

Module 17

Evaluating events

1. Event evaluation

Event evaluation is the process of critically observing, monitoring and measuring the implementation and outcomes of events to determine if objectives have been achieved. Evaluation is a critical step in successful event management. It enables us to:

- Measure the success of an event
- Continuously improve events
- Refine the event and shape its outcomes
- Communicate event outcomes to stakeholders.

What monitoring and evaluation have in common is that they are geared towards learning from what you are doing and how you are doing it, by focusing on:

- Efficiency
- Effectiveness
- Impact

1.1 Efficiency

Efficiency tells you that the input into the work is appropriate in terms of the output. This could be input in terms of money, time, staff, equipment and so on. When you run a project and are concerned about its going to scale, then it is very important to get the efficiency element right.

1.2 Effectiveness

Effectiveness is a measure of the extent to which a development programme or a project achieves the specific objectives it set.

1.3 Impact

Impact tells you whether or not what you did made a difference to the problem situation you were trying to address. In other words, was your strategy useful? Before you decide to get bigger, or to replicate the project elsewhere, you need to be sure that what you are doing makes sense in terms of the impact you want to achieve.

2. Why should monitoring and evaluation be done?

Monitoring and evaluation enable you to check the “bottom line” of development work: Not “are we making a profit?” but “are we making a difference?”

Through monitoring and evaluation, you can:

- Review progress;
- Identify problems in planning and/or implementation;
- Make adjustments so that you are more likely to “make a difference”

Getting something wrong is not a crime. Failing to learn from past mistakes because you are not monitoring and evaluating is.

Monitoring and evaluation can:

- Help you identify problems and their causes;
- Suggest possible solutions to problems;
- Raise questions about assumptions and strategy;
- Push you to reflect on where you are going and how you are getting there;
- Provide you with information and insight;
- Encourage you to act on the information and insight;
- Increase the likelihood that you will make a positive development difference.

Monitoring involves:

- Establishing indicators of efficiency, effectiveness and impact;

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- Setting up systems to collect information relating to these indicators;
- Collecting and recording the information;
- Analysing the information;
- Using the information to inform day-to-day management.
- Monitoring is an internal function in any project or organisation.

Evaluation involves:

- Looking at what the project or organisation intended to achieve
- What difference did it want to make? What impact did it want to make?
- Assessing its progress towards what it wanted to achieve, its impact targets. Looking at the strategy of the project or organisation. Did it have a strategy? Was it effective in following its strategy? Did the strategy work? If not, why not?
- Looking at how it worked. Was there an efficient use of resources? What were the opportunity costs of the way it chose to work? How sustainable is the way in which the project or organisation works? What are the implications for the various stakeholders in the way the organisation works?

3. How to evaluate an event

The evaluation process takes place throughout the life of the event and it requires the commitment of time and resources. It has five key stages:

- Identifying the objectives of the event
- Deciding on the method/s to evaluate the event
- Collecting data
- Analysing and interpreting the data
- Compiling an event report summarising the results of the evaluation
- Distributing the report to all key event stakeholders and media.

The process begins with the setting of event objectives. Decide what is to be achieved and how these achievements will be measured. For example, one aim of the event may be to increase the attendance by 10% over that of the previous year. Measurement may take the form of counting the number of tickets sold (if it is a ticketed event) or the police estimates of the crowd.

Alternatively use other indicators such as the number of parked cars or the amount of food purchased from food vendors. All of these are means of collecting data in order to measure success.

Another objective may be to increase the profit of the event by 5% over that of the previous year. This time the measure will be the bank balance at the end of the event. However, it may require some degree of analysis to decide whether the profit arose from an increased number of attendees, a higher expenditure per attendee or from cost savings.

Yet another objective might be the level of satisfaction of people attending the event. This could be partly measured by observation of the response to the entertainment or by how long they stayed at the event. However, the best method of determining satisfaction is to undertake a survey of event attendees.

4. Evaluation methods

There are a number of methods that an event manager can use to collect data and measure the outcomes of events. Commonly used methods include:

- Direct observation by the event manager and staff
- Staff meetings and reports, where the progress of the event is monitored and controlled
- Administrative reports such as ticket sales, food and stall-holder income and event financial statements
- Postcode analysis of ticketing reports
- Professional reports such as police crowd estimates, incident reports by security staff, and transport, parking and traffic statistics
- Debrief meetings, where key staff and stakeholders are invited to give their feedback on the processes and outcomes of the event
- Photographic documentation of the event
- Media coverage and reports
- Surveys of event participants, stall-holders and sponsors
- Surveys of event attendees conducted prior to, during or after the event
- Visitor and tourist surveys
- Economic impact studies.

These and other methods will allow the event manager to collect a great deal of data on the event and to piece this together in order to analyse the event outcomes and report to stakeholders

4.1 Event surveys

By surveying the audience, it will be possible to find out many other things about them that will be useful in the future marketing of the event including:

- Their age bracket
- Their level of income
- Where they come from
- How they heard about the event
- How they got to the event, eg by car, on foot
- What sort of groups they came in, eg family groups, couples, mixed groups
- Their response to different aspects of the event.

There are several different survey methods that can be used including:

- Direct interviews
- Written questionnaires
- Telephone surveys.

The appropriate method will depend on the individual circumstances and resources. Selecting the right method involves many factors. Some are better for particular audiences than others. Some methods gather richer, deeper data than others do.

When designing evaluation tools and selecting evaluation methods, it is useful to consider the cultural contexts of the communities in which programmes operate. Below are some guiding questions to consider ensuring that evaluation methods and tools are culturally appropriate:

- Are data collection methods relevant and culturally sensitive to the population being evaluated?

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- Have you considered how different methods may or may not work in various cultures
- Have you explored how different groups prefer to share information (e.g., orally, in writing, one-on one, in groups, through the arts)?
- Do the instruments consider potential language barriers that may inhibit some people from understanding the evaluation questions?
- Do the instruments consider cultural context of the respondents?
- Are multiple methods being used, so that information can be analysed in a variety of ways?

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EVENT ATTENDEE SURVEY (Sample)

Event _____

Date _____

1. Age Group: _____

Under 15 (no more questions) 15-25 ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ 46+ ☐

Male ☐ Female ☐

2. Was your visit here today motivated by the event? Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, what was the purpose of your visit?

☐ Holiday

☐ Visit friends/relatives

☐ Business

☐ Other _____ specify

3. Where are you from?

List postcode

Overseas - list country _____

4. How many nights are you staying? _____

5. Where are you staying? (suburb) _____

6. What type of accommodation are you using?

☐ Hotel/motel/resort

☐ Guest house/bed and breakfast

☐ Self catering cottage/apartment

☐ Caravan park/camping ground

☐ With family/friends

☐ Other _____ specify

7. How did you travel to the event?

☐ Car

☐ Public transport

☐ Friends

☐ Air

8. Other than the event, what activities/attractions did you or do you intend to engage in during your visit? _____

Please estimate how much you have spent or intend to spend per person during your visit including transport, food, accommodation, souvenirs and entertainment

☐ £0-£50

☐ £51-£100

☐ £101-£150

☐ £151-250

☐ £251+

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9. How did you find out about the event?

- ☐ Brochures/posters ☐ Newspaper
☐ Radio ☐ TV
☐ Internet ☐ Word of mouth
☐ Tourist Information Centre
☐ Other _____ specify

10. Have you attended this event in previous years?

If yes, then which year did you last attend? _____

Why did you attend this year? _____

11. Do you intend to attend the event next year? Yes ☐ No ☐

12. How would you rate the following aspects of the event? (optional question)

- | | Poor | satisfactory | good | excellent |
|-------------------------------------|------|--------------|------|-----------|
| a) Venue | | | | |
| b) Parking | | | | |
| c) Value for money | | | | |
| d) Quality of food | | | | |
| e) Variety of food | | | | |
| f) Entertainment for adults | | | | |
| g) Entertainment for children | | | | |
| h) Seating | | | | |
| i) Toilets | | | | |
| j) Shade | | | | |
| k) Overall presentation of event | | | | |
| l) Crowd management | | | | |
| m) Signage/information | | | | |
| n) Overall site presentation/layout | | | | |

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Sample survey report

Attendees:

Male:	43%
Female:	57%
<15:	11%
15-24:	38%
25-44:	37%
45-64:	12%
65>:	2%
Children:	28%
Adults:	72%

Marketing:

Word of mouth	32%
Radio	9%
TV	18%
Newspaper	28%
Posters	6%
Other	15%

Motivation to Attend: (in order)

- Fun
- Kids
- Socialise
- Music
- Food
- Involvement in festival
- Support Lismore

Any Improvements:

- Better weather (11% answers)
- More rides/activities/freebies/stalls - bigger is better
- More for toddlers/kids/teenagers
- Have competitions/activities with prizes
- Improve parking (especially peak time before street parade)
- Put survey in Echo and ask for new ideas
- More country music
- Area could be more concentrated
- Youth Concert re-located (too loud for shops)
- Many comments said 'congratulations'

4.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are simple and effective tools for collecting information from a large number of people. Compared with other ways of collecting information, questionnaires are relatively inexpensive to administer. They can be used to gather information about the community-building process itself (process evaluation) or the results it produced (outcome evaluation).

4.2.1 Utility of Questionnaires

When using questionnaires to evaluate your community-building *process*, you typically ask questions about how the work of the team was accomplished. For example, you could ask participants in a community event to provide ideas for how the event could be improved in the future. An end-of-event, questionnaire could be used to gather such information.

4.2.2 Types of Questions

Questionnaires can contain either *forced-choice* or *open-ended* questions. Forced-choice questions have a limited number of responses from which a respondent may choose. Respondents are frequently asked to check or circle their desired responses. One advantage of forced-choice questions is that they are typically easier to analyse than open-ended questions.

4.2.3 Example of Forced-Choice Question

Which of the following best describes the degree; to which young people were involved in making decisions about the project?

- No involvement
- Little involvement
- Moderate involvement
- Extensive involvement

4.2.4 Hints for Constructing Questionnaires

First, revisit the evaluation questions you developed earlier and decide whether a questionnaire is the best way to gather the information you need.

If so, decide on the specific group of people to whom the questionnaire will be administered

Group the questions by topic or format. (For example, you may want to put all the forced-choice questions together.) Put demographic questions about where participants live, their age, or gender at the end.

Leave lots of “white space” in the margins and between questions. The goal is to make the questionnaire look like it is easy to complete. Also, strive to achieve a vertical flow in how the respondent must answer the questions.

4.2.5 Administering Questionnaires

Questionnaires can be administered via mail, telephone, or computer; in face-to-face interviews; or in a group. Each method has distinct advantages and disadvantages. For example, mail administration allows for broad reach but often produces low response rates. Web-based questionnaires can be programmed to automatically summarise the results but can only be completed by people who have access to the Internet. Face-to-face or telephone interviews often produce more complete information, but they are time consuming to conduct. Administering paper-and-pencil questionnaires in a group setting often results in high response rates, but respondents often hurry through the questionnaire and provide less detailed information.

5. Interviewing

Interviews should be structured, yet conversational. Begin by making the key informant comfortable. Tell him or her purpose of the interview and provide assurance that the information will only be used for making judgments about the event. Because of the nature of the information key informants provide, it is often difficult to ensure their anonymity. In many cases, the key informant is the only person who could have provided a particular piece of information.

(That is why they are key informants!) Make sure the key informant is comfortable with the way you plan to use the information you collect. Maintain a neutral attitude throughout the interview. Be prepared to probe or use follow-up questions to gather additional information that might clarify

why the key informant sees the situation as he or she does. Be sure to take detailed notes—they are essential for accurate analysis.

6. Data Analysis

Responses from the key informants are typically reviewed and analysed to identify key themes as well as divergent viewpoints. This analysis may be best accomplished by a meeting of all interviewers in which everyone shares information from his or her interview(s).

6.1 Focus Groups

Group interviews are another way to collect information from many people. Most people are familiar with focus groups. A focus group is a small-group gathering conducted specifically to collect information from the group members

6.2 Clarifying Expectations

The first step in planning a focus group is to clarify its purpose. What kind of information do you hope to gain from your focus group discussion? Do you want input about how an activity or event could be improved, or are you more interested in the activity's impact on the community? What specific information is needed? Your answers to these questions will help you decide whom to invite to participate in the focus group discussion.

7. Observation

The aim of observation is to document behaviour through watching and listening. Through observation it is possible to see *what* people are doing, *when* they do it, *where* they do it, and *how* they are doing it. You can use observation to gather information about the (i.e., process evaluation) or the results it produced (i.e., outcome evaluation). Although the benefits of observations are multifold, the presence of the observer may influence the behaviour of those being observed. The consistency of data collected can also vary if more than one observer is gathering data.

7.1 What to Observe

- The setting: What is the physical environment like? What kind of behaviour does the setting encourage, permit, discourage, or prevent?
- The participants: Who is in the scene? How many people are there, and what are their roles?
- What brings these people together? Who is allowed there?
- Activities and interactions: What is going on? Is there a definable sequence of activities?
- How do people interact with the activity and one another?
- Frequency and duration: When did the activity begin? How long does it last? Is the activity recurring or unique? How typical of such situations is the one being observed?