CULTURE AND WELLBEING
A Handbook for Cultural Organisations
Culture Action Europe

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In this handbook, we present guidelines to orient cultural organisations in their process of investigation, assessment and evaluation of the impacts they expect to generate on wellbeing of relevant groups.
It is important to underline that we are not suggesting any particular format, but rather we point to a few key passages that could assist cultural organisations in creating the tool best suited for them.

1 Looking for evidence

Our three-year itinerary on culture and wellbeing documents that, if on the one side, there is a growing interest in this field of investigation and a growing number of examples of a positive direct relationship between the two; on the other side, despite its vast amount, the body of evidence that has been produced over the last decades is still considered not enough. Our Handbook starts by discussing the reasons for collecting evidence of the relevance of cultural practice for wellbeing.

REASONS FOR COLLECTING EVIDENCE

In many occasions, during the three years of this project, representatives of cultural organisations have complained that they often feel unequal to the task of justifying to their funders their costs, their activities or their very existence, in terms of quantifiable economic or social returns to investments. Clear enough, most of those requests show little, if any, appreciation of arts "for art's sake". they are also the effect of a shift from a model of funding culture based upon the support to organisations/institutions to another one, which is based upon projects, and often in a competitive environment. As consequence, a fragmented approach project-by-project increasingly replaces an integrated, organic one, and a pressure is added to "getting a higher score" to obtain funds.

Ironically, such sophisticated evaluations would require an amount of dedicated funding resources which are instead very scarce and increasingly so.
Apart from the growing demand for accountability, there are other good reasons for cultural organisations to assess their impacts: greater transparency, more effective comparisons of their own diverse interventions, and more robust evaluations.

The following sessions summarise three of the possible motives for assessing impacts: self-assessment and planning, reporting and advocacy.

• Self-assessment and planning

From the cultural organisation's own point of view, a clear idea of the direct and indirect effects of their activities in terms of wellbeing contributes greatly to increase the quality of management, optimal resource use, goal setting and attainment. It also helps to place those impacts, if desired or sought, in their proper rank among the organisation's priorities. For those organisations that address the theme of wellbeing among their core concerns, It also helps selecting the best, most effective and cost-efficient activities. In this case, there is no special constraint as to the method of assessment/evaluation to adopt. It may range from very informal, as in the case of closed-room, restricted staff or staff-and-management meetings held time to time to discuss how things proceed, to more enlarged and public meetings, to narrative reports including an assessment of the wellbeing component, to technical reports written with a specific form and including data and indicators, and so on. Some rules should be followed by cultural organisations, nonetheless, like committing themselves to report the impact on wellbeing of their activity regularly, and to be the first to take those reports seriously as a base for decision and choice. Cultural organisations may also want circulating, on paper or digitally, wellbeing reports, to communicate in a horizontal way all their initiatives taken to that purpose or with content, as in sustainability reports or social responsibility reports.

Cultural organisations aware of their impact on wellbeing will be more likely to share that awareness beyond their inner circles, and to use it when reporting to third parties.

• Advocacy

Another excellent reasons for reporting is advocacy. Many cultural organisations want that their voices to be heard by decision makers at various levels, local communities, the media, the general or specific public, etc. To do so, they must be credible, reliable, competent in their own field. Effectively reporting the impact on wellbeing of their activities helps building and strengthening their credibility. To do so in regular ways, with accuracy of data and careful selection of sources, builds up their reliability. Their competence is clearly shown by the range of their impacts on wellbeing. All this calls for a substantial effort for high quality evaluations, that, once again, should be built-in since the planning stage. Trying to reconstruct ex post possible impacts without any clear ex ante idea about the expected results is a inefficient time and resource-consuming exercise, la sort of piñata game, designated hitter, after being turned around three times, strikes at the moving target while blindfolded.

• Reporting to third parties

Reporting impacts on wellbeing to third parties may be done for a set of reasons, under different conditions and degrees of freedom. Cultural organisations may want to report their accomplishment to their stakeholders, to the larger public, to Government, national and international partners, patrons, funders, for contributing to the political debate, to raise issues, to suggest solutions, to gain consensus, to introduce themselves into new arenas. Contents and methods of that reporting can be freely established by the cultural

organisation itself, taking into account the characteristics of their targets. They can alternatively resort to numbers, to narratives, to cases, to a mix of them, to self-built indicators. Cultural organisations are free to select their fallout area, time dimension, the emphasis and priority they will give to wellbeing aspects when presenting their results, and to include outputs, outcomes and impacts in their account, or, conversely, limit their report to their inputs: efforts, resources, etc.

In other cases, reporting is required by third parties who adopt specific logical frames and standardised forms. This often implies for cultural organisations forced adjustments, and the risk of being unable, on the one side, to fill properly some of the required fields, and, on the other, to make with a full account of all the relevant outcomes and impacts of their actions. Time frames are again crucial, since significant impacts may become evident only in the long run.

In such cases, the information gap could be better bridged if cultural organisations were prepared to integrate the evaluation sheets required by third parties with their own assessment and evaluations, expressed in their own terms and matched to their own plans and expected results.
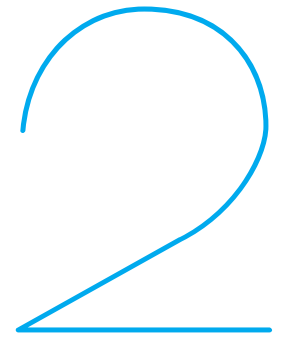
2 You shall not covet your neighbor's tools: A variable geometry

A noteworthy progress in the debate about wellbeing, impacts and their assessment, revealed by the recent literature, is represented by the general recognition that in this field, metrics cannot follow a "one size fits all" logic. The very term, "measurement" has been questioned (Cicerchia, 2015) extensively. As Matarasso puts it, "Measurement is a scientific concept that assumes the existence of a fixed scale against which different values (quantities, this time, not goods) can be compared. (….) But because people do not agree about culture, its definition or its good, it seems unlikely that they will be able to agree on a scale against which that good could be measured. (Matarasso, 2012)." Where measurement in the strict sense is not applicable, valid alternatives are many. Scientific reliability is not uniquely based upon massive quantification, as Epidemiology demonstrates beautifully. The temptation to ape economic measurements forcing their models into cultural activities and, above all, impacts on wellbeing, leads to frustration. We suggest that cultural organisations develop a variable geometry approach, and that they resort to measures when measurement is viable, to cases, stories, descriptions, images and other narratives when they are more suitable to convey the desired meaning. The next sections describe a few criteria for selecting the most appropriate methods of assessing impacts.

- Project-generated impacts vs Continued activity impacts

Assessing impacts on wellbeing resulting from continued activities may require different strategies and tools than when project-generated impacts are considered. Differences can be due to changing v. constant audience/beneficiaries/participants, intensity, frequency, repetition, duration in time, etc. Continued activities may rely on progressions, or cumulative effects, while one-shot projects tend to be more fragmented, although, sometimes, more intensive and focused. This distinction should be borne in mind in the design of the evaluation, to suit best nature and characteristics of the actions that generate impacts on wellbeing.

• Outputs, Outcomes, Impacts

Cultural activities may interact with wellbeing of individuals and groups with a wide range of effects. Spending a few hours watching a good film may be an important temporary relief for a long term hospital patient. A guided session in a museum may help raising spirits for Alzheimer affected persons and their caregivers. Learning to play a musical instrument in a marching band may be the only alternative to boredom, despair and deviance for teenagers in depressed areas. Libraries may be a welcoming place where you feel at home even if you are a migrant. Spaces created by architects present cherished doses of beauty to people passing by. And sometimes, an image you see or a book you read change forever your life.

The technical distinction outputs, outcomes, impacts, may be of use.

Outputs refer to the immediate product an action generates, e.g.: a cycle of training lessons in archaeological field work for 10 young offenders; puppet theatre performance in a child hospital ward involving 50 young patients, etc.

Outcomes look beyond the immediate product, and represent a perceived change of the level of wellbeing. It can be assessed informally, i.e. collecting comments "I felt happy all the time", "My neighbourhood looks nicer", "I have learned a few new interesting things", and the like. Videos are used sometimes to record participants' opinions. Alternatively, such perceptions may be collected in a more formal way, as in the case of the paper umbrella proposed by UCL for museums (section 2.2), or regular questionnaires.

Impacts are defined as long lasting or permanent changes. They can be detected in subjective or/and objective terms, with different qualitative (like the Most Significant Change) and quantitative

methods (like the SROI), the use of proxies (e.g.: increase in the rate of cultural participation or in the rate of people declaring themselves satisfied of their neighbourhood/workplace/life, improvement of the image of the city in the local or national press, etc.).

It may happen that cultural organisations who concentrate resources to attain significant changes in terms of wellbeing, have no way to record them for a period of time. In those cases, keeping track of inputs specifically addressed to well defined wellbeing goals may be advisable: number of hours/people/programmes, total amount spent, etc.

• Types of activity

As in the case of project v. continued activity, different disciplines (museums, libraries, visual arts, performing arts, music, digital creation, literature, poetry, etc.) require to develop each the most appropriate approach to detecting and assessing their impact on wellbeing. Due account must be taken in particular of their different degrees of involvement of their public, the extent of the interaction they display, the level of skills and knowledge they require from participants, the familiarity with the target audience/participants, voluntary/compulsory, paying/non-paying attendance, etc.

• Types of target groups

Who is the impact on wellbeing for? There are occasions when the target groups are clearly identified and occasions when they are not. Addressing groups with specific characteristics facilitates the tasks of assessing impacts. Target groups may also be internal to the organisation itself.

• Planned vs side or unexpected impacts

The piñata game effect is frequent when cultural organisations try to guess unplanned, unexpected, side effects of their action. They represent a difficult and risky exercise. The main reason of its difficulty is not so much due to the fact that culture and wellbeing are slippery concepts, with many intangible and non quantifiable aspects, but rather lies in the fact that lack of ex ante evaluation increases enormously the area of uncertainty of the final result. The piece of advice that we feel proposing to cultural organisations, then, is "steer more, row less", i.e. try, as much as possible, to decide in advance what your desired impacts in terms of well being are. You may even discover that you do not want to attain anything specific in terms of wellbeing, and you are perfectly entitled to skip that part. But, if you decide that wellbeing is within your area of interest, see if your activities lead to those impacts or not. If not, adjust your activities. Adopt ex ante, in itinere and ex post evaluation practices to help yourself to stay on course.

3 Six focuses, in two stages

Based upon the participatory work CAE has carried out in this respect since 2014, we propose cultural organisations who want to become more aware and accountable for their impacts on wellbeing to consider six focuses: three help the analytical stage, three the planning stage.

• 5.3.1. Places, needs, powers

Places, their needs and our powers should be the focuses of the analytical stage of the process.
Focus on the place of your action.
Places may be physical or conceptual.
They locate your action in a space with characteristics about wellbeing (which ones?) that demand your attention and express needs (again, which ones?) of their own. Can your organisation help satisfying those needs?
Needs are about changes.
What changes are in your power to bring about, at least partially?
How wellbeing in that place will increase, and for whom, thanks to your powers?
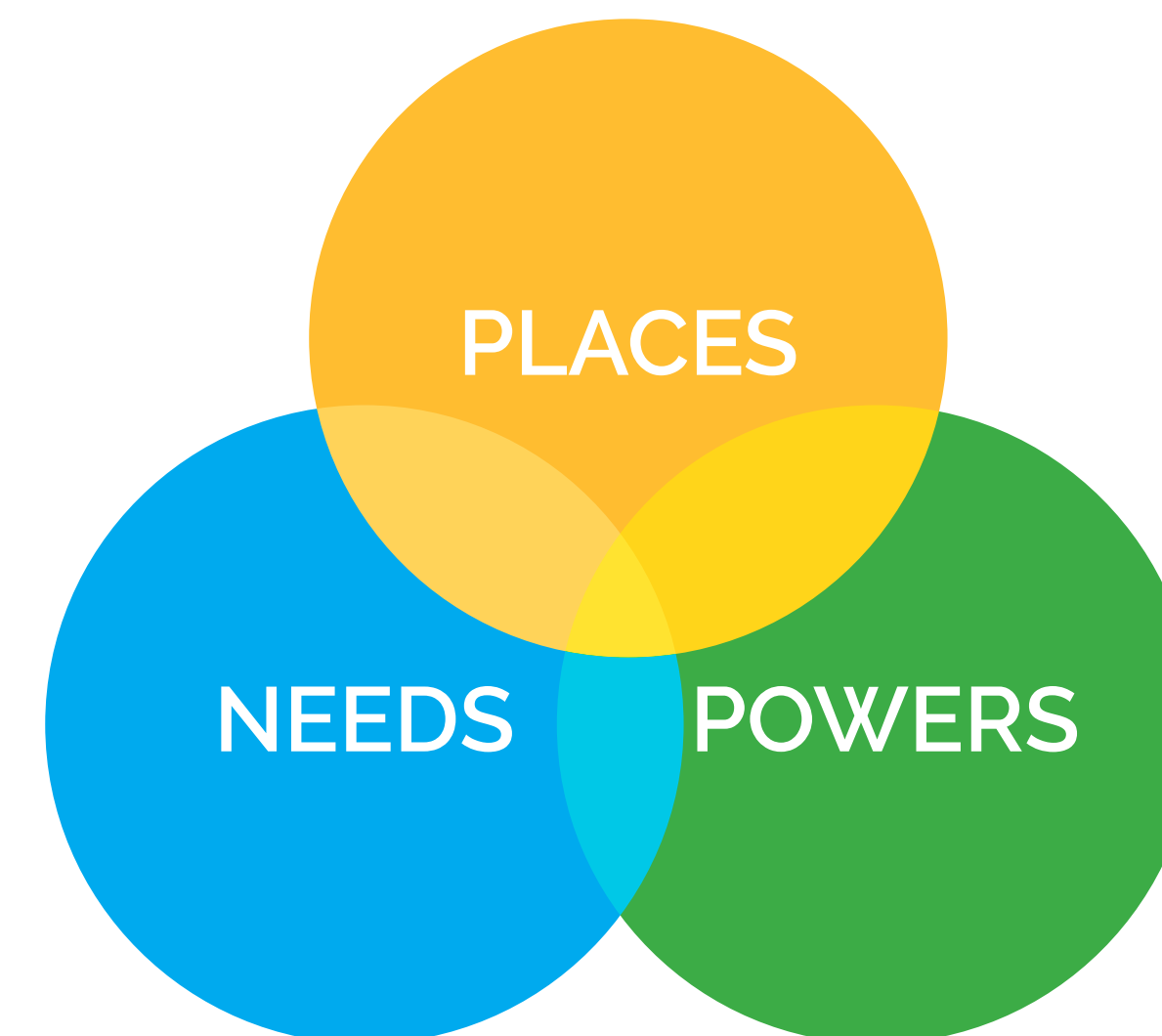
• 5.3.2. Decisions, goals, plans

The planning stage of the process is built on the information gathered and the awareness reached in the analytical stage. We suggest that impacts on wellbeing are decided in a deliberate procedure, with constant reference to needs the organisation wishes to address and its actual powers. Decisions not only concern the desired impacts on specific groups, but also the resources allocated to attain them within a given time horizon, with or without concurring external supply of means and people. Thus, by setting goals and the course of action (strategy) to reach them, and identifying with increasing levels of detail the individual actions the organisation will develop, impacts on wellbeing will be at the core of a strategic plan. The plan will include monitoring, as well as ex ante, in itinere and ex post evaluations.

PLACES

NEEDS POWERS
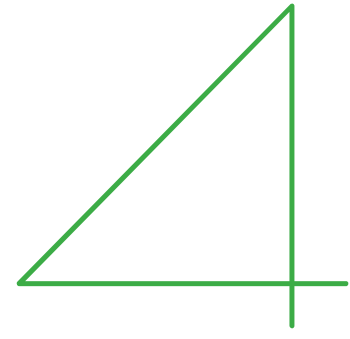
The case of Arts in Health

"The arts, including music, dance, theatre, visual arts and writing, are increasingly recognised as having the potential to support health and wellbeing. However, in order for arts to be included in commissioning of health and social care services, there needs to be robust evidence of their effectiveness, impacts and costs. (...) Artists can find it challenging to navigate the terrain of evaluation and to access the language and frameworks that are required in order to develop robust evidence that will ensure that their programmes are understood and are eligible for funding". Daykin N. and T. Joss (2016)

In 2016, Public Health England published Arts for health and wellbeing. An evaluation framework, to provide guidance on appropriate ways of documenting the impacts of arts for health and wellbeing, whether through small scale project evaluations or large scale research studies. It suggests a standard framework for reporting of project activities that will strengthen understanding of what works in specific contexts and enable realistic assessment and appropriate comparisons to be made between programmes.

The document starts from the widely shared view that a number of different evaluation designs are possible in arts for health and wellbeing.

Quantitative evaluation can be used for monitoring project delivery and capturing measurable outcomes. It may involve quasi-experimental designs, using pre-and post-testing of participants, individually or in groups.
Qualitative evaluation, using interviews, focus groups and

observation, can explore broader project impacts, such as those on organisations and staff. Qualitative designs range from simple process evaluation through to detailed ethnographic research. Participatory action research places participants at the centre of the process as they work closely with evaluators to design, implement and report evaluation. This allows understanding of impacts of arts for health and wellbeing projects to develop through dialogue and not in response to themes and outcomes that are pre-determined by evaluators, funders or commissioners.

Case studies can use a range of methods but most often they draw on qualitative data. They can contribute to high quality evaluation when used rigorously. They - the document adds - can be strengthened by drawing on good research practice including sampling and case selection, data analysis and ethics.
The document also suggest that creative and arts-based methods using techniques, such as photography, film, visual arts, poetry, creative writing, music, drama and dance can be used to support evaluation. Arts for health and wellbeing projects often produce outputs – artworks and artefacts that may inform understanding of project impacts. These can be effective for uncovering hidden perspectives, adding empathic power and strengthening participants' voices. They are also used in dissemination to make evaluation and research findings accessible to audiences beyond traditional academia or policy making circles.
They also note that economic evaluation can be used to capture benefits and savings from using arts-based approaches within health and social care. While formal approaches, such as cost benefit analysis have not been widely used to date. More commonly, social

return on investment (SROI) is used to project forward the costs and impacts that would occur if an intervention did or did not take place.

Finally, the document mentions the arts observational scale (ArtsObs), a non-intrusive tool developed specifically for the evaluation of performing arts interventions in healthcare settings (www.cwplus.org.uk/assets/pdf/Manual.pdf).

The document also proposes an agile and convincing reporting and evaluation tool. Its full version is available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/496230/PHE_Arts_and_Health_Evaluation_FINAL.pdf

Below, we offer a description of its contents.

The first section is aimed at gathering information about the project.

• Essential information

What does the intervention aim to do? What are the intended outcomes and impacts? What is the rationale for the evaluation, ie, why are you doing it? Identify the key health and wellbeing outcomes as well as the personal, artistic, organisational, financial and social outcomes that the project seeks to achieve. Identify any broader impacts that the project seeks to influence.

Who will be involved in the project delivery? List the key people involved in the intervention planning, delivery and evaluation.

Commissioner(s) and funding sources
How is the intervention funded and who has commissioned it?

For how long does the intervention run? How many sessions, episodes or events are delivered?

Location and setting
Where is the intervention taking place? It could be in a community centre, school or other setting.

Type of arts intervention
Provide details of the art form, for example, music, singing, visual arts, theatre, literary, digital or electronic. Also provide details of the nature of the activity: for example, static, live performance or participatory.

Description of the activity
Can the evaluation be reproduced based on your description? Identify the elements of the intervention so that others can deliver it outside your project. Give details of the content, delivery method, session format.

Context and setting for the activity
Will the project work equally well in different settings? It is helpful to appreciate the context of the activity. Give details of the setting and identify any particular features of the environment or setting.

Quality assurance
Who will manage the intervention? Who will deliver it? What quality assurance procedures will be followed?

Target population

Who is the target population? Are there specific admission criteria? Provide details of the individuals and groups as well as the settings where the project is targeted. Include age and demographic details as well as health conditions.

Method of recruitment and referral

How are participants recruited to the intervention? Is there a referral process or is it self-selecting?

Equipment and resources required

What equipment is needed to run the intervention? How much space is needed? Can the facility accommodate population groups with specific requirements (such as people with physical limitations or specific dietary needs)?

Core staff competencies (and training required)

How are those delivering the intervention recruited? What are the core skills needed by everyone involved in delivering the intervention? Does the intervention require the involvement of a professional artist or musician? What personal skills such as communication or facilitation are needed? Do those staff delivering the intervention need to be trained in certain aspects of the intervention such as group work, community music or working with older people?

Quality assurance mechanisms; assessment of risk and potential unintended consequences.

Project costs per participant

Is there a cost to the participant? Provide details of any charges made for any part of the intervention and other costs such as equipment, clothing or transport.

Ethics and consent

It is important to consider any ethical issues that arise in the delivery of the project. Will individuals' artworks or performances be reproduced, broadcast or disseminated? Will participants be identified in advocacy or marketing materials? What procedures will be used to obtain consent and protect the privacy of participants?

Declaration of interest

It is important to declare any potential conflicts of interest, even if these do not seem to be important. This is particularly important if the evaluation is funded by an agency that could be perceived to have a commercial interest in the results.

• Desirable information

DETAILED RATIONALE AND THEORY OF CHANGE
Give details of the rationale in terms of the mechanisms of change underlying the intervention. This includes identifying a clear goal or primary outcome, tracing intermediate outcomes that might contribute towards this and using evidence to demonstrate the link between outcomes.

Evidence review

Give details of the evidence review process including reviews of comparable interventions that have informed the development of the project.

Consultation

Consultation is important to establish that an arts intervention is being developed in response to an identified need. Describe the consultation processes with stakeholders, including service users, which have informed the development of the activity.

Duration of funding

Special conditions of attendance and incentives

Details of health needs assessments

Details of equality impact assessments

THE SECOND SECTION
OF THE TOOL GATHERS EVALUATION DETAILS

Evaluation aims
What is the rationale for the evaluation – why are you doing it? Identify the key outcomes and impacts that have been prioritised for evaluation.

Evaluation questions
What questions does the evaluation seek to address?

Type of evaluation and evaluation design
What kind of evaluation design will be used? For example, will it draw on quantitative or qualitative approaches? Describe the evaluation approach, the data collection methods and the procedures that will be used for analysing the data.

Evaluation budget
What resources have been set aside for evaluation? Give details of the evaluation costs and a budget to include evaluation planning, staff, transport, materials and other evaluation costs.

Monitoring
It is essential to capture basic information such as the numbers of people recruited to a project and have completed all its stages. Recording demographic information about participants including age, sex, ethnicity, disability and socio-economic status can help to assess whether the project has successfully reached its target population and it can also help to establish whether the outcomes are more or less likely to be delivered for different groups. It is standard practice in public health evaluations to monitor such details. In public services there is a legal requirement to carry out ethnic monitoring.

Data collection procedures
In addition to monitoring, what data collection activities will be undertaken? What tools will be used? Who is going to collect the data? What skills do they need?

Sampling, selection and recruitment of participants

Evaluation timeline
When are the data going to be collected? Baseline data for the outcomes should be collected before the intervention begins and assessment should be repeated at the end. Ideally, longer term follow-up will include data collection between six and 12 months after the intervention has been completed. Provide a timeline for the evaluation, allowing for planning and preparation as well as data analysis and reporting.

Process evaluation
How will broader project impacts, including strengths and challenges of delivery, be assessed? How will learning be captured in order to inform future projects and the wider arts for health and wellbeing field? Outline the information used for process evaluation, including diaries and activity logs. Record what actually happens during the

project, including any challenges to the delivery of the evaluation. Note that unexpected outcomes and impacts can be positive as well as negative.

Participants' views about the intervention

How will participants' views about aspects of the project and its delivery be captured? Give details of any methods used to capture participants' experiences including satisfaction questionnaires, focus groups or interviews. It is important to bear in mind that participants may not wish to be seen as criticising the project or the team delivering it. Consider methods that enable participants to give anonymous feedback, including talking to people who are not directly connected with the project delivery.

Ethics and consent

What are the ethical considerations for the evaluation? Will the anonymity of participants be protected? Could the evaluation include discussions about upsetting topics? Are the participants particularly vulnerable? Are adverse effects a possibility?

Conducting the evaluation

Who will conduct the evaluation? How will you ensure that they have the requisite skills? ill the evaluation team include expertise from different disciplines including arts, health and research and evaluation? Internal evaluation often means that the project is being evaluated by the artists and staff who are running it: if this is the case then possible causes of bias may need to be acknowledged. External evaluation by independent specialists is more likely to produce an objective view of the outcomes of the intervention.

Managing evaluation

Who will manage the evaluation? It is important that there is a process in place to record progress against the original plan as well as any changes that are made to the evaluation design and delivery.

Evaluation findings: data analysis and interpretation

How will the data be analysed? How will you avoid bias in data analysis and reporting? How will you use the findings? In outcomes evaluation, the purpose of analysis is to show whether the key outcomes have changed over the course of the intervention. Qualitative analysis can be used to explore impacts, process issues and participants' experiences of the project. Give details of results compared to baseline for each outcome measure included in the evaluation. Give details of the methods of analysis used for each component of the evaluation. Comment on limitations of the analysis and the extent to which it can be generalised – how likely is it that the results would be reproduced if the project was undertaken with another group? It is also important to consider what would be done differently with hindsight. Show how the learning from evaluation will be embedded in programme delivery and provide recommendations for changes in future projects and evaluation approaches.

Reporting and dissemination

How will you report your evaluation findings? Who are the target audiences for dissemination? It is important that evaluation evidence is made available so as to inform broader awareness and understanding of the role and impact of the arts. Give details of how the evaluation will be reported and disseminated including publications, conference presentations, multimedia links, public performances, and engagement with policy makers, professionals and the public.