Enriching Lives
Los Angeles County **Arts** Commission

EVALUATION MADE EAS[IER]

APPLYING FOR AN ARTS COMMISSION GRANT
CRITERION 4: PROJECT EVALUATION

By measurement to knowledge.
– Heike Kamerlingh Onnes, Dutch physicist and Noble Laureate

Evaluation Basics
@ The Arts Commission

We want grantees . . .

To be able to **measure**, **analyze** and **report on** multiple aspects of creative and organizational performance and community impact, including:

- Artistic development and creative achievement
- Patrons, participants, and stakeholders
- Operations, organizational management, and finances

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Evaluation Basics
@ The Arts Commission

1. **Organizational learning and improvement**
   - Programs, policies, and practices
     - Who are we, what do we do, how do we do it, who do we serve, how can we get better?
2. **Grantee feedback**
   - Needs, wants, interests
     - Local knowledge, trends, patterns, relationships
3. **Demonstrate value and effectiveness**
   - What's going on, how much, what kinds?
     - Find the story, tell the story

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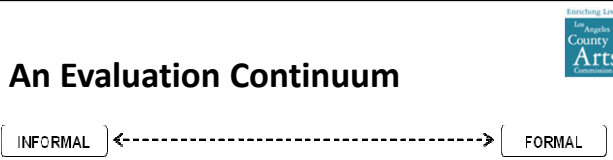
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What we mean by . . .

Assessment

Assessment is the **organized and ongoing process** of collecting and analyzing data and information so as to describe activities, practices, progress, and other dimensions of performance.

What's happening?

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What we mean by . . .

Scriven, M. (1998). Minimalist theory of evaluation: The least theory that practice requires. *American Journal of Evaluation. 19*(1), 57-70.

Evaluation

Evaluations are **systematic investigations** that involve synthesizing and integrating assessment data and then using this information to make **inferences** and **judgments** about:

- the **merit** (i.e., quality, excellence)
- the **worth** (i.e., value, cost-effectiveness)
- and/or the **significance** (i.e., importance, impact) of a project, program, or organization.

Is it working/not? Why is it working/not?

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A Planning & Evaluation Flowchart

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So What?

- **Documentation**: What's **happening**? What's our **story**?
- **Effectiveness**: What's **working**? What's **not working**?
- **Planning and improvement:** Evidence-based **quality management**.
- **Advocacy**: Find the **case**. Make the **case**.

Evaluation is accountability-in-action.

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A Planning & Evaluation Flowchart

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An Evaluation Continuum

INFORMAL <------------------------------> FORMAL

"INFORMAL" EVALUATION

May be more involved with:
- Day-to-day operations
- Improvisational, un-structured
- Action-oriented, problem-solving
- Staff, clients, participants

"FORMAL" EVALUATION

May be more involved with:
- Systems, policies, models
- Structured activities, workplans
- Organizational development
- Multiple stakeholder groups within the community

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The Question:
How Will You Measure Effectiveness?

Project Evaluation

- How will you **measure the effectiveness** of your project plan and activities?
- What **qualitative** (narrative) and/or **quantitative** (numbers) **data** will you use to demonstrate how well you are achieving your project's goals and objectives?
- If you will be using funds to support a staff position, how will you evaluate his/her **job performance**?
[CRITERION 4]

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An Evaluation Continuum

INFORMAL <---- $ ------ $$ ------ $$$ ---- $$$$ --> FORMAL

"INFORMAL" QUESTIONS

- What's happening? How are things going?
- Did you get X done? What do we need to do to get X done?
- How did they (patrons, students, visitors) like it?
- Where are we on the budget?
- How are the reviews?
- How many people came?

"FORMAL" STRATEGIES

- Seeking input from a wide variety of stakeholders
- Using an outside evaluator
- Developing scaled surveys and doing statistical analyses
- Conducting interviews and holding focus groups
- Measuring impact; cause-effect
- Publishing white papers

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Answering the Question
Elements of an Evaluation Plan

- **What** are we evaluating?
  - We are applying for Arts Commission support to . . .
- What will it look like if we're **successful**?
  - Our project goals and objectives include . . .
- What **kinds of data** do we need to **collect** to determine if we're succeeding?
  - Qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods
- **How** and **when** are we going to collect the data?
  - Our evaluation plan includes. . .
- What are we going to **do** with the data we've collected?
  - Analyze/report to the Commission, our board, funders, patrons, etc.

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Qualitative Data & Methods

Empirical evidence largely in the form of **words and text** – narratives, stories, memos, transcripts, and quotes, as well as descriptions of images, spaces, events, artworks, etc.

Qualitative Data & Methods
Approaches to collecting qualitative data

- **Observational fieldwork**
  - o Multiple places, multiple times: People, settings, objects, contexts, processes, relationships, high/low points, celebrations, events, etc.
  - o Descriptions of program or workplace activities; planning and management meetings; formal and informal interactions; routines, behaviors, conversations, official and unofficial places, etc.
- **Analyses of documents and artifacts**
  - o Official and unofficial documents and records; work products; personnel assessments; grant proposals and reports; formal and informal correspondence and memos; publications, newsletters, media; journals, diaries, letters; artworks (literary and non-literary); photographs, videos, objects; emails and postings; etc.

Qualitative Data & Methods
Examples of qualitative data in the arts

- **Descriptive narratives, stories, and reflections** (what happened, what was the experience "like," how did things go, what was the "feeling" in the room?)
- Patron and participant **comments**, **responses**, and **observations**
- **Feedback** from artists, program managers, and staff
- **Excerpts from written materials** such as articles, research reports, reviews, blog posts, etc.

Qualitative Data & Methods
Approaches to collecting qualitative data

- **Written or oral questionnaires**
  - o Open-ended questions or "free comment" spaces often are included in instruments along with scaled surveys.
- **Interviews and focus groups**
  - o Program participants, directors, constituents; leaders, staff, user groups; community members; civic and business leaders; etc.
  - o Open-ended, un- or semi-structured, conversational; individuals; facilitated or self-directed focus groups.

Qualitative Data & Methods
Analyzing qualitative data

- Interpret narratives to reveal **strengths** and **weaknesses, threats** and **opportunities**; rich **stories** and interesting **solutions**.
- Use stories to **describe and illustrate the outcomes** of your project and the **meanings, patterns, and themes** that you believe reflect your vision and desired outcomes.

Quantitative Data & Methods
Examples of quantitative data in the arts

- Number of participants (students, teachers, audience members, etc.)
- Number of events (workshops, instructional hours, performances, exhibit days, etc.)
- Number of catalogues or workbooks produced
- Revenue, expense, and income records
- Demographics (race/ethnicity, income, ages, etc.)
- Survey responses and performance on tests/rubrics

Quantitative Data & Methods

Empirical evidence in the form of numbers – **numerical indices** that allow for **counting, ranking, or scaled measurement**.

- N = 372; 48.4%; 3.21
- 1st, 2nd, 3rd
- Strongly Disagree = 1 . . . Strongly Agree = 4

Quantitative Data & Methods
Approaches to collecting quantitative data

- **Checklists:** Did something happen or not? (1 or 0)
- **Written or oral scaled surveys** (participants rate their experience or other variable of interest on a scale, e.g., Very Dissatisfied = 1 . . . . Very Satisfied = 5)
- **Observational frequency counts** (i.e. a desired behavior – how often did it occur?)
- **Counting, calculating, estimating** (records of *quantities* such as attendance, finances, and demographics)
- **Tests and rubrics** (especially in training and education)

Quantitative Data & Methods
Analyzing quantitative data

- **Classifying, counting, categorizing, and calculating**: Totals, averages (means), medians, ranges, percentages, and other mathematical or statistical relationships
- **Comparing** your results – your *numbers* – with your project's goals and objectives; with those from a previous project; with those generated by similar groups, organizations, surveys, tests, etc.

Sample Scenarios 1 & 2
Support for People

1. We are applying for an Arts Commission grant to support the **salary of a current staff member** (e.g., artistic director, outreach coordinator, managing director, education manager, etc.).
2. We are applying for an Arts Commission grant to support the **hiring of an outside consultant** (e.g., marketing, development, strategic planning, board development, etc.).

Quick Quiz

QUANT or QUAL?
1. You count how many times people ask questions.
2. Detailed, vivid descriptions are what you find most useful.
3. 91,607
4. Zip code 91607

Sample Scenarios 1 & 2
Support for People

Project goals/strategies MIGHT include:
- To increase paid attendance by 3 percent per year for each year of our grant
- To continue our long-term planning process
- To grow our board from 5 to 10 members
- To increase our contributed revenues by 10 percent over the two-year grant period

Sample Scenarios 1 & 2
Support for People

Ask: What evaluation tasks are **appropriate** to our goals, **feasible** for us to undertake, and will **help** us find out what we want to know about our Arts Commission project?

- **Expectations** regarding duties and responsibilities
- Who is **overseeing** the employee or consultant?
- Who will conduct a **performance review** and when?
- How will the results be **communicated** and **used**?

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Sample Scenarios 1 & 2
Support for People

Evaluation activities MIGHT include:

- Annual **performance evaluation** (QUANT/QUAL)
- **Phone interviews** with board committee members and staff (QUAL)
- Measure performance against **benchmarks** (QUANT)
- **Self-evaluations** (QUANT/QUAL)

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Sample Scenario 3
Support for Arts-Based Projects/Programs

We are applying for an Arts Commission grant to partly support initiatives designed to grow and enhance the "Artsapalooza" arts fair. Our goals are:

- A **10 percent increase in attendance** by students and older adults over the two-year grant period
- A **measurable expansion** of participation from new neighborhoods and artists
- **Increased interest** in and **value** placed on the festival by key stakeholder groups (participants, vendors, artists, community members, etc.)

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Sample Scenario 3
Support for Arts-Based Projects/Programs

Ask: What evaluation activities are **appropriate** to your goals, **feasible** for you to undertake, and will **help** you find out what you want to know about your Arts Commission project?

- What does **success** look like for your project?
- What **criteria or standards** will you use to determine effectiveness, quality, value?
- Do you need **both numbers and words** to measure outcomes?

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Sample Scenario 3
Support for Arts-Based Projects/Programs

Evaluation activities MIGHT include:

- **Number** of attendees and demographics (try using zip codes and Census data); comparison data collected from both projections and previous festivals (QUANT)
- **Scaled and short-answer survey** of attendees administered on-site by volunteers (QUANT/QUAL)
- **Phone interviews** with cultural and local "champions" to identify value-added components and effectiveness of new outreach (QUAL)

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Sample Scenario 4
Support for Other Projects/Programs

Ask: What evaluation activities are **appropriate** to your goals, **feasible** for you to undertake, and will **help** you find out what you want to know about your Arts Commission project?

- What will indicate to you that **changes have occurred** – whether organizational, behavioral, or operational?
- How can you integrate **assessment and evaluation** into both the project workplan and day-to-day activities?

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Sample Scenario 4
Support for Other Projects/Programs

We are applying for an Arts Commission grant to support a marketing/fund development initiative. Our desired outcome is greater financial self-reliance. Initiative- and agency-level goals include:

- For staff and board: **Improved** knowledge, skills, understanding, and attitudes
- **Increased** demand for services and attendance at events
- **Improved** brand recognition

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Sample Scenario 4
Support for Other Projects/Programs

Evaluation activities MIGHT include:

- Board and senior staff review **interim progress reports** (QUAL/QUANT)
- **Tracking and monitoring** indicators of interest, e.g.:
  - Measurements of **learning** (QUAL/QUANT)
  - Measurements of **financial health** (QUANT)
  - Measurements of **attendance** (QUANT)
  - Measurements of **awareness and value** (QUAL/QUANT)

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