Evaluating your event

This document covers the process and reasoning behind collecting feedback from public events. Evaluation can include reflection from both attendees and organisers of the event, and helps you to deliver successful events.

Why is evaluation important?

Evaluation is an important part of any public engagement activity or event. It tells you about what has worked, what hasn’t, and what the value of the activity has been for the different audiences. It also:

- Provides data for reporting, which can be used for awards, grants and impact case studies
- Often a requirement of funders/ sponsors
- Allows you to reflect
- Highlights areas for improvement
- Measure progress from past events
- Can be used (with permission) in testimonials

How to evaluate your event

Evaluation starts at the stage where you are planning an event, not once it has finished. In order to know what you want to measure, you need to know what you were trying to achieve for each audience (including you).

When you set objectives for the event, you will also be thinking about what constitutes success and how you will measure it. Different tools, like a log frame, can help with this planning.

Objectives should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.

Evaluation can often be divided into two parts – formative and summative. Formative evaluation happens during the course of a project and is a way of reflecting on what has happened and making changes in response to your findings. Summative evaluation tends to come at the end of a project and assesses the value of your activities against your original objectives.

When multiple partners, stakeholders or funders are involved, they may require evaluation on different parts of the event or activity. They may also request certain data is collected, and for their logos to be included on any surveys.

Requesting feedback should ideally take place on the day of the event or the day after.

Paper or digital?

You can gather feedback at the event, either via paper questionnaires, some form of ‘feedback wall’ or graphic artist (contact cpe-info@bristol.ac.uk), or through an online survey sent after the event. Pick the format which is most suitable for your event – for example when running schools events, paper surveys on the day are recommended as more data can be collected.
If you want to set up an online survey, subscribing to the Bristol Online Survey (BOS) offers a simple form builder where you can add questions and notes, and compile responses.

Think about how long to leave a survey open for – we recommend one month – and make sure attendees know this deadline.

**Introduction**

Whatever form of evaluation you choose to use, you should include a short introduction. This explains what event the feedback concerns, as well as information on whether the data entered will be anonymous, that it is non-compulsory, and how data will be shared and stored after collection. Always thank respondents for taking part.

**Sample questions**

There are many forms of question used in evaluation. Below is a selection of common questions, with an explanation of what information they will collect and why.

*How would you rate the event according to the following criteria/* *how satisfied were you with the following aspects of the event?*

Used to collect opinions on venue, speakers, content, timings and opportunity for interaction.

*What worked well/* *what did you enjoy in particular?*

Provides the opportunity to collect positive and specific feedback.

*Please provide any suggestions for how this event could have been improved.*

Allows attendees to highlight things which didn’t work well.

*How did you first find out about this event?*

Demonstrates which of your marketing channels was most effective, and can help you refine promotion for future events. It’s best to include options, e.g. Newsletter, Twitter, Word of Mouth.

*Have you attended a University event before/* *would you attend another University event?*

University events can sometimes attract a very narrow audience; many attendees answering yes to this question could suggest you need to consider different techniques for reaching a wider audience. Alternatively this can show the success of previous University events to encourage repeat attendance.

*Did you have prior knowledge of the event’s topic?*

Measures any increase in knowledge; a key element of successful public engagement.

*Which age group do you belong to?*

Questions about age, ethnicity, gender and postcode collect demographic data. This can show whether your event attracted your target audience.

**Further information**

The NCCPE website has useful information to help you evaluate your activities.

Contact the Public Engagement team for assistance evaluating public engagement.

Bristol Online Survey