

Evaluating Community Arts & Community Well Being

AN EVALUATION GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY ARTS PRACTITIONERS

This guide is available from the following websites:

Arts Victoria	:	www.arts.vic.gov.au
VicHealth	:	www.vichealth.vic.gov.au
Effective Change	:	www.effectivechange.com.au
Darebin City Council	:	www.darebin.vic.gov.au/arts/publications.html
City of Whittlesea	:	www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/evaluatingcommarts

Evaluating Community Arts and Community Well-Being

An Evaluation Guide for Community Arts Practitioners

Evaluation research; Evaluation indicators; Community arts; Community well-being; Community development; Community capacity building

Researched and written by: Clare Keating
Effective Change Pty Ltd
(03) 9388 1661
www.effectivechange.com.au

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- Mark Wilkinson (Darebin City Council)
- Judy Turner, Kath Melbourne and Sarah Poole (City of Whittlesea)

I also wish to acknowledge and thank of the broad range of community arts practitioners, managers and participants who were consulted in the development stages; commented on drafts or actually piloted the guide with their own community arts projects. Your contributions have been invaluable.

A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR THE ARTS

The arts engage, provoke, amuse and excite us but, above all, the arts reflect and shape our sense of community identity and helps build social cohesion.

As Minister for the Arts, I am passionate about spreading the word that participating in the arts and cultural activities is a rewarding and creative experience, on both an individual and community level.

We need a balanced understanding of the role and worth of the arts in our society – one that embraces their aesthetic, cultural, economic and social values.

One of the challenges facing governments and the arts sector is finding rigorous research to demonstrate the positive social impact of arts involvement, rather than relying on anecdotal evidence.

With the release of Evaluating Community Arts & Community Well Being, we have a user-friendly tool that allows community arts practitioners to document and assess the social outcomes of their projects and programs comprehensively and systematically.

The widespread use of this Evaluation Guide will increase knowledge and understanding of the benefits of arts involvement, leading to more, and more effective, arts programs in Victoria's diverse communities.

I strongly commend the guide.

The Hon Mary Delahunty MP
Minister for the Arts

FOREWORD

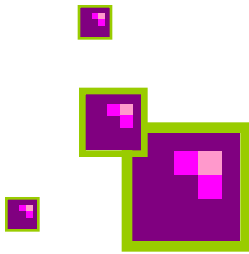
I am pleased to commend this evaluation guide to you. Evaluation is important, not only for proving what you do is effective but also for improving programs and contributing to better outcomes.

VicHealth is an active supporter of community arts through a range of funding schemes developed within our Arts for Health Program. We regularly observe important health and community well-being outcomes through community arts projects, however, we find that organisations have limited capacity to provide evidence of this beyond the anecdotal. This in turn limits all of our ability to showcase successes; to learn from failures; and to reflect on the range of achievements.

I understand that many people face evaluation with some trepidation. It is hoped this evaluation guide will ease that fear and be a welcome resource which provides the framework and the necessary tools. It has been developed in close consultation with the sector, responding to the need for both a short 'Express' guide and a more comprehensive version which has the capacity to be used as is, or adapted to your specific needs. We have ensured that the resource is widely distributed and readily available— the document is on the websites of the five project partners.

We thank our project partners, Arts Victoria, Darebin City Council and the City of Whittlesea for their commitment to the project. We thank Clare Keating of Effective Change for producing such a high quality document. We hope it helps you to show the difference community arts can make to health.

Dr Rob Moodie
Chief Executive Officer



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PREFACE

COMMUNITY ARTS PRACTITIONERS ...

Would you like to have your next funding application ready before you've finished your current project?

- Would you like to be able to plan future projects?
- Would you like to develop stronger partnerships in the community?

Evaluation is a process which can help in all of the above.

- Have you ever asked participants whether they enjoyed a community arts project?
- Have you ever asked a partner in a community arts project what they thought of the experience?
- Have you ever asked the public what they thought of a performance or piece?

If you answered yes, then you have undertaken at least a basic level of evaluation. Let's face it, most community arts workers do this all the time – it's a natural practice for most people involved in the community arts. It's easy, it's fun, it's interesting and it keeps you involved and striving for new goals and new projects.

- But, do you then sit down and consider the feedback?
- Do you think about what you need to do before commencing another project?

Yes? Then, you are undertaking some level of continuous improvement, through evaluation. This might be a bit harder and have some pitfalls. Often, there is no incentive to do this and no time to do it systematically. You probably have already experienced some direct benefits from this approach though, and you're keen to keep going. But...

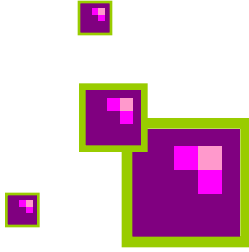
- Do you have a plan ready now to evaluate your next project?
- Have you thought about who to speak to? When? What will you ask them? How?
- How would you recognise and prevent a looming disaster?
- If you documented the project outcomes, how would you report, and to whom?

If you don't have a plan ready NOW for evaluating your next community arts project, this guide is for you. Recognising time constraints in the community arts, the guide is simple, straightforward and ready to use. The guide is organised around the stages of evaluation. At the back of the guide are tools for each stage of the evaluation which can be used as they are, or adapted. The evaluation model recognises the importance of the *process* as well as the *outcome* in community arts and helps you to identify achievements in each area. The model is designed as a resource, with all the tools provided to help you evaluate, report and improve. Hopefully, with the evaluation planned out for you, community arts practitioners will have support to evaluate, reflect and improve. The guide is in two formats – a summary version called the Express Guide and a comprehensive version, which includes the Express Guide.

Both versions of the guide are available from any of the following websites:

Arts Victoria	www.arts.vic.gov.au
VicHealth	www.vichealth.vic.gov.au
Effective Change	www.effectivechange.com.au
Darebin City Council	www.darebin.vic.gov.au/arts/publications.html
City of Whittlesea	www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/evaluatingcommarts

It is recommended that you access both versions. *Good luck!*



INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to provide a resource for community arts practitioners to use when they evaluate community arts projects. It is designed to be as flexible as possible, so that it can be used by the wide variety of organisations involved in the community arts and so that it can cover the range of community arts projects. The guide provides a comprehensive base for undertaking evaluations. The process outlined in the guide can be followed through sequentially. Alternatively, the process, tools and suggestions can be amended and refined to suit the specific needs of various projects and organisations. The guide also aims to help build a body of evidence about the work of the community arts sector, by using a consistent and structured research framework.

BACKGROUND

A consortium of organisations has been involved in the development of the guide. The project was funded by Arts Victoria; Darebin City Council and the City of Whittlesea. Arts Victoria and VicHealth have funded the final production of the guide and making them available on-line. Together the project partners recognised that:

- within the community, increasing value is being placed on community activities which have positive impacts on the community;
- there is a growing recognition of the social and community well-being outcomes of community arts projects, yet
- there is a gap in the resources available to community arts practitioners to assist them in identifying; collating and reporting on the positive outcomes achieved through community arts projects.

The purpose of this guide is therefore to address that gap and to serve as a resource for community arts practitioners.

The guide has been prepared and developed by Effective Change Pty Ltd, a Melbourne-based consultancy company. In researching the guide, relevant literature was consulted and a range of key informants were interviewed.

WHO IS THE GUIDE FOR?

The guide is for community arts practitioners, rather than specific organisations, as community arts projects can be located across a variety of organisations.

HOW SHOULD IT BE USED?

The guide essentially ‘talks’ to a generic community arts project worker and assumes that this person will drive the evaluation. However, it can be used in a range of ways. For example, all participants in a community arts project could share roles in undertaking an evaluation. Or it could be used an external student or consultant to undertake an independent evaluation.

COMMUNITY ARTS – NOT JUST COMMUNITY, NOT JUST ARTS

This guide recognises the unique place of community arts within community and cultural activity. Case stories abound of community arts projects producing stunning and lasting creative achievements. There are also numerous examples where extraordinary life changes occurred for participants while the creative outcomes were less memorable. Other times, community arts projects have contributed enormously to their local community, through a range of strategies, such as engaging disenfranchised members of the community, or producing valuable resources for a particular community. Sometimes exceptional community arts projects produce extraordinary results across all areas. Other times, people just feel good by being involved and taking risks. This guide has been developed to work across all areas – from the creative output, to the creative journey, to the individuals and communities involved. This model of evaluation will allow you to identify the areas of achievement and success. It works even when, in conventional terms, the project may not appear to be that successful. It will also allow you to recognise extraordinary achievements across this range of factors when they do occur.

The diagram below shows the key elements to be evaluated, using this model of evaluation.

Diagram 1: Key Elements of Community Arts Projects to be evaluated

	participants	project/ organisation	community	
process	how participants are involved in the project	how the project is managed	how the community is involved in the project	process
impact	what happens to, or for, participants through the project	what happens as result of the project	what happens to or for the community through the project	impact
outcome	what happens to, or for, participants in the long term as a result of the project	what happens in the long term, as a result of the project	what happens to, or for, the community in the long term as a result of the project	outcome
	participants	project/ organisation	community	

Remember that you probably won't be able to consider all the above factors, all of the time. This guide provides a comprehensive approach – it is up to you to select the parts that are relevant to your project, your organisation and your resources. You may only have the resources to focus on one key aspect of the project. Most commonly, you will focus on the impact of the project - *What happened as a result of this project?* Positive answers to this question in particular yields useful information for promoting the project; promoting the organisation; that the participants can use; that can be used in funding applications or program expansion applications and so on. And when you want to evaluate a project in greater depth – when you're clear that you have the resources; there's a good case for evaluating the project and the organisation supports the evaluation - the guide's simple framework and ready resources will enable you to collect the information and help you articulate the elements that go to the heart of community arts projects, but are too often left unsaid.

STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDE

The guide is structured chronologically. It guides the evaluator through the stages of evaluation from preparing the ground through to reporting on the evaluation. The six stages are:

- **Stage 1: Prepare for an evaluation**
- **Stage 2: Plan the evaluation**
- **Stage 3: Determine evaluation indicators**
- **Stage 4: Collect the data**
- **Stage 5: Analyse the data**
- **Stage 6: Prepare the evaluation report and improve on current practice**

Each stage is presented as a worksheet for you to complete and:

- takes you through the decisions you need to make
- asks trigger questions to focus your thoughts
- highlights the issues you are likely to encounter
- provides a checklist
- refers you to tools you can use and adapt if you wish
- refers you to the full text for further detail.

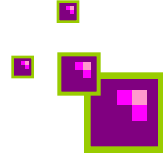
The Overview diagram on the next page is a summary of the complete process.

In the comprehensive guide, each Stage contains:

- an introduction;
- discussion on the rationale behind the particular step of the process;
- discussion on research methods and issues;
- practical issues – outlining the tasks to be done, and
- refers you to the tools to use.

There are sample tools at the end of the guide, ranging from sample surveys to a draft evaluation report outline which can be adapted for your own project. The tools are numbered to correspond with the relevant stage of the process.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW



STAGE 1 Prepare for the Evaluation	DECIDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project aims and objectives
STAGE 2 Plan the Evaluation	DEFINE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purpose of evaluation<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Why is the evaluation being done?• Evaluation Audience<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Who will receive and use the information?
	DETERMINE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Process• Resources<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Who will manage the evaluation? How? How will it be funded?- Which stakeholders will be involved? How?- What are the timelines?
STAGE 3 Determine Evaluation Indicators	DETERMINE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key evaluation indicators<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What tells us that aims and objectives have been achieved?
STAGE 4 Collect Data	DESIGN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data collection and analysis tools<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What are the key research questions?- How will data be collected? From whom?- How will the data be analysed?- How will confidentiality be guaranteed?
	COLLECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluation data<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Existing research, records, files, interviews, surveys, focus groups
STAGE 5 Analyse Data	ANALYSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data collected<ul style="list-style-type: none">- reduce- check- identify findings and conclusions- discuss and report
STAGE 6 Report and Improve	REPORT ON	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Findings<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Process- Impact- Outcomes
	IMPROVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Processes• Practices

STAGE 1: PREPARE FOR THE EVALUATION

SET

Project aims and objectives

Why are we doing this project? What are our short, medium and long term aims?

What are the aims for participants?

What are our organisation's aims?

Define your 'community' target for this project – the local community? a particular group in the community – young people? men? women?

What are the aims for our community target group?

How will we do the project?

ISSUES

Look at your answers –

What do they mean for the evaluation?

Have you planned the project well?

Do you have enough resources (people included!) to manage the project?

How important will the evaluation be?

Investing about 10% of a project budget on an evaluation is a common practice.

What sort of investment can your organisation realistically make?

STAGE 1

CHECKLIST

Have you: defined aims and objectives for the project?

considered aims and objectives for participants?

the project / organisation?

and the local community?

considered

the *process* (how you will do the project);

the *impact* (what you would like to happen in the medium term)

and the *outcome* (what you would like to happen in the long term)?

MORE

INFORMATION?

Refer to: *Stage 1: Preparing for an evaluation* in the full text version

Sample Tool 1.1: Setting project aims

STAGE 2: PLAN THE EVALUATION

DEFINE

the purpose of the evaluation

Why are we evaluating this project? Do we usually evaluate our projects? Will this evaluation be any different? How? Why?

DEFINE

the audience for the evaluation

Who will we report to? (a funding body? project partners? the community? our board of management?) Do we have an internal or external focus? or both?

How can we use the evaluation results? (Consider: future funding applications; improving practice; keeping this project on track; feedback to participants...)

DETERMINE

the process for evaluation

How will we manage the evaluation? What suitable structures exist? Do we need a committee / group – or an individual?

Will we need an internal or external evaluator? Who is available; able and capable of managing the evaluation? Are there any conflicts?

DETERMINE

the resources available for the evaluation

What resources (time; money; materials; equipment; records) can we allocate to the evaluation? Can we afford / justify an external evaluator?

ISSUES

Look at your answers –

*Are you clear about why you want to do the evaluation?
Are you clear about how much time and effort can be put into the evaluation?
Remember, if you reflect on your practice now, you already evaluate!
What are the potential benefits of an evaluation? e.g. a new funding application, leading to more money, more time, more people?
Apart from money, what are the potential costs to consider? e.g. political issues?
Can you write one evaluation report and modify it for various audiences?
How can you be creative with resources? e.g. Are there local university students willing / appropriate / able to take on the evaluation for their course work?
How can you integrate standard practices? e.g. project photos? project journals?*

STAGE 2:

CHECKLIST

Have you: clarified the reasons for undertaking the project?
decided how the evaluation will be managed?
decided on the level of resources to be allocated to the evaluation?

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Refer to *Stage 2: Planning an evaluation* in the full text version
Sample Tools 2.1: Planning the evaluation
2.2: Indicative evaluation timeline

STAGE 3: DETERMINE EVALUATION INDICATORS

DETERMINE

Key evaluation indicators

Broadly, what will tell you that the aims and objectives of the project have been achieved? (e.g. participants were recruited from the target group; participants were involved in the creative process; we aimed to develop a play and we reached playreading stage...)

Using the model of evaluation in this guide, it is recommended that you break down the project into key parts. So, firstly list the stakeholders involved – e.g.:

participants	organisation	target / community

Then, break the project down into its parts and how far you are ‘thinking’ into the future and list below. For example, process is particularly important for community arts projects. Do you also have medium or long term aims?

process (short term aims)	
impact (medium term aims)	
outcomes (longer term aims)	

Then, think about what you hope to achieve for each group of stakeholders – both in terms of doing the project, and as a result of the project and put the two parts together in a grid. Keep this simple – for example:

	participants	organisation
process (short term)	<i>enjoyed socialising in group</i>		
impact (medium term)	<i>felt more confident shared feeling of achievement</i>		
outcomes (long term)	<i>involved in other groups / activities</i>		

ISSUES

Look at your answers –

Are you clear about what will tell you you have achieved your aims / done a good job? These are your evaluation indicators.

Evaluation indicators are a tool – not an aim! Your aim is to do the community arts project well – challenging; mentoring; supporting; skilling participants in a creative process that they enjoy and that they can be proud of!

Effective evaluation indicators are a tool to keep you on track. Use them to help you articulate the achievements of the project.

STAGE 3: CHECKLIST

Have you: decided on evaluation indicators for the project?

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Refer to *Stage 3: Determining evaluation indicators* in the full text version (recommended)

Sample Tools 3.1: *Determining evaluation indicators*
 3.2 – 3.4: *Sample evaluation indicators*

STAGE 4: COLLECT DATA

DESIGN

data collection methods

What are the key questions to be answered through the evaluation? Tip: turn your evaluation indicators into questions.

What data collection methods will you use? (e.g. focus group discussions; written surveys; structured interviews). Match methods to key research questions; available time; resources and to the stakeholders involved. Think creatively e.g. project journals; surveys with pictograms; videos; photos

*When will you collect data? throughout the project? at the end? months after the project finished? List below **how often** you will collect data, **from whom**.*

DESIGN

data collection tools

What data collection tools do you need to design? e.g. survey using pictograms; focus group outline. Tip: design each around your key research questions.

COLLECT

evaluation data

What existing data can be used in the evaluation? e.g. original funding application; waiting lists; project archives...

What issues do you need to consider in collecting the data? e.g. research ethics; keeping people informed; planning best use of everybody's time; storage of data

ISSUES

Look at your answers –

The key to efficient data collection is focussed key research questions – limit yourself to about ten. When this basic framework is right, designing surveys or focus groups to suit different groups of people is straightforward. Don't try to collect too much information – make it manageable.

Consider the ethics of the research *before* asking questions.

Think about collecting information efficiently as you go - it may only take 15 mins extra on rehearsal or meetings for a discussion or to complete a survey.

STAGE 4: CHECKLIST

Have you:	considered the ethics of the research?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	identified the existing records and material to be collected?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	identified the new information to be collected?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	decided on your key research questions?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	decided on the most appropriate research methods for the evaluation?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	planned how often people will be surveyed/ interviewed etc?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	developed appropriate communication strategies for the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Refer to *Stage 4: Collecting the data* in the full text version

Sample Tools 4.1: Participant evaluation survey

4.2: Generic interview structure / focus group outline

4.3: Project journal guidelines

STAGE 5: ANALYSE DATA

ANALYSE

evaluation data

How can you reduce the data into manageable chunks? Read through the data and identify the key themes coming through; use tables and graphs for quantitative responses

How do I check the data against the evaluation indicators? Test the data against the evaluation indicators e.g. If the evaluation indicator is: Participants were recruited from the target group – analyse the data to see if this is the case.

Who should the data be discussed with? Consider confidentiality or other sensitivities.

What are the key findings at this stage?

Who should we report draft findings to?

ISSUES

Look at your answers –

Are you clear about how to reduce the data into meaningful chunks?
Are you clear about who is involved in collating; reducing and analysing data?
Consider confidentiality issues when analysing data.
Consider whether you will be producing an internal or public document.
If appropriate, it is often useful to discuss draft findings with a range of people, preferably in a group. You can test the clarity of the report with these people.
What will you do if the findings are either not very good or mediocre? How will this impact on the organisation or on individuals?

STAGE 5: CHECKLIST

Have you:

collated the data you collected into manageable and logical chunks?

checked the data against the evaluation indicators?

discussed the data with some relevant people?

developed draft key findings?

presented or discussed the key findings with appropriate people?

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Refer to Stage 5: *Analysing the data* in the full text version
Sample Tool 3.2 – 3.4: Sample evaluation indicators
5.1 Analysing evaluation data template

STAGE 6: REPORT AND IMPROVE

REPORT

evaluation findings

What did you find in relation to the process? (for participants; for the project, or the organisation; for the community)

What did you find in relation to the impact of the project? (for participants; for the project, or the organisation; for the community)

What did you find in relation to the outcomes of the project? (for participants; for the project, or the organisation; for the community)

IDENTIFY

project outcomes

What did we achieve in relation to this project? Think about achievements from the range of stakeholder perspectives.

Who do we need to tell about the project outcomes and achievements? Think about participants; funding bodies; the community; partnership organisations

potential improvements

What do we need to improve?

ISSUES

Look at your answers –

After an evaluation, you may need to take care that the information is interpreted appropriately by all – some staff may feel their work has been highlighted negatively. Ensure that you use the evaluation as an opportunity to turn the situation around to ensure everybody learns from the experience and improvements are implemented.

If the evaluation has highlighted areas of serious concern, e.g. underperformance; inappropriate performance etc – ensure that the issues are discussed at the appropriate management level of the organisation and your decisions and strategies are carefully thought through and documented. You also need to plan how you improve areas that were identified as requiring improvement. and even to start thinking about your next evaluation!

STAGE 6: CHECKLIST

Have you:	developed a draft evaluation report?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	answered the key research questions in the evaluation report?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	collected feedback on the draft?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	finalised the report and prepared an executive summary?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	distributed the executive summary to the appropriate parties?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	linked the evaluation results into an improvement process?	<input type="checkbox"/>

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Refer to Stage 6: *Reporting on the data and improving current practice* in the full text version

Sample Tools *6.1: Sample evaluation report*
6.2: Improving current practice
