

## Evaluation Glossary Arts Funders Version

*These terms from the evaluation field are defined and adapted to the arts field, particularly for the use of funders. Each one could apply to a funding program overall or to an individual grantee project.*

Accountability—the responsibility of staff to provide evidence to their stakeholders that a program is effective and conforming to standards with its coverage, service, legal, and fiscal requirements.<sup>i</sup>

Baseline—the starting point for data collection, in the form of initial measurement before a program commences. Usually this measurement is repeated at key points, or at the end, of the program, in order to compare the change.

Cases (or units of analysis)—each of the things that are being evaluated, such as grantees, commissions, artists, audience members, or program participants.

Coding—the process whereby evaluators identify and categorize similar responses to qualitative questions, in order to consolidate findings. See content analysis.

Complexity Evaluation—an approach to evaluation that views programs, and the environment in which they operate, as complex systems, whose dynamics have a high degree of connectivity and interdependence. The ramifications of changes are not readily apparent and can be difficult to understand. Solutions are tried, problems then re-examined in light of what was learned; and additional stakeholders can be consulted or included. This approach may resonate with funders of innovative programs that involve outcomes that are not yet known, such as the creative process, or the impact of after school arts programs.<sup>ii</sup>

Content Analysis—a systematic process of reviewing qualitative data for recurrent issues and themes that emerge, which are of interest to stakeholders, usually for the purpose of summarizing or writing reports. It is often done through coding open ended responses.

Context—the circumstances and setting in which a program takes place. For most programs, it includes events, location, cultural norms, beliefs, resources, timing/history, people, and other circumstances. Context for arts funding might include the assets of the arts community where funding is being distributed; the demographics of the community to be served by the program, the quality of leadership and partners involved; or even changes in the overall funding environment that supports the program.<sup>iii</sup>

Developmental Evaluation—an approach to evaluation that is used when goals and outcomes are not pre-set but rather evolve as learning occurs. It supports continuous progress and rapid response to complex situations with multiple variables. The evaluator is often an integral member of the program design team. Development Evaluation is best suited for initiatives that are at an initial stage of development or undergoing significant change, and can benefit from careful tracking of the process. Organizations and programs focused that are focused on innovation and social change are especially appropriate for developmental evaluation.<sup>iv</sup>

Documentation—the process of recording what happened, or creating a record of a project, usually with little or no judgment attached. Documentation may include meeting notes, letters and memos, oral history records, journals, voting results, census data, audio and video recordings, media coverage of events, etc. In some instances, documentation materials may be used for evaluation.

Evidence-Based Evaluation—aims to find measurable changes that can be directly attributed to specific policies. It tends to use experimental or quasi-experimental research methods. It is evaluation by testing, just as the effect of a

medical treatment is assessed in laboratories by administering it to some members of a test group and not to others. By using a large sample group, and controlling carefully for outside influences, one can determine the effects of a program or project objectively. It is often costly to implement by arts funders' standards.<sup>v</sup>

Focus Group—a common method of gathering qualitative research, where a moderator conducts a group discussion among five to ten people in order to learn their opinions, attitudes and thought processes about a given topic. The group dynamic encourages a deeper level of discussion and allows the moderator to probe for responses to important topics. Focus groups can be useful in the design and planning stage of arts programs as a means of gathering input from advisors, partners, and potential applicants. A true focus group has a set structure for sampling and recruiting respondents and asking questions. It is not merely a roundtable discussion on a topic.

Generalizability—the extent to which findings from a sample reflect the population studied. Generalizability depends on factors such as the design of the evaluation or study, sample size, and selection process.

Goal—the overall purpose or projected/desired end result(s) of a program, project, or effort. Goals for arts programs may involve supporting the creative process, expanding community participation, or building organizational capacity.

Implementation Evaluation (same as Process Evaluation)—focuses on the way a program is working in order to understand its strengths and weaknesses. It asks and answers the question, “What is happening and why?” It looks at how a program or product is run rather than the product itself. It refers to the evaluation of indicators that are process or activity related, such as the activities that were undertaken/achieved. Examples might include: evaluation based on the number of items distributed, people who attended, or the reach of a particular program.<sup>vi</sup>

Indicators—types of evidence/information by which the success of the program can be assessed. Indicators should be measurable and agreed-upon and indicate the degree to which stated outcomes have been attained. They answer the question, “How will you know if/when a stated outcome has been achieved?” Broad distinctions are made between process indicators, which point to what happens during a program, and outcome/impact indicators or the change that results during or after a program has been launched.

Key Informants—people whose personal or professional position gives them a particularly knowledgeable perspective on the nature of a problem or target population and whose views are obtained during an assessment or evaluation. For arts programs, key informants may include artists, commissioners, past grantees, or consultants.<sup>vii</sup>

Logic Model—serves as a roadmap for, or picture of, a funding program overall, or a grantee's individual project. It reflects, rather than dictates, the thinking and assumptions behind the program. It is a communication tool that displays the structure of the project on paper at the beginning, as it builds understanding and helps to regulate expectations. The *goals* should state the main purpose, or what is to be accomplished over the life of the program. *Inputs* are the resources required to run the program, including human resources, space, materials, equipment, and technology. *Activities* are the action steps that will be taken to implement the program and reach the goal and are usually summarized into major categories, such as marketing, production, presenting, etc. *Outputs* are the distinct products that a program produces and which can be counted, such as number of tickets sold, art works produced, or attendees. *Outcomes* are the intended results of the program.<sup>viii</sup>

Monitoring—the regular (periodic, frequent) reporting of program results in ways that stakeholders can use to understand and judge those results.

Non-response bias—bias that results when information is absent from an evaluation (or any study) from those who chose not to respond.

Outcome—the intended results from a program, usually indicated by the kinds and degree of change that occur. Examples of arts-based civic engagement outcome goals could be public awareness of a civic issue is heightened; a policy is enacted or changed; or media coverage of an issue is more comprehensive.

Outputs—the quantifiable, measurable, and distinct end products of a program. Examples are audience size, number of performances or premiers, or ticket revenue.

Participatory Evaluation—a process that involves key participants (such as program officers, board members, grantees) in planning and implementing the evaluation, including setting goals, developing research questions, interpreting data, making decisions, and using the information. The participatory approach is designed to increase participation in and ownership of collective inquiry on the part of stakeholders, as well as the usefulness of the information gathered.

Population—the entire group of people you seek to study and learn about in your evaluation, such as midcareer artists, audiences, presenters, members, etc.

Process Evaluation (same as Implementation Evaluation)—focuses on the way a program is working in order to understand its strengths and weaknesses. It asks and answers the question, “What is happening and why?” It looks at how a product is produced rather than the product itself. It refers to the evaluation of indicators that are process or activity related – such as how many activities were undertaken/achieved. Examples might include: evaluation based on the number of items distributed or people who attended/joined/registered or the reach of a particular informative campaign.<sup>ix</sup>

Program Evaluation—efforts to systematically assess the performance, particularly the outcomes and impacts, of programs and policies.

Purposeful Sample—a sampling practice in which people are intentionally selected because they have a distinct set of characteristics that are of interest to the researcher. For example, in reviewing their own program, arts funders may opt to interview grantees from select disciplines who fall within a designated budget range and have received repeat funding.

Qualitative Research—involves study and analysis of variables designated by words or labels and non-numerical differences. This includes in-depth, open-ended interviews and focus groups but also direct observation, written items on questionnaires, journals, letters from program participants, notes, and program records.

Quantitative Research—involves study and analysis of variables and categories that express numerical distinction. This includes close-ended questionnaires, attendance information, and census/population data.

Random Sampling—a process that gives each person in the population an equal chance of being included in the sample. The most common and statistically valid method of selecting participants, especially for quantitative studies. See population.

Representative Sample—a sample that is representative of the key characteristics of the population from which it is drawn. Such characteristics vary according to the study and may be demographics such as age, race, and gender, or other areas such as artistic discipline or degree of civic involvement.

Research—systematically and empirically gathering information about a topic of interest. Some research is used for evaluation. Within arts-in-healthcare settings, the term is used to describe only studies that fit within the health care field’s definition of research, meaning studies that are experimental or quasi-experimental in design and have been approved by an IRB.

Response Rate—the percentage of those who provide requested information for an evaluation, which is calculated by dividing those who did respond by the total number of surveys (or other instruments) distributed. The response rate is one factor that determines the confidence of drawing conclusions from data.

Sampling—the process of selecting individuals or entities to participate in an evaluation, usually with the goal of being able to use the findings from these people to make inferences about the population that is being studied.

Social Desirability Bias—also known as or Social Response Bias, the skew that is present in a study when participants feel compelled to respond in socially desirable ways, in order to make the researcher (or presenter or funder) feel good about the evaluation or subject of the study. Funders should be concerned about this form of bias,

as grantees, who are self-reporting their own progress may understandably wish to report positive outcomes on the use of grant funds.<sup>x</sup>

Sphere of Influence—traditionally defined as the “territorial area over which political or economic influence is wielded by one nation,” the term has been adapted to evaluation to mean the area, as defined by geography, number of people/artists/citizens, or other characteristics, that can be influenced by a program, given its scope and other limitations.

Stakeholders—all individuals who hold a stake, or value, in the success of your program. Groups can include program staff, board, artists, instructors, panelists, other funders, evaluators, and/or program participants.

Statistical Significance—also known as Statistical Power, procedures that test the likelihood that differences in data are due to true difference, rather than chance or random error, and that they can thus be inferred from the sample studied to the total population.

Strategy—a step taken with the express purpose of meeting a goal.

Target Audience— the people, group, and/or community you intend to reach with your program or initiative. This includes those that will benefit from or be influenced by the program and the group to which findings and recommendations will be presented.

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<sup>i</sup> Adapted from Lipsey: Rossi, Peter H., Mark W. Lipsey, and Howard E. Freeman. 2004. *Evaluation: A Systemic Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

<sup>ii</sup> The Broker’s Three Approaches to Evaluation: Evaluation Evolution?

<http://thebrokeronline.eu/en/layout/set/print/articles/Evaluation-evolution> and Gamble, Jamie A. A. 2008. *A Developmental Evaluation Primer*. Canada: The J. W. McConnell Family Foundation.

<http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca/assets/Media%20Library/Publications/A%20Developmental%20Evaluation%20Primer%20-%20EN.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Michael Quinn Patton. 2002. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.; 3rd ed.

<sup>iv</sup> J. W. McConnell Family Foundation: What We Are Learning; section on Patton’s Developmental Evaluation, Sustaining Social Innovation. Online source.

<http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca/assets/Media%20Library/Publications/A%20Developmental%20Evaluation%20Primer%20-%20EN.pdf>

<sup>v</sup> The Broker’s Three Approaches to Evaluation: Evaluation Evolution? Online source.

<http://thebrokeronline.eu/en/layout/set/print/articles/Evaluation-evolution>

<sup>vi</sup> Callahan, Suzanne *Singing Our Praises: Case Studies in the Art of Evaluation*. 2005. Washington, DC: The Association of Performing Arts Presenters.

<sup>vii</sup> Adapted from Lipsey: Rossi, Peter H., Mark W. Lipsey, and Howard E. Freeman. 2004. *Evaluation: A Systemic Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

<sup>viii</sup> From Callahan, Suzanne *Singing Our Praises: Case Studies in the Art of Evaluation*. 2005: The Association of Performing Arts Presenters, Washington, DC.

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