to get that evidence

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OR OUTCOMES?

EVIDENCE YOU NEED

What will you need to collect or measure to know if the outcomes you hoped for have happened? How will you know if anything happened that you didn't expect?

PLAN FOR GETTING IT

Collecting data on the effects (outcomes) of events is hard to do, because it might mean that you need to follow-up with people after the event. That is easier with some groups than others, for example volunteers are more likely to answer follow up questions than regular attendees.

You can get some way to understanding this on the day by asking participants about their intentions e.g. Will you do anything differently as a result of this event? Although questions like this are not as reliable as actually following up, they are a good practical solution if that isn't possible.

It is still worth capturing stories that you hear about the effects, such as someone being inspired to volunteer or set up their own event – even if these are not representative of the event as a whole.



STEP 4: DECIDE WHAT YOU WILL DO WITH THE EVIDENCE ONCE YOU'VE GOT IT

In the template there are four questions about this. Here are some things to think about when you fill in your answers:

WHAT DOES THE AUDIENCE FOR YOUR EVALUATION NEED/WANT?

You have already spent some time thinking about why you wanted to evaluate your event, and who you wanted to evaluate it for and share the learning with. Thinking about what you said in response to those questions, can you make a clear list of the audiences for your evaluation? When you do this, think about:

- What are the specific things those audiences want to know?
- How they might want to receive what you've learned. Do they want a report, some other kind of written format? If you're sharing the learning with your community, are there other, more creative ways you might do that?
- Are there any specific requirements or deadlines (e.g. from a funder)?

WHO WILL ANALYSE AND INTERPRET THE DATA?

- Who has the time, skills and knowledge to do it?
- How can you use analysis and interpretation as a learning and reflection opportunity? It doesn't have to be done by one person – if lots of people were involved in delivering the event, then reflecting on what the feedback means could be a collective process.
- Whether you want to involve other people in interpreting the data. Depending on how you delivered your project, you might want community members to get involved in reflecting on the evidence and deciding what it means. You might have partners in your project who could help interpret and reflect on the data.

STEP 4: Decide what you will do with the evidence once you've got it

HOW WILL YOU SHARE YOUR EVALUATION?

You will need to think not only about the format in which you want to produce any evaluation material, but also about how you plan to share it. It might be that you plan to share different parts of your evaluation material with different stakeholders, including other members of your community, partners and funders. If you have contact details of attendees, do you want to email them a short summary and thank you? You could also use that as an opportunity to tell them what you intend to do next. Using a community Facebook group or Twitter account could also help you to share key bits from the evaluation.

WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THE LEARNING?

Finally, the first purpose of evaluation should be that the people running an activity have a chance to reflect and learn about what worked, what didn't and what you want to do differently next time. If you're planning future events and activities, how will your evaluation help you to do that better, or differently, next time?

*Below: Selby Big Local
(Photo: Jonathan Pow/Local Trust)*



WHAT CAN EVENTS ACHIEVE?



In this section we go through six common areas that you might expect your event to make an impact. We've called these the six dimensions of social value, and we have chosen them after reviewing the existing evidence about the difference evidence makes in our communities.

When you're thinking about what your event could achieve, picking examples from this list will help ground your evaluation in existing research – which might give you confidence that your ambitions are realistic, and be useful when talking to funders, too. Five of the impact areas are positive, while one helps you think through the unexpected and potentially negative impacts of your event. You can read more about existing research in our Literature Review.

People often use the terms qualitative and quantitative (or qual and quant) to describe research.

Qualitative refers to research on opinions and views, gathered from discussions in focus groups, telephone calls, interviews, or asking someone to write down thoughts and reactions on post-its.

Quantitative refers to measures of numbers for example, 65% of participants rated the event as good or very good. Surveys can collect qualitative and quantitative data, but the closed questions, scales in a survey are used to collect quantitative data.

1. PLACE

Events can affect communities by influencing how people view the places where they are hosted. Positive event experiences may create feelings of pride and attachment to a place, which can in turn strengthen or create local identities tied to the place.

You would expect to see differences based on how people already feel about the place – whether they like living there, or whether they feel it has a good or bad reputation. You might also see differences depending on whether someone is new to the area or a longstanding resident.

You could see if there are any differences between how residents feel about a place and how visitors feel.

It could be that the event improves the reputation of a place to visitors – who feel there is more reason to visit – but that residents are frustrated about noise or litter (see [page 24](#) on negative effects). Alternatively, the event could be much more relevant and enjoyable for residents.

If you are planning to undertake a survey of people who have attended the event, you will need to consider who you will ask to complete it. People you ask to complete the survey should be broadly representative of those who have attended the event in relation to gender, age and ethnicity. For example, if about 70% of attendees are female, you should ask seven females to complete the survey to every three males.

HOW TO MEASURE

QUANTITATIVE

Questions you might ask in a survey might include:

- Attending this event has made me feel proud of this area. [Strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree, don't know.]
- Attending this event has increased my sense of belonging to this area. [Strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree, don't know.]
- There is a growing sense of pride in this neighbourhood. [Strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree, don't know.]

QUALITATIVE

- Set up a comments board on the day with a big question on this theme e.g. What does this place mean to you?, How does this event make you feel?, Give a memory of a time you felt proud of this place. These questions could also be interesting for interviews or focus groups
- You could ask people for three words to describe the place at the beginning and end of the day.

FURTHER RESOURCES

[Event Impacts Identity and Image toolkit](#) – questions about pride and positive views of the area for residents and visitors.

2. COMMUNITY

Events can impact on the connections and relationships that people have with others. These can be bonding connections with people who we see as having similar qualities to ourselves or bridging connections across social divides with people we see as different. Bonding and bridging connections can reduce loneliness and social isolation. Bridging social contact between 'us' and 'them' helps to reduce stereotyping and prejudice, as well as developing greater trust, empathy and shared 'more in common' identities.

Bridging connections are particularly important in communities that are divided by ethnicity or faith. Events can also build linking connections – between people and institutions. Organising a community event will often require contact with councillors or their official connections that help build trust in democratic institutions.

HOW TO MEASURE

QUANTITATIVE

Questions you might ask in a survey might include:

- Attending this event has enabled me to get to know new people. [Strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree, don't know.]
- Attending this event has enabled me to get to know people who I would not normally meet. [Strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree, don't know.]
- People who live in this area can generally be trusted. [Strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree, don't know.]

QUALITATIVE

You could use a comment board to ask people how this event has impacted on relationships within their local community. You could also ask what difference people think that taking part has made to them, and to the community. You can also include evidence from photographs and videos of the day, and record audio clips of answers to informal interviews with participants. Make sure you explicitly gain consent for use of photographs and videos, explaining how you will use them.

3. PARTICIPATION

HERE YOU NEED TO CONSIDER TWO ISSUES:

- Who has taken part in your event and if participants reflect the population of the local area? This is best measured on the day by asking people who complete a survey to state their gender, age band (under 18, 18-24, 25-34, 35-44 and so on), and ethnicity. Here is a useful guide for asking people about their ethnic group: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/ethnic-groups#list-of-ethnic-groups>. Include a 'prefer not to say' option for all these categories to make it clear people have a choice over what information to give you.
- The impact of the event on active participation. Simply getting a range of people to come along and take part in your event might be an end in itself, particularly if your community does not typically put on community events. You might also hope that the event will encourage people to get more involved in the community, find a new hobby or interest or take part in some further follow up action. Think about the different ways people are going to be involved, from attendees to volunteers. Do you want to find out different things from each group? The impact of the event on levels of participation is best measured a month or so after the event has taken place.

HOW TO MEASURE

QUANTITATIVE

Questions you might ask in a survey during an event might include:

- People who are attending this event are broadly representative of those who live in this area. [Strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree, don't know.]
- People from all backgrounds are involved in this event. [Strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree, don't know.]

Questions you might ask in a survey after an event might include:

- Since taking part in the event I have worked with my neighbours to improve my local community. [Yes, no, don't know.]
- Since taking part in the event I have taken up a new volunteering opportunity in my local area. [Yes, no, don't know.]

QUALITATIVE

You might wish to consider if the people attending the event are representative of those who live in the neighbourhood. Are there any groups of people who have not taken part?

You can also include evidence from photographs and videos of the day, and record audio clips of answers to informal interviews with participants.

4. WELLBEING

Events may have an impact on the mental and physical health of participants. These impacts might be:

- immediate or short-term changes – improved mood, enjoyment – which can be measured on the day; or
- long-term changes, for example reduced loneliness, increased life satisfaction, new friendships, or new hobbies. These impacts are best measured after the event.

HOW TO MEASURE

QUANTITATIVE

Questions you might ask in a survey during an event might include:

- I have enjoyed attending today's event. [Strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree, don't know.]
- On a scale of 1-10, where 1 is not at all happy and 10 is very happy, how happy has today's event made you feel?

Questions you might ask in a survey after an event might include:

- Since attending this event I have felt less lonely. [Strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree, don't know.]
- I have made new friends as a result of the event. [Strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree, don't know.]

QUALITATIVE

Set up a comments board on the day and ask people if they enjoyed the event and how it has impacted on their mood. You could ask people for three words that describe their enjoyment of place at the beginning and end of the day.

You can ask people what they:

- enjoyed the most
- enjoyed least
- what surprised them
- what inspired them.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- [UCL Museum Wellbeing Measures Kit](#) has a list of questions related to emotional response to an event (e.g. "I felt engaged" none of the time, not very often, some of the time, very often, all of the time)
- [What Works Centre for Wellbeing](#) has a guide to measuring loneliness with full template questionnaire

5. LEARNING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Events can increase the knowledge and skills of both attendees and volunteers.

This could be an explicit aim of the event (for example, to raise awareness of a particular issue, to teach craft skills), or it could happen spontaneously, for example, through people sharing recipes.

Some events have training for volunteers or staff and you could use an evaluation to see if that training has been effective.

HOW TO MEASURE

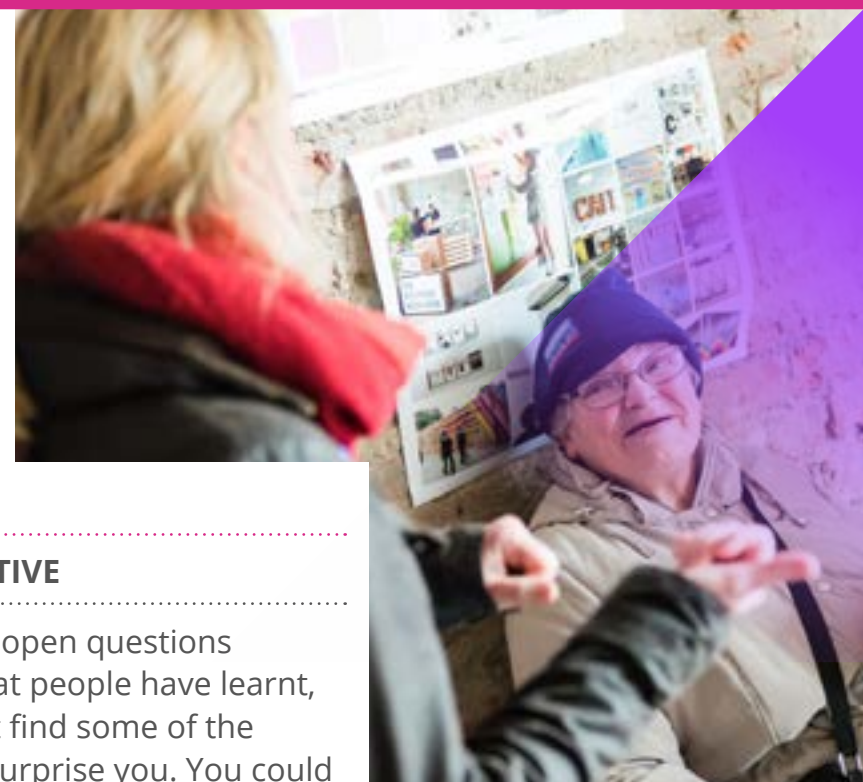
QUANTITATIVE

Questions you might ask in a survey might include

- I learnt something new today. [Strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree, don't know.]
- On a scale of 1-10 how do you rate the training that you received today, where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent?

QUALITATIVE

If you ask open questions about what people have learnt, you might find some of the answers surprise you. You could ask attendees to write down their key take away or most interesting thing they learnt, and post it in a box on the way out.



FURTHER RESOURCES

- The Art Council's [Generic Learning Outcomes](#) gives a whole list of questions you could use to measure skills.

Above: Selby Big Local
(Photo: Jonathan Pow/Local Trust)

6. DISRUPTION

Events can also have negative effects. They may bring anti-social behaviour such as vandalism, but also traffic, noise or littering.

It is important to think not only about the positive effects which events might have, but also the potential negative effects and how these might be reduced or addressed.



HOW TO MEASURE

QUANTITATIVE

Questions you might ask in a survey during an event might include:

- On a scale of 1-10, has today's event had a negative or positive impact on your local community, where 1 is the most negative and 10 is most positive.

QUALITATIVE

You could use a comment board to ask if the event had any negative impacts. The following sources of evidence might also be useful:

- Number of complaints to event organisers or local authorities
- Comments posted on Facebook or local WhatsApp groups about the event.

Section 1 of [GLO Researcher's Question Bank](#) contains a list of negative open-ended questions. Though aimed at museums, they are useful for events as well.

Not everyone has negative things to say. Finding those who do may be one way, but also to ask those who seem positive again; the very negative are often not representative.

QUICK GUIDE TO DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND APPROACHES

When you think about what data you want to collect, and particularly what methods or approaches you want to take, there are some important general things to consider.

There are two main types of evidence you will use in an evaluation: 'quantitative' and 'qualitative'.

Most evaluations of events includes some quantitative and some qualitative data, and combine the two to try and answer the questions they want to know about.

QUANTITATIVE APPROACHES

Quantitative approaches are useful when:

- you need to gather data from a lot of people
- when the subject of the research can be counted or easily measured in tangible ways
- when there's a high level of need for consistency and standardisation – for example when different organisations are running a community event and you want to collect consistent data (perhaps across different organisations/activities).

The most common type of quantitative data you can collect is from surveys, but this category also includes other numbers like counting the people attending an event; and using other people's surveys.

SURVEYS

Surveys can be conducted in-person and online. They do not have to be limited to quantitative data only – you can ask open questions where respondents can give answers in their own words – but typically you might choose to use a survey when you want to get a larger number of responses and you want to be able to compare those responses.

Online surveys can be undertaken where you have contact details such as emails which may allow you to approach people after an event. In-person surveys may be more suitable for doing at the time of the event – people are much more likely to respond on the day than in follow up, and don't require contact details. In-person surveys also enable you to reach people who are not online.

However, face-to-face surveys are more resource intensive as they require event volunteers to ask questions.

You don't have to restrict yourself to surveying people who have attended an event. You might also want to survey volunteers to find out about their experiences.

Here are some points you might want to consider if you are designing a survey.

Make it proportionate:

Think about how much time your attendees have spent at your event, and therefore how much time you can reasonably expect they might spend on telling you about themselves and providing feedback. You can generally expect more from people who were more deeply involved (e.g. volunteers) or those attending several events.

Make it representative:

It will be close to impossible to get everyone who came to give you feedback, so think about how many people you need to ask in order to get useful information.

When you're doing surveys, if you want to be able to make statements like '75% of attendees said they'd met someone new' you need to survey enough people to be confident that people you didn't survey would be likely to say the same as people you did. The more attendees you have, the smaller the proportion you need to survey to be able to make statements like that. If your event has 100 people coming for example, you will want to survey about 80 of them to be very confident that those other 20 would say the same thing. This may be unrealistic, but it is important to remember that you

do need to survey a reasonable number of people if you want to be confident in your survey's findings.

You should also try and get a representative sample of participants (e.g. if a third of your attendees are over 60, you should try and make sure a third of your survey respondents are over 60; if half of your attendees are women, half of your survey respondents should be women). This will help you look at things like whether older people had different opinions about your event that younger people etc.

You will also need to consider who is going to be asking the questions. If there is a prior relationship between them and the person responding to the survey, they might feel unable to be honest or to tell you particular things.

DESIGNING YOUR SURVEY

You will need to consider the following when designing your survey:

You should ask people for their consent to use the information they give you. This includes telling them what you plan to do with the information. If people provide you with personal information, for example, their contact details, UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) oblige you to store this information securely and not share it. You may also have specific responsibilities in relation to UK GDPR if they provide you with personal information.

You should give people the chance to respond in their own words in an open question, but most short surveys are made up of closed questions where people are asked to choose from a list of answer choices.

Examples of closed questions about community events include:

Today's event has made me feel that I belong in my community. [Strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree, don't know.]

What did you most enjoy about today's event? Please choose the option that most applies to you.

- I got to meet new people
- I got to know my neighbours better
- I enjoyed the food
- I enjoyed the entertainment
- I found out more about my local community
- Other, please specify

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all enjoyable and 10 is very enjoyable, how much did you enjoy today's event?

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

Management information is the data you collect automatically as you run your event. For example – how many activities are you running? How many tickets have you sold or how many people registered?

This data may already be collected as part of the way in which you run your event, and you may already use it in your planning (e.g. managing the capacity of a venue).

SECONDARY DATA

Secondary data is data that somebody else has already collected for another purpose, rather than specifically for your evaluation. It might come from a regularly-collected dataset, for example data which is collected by the Office of National Statistics, by government departments or local authorities, or perhaps it might come from a partner, e.g. a community organisation which has done a survey or undertaken a consultation. Secondary data might be most useful to you in planning your community event. It might be able to tell you about the characteristics of your local community, for example, the demographic make-up of people who live there.

QUALITATIVE APPROACHES

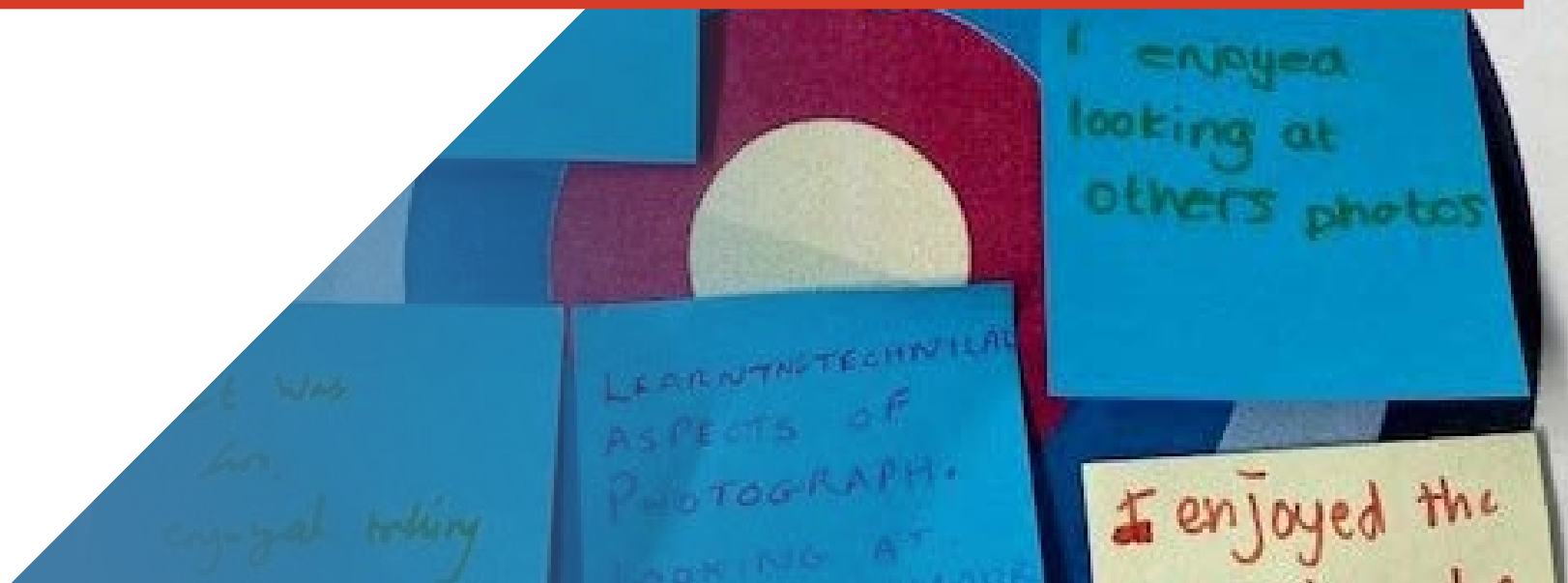
Qualitative approaches are useful when you want to explore your event in greater detail, or capture the voices of people who are engaging in your event. This might involve interviews, focus groups, or observation.

INTERVIEWS

These are one of the most popular techniques for collecting qualitative data on events. They can be more or less structured depending on what information you want to get. If you need the same information from every interviewee, you will need a consistent list of questions.

If you are collecting stories in participants' own words, you might allow them more flexibility or have a set of themes they can respond to.

Short, vox pop-type interviews can be used to get people's responses at an event. Here you will ask people to respond to one or two questions. If filmed, they can also be used as a means of promoting the event to others in the future.



Above: Bay Create (Photo: Whitley Bay Big Local)

FOCUS GROUPS/GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Focus groups are designed to collect the views of a specific group of people. Most focus groups comprise 6-10 participants who would be asked to participate in a 1-1.5 hour discussion around a specific topic. Focus groups are different from interviews because they involve interactions between the participants. They are a particularly useful method for bringing together groups of partners or stakeholders to discuss their experiences, or to understand more about how volunteers enjoyed being part of the community event. If you've already done your survey, you can dig deeper into the issues that the survey raised.

It can be quite resource intensive to organise and recruit participants to take part in a focus group or group discussion, but they can also produce valuable insights about your community event.

You will need to consider who you ask to attend the discussion, especially if you want it to be representative of people who have attended the event. You will also need to prepare a list of questions to prompt the discussion.

Your first question should be a 'warm-up' question to get people relaxed and thinking about the subject of the discussion. As a rule of thumb, you will be able to cover about five themes in a 1.5 hour discussion, with each theme comprising a couple of questions. The questions you ask should be simple and open, for example "I want to find out what you enjoyed or didn't enjoy about the event. First of all, what did you enjoy about the event?"

You should avoid leading questions (those which prompt or encourage the answer wanted) or value-laden questions (those that assume the respondent accepts a particular set of values).

The people that lead focus groups are called moderators. It is the moderator's job to make sure that everyone is able to contribute to the discussion and that no-one dominates the discussion. Moderators are also responsible for covering all the questions and making sure that the discussion keeps to time.

Focus group discussions are often recorded, for future reference. You will need to ask participants' permission if you are recording the discussion, and guarantee them anonymity. It is also a good idea to make notes to summarise key points, either during or immediately after a discussion.

FOCUS GROUPS/GROUP DISCUSSIONS CONTINUED

Observations: You might want to make your own notes about an event, either when it is taking place or immediately afterwards. Who attended and are they representative of people who live in the area? Who mixed with who? What did people enjoy most?

You might want to consider other things that are going on in your neighbourhood that might impact on people's experience of your event. For example, if you think your event will make people feel better about their neighbourhood, but there is also a litter-picking campaign going on – how do you know whether any improvements to how people feel are because of your event, the litter-picking campaign, both or neither?

Public feedback: You may get unsolicited feedback – either verbal or perhaps via email – on the day, and in the days following the event. This may provide valuable insights. Try to document what people say straight away – write it down so you don't forget it. Remember that people who are inspired to give unsolicited feedback are likely to be those who most enjoyed the event, or had a particular complaint, rather than being representative of the attendees as a whole.

FURTHER RESOURCES

The [Association for Research in the Voluntary and Community Sector](#) (ARVAC) has a Community Research Toolkit, supported by Local Trust, which is available [here](#).

It includes some excellent guides on:

- research theory and ethics in community research
- different research methods, including some of those discussed in this guide and some other approaches which you may want to consider

[Together We Plan](#) is a resource from Local Trust which brings together learning, case studies and tools for collective community planning, activities and reflections.

[Measuring Change with Big Local](#) includes a helpful Resources Guide to Understanding and Measuring Change which has links to several excellent resources, covering the theory of change, thinking about impact, links to tools for specific areas (e.g. measuring loneliness), and to a range of generic tools like survey and other data collection tools.

ABOUT SPIRIT OF 2012

Spirit of 2012 is the London 2012 Games legacy fund. Spirit awards grants for inclusive arts, sports and volunteering activities in communities that bring people together to improve their wellbeing. The National Lottery Community Fund founded Spirit in 2013 with a £47million endowment to continue and recreate the spirit of pride, positivity and community that inspired people across the UK during the London 2012 Games.

Spirit of 2012's grantholders range from national to small, hyper-local organisations. www.spiritof2012.org.uk

ABOUT LOCAL TRUST

Local Trust is a place-based funder supporting communities to transform and improve their lives and the places in which they live. We believe there is a need to put more power, resources, and decision-making into the hands of communities. We do this by trusting local people. Our aims are to demonstrate the value of long term, unconditional, resident-led funding, and to draw on the learning from our work delivering the Big Local programme to promote a wider transformation in the way policy makers, funders and others engage with communities and place. www.localtrust.org.uk

ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR CULTURE, SPORT AND EVENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WEST OF SCOTLAND

This report was produced by the Centre for Culture, Sport and Events at the University of West of Scotland (UWS). The work involved a consortium of researchers. This report was written by Professor Gayle McPherson, (UWS), Tamsin Cox (DHA Communications), Professor David McGillivray (UWS), Dr Bernadette Quinn (Technological University Dublin), Niclas Hell (UWS), Prof Andrew Smith (University of

Westminster) and Dr Sophie Mamattah (UWS). The research Centre for Culture, Sport and Events conducts and produces research evidence to support the importance of culture, sport and events in the creation of economic, social and cultural values for institutional and non-institutional beneficiaries. We aim to translate research evidence into useable, accessible formats for research and community users.

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