

Evaluating Public Engagement Activities with School Pupils: A Toolkit

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About this toolkit

This toolkit aims to provide support for anyone at the University of Bristol who would like to evaluate their public engagement activities with schools. It is a step-by-step guide to the process of evaluating events, activities, or projects.

The toolkit provides practical suggestions and simple guidance on how to plan, execute, and implement the learning from evaluation research that the organisers can build in to their events, activities, or projects. It draws primarily on experiences and resources from the evaluation of the Schools-University Partnerships Initiative (SUPI), a cross-university project funded by RCUK and coordinated by the Public Engagement team from 2013-2016.

In this toolkit, you will find guidance on the seven key steps to a successful evaluation 'cycle':

1. Deciding whether to evaluate, and planning your evaluation
2. Choosing appropriate methods, with pros and cons of the most commonly used:
 - a. Questionnaires
 - b. Online surveys
 - c. Interviews
 - d. Participant observation
 - e. Focus groups
3. Developing research instruments/tools/questions
4. Collecting data
5. Analysing data
6. Writing up and sharing results
7. Applying the learning to develop activities

In the appendices you will find a downloadable exercise sheet, to help with evaluation planning, and examples of evaluation tools and interview questions that may help you to design your own.

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1. Planning your evaluation

Why evaluate?

First you need to decide whether evaluation is needed. Evaluation is often a requirement for schools' engagement, to access funding or for departmental monitoring. However, if the decision is yours, you may be considering whether evaluation is worth the extra effort. A well planned and executed evaluation will allow you to:

- Clarify your aims and objectives, refine your plans, and avert mistakes
- Learn to what extent your activity had the effect you intended, or any unintended effects
- Learn what you could have done better, or what went wrong
- Develop the activity, or any future activities that you plan to do with schools
- Make informed judgements about whether, how, and when to repeat the activity or run any follow-on activities
- Demonstrate to others what you've achieved and help to gain further support or action
- Collect evidence for use in impact case studies

These benefits make a strong case for completing some form of evaluation of any activity you run.

Even if no formal report is required, collecting data and evidence is good practice and will help you to better understand your activity and its effectiveness. However, the time and resource you put in to evaluation needs to be kept in proportion. As a realistic rule of thumb, **allow between 5% and 20% of the total time and resource available.** This depends on what kind of engagement activity you are running, the evaluation requirements and its purpose.

When to start planning

The planning stage of the evaluation should be part of the overall planning of the activity. This allows you to clarify early on what you are setting out to do, and has several benefits:

- Identifying clear aims and objectives of the activity
- Judging whether they are achievable
- Helping to avert mistakes which may be costly in terms of time and resource and potentially damaging to your objectives or your relationships, for instance with schools

You may be planning evaluation after the activity plans are in place. If so, be open to changing or adapting the activity in line with the evidence generated. If your evaluation planning comes after the activity has started, you can still gather useful evidence, but you may miss opportunities to collect key data or shape the activity.

Clarifying focus and purpose

Having decided to evaluate your activity, you need to clarify the focus of your evaluation. **What is it that you want or need to find out about your activity, and for what purpose?**

Two terms are used to differentiate between two broad types of evaluation: 'formative' and 'summative'. **Formative** evaluation primarily aims to provide learning to develop and improve a project's design and performance. Its main audiences are usually those involved in managing and delivering the project itself, and anyone (internal or external) interested in running something

similar. Formative evaluation typically attempts to find out *why* and *how* a project works or does not work.

Summative evaluation is concerned with reviewing what impact a project had on its target group(s) e.g. pupils, teachers, and university staff. It is focused on the ‘outcomes’ of the process, rather than the process itself and it measures what has been achieved or changed by the end of the project. Its key driver is usually accountability, i.e. demonstrating to those who have provided funding or resources that a project has had a positive effect.

The evaluation of most schools’ engagement activities will have both formative and summative elements. In addition to the evaluation requirements your activity may have, consider:

- Where does the balance lie between formative and summative intentions?
- Who will use the data, evidence, or reporting you produce and for what purpose(s)?
- What implications might this have for focusing your own limited time and resource?

Activity boxes 1-4 below will guide you through the planning process and can be fully completed in around one hour.

Identifying evaluation aims and intended outcomes

Having identified the main purpose(s) of your evaluation, you may have an emerging idea of what **overarching questions** you are attempting to answer. If your evaluation is a requirement, you might have inherited some evaluation questions or been asked to measure some predefined ‘objectives’, ‘intended outcomes’, or ‘key performance indicators’ (KPIs). First try to express in your own words what the ‘top level’ questions are.

Activity box 1 – Overarching questions

Try to note down the overarching evaluation questions for your activity. Typically there are two or more of these. Consider this as an initial brainstorming exercise, and spend only about 10 minutes on it. Remember, you are not tied to these and you can revise them later. It often helps to work on this with colleagues.

Some examples of overarching questions in a schools’ engagement context are:

- *Did pupils/ teachers learn what was intended from the activity?*
- *Was the material interesting/inspiring/pitched at an appropriate level?*
- *Did it enhance the school curriculum? Did it increase interest in the subject or topic?*
- *Were there any benefits for university staff/ students, and if so what?*

Next, you need to get more specific. **Consider how your overarching questions relate to the content and structure of the activity, as well as the purpose of the evaluation.**

Activity box 2 – Aims and objectives

For each overarching question, try to write down what evidence you would need to answer these questions. Try to encapsulate this in one sentence. These are your 'evaluation aims' (for formative evaluation) or 'objectives'/'intended outcomes' (most suitable for summative evaluation). You are aiming to end up with something resembling the following table:

<i>Overarching question</i>	<i>Evaluation aim (formative)</i>	<i>Objective / Intended outcome (summative)</i>
...
...

You should be able to produce a reasonable outline in 20 minutes. See **appendix A** for a **printable outline** of the above table, and a worked example for a fictional schools' engagement activity.

Tips

- Depending on the purpose of your evaluation, you may need to populate either formative aims or summative objectives, or a combination of the two
- There may be more than one aim or objective attached to each overarching question
- Remember, you can always go back and revise these or your overarching questions

The next step is to review your aims and objectives. You want to ensure they seem sensible, realistic, and appropriate to your activity and evaluation focus. You also need to check that you are not being overambitious.

Activity box 3 – Review of aims and objectives

Give yourself 10 minutes to review your aims/ objectives, and revise if necessary. Consider:

- Are there any gaps?
- Would they produce sufficient evidence to meet your purpose(s)?
- Do you think you could collect this evidence with the time and resource available?

Review your intended outcomes/objectives and consider whether each one is “S.M.A.R.T”:

Specific – does the intended outcome target the issue precisely enough?

Measurable – can you express the findings in a numeric or objectively countable form?

Achievable – can the indicators of positive evidence be reasonably expected from the activity? Is the bar set too high or low?

Realistic – is the outcome likely to be influenced by the planned activity, or is it something outside of its scope or main focus?

Timebound – Is it clear when the outcome should be measured, and is this appropriate?

Thinking ahead

The final task in the planning stage is to cast your mind ahead to the later stages of the cycle, and make a rough plan of what you think you might do and when.

Activity box 4 – Initial working plan

To what you have set out so far, add brief answers to the following questions. Remember, this is about initial ideas rather than a fixed plan:

- *Who will you need to collect data from, and when?*
- *How will you ensure a representative sample of responses?*
- *What do you imagine are the best/ most realistic means of doing this? What methods, if any, do you already have in mind?*
- *Are you most interested in quantitative (numerical) or qualitative (descriptive) data, or a mixture of the two? Why is this?*
- *Who will be responsible for collecting, collating, and storing data?*
- *How might you analyse your data? What do you want to find out from it?*
- *What will you produce from your data, e.g. a document or presentation?*
- *How will you apply the learning from your findings? Will you share it, and with whom?*

You will now have a working initial plan and you can refine your strategy by following the next steps.

2. Choosing methods

The methods you choose will depend on a range of factors:

- The structure and content of the activity you're planning
- The nature of your evaluation aims or objectives/ intended outcomes
- Who you need to gather data from
- The balance of formative vs summative evaluation
- The time and resource you have available

Below is an overview of the traditional methods you could use for evaluating schools' engagement activities with a summary of their benefits (pros) and disadvantages (cons). Note that this is not an exhaustive list and being creative with evaluation methods can yield excellent results.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires or 'feedback forms' are the most frequently used method for gathering data from participants in schools' engagement activities (pupils, teachers, university staff and students). **They are highly adaptable and can be used to collect quantitative or qualitative data, or both.**

Designed in advance, questionnaires are typically distributed in paper form at the end of an activity for completion and collection. They can also be used to collect the same or directly comparable data at the start of (or soon before) and at the end of (or soon after) an activity, as a way of measuring what has changed as a result of the activity. This can be referred to as a 'pre-/post methodology'.

Pros

- ❖ Time efficient
- ❖ High response rate possible if completed on the day of the activity
- ❖ Questions can be carefully considered, consistently applied, and collect a mixture of quantitative and qualitative evidence
- ❖ Respondents often expect to be asked to complete them
- ❖ Feedback can be more honest as it is a more anonymous method than face-to-face or telephone methods such as interviews or focus groups; there may be less social pressure on the respondent to say only positive things

Cons

- ❖ Sufficient time is needed to complete them within an already-time pressured activity
- ❖ May be undervalued, seen as a 'tick box' exercise (clearly explaining the purpose and importance to participants can help overcome this)
- ❖ Difficult to get rich and in-depth qualitative evidence, particularly from young people
- ❖ No way of asking for answers to be clarified or qualified, unless followed up with
- ❖ Produces extra data entry work if completed on paper and analysed on a spreadsheet

Online surveys

Online surveys share many of the attributes of questionnaires, but can be a useful alternative. Like questionnaires, they can collect a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data and be completed afterwards or incorporated into a pre-/post methodology. They can be completed on the day of an activity, particularly if the session already includes participant work at a computer terminal or with

another online device, or they can be distributed for completion earlier or later (typically by email, but also by other social media or web platforms).

Online surveys can seem an attractive alternative to paper questionnaires because they avoid the need for data entry and potentially save time within an activity schedule. However, their main drawback (when used outside a session) is the inability to control the response rate. **We would recommend that they are only used for school pupils within a structured and supervised context.** They can, nevertheless, be an extremely useful method for gathering data from teachers, university colleagues and others when face-to-face contact is limited.

Free providers such as Google forms, Survey Monkey and the University's platform Bristol Online Surveys (BOS) offer comparable interfaces for designing, distributing, analysing and exporting results. If you are using them for the first time, familiarise yourself with the platform and test it in advance. Pay attention to features and limitations such as functionality on different devices and web-browsers, maximum number of responses, how data is securely stored and backed up (and deleted), and the ability to export data to other formats such as Excel spreadsheets. Be aware that these features can and do change, periodically.

Pros

- ❖ Flexible to administer: can be done on day of activity, or at respondents' convenience. No need for face-to-face contact
- ❖ Fits well into activities already involving a computer or digital device
- ❖ Efficient: free and easy to distribute, no need for data entry, easy to analyse, paper free
- ❖ Questions can be carefully considered, consistently applied, and collect a mixture of quantitative and qualitative evidence
- ❖ Can produce honest, anonymous feedback

Cons

- ❖ Requires participants' email addresses or another way of circulating digitally
- ❖ Possible poor response rate if administered in an unsupervised context
- ❖ Difficult to get rich and in-depth qualitative evidence, particularly from young people
- ❖ No way of asking for answers to be clarified or qualified

Interviews

Interviews for evaluation purposes can take a range of different forms and can be a useful method for producing evidence for schools' engagement projects. **They are particularly well suited to provide rich, qualitative, explanatory data.** Interviews may be conducted in person (face-to-face), via phone, skype or similar. They may comprise one interviewer to one respondent at a time (one-to-one), or small multiples of each. However, careful thought should be given to social comfort levels if interviewers outnumber respondents, and be aware that – in a group scenario – interviewees may affect each other's responses.

Interviews are almost always conducted post-activity, and should be completed within a time period that allows respondents to retain a fresh memory. They are generally voice-recorded (earphone microphones are cheaply available if conducting by phone), though permission should always be sought from the respondent at the outset and be prepared to use an alternative recording method if necessary (e.g. shorthand note-taking). You can either transcribe the interview verbatim or it may

be that note form will suffice (with only key quotes transcribed verbatim). Interviews can be conducted by a researcher who has been involved in the activity, which can provide a good opportunity for participants to develop working relationships and discuss future work together. However, it is worth considering that respondents (particularly young people) may be reluctant to express more negative views in such a scenario. In this case, it could be useful to have an external interviewer conduct interviews.

A key distinction to consider when planning interviews is whether they are to be structured, unstructured, or semi-structured. **Structured** (or 'standardised') **interviews** follow a set schedule of questions which are posed in the same order to the whole sample of respondents. They are most useful when there needs to be standardisation across responses, for instance, to allow rigorous comparison between results, and/or where the sample size is relatively high. As such they are most associated with evaluations that have a strongly summative remit.

Unstructured interviews are open, free-flowing conversations based on the general theme or topic. The interviewer asks specific questions that occur to them spontaneously and then probes further on the basis of responses given. They may be most useful when the depth and 'validity' of respondents' answers are prioritised above all else, or in situations where an unexpected opportunity for an interview presents itself.

Semi-structured interviews offer an attractive middle ground as they combine the possibility of depth of exploration with comparability and control over results. A list or 'framework' of questions or themes to be covered is prepared in advance, although these may be posed to different respondents in slightly differing language or sequence. You can make it clear at the outset that the exchange is an open dialogue and as such new ideas, additional, clarifying or probing questions on the part of either the interviewer or respondent are both permissible and encouraged.

Pros

- ❖ Generates insightful, in-depth qualitative evidence
- ❖ Allows respondents to explain and justify their experiences and views
- ❖ Potential for researchers to probe, clarify and qualify respondents' answers in the moment
- ❖ Can generate positive relationships for future collaboration

Cons

- ❖ Time/resource intensive to complete, transcribe, and analyse
- ❖ Needs email address/telephone numbers to contact participants post-activity
- ❖ Can be difficult to arrange, particularly if interviewees are time poor
- ❖ Participants may not feel comfortable expressing negative views about an activity if the interviewer has been closely involved in its delivery
- ❖ Not generally suited to large, representative samples e.g. all pupils completing an activity
- ❖ Will not usually generate quantitative evidence, except in most structured form with large sample size

Focus groups

Focus or 'discussion' groups involve one or more researchers talking to a group of respondents at once in a face-to-face setting. **They offer many of the same positive attributes as interviews, but can save time and resource and increase the sample.** In addition, the dynamic of a group

conversation can be very helpful to compare and qualify different and/or potentially conflicting viewpoints and experiences.

Focus groups are typically scheduled well in-advance and last between 30 and 90 minutes within a realistic timeframe post-activity. They are generally voice recorded and can also be videoed, though it is vital to obtain consent from all participants. They tend to work best with at least four respondents and no more than 12, to allow everyone the chance to participate comfortably. On balance, it is best if the facilitator is not someone who has been closely involved with the delivery of the activity but who understands it well, otherwise it may be difficult to obtain the most honest, forthcoming critical feedback.

Prepare in advance a list of topics and themes you wish to cover, similar to a semi-structured interview. During the session, topics or questions are posed to the group and the facilitator seeks views from different individuals, encouraging and managing discussion and debate or asking follow-on questions where they deem it appropriate.

Pros

- ❖ A valuable method when working with a group of participants
- ❖ Generate insightful, in-depth qualitative evidence; allowing respondents to explain and justify their views and experiences
- ❖ Dynamic of group conversation can be especially helpful at drawing out, qualifying and clarifying responses to a topic
- ❖ Practical and resource efficient: can increase the sample size for in-depth qualitative evidence
- ❖ Can be easier to schedule and arrange than interviews, particularly with groups of young people

Cons

- ❖ Ideally requires facilitation by an experienced researcher who has not been part of the delivery of the activity
- ❖ Requires a group of respondents to all be available at a specific time and place
- ❖ Some skill involved in facilitating discussion, drawing out responses and putting respondents at ease – particularly with groups of young people

Participant observation

Participant observation can play a useful role, particularly in formative evaluation. An evaluation researcher attends and normally takes part in some way in the activity. Notes ('field notes') of their observations and interactions with fellow participants are written up at the time or very shortly afterwards. **This generates an in-depth, embedded account of how and why an activity functions as an experience**, with the intention of telling the 'story' of the activity from the participants' point of view. It is a subjective endeavour, with the observer's descriptions and analysis filtered through the lens of their knowledge, experience, and personality. This, however, is seen by proponents as an advantage as it allows for both insight and critical reflection from an interested observer who is immersed in the activity. The sociologist William Foote Whyte, famously remarked of his study of street gangs in a Boston slum in the 1930s: *"as I sat and listened, I learned the answers to questions that I would not have had the sense to ask"*.

The degree of the observer's participation in an activity may range from passive (as only a by-standing note taker) to complete, i.e. fully integrated into the activity. **However, it does require some freedom to listen carefully and write notes, so it is not suitable if the observer is also playing an active role in delivery.** Whatever the degree of participation, it is good ethical practice for the observer to identify themselves at the outset and briefly explain their role to participants.

Participant observation can be a very practical way of generating evidence from schools engagement activities, particularly those which are dynamic, mobile and/or very immersive. It can be used in conjunction with questionnaires or online surveys to capture quantitative data for summative purposes.

Pros

- ❖ Generates in-depth accounts of how and why an activity functions as an experience; useful for formative learning
- ❖ Can tell the story from a participant's point of view, while allowing for critical reflection from an interested observer
- ❖ May be the most practical way of generating evidence from an activity which is mobile/immersive

Cons

- ❖ Necessarily subjective
- ❖ Does not generally produce any quantitative evidence
- ❖ May therefore be unsuitable for evaluations with a primarily summative remit
- ❖ Requires one or more researchers to be present with little or no responsibility for delivering the activity

3. Developing tools and questions

Once you have decided on the most appropriate methods to use, you will need to begin developing the questions you will ask and any tools (or ‘instruments’) such as questionnaires or online survey forms. In some cases, you may have inherited questions or tools, for instance from a funder or a similar project. If so consider whether they will sufficiently evidence your aims and objectives. If not, you will need to adapt or redesign them.

Designing research questions or tools need not be a daunting task. **Although your questions and tools will be specific to your activity, it can help to look at other examples and to follow some general guidance.** In appendices *B-E* you will find copies of real tools and questions that were used to evaluate schools’ engagement activities. Where relevant, these are annotated to explain why particular questions were asked and/or in which ways.

- **Appendix B** is a **pupils’ questionnaire** used to evaluate visits to the University’s libraries by A-Level students completing Extended Project Qualifications.
- **Appendix C** is an **online survey** produced in Google Forms, used to collect data from University staff and post-graduate students who organised and/or facilitated activities for schools within the University’s ESRC-funded Thinking Futures Festival of Social Science (2015).
- **Appendix D** is a **bank of generic interview/focus group/survey questions** for teachers that were chosen selectively and adapted for specific activities.
- **Appendix E** is a basic **field-notes form** for recording action and analysis in hand written notes when conducting participant observation.

Some general tips to guide you with tool and question design are:

- Make your questions as **clear and unambiguous** as possible. Keep your language age appropriate, whilst thinking about the whole range of individuals who make up your sample. **Avoid jargon**, technical terms and acronyms where possible.
- Adopt an economical approach: **only ask the questions you really need to.**
- **‘Pilot’ your questions or tools** by testing them on individual(s) who fit the profile or your sample. Ask them to tell you if any of the questions are difficult to answer or seem unclear.
- If you feel you need to, provide short guidance notes within your tools or examples of the types of answers you’re looking for; but **avoid ‘leading’ the respondents.**
- Keep questionnaires and surveys to a **maximum of two pages**. Any more is likely to be daunting or time consuming, thus potentially reducing your rate of return.
- With questionnaires and surveys, **think ahead to the type and levels of analysis you want to produce.** Be aware that in a pre-/post methodology you will need to collect names or another create a unique identifier in order to compare responses.
- **Keep exploratory interview or focus group questions as short and simple as possible.** If necessary, separate them into main questions and sub-questions or follow-on prompts.
- As a rule of thumb, aim to **ask 5-6 exploratory questions per hour of focus group**, and no more than **8-10 per hour of interview.**

4. Collecting your data

In your initial planning you should have thought about how you will approach data collection (*Who will you need to collect data from, and when? Who will be responsible for this?*). Now is the time to review and implement those plans, revising them if necessary in view of the methods you have chosen and the tools/questions you have developed.

The approach you take will depend on the nature of your activity and the resources available, but below are some general principles and advice to guide you.

Timing

Timing is an aspect of data collection that is often overlooked. Most methods will entail collection of data at the time of the activity, or soon afterwards; however if you are conducting a pre-/post questionnaire or survey then you need to consider how to administer it. Sending paper forms in the post or emailing them to a teacher is one option, but be sure to provide clear guidance and seek confirmation that they have been completed before and after the activity. Other things to consider are:

- Don't leave it too long between an activity and any follow-up data collection. Within a week is ideal for a one-off activity to be fresh in the memory, particularly for young people. For an ongoing or more involved activity, a little longer is acceptable.
- Be aware of term dates and particularly busy periods in the school or university calendar if you are intending to follow-up after an activity.
- Teachers and university researchers tend to have very full diaries; scheduling follow-up data-collection activities in advance of the activity can be sensible, and being flexible around the respondents' availability helps.

Ethics

If you intend to use your research findings for any other purpose than internal evaluation, then you should seek guidance and approval from a research ethics committee within your department. Otherwise, it is advisable to:

- Give thought to any **risks** or potential harm that could result, for either respondents or researchers, and takes steps to minimise this
- Obtain **informed consent** from respondents prior to their participation
- Protect **anonymity** and personal data
- Be careful not to **deceive** or mislead respondents

It is also good practice to provide a way for respondents to contact you if they have any concerns, queries, or want to withdraw their data from the research.

All of this is especially important in research with children and young adults (under the age of 18). In practice, this may be as simple as thinking through the above and then having a short conversation prior to any face-to-face data collection, and/or adding a short statement to the top of a research instrument (see Appendix B for an example). You must take steps to securely store any personal data and it is good practice to destroy it after a reasonable period of time has passed (and you are sure you will no longer need it).

If you have any concerns, or need further advice, contact your School or Faculty Research Ethics Officer in the first instance.¹

Collating and processing data

Your approach to collating and processing data will vary depending on your chosen methods, available resources, reporting requirements and the nature and structure of your activity. Some issues to bear in mind are:

- With the exception of online surveys, which can export responses to a spreadsheet, most methods require manual data entry. The transcribing of audio recordings of interviews or focus groups is particularly time consuming. You can opt for professional transcription if you have the budget (the cost starts from around £1 per minute of audio, depending on how fast a turnaround you need). For ethical reasons, you should let respondents know in advance if you are intending to do this. If transcribing yourself, you can save time by writing up in note form, but including key sections or significant quotes verbatim.
- If using online surveys, be sure to export and save the data regularly to avoid losing it should something go wrong with the web platform.
- Questionnaire responses are typically entered into an Excel spreadsheet. You should consider the different levels of analysis you will or might want from the data when structuring the template.

¹ <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-governance/ethics/uni-ethics/>

5. Analysing your data

Once your data is collected and processed, your next task is to analyse it. How you do this depends on the type and volume of data you have collected. The degree and depth to which you explore and interrogate your data for potential patterns or unexpected themes may also depend on the balance of formative vs summative in your evaluation's purpose, and your reporting requirements.

Analysing quantitative data

For quantitative data, such as from a questionnaire or survey which has 'closed' or multiple-choice questions, start by counting how many respondents gave the same response to a question. The 'autosum' function in Excel will do this for you automatically. You can produce these as percentage averages, but you should also retain the overall *number* of responses for reporting purposes.

Next, you can isolate subgroups within your sample, if this is relevant; for instance, what was the difference in enjoyment levels between girls and boys, or between pupils from different schools? You can use the 'sort' function in Excel to do this. This is an example of cross tabulation, or 'cross-tabbing'. You can use cross-tabs to explore patterns and relationships in your data, for instance, how many girls, from particular schools, said they enjoyed the activity and wanted to learn more about the topic as a result? As noted above, if you have conducted a pre-/post survey or questionnaire, you will have collected names or given some other unique identifier to responses in order to make cross-tab analyses (e.g. how many pupils who said they didn't enjoy science *before* the activity, said their interest in science had increased *after* the activity).

Analysing qualitative data

For qualitative data such as interviews, focus groups, observation notes, or open response questions, start by reading through your data to get a feel for common themes in what people have said. Then decide what the key themes and name them. These theme names are referred to as 'codes'.

Then go back through and 'code' your data, by highlighting or cutting and pasting individual responses or sections of transcript/notes that correspond to your themes. You can do this in many ways, such as by organising your themes into a grid with the code labels across the top and each person's views or comments separated into rows below. Or you might find it easier to cut and paste parts of transcripts or notes into individual Word documents organised by code. You can highlight with different colours on printed copies or paper-based response, but this has the disadvantage of creating extra work if you want to work with the material digitally. Make sure you are consistent and thorough when coding

If you have a large volume of qualitative data, or if you want to analyse at a more detailed level to consider 'co-occurrence' (similar to 'cross-tab' analysis with quantitative data: how many times two or more codes appear together) you could use a Qualitative Data Analysis software package, such as QSR NVivo. The University has a licence for this, but you may need to contact IT Services to get access to it, and it requires some training or self-teaching.

6. Writing up and sharing your results

The most common way to share your evaluation results is through a written report. You may have guidelines or template from a funder. If not, there are no particular rules on content and structure, but evaluation reports usually look something like the outline below.

Executive summary or overview – *Summary of the most important points or learning*

Background/introduction – *Description of the activity/ project*

Evaluation methods – *How you did it, how many people in your sample*

Findings – *Usually broken into several shorter sections, for example by: themes, evaluation questions/objectives and different types of respondents*

Conclusions and recommendations – *what you learnt, and the implications of it*

Appendices – *including copies of any tools used*

Your task is to answer your overarching evaluation questions. You may have unexpected findings or answered unplanned questions and these can be the most interesting results to reflect on and share.

Below are some general tips to guide you in writing up your data into a report:

- Be selective in what you include. You don't need to report on everything you discovered, or each individual question, just what is relevant to your evaluation purpose.
- Use data from as many sources, methods, or different groups of respondents as you have available to back up the points you are making.
- Be careful about making bold inferences, or claiming that one thing caused another, unless you have very strong evidence. For most evaluations, you are looking to make claims about the *contribution* your activity made rather than attributing any changes to it. Use cautious language ("this may suggest") and offer alternative readings of the data if needed.
- Using figures can be helpful to illustrate your findings. Ensure that you refer to it in the text.
- Consider dividing long qualitative responses into text boxes, or synthesising an individual's experience or views into a short case study.
- If using direct quotes, make sure they don't identify anyone. Be aware that even the way you describe an individual, e.g. by gender, school or the subjects they are studying or teaching can make it fairly easy to be identified within a small sample.
- Use clear, plain language and avoid jargon. Short sentences are good.

Once you've produced your report, share it with the people who were involved, and any other relevant colleagues. You may want to include shorter versions for some audiences.

It may be that your project's evaluation is of interest to a wider public. You could consider presenting it at conferences, or circulating it amongst relevant networks, agencies or organisations. You may want to write up your data into a published form, such as journal article. Remember, if you wish to circulate your findings publicly, you should let respondents know at the time of obtaining their informed consent.

7. Learning from findings to develop your activities

This 'final' stage may take place while a project or series of activities is still in progress or some time afterwards when there are plans to repeat it or develop something similar.

Whether your evaluation has been primarily for formative or summative purposes, there will undoubtedly be important learning points which can be used to improve an activity. These may have been usefully summarised in the **conclusion and recommendations** section of your report.

At the extreme end of the spectrum, your findings may indicate that your activity was not successful enough at meeting its aims and objectives to warrant repeating it, or anything similar. A more likely scenario is that you have data indicating factors that hampered its success, and how the content and structure can be adapted to improve it. These factors will vary widely depending on both the nature of your activity and findings, but they may include general aspects such as:

Structure

- The timing, duration, and location of the activity
- Whether it is a 'one off' or part of a series
- The logistics of pupils or other groups and individuals attending
- Who plans, organises, and facilitates it; including whether and how teachers and/or pupils are involved
- The ways it is publicised
- The age and/or ability levels of pupils invited
- The ways it is evaluated

Content

- The most interesting, useful, or exciting elements of it (to retain); and the least (to consider excluding)
- The elements or aspects which were difficult to understand: the ways topics and concepts are introduced, the depth and scope to which they explored, and the language and resources used to do this
- The extent to which the subject matter links to the school curriculum, or expands upon it
- The degree to which it connects to other activities or resources available to pupils
- Whether any opportunities to follow on from the activity, subject matter, or topic are offered or signposted

8. Further support with evaluation

We hope you have found this toolkit a useful starting point for evaluating engagement activities that take place with schools. If you would like more help with evaluating schools' activities beyond this toolkit, please contact Ellie Cripps in the Public Engagement team (ellie.cripps@bristol.ac.uk).