

CultureCounts



**FORMULATING AN EVALUATION
STRATEGY THAT BENEFITS YOUR
WHOLE ORGANISATION.**

An expert guide to making it meaningful .

Think about what you are trying to achieve

Take a look at the mission statements below. These highlight some of the important things that arts and cultural organisations set out to achieve.

*To inspire and strengthen the community, through everything we do — **Sydney Opera House***

*We provide free and equitable access to cultural and educational experiences. We celebrate ideas, promote creativity, connect people and enrich lives — **Madison Public Library***

*We create challenging and inspiring theatre creatively controlled by Indigenous artists — **Ilbjerri Theatre Company***

There's a diverse mix of objectives represented here; with key-words such as inspiring, challenging, connecting, enriching. But how do you know if you're achieving these objectives?

Make your objectives measurable

Anecdotally and intuitively, most organisations have a sense of whether they are achieving their mission but often these objectives aren't measured in any structured way. Measuring overall audience satisfaction alone does not make for meaningful evaluation, as there's no opportunity to learn how and where you're making an impact.

- Build evaluations around key objectives to find out how audiences or participants were impacted by the work
- Capture public data about artistic quality and impact to add evidence to anecdotes and make a stronger case for the outcomes your organisation generates
- Not every arts and cultural organisation sets out to achieve the same thing. Some may aspire to produce work that's highly contemporary and innovative, while others have educational or community based objectives. Frame the evaluation accordingly so you can demonstrate your unique and important impact

Consider the following example

Festival 1 surveys their attendees and asks demographic questions, some marketing questions (such as how did you hear about the event), questions relevant for partners (awareness of brand X), overall satisfaction with the event and likelihood of recommending the festival to family or friends.

Festival 2 also asks their attendees to assess the quality and impact of the festival, using a range of measures such as whether it helped them feel connected to people in the community, whether it inspired them to be more creative, and whether it challenged them to think in different ways.

If someone says they were unsatisfied with Festival 1, it is not clear why. Even if the majority say they'd recommend the festival to others, it may be difficult to replicate this success at future festivals without unpacking the reasons why. The creative team is none the wiser and the only the marketing team receives useful data.

Festival 2 is able to delve more deeply into their results and understand how particular groups of interest experience the event in different ways. Festival 2 results may show that although they are successfully attracting diverse audiences, females under 30 were highly moved and inspired while males and older demographics were less engaged. These types of insights make an evaluation meaningful right across the organisation and enable evidence-based actions.

Complete a self-assessment

Self assessment helps organisations to think about what they want to achieve and whether or not they achieved it, in a structured way.

- Involve as many members of your organisation as possible. It's a very useful exercise in seeing whether internal views align. This could also include board members
- Complete a pre-assessment to set up your expectations for the program. Doing this as early as possible helps key objectives and messaging to be identified and communicated to production teams and artists, and clearly marketed to the public
- Complete a post-assessment to capture how you think it has performed
- Compare self expectations with public and peer experience using the same metrics

Involve expert peers to your advantage

Peer assessment involves asking experts to provide feedback on your programs or events.

- Use peers to full advantage - their opinions and advice can be an invaluable component of meaningful evaluation
- Ask peers to assess the work using the same metrics as the public
- Peers can often provide input on sector and artist development objectives, so consider including some peer-specific metrics too
- Include an open text field so peers can also provide detailed suggestions or critiques

Standardise your measurements

Using standardised metrics means that everyone is speaking the same language.

- Ask your peers, public and members of your organisation the same questions to see how closely opinions align. Comparing views provides important insight into the perceived quality and impact of the work for different audiences
- Use consistent measurements across programs from one year to the next to allow internal comparison and highlight areas of improvement
- Tap into sector benchmarking. When measurements are standardised across multiple organisations, accurate and objective comparison can take place. This opens up opportunities to learn from collegiate organisations nationally and internationally

*Contact Culture Counts for more information on our academically validated and internationally benchmarkable metrics.

Use the data to your advantage

Following these methods will ensure that the evidence collected through evaluation is extremely useful to all parts of your organisation.

- Prove the value your organisation is creating by measuring your unique strategic objectives
- Generate a range of actionable insights that can be used across the organisation to make better decisions, strengthen engagement and drive future growth
- More information about using data effectively can be found in Culture Counts Cheat Sheet 3

CultureCounts



www.culturecounts.cc