PARTS 1 AND 2:
The Toolkit

Contents

The Public Engagement Evaluation Toolkit was developed for Queen Mary University of London with Fast Track Impact, the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement and Dialogue Matters.

How to use this toolkit

The toolkit is written to help you to evaluate your own public engagement or if you are reviewing what someone else has done. The approach can be adapted for one-off engagement events or longer-term projects.

This toolkit contains:

Part 1: A quick start guide. If you are pushed for time this will guide you through the essential steps to develop a basic evaluation plan

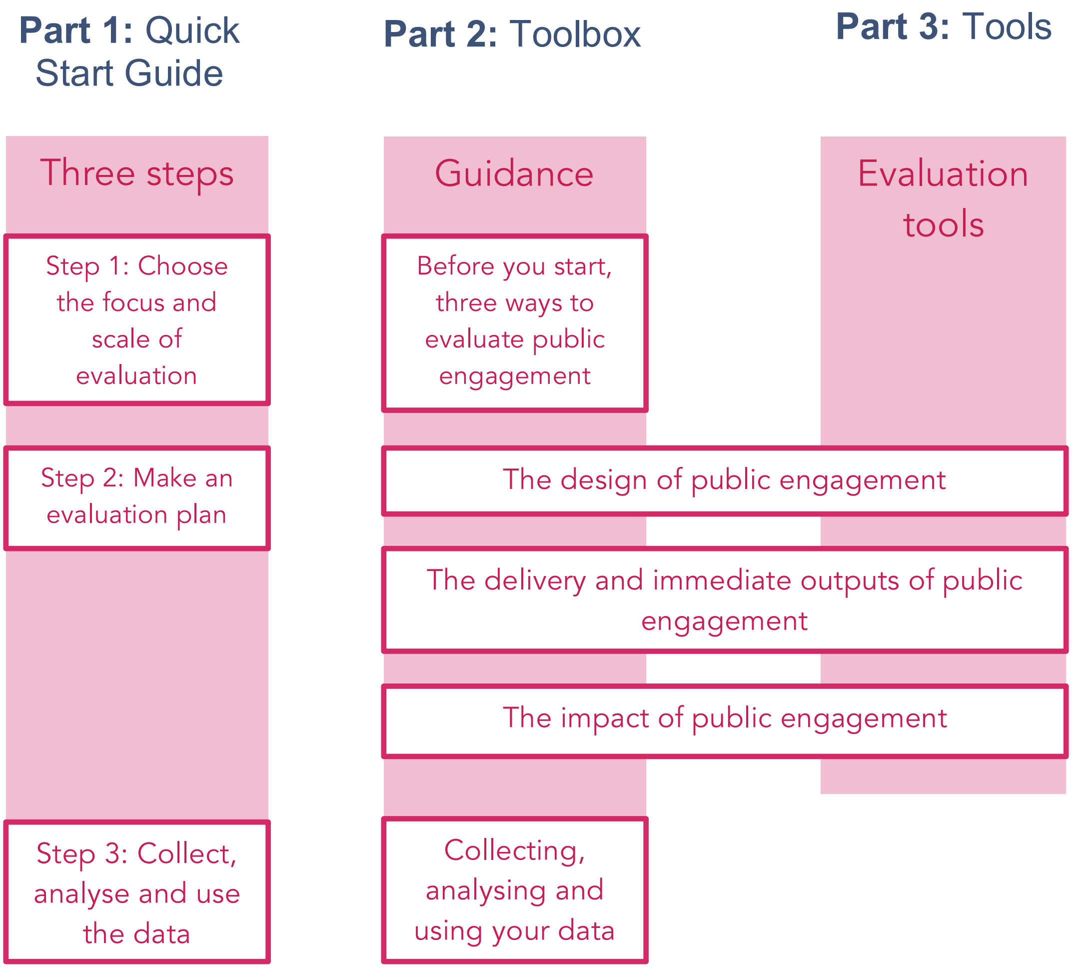
Part 2: This section helps you to take an in depth approach across three elements of evaluating engagement activities:

- The design
- The delivery of immediate outputs
- The benefits or "impacts"

Part 3 (separate booklet): This provides some evaluation tools that you can use to collect data to indicate progress towards outputs and impacts

This diagram explains how to use the toolkit:

- If you are in a hurry, navigate to the Quick Start Guide in Part 1 of this booklet to get a short-cut to everything you need to do to evaluate your public engagement work.
- If you have more time, look through the more detailed guidance in Parts 2 and 3.
- Part 2 helps you prepare for your evaluation and provides guidance on how to evaluate the design, delivery and immediate outputs and the eventual impact of your work.
- Part 3 (separate booklet) gives you a choice of evaluation tools you can use to evaluate each stage of your public engagement work, with information about the relative cost, expertise and time required.



Part 1: Quick Start Guide

If you are pushed for time Part 1 of the toolkit will guide you through the essential steps for a basic evaluation plan. In an ideal world you will plan your evaluation at the same time as you plan your engagement. This helps you make decisions about whether to use evaluation to inform the development of your activity, or whether just to use it to evaluate the outcomes from the activity. If you haven't done this then all is not lost, you can still develop your evaluation plan but you will have less opportunity to utilise the full toolset. To evaluate how effectively you have designed your engagement, see section 2.2 (p. 11).

Step 1: Choose the focus and scale of evaluation

For a quick evaluation, you must have a clear focus on exactly what you want to find out. If you are really pushed for time, decide whether you are:

- Most interested in getting feedback on the delivery and immediate outputs of public engagement that can inform your on-going practice (answer the questions in the delivery/outputs (pink) row of the cut-down evaluation planning template opposite); or
- More interested in evaluating and reporting the impacts of engagement (answer the questions in the impacts (yellow) row of the cut-down evaluation planning template opposite).

To understand the difference between outputs and impacts, see Box 2 (p. 10). For larger projects, see the full evaluation-planning template in section 2.8. For more information about this first step, see sections 2.1 and 2.2.

Fill in this cut-down evaluation planning template by answering the questions in each box below:

Delivery Outputs	**What immediate outputs do you want to deliver from engagement?**	**How will you know you delivered these outputs?** *Identify indicators to show whether your delivery of public engagement activities is providing the immediate outcomes you want*	**What tool will you use to track your progress?** *Identify evaluation tools (see part 3 of this toolkit) that will enable you to track the indicators you have identified*
Impact	**What benefits or "impacts" do you want to achieve from engagement?**	**How will you know you achieved these impacts?** *Identify indicators to show whether your public engagement is leading to "benefits" or impacts*	**What tool will you use to track your progress?** *Identify evaluation tools (see part 3 of this toolkit) that will enable you to track the indicators you have identified*

Step 2: Make an evaluation plan

An evaluation plan contains a few core ingredients. It starts with the main aim and objectives of your public engagement. If you don't know these it will be hard to work out what to evaluate – so take some time to think it through.

Once you have your aims and objectives, you need to work out the questions you want to address, the tools you need to find out the answers to your questions, and if there are specific indicators that will help you assess if you are achieving your aims.

- State your aims and objectives
- Clearly state the delivery of outputs and impacts of public engagement that you expect to see
- Identify indicators that can be used to evaluate whether or not you are achieving your aims and the delivering outputs and impacts you want
- Think about what evaluation tools (see Part 3, separate booklet) you will use to use to capture data for each of these indicators. Think about the resources associated with each evaluation tool, for example whether you have enough people, time, materials and equipment to use the method

For more information about this step, see section 2.4 and 2.5.

Step 3: Collect, analyse and use the data

Using the tools chosen from Part 3 in the separate booklet, collect data for each of the indicators identified in the table above, it is now possible to carry out the evaluation. Section 2.6 (p. 21) provides further guidance on the collection and analysis of evaluation data.

Evaluation findings may then be used to improve on-going or future engagement practice, or to report the benefits arising from engagement. If you have time, or for larger or longer-term projects, it is a good idea to evaluate the design of your engagement activities (see the full evaluation planning template in section 2.8, p.26). When reporting benefits of engagement, remember to tailor your communication to the different audiences who are interested in the evaluation. For more information about this, see section 2.7 (p. 23).

Part 2: The Toolkit

This part of the toolkit provides a detailed explanation of how to evaluate public engagement. If you are in a hurry, you can skim through the material in pink boxes to get a feel for each step.

2.1 Before you start

Interest in public engagement with research has never been higher. By evaluating what works, it becomes possible to design more effective engagement and report the benefits that arise from working with publics (see Box 1 for a definition of publics and Box 2 for a definition of public engagement outputs and impacts).

Before starting any evaluation of public engagement, it is essential to do some preparatory work:

1. Define the scope and purpose of the engagement, for example:
    - Who are your target publics?
    - What do you and they want to get from engaging with each other?
2. Linked to this, define the scale of the engagement, for example is it a:
    - One off, isolated activity
    - One off activity that is part of a bigger programme; or
    - Longer term, larger-scale project?
3. Informed by the scope, purpose and scale of the engagement (the previous two points), define the scope, purpose and scale of your evaluation:
    - Is the evaluation to inform more effective design or execution of engagement activities, or to report what happened as a consequence of engaging with publics?
    - Who is the evaluation for and who will use the results?

Box 1: What are publics?

Although everyone may be considered a member of the public in certain contexts, it is important to recognise that there are differences between individuals, by which we can group them. Rather than thinking of the public as a single entity (the 'general public'), it is useful to start thinking about different 'publics' if we want to identify groups who are more likely to be interested in our research. By targeting engagement activities towards these specific publics, it is possible to engage more efficiently and meaningfully.

A traditional approach to this is 'demographics' which differentiates between people by factors like age, gender, class, income or location. Motivated by a desire to understand customers, supporters, voters and audiences better, many organisations now draw heavily on 'psychographics' (sometimes referred to as audience segmentation). This is much more interested in the differences between people's values, opinions, attitudes, interests, and lifestyles. The British Science Association's Public Attitudes to Science survey, for instance, identifies six 'segments' (percentage figures after each segment denote the proportion of the UK population in each segment in 2014 based on a survey of 1,749 adults): confident engagers (14%), distrustful engagers (13%), indifferent (19%), disengaged sceptics (13%), concerned (23%) and late adopters (18%).

Box 2: What are public engagement outputs and impacts?

Outputs are tangible things that have been produced during (or as a result of) the engagement, including activities, websites, publications, numbers of people attending, numbers of tweets etc. Outputs are typically easier to measure and attribute to public engagement.

Impacts occur when public engagement gives rise to tangible benefits for people (such as enhanced well-being or educational attainment), and are typically harder to evidence. Research Councils UK defines research impact as "the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy".

Public engagement may give rise to a range of impacts, for example:

1. Instrumental impacts (for example, behaviour change)
2. Capacity-building impacts (for example, new skills)
3. Attitudinal impacts (for example, a change in public attitudes towards issues that have been researched)
4. Conceptual impacts (for example, new understanding and awareness of issues related to research)
5. Enduring connectivity impacts (for example, follow-on interactions and lasting relationships such as future attendance at engagement events or opportunities for researchers to work more closely with publics)

The extent to which all these types of impacts will be eligible or score highly under the Research Excellence Framework (REF) will vary between Units of Assessment.

For the purposes of this toolkit, to avoid confusion with impact, "outcomes" are included under impacts. Outcomes are the effects of public engagement, whether or not they are beneficial, and so in many cases will overlap with impacts. However, it is important to recognise that some of the outcomes from public engagement may not be beneficial for certain groups, and it is important to identify risks and assumptions within the design and delivery of engagement that may lead to unintended negative consequences.

2.2 Three ways to evaluate public engagement

With the preparatory tasks in the previous section (2.1) complete, it is now possible to start evaluating the public engagement. Broadly speaking, there are three ways of evaluating public engagement (Figure 1):

1. Evaluate the design of public engagement activities for a given purpose and context: to what extent is/was the design of the public engagement process and activities appropriate for the context and purpose of engagement?
2. Evaluate the delivery/outputs of public engagement: to what extent do/did the delivery of the public engagement process and activities represent good practice and lead to the intended outputs?
3. Evaluate the impacts of public engagement: to what extent do/did engagement lead to planned (or other) benefits for target publics and researchers?

The rest of this toolkit is structured around these three ways of evaluating public engagement.

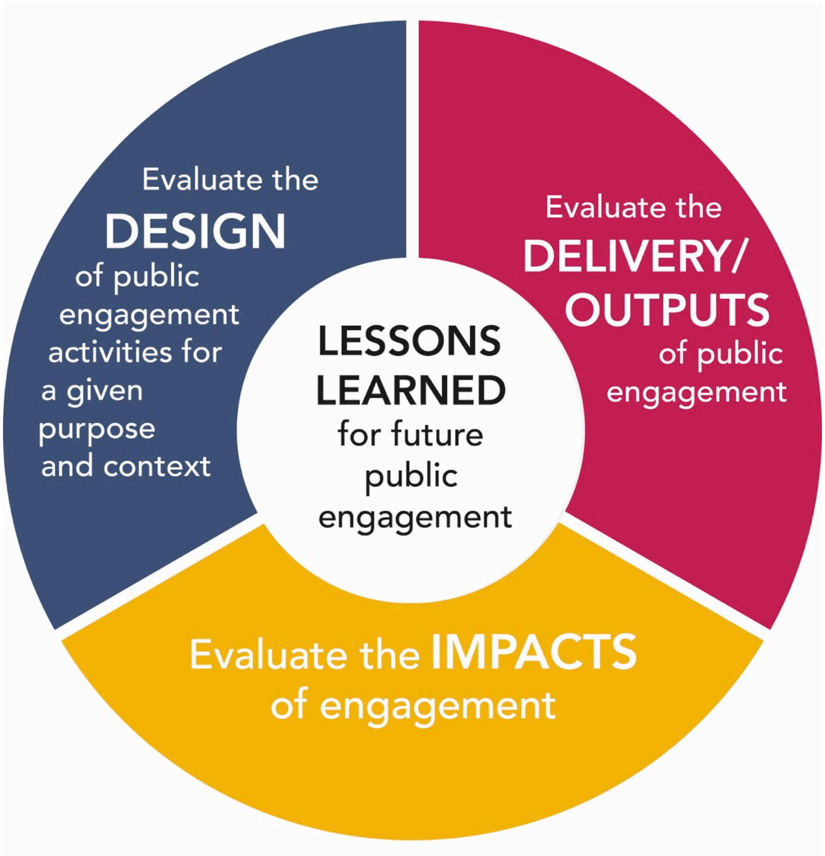


Figure 1: Three ways to evaluate public engagement

Worked Example

Aim: To inspire children aged 5-11 to learn about the science of studying dinosaurs.
Audiences: Family groups with children aged 5-11 visiting science festival.
Activity: Table top excavation activity; quiz exploring what researchers have learnt from bone fragments; match the bone to the dinosaur game.

1. Evaluate the design of public engagement

Example evaluation question: Is the planned activity appropriate for the aim?
Tool used: Activity piloted with focus group of parents and children at after school science club.
Example indicators:

- Did the children learn something about the science of studying dinosaurs?
- Was the activity enjoyable enough for people to want to participate?
- Were the activities too hard or too easy for participants?
- Were the parents satisfied by the experience?

2. Evaluate the delivery and immediate outputs of public engagement

Example delivery/output goals:

- Resources are adequate for the numbers of people attending the event
- Activities are popular
- Activities engaged a diversity of participants

Tools that could be used:

- De-brief meeting or survey with team (in this case to identify resources used from different activities to determine which activities were most popular)
- Different activities offer a sticker for participation which participants collect on a reward card, to be entered to a prize draw (or have an observer noting down who participates in what activity)
- Show of hands by age range in quiz (or have an observer estimating ages in a small number of very different age ranges)

Example indicators:

- Resources used in different activities
- Numbers participating in each activity
- Numbers of participants in different age ranges

3. Evaluate the impact of public engagement

Example impact goal:

- Change in understanding among children participating in the activity
- Children and their parents retain what they learnt

Tools that could be used:

- Integrate question into quiz to see if people's knowledge and understanding changed over the course of the activities
- Opportunity to sign up for dinosaur newsletter (accompanied by an incentive to do so)

- Follow-up activities such as: questionnaire of people who participate on website to ask what interested them in participating; follow up focus group with small group of families recruited at the event; follow up drawing activity for families, linked to a competition asking children what they found out at the event; parent survey

Example indicators:

- Number and nature of new things children learnt about the science of studying dinosaur remains
- Number of people who sign up to dinosaur newsletter
- Qualitative feedback from focus group discussions and drawings in follow-up activities
- Quantitative data from follow-up questionnaires

2.3 Evaluate the design of public engagement

Many of the most common mistakes in public engagement can be easily avoided if the design is evaluated at an early stage. It is important to evaluate the design of planned public engagement against good practice principles, and check if activities are appropriate to the context and likely to meet intended goals.

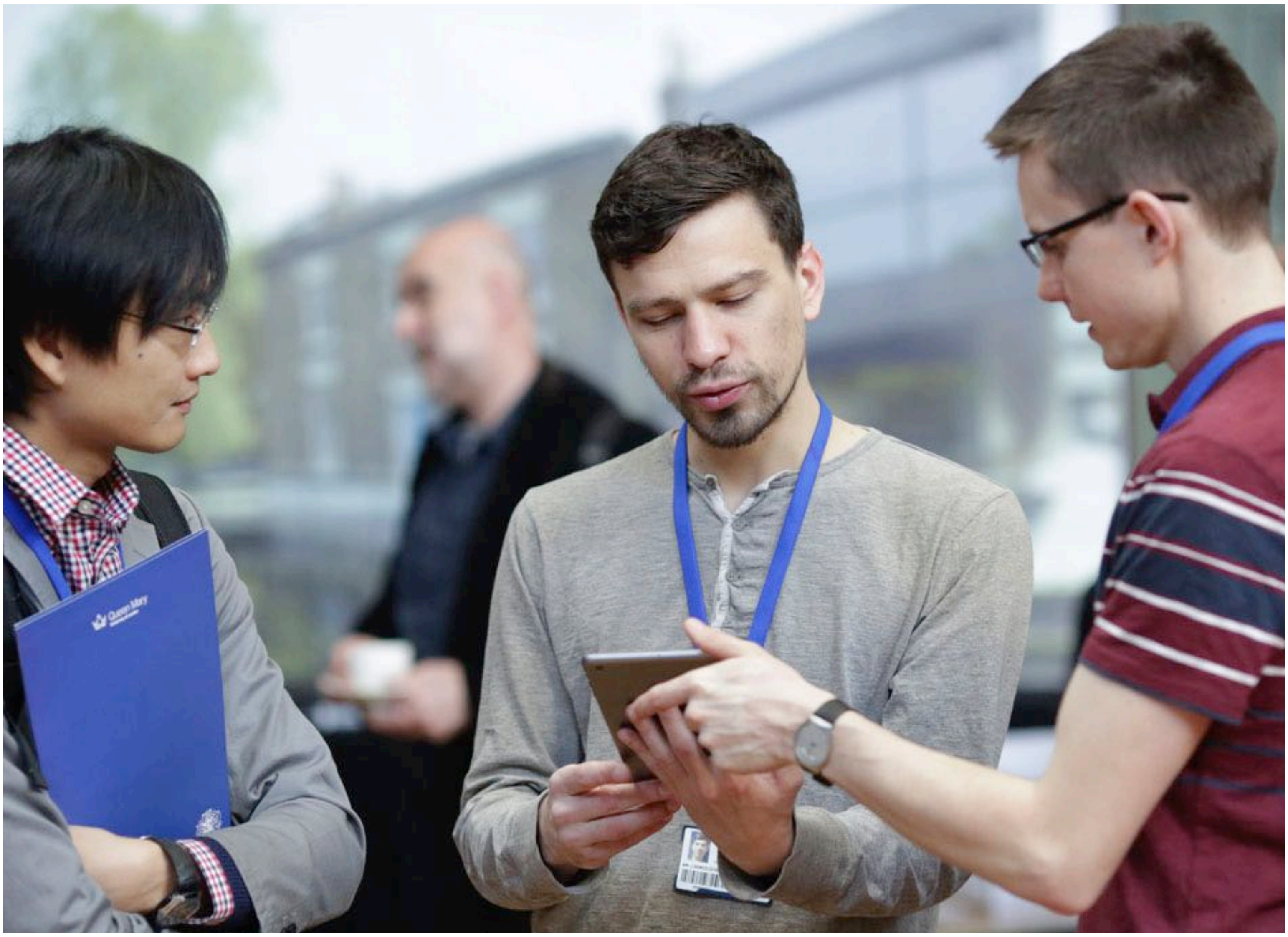
Using the evaluation-planning template in section 2.8 (p. 26), evaluate the design of any planned public engagement:

1. Does the design follow good practice, underpinned by sound ethics and avoid known issues that commonly lead to failure?
2. Is the design appropriate and relevant for the context in which it is taking place, including the needs, priorities and expectations of those who take part?

Are any of these factors likely to present challenges for the planned approach to public engagement? If the evaluation of design is done prior to engagement, it may be possible to improve the design.

Case study illustration

Before running its first Festival of Communities in 2016, Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) evaluated the design of the event using a focus group with community leaders and academics. Participants discussed the goals of the festival, target publics, risks and assumptions associated with planned activities, and whether or not these activities were likely to achieve the goals of the festival for each of the target publics. Community leaders were consulted and provided valuable feedback about contextual factors that may limit the success of the festival, such as language barriers and objections to noise from surrounding communities. Where plans were already in place to adapt the design of the festival to this context, these were communicated to participants (for example, coordinating location and timing of noisy activities with local Mosque) and where necessary, the design of activities was adapted (for example, recruiting student volunteers with relevant language skills to assist stallholders).



2.4 Evaluate the delivery and immediate outputs of public engagement

Public engagement is often assessed in terms of the number and breadth of people taking part. However, it is just as important to know about the quality of the engagement; good delivery of public engagement results in all sorts of positive outputs, and poor quality engagement can end up achieving little, and in some cases make things worse.

> Using the evaluation-planning template in section 2.8 (p. 26), identify specific outputs that researchers and/or publics would expect to see as a result of engagement. Then identify indicators that would show progress towards these outcomes. It is useful to systematically identify outputs and associated indicators and tools linked to each planned engagement activity. Part 3 provides tools that can be used to collect data for these indicators.

The evaluation-planning template in section 2.8 (p. 26) asks you to identify specific outputs that researchers and/or publics would expect to see as a result of engagement, and then to identify indicators that would show progress towards these outcomes. It is useful to systematically identify outputs and associated indicators and tools linked to each planned engagement activity. Part 3 provides tools that can be used to collect data for these indicators.

Case study illustration

In QMUL's Festival of Communities, two evaluation tools were used to assess progress towards the immediate goal of having engaged a wide range of publics, many for the first time. These tools were designed to collect data that could indicate the balance of participants from different communities, ages, genders and backgrounds, and the proportion who were engaging with research for the first time. To determine the diversity of visitors, face-to-face surveys were carried out by student volunteers with a random sample of participants during family fun days and questionnaires were administered at a selection of other festival events. To determine how many visitors tried something new, during fun days, participants received reward cards and could collect stickers (different colors for different activities) for doing something new, with completed cards being entered to a prize draw.

2.5 Evaluate the impacts of public engagement

The third way of evaluating public engagement is to focus on the impacts of engagement (see Box 2 (p. 10) for an explanation of the difference between outputs and impacts of engagement).

If the goal is to report benefits arising from public engagement, you will need to consider the sorts of impacts you might expect as a result of the engagement. Depending on how indirect and long-term these impacts are, you may wish to design additional future evaluation activities that can build on initial work. Although many researchers tend to look primarily for instrumental impacts, Box 2 (p. 10) shows other types of impacts.

Once impact goals have been identified, it is possible to use the evaluation planning template in section 2.8 (p. 26) to assign indicators to track progress towards each of these goals, using relevant tools (selected from Part 3, separate booklet).

Finally, it is worth considering whether it will be possible to determine if engagement is leading to unplanned (positive or negative) impacts over the long-term. Additional indicators or other measures may be necessary to alert you to risks so you can mitigate these as far as possible prior to engagement.

Case study illustration

The impact goals of the Queen Mary University of London Festival of Communities included an increased acceptance of different cultures within local communities, and to generate long-term relationships between the University and local communities. Indicators of success for these impacts included evidence of more positive attitudes towards different cultures and the University from among community members, and increased engagement with QMUL (for example, via future events) after the festival. The tools that were used to measure progress towards these goals via these indicators were the collation of comments on social and other media linked to the festival, and a follow-up survey (pertaining to this and other impacts) with those who signed up for email updates at the festival and those commenting on the festival via social media. Attendance at future events may be monitored with questions in future evaluation forms asking about previous engagement with QMUL including specific reference to the festival.

2.6 Collecting and analysing evaluation data

With an evaluation plan in place, it is now possible to start collecting and analyzing data for each of your selected indicators, using the tools you have chosen from Part 3.

To make sure that the evaluation plan can be used effectively and efficiently to collect the necessary data, it may be useful to check that relevant tools have been identified to provide data for each of the indicators in the evaluation plan. Similarly, consider if the selected tools might be able to easily provide other relevant data that could be used to track outputs and impacts. Check if there is an existing data source before you start collecting new data.

Preparation for data collection:

- Ensure you have allocated sufficient time to prepare data collection methods in advance: for example to design and print surveys, to make props, or to get advance consent forms signed.
- Check you have the time, people, instruments and skills to collect the data
- Check you have procedures in place to protect data and privacy

Analyzing data:

- Consider the methods that will be used to analyse the data and whether you and your team have these skills
- Consider who will be involved in interpreting the analysis, and whether this will include publics and other stakeholders in addition to the research team

Case study illustration

Data collection at the Queen Mary University of London Festival of Communities was done by an evaluation team supported by student volunteers for fun days, and by QMUL event organisers throughout the rest of the festival. Across the festival, sampling was used to collect data efficiently whilst representing the widest possible range of public engagement activities. For example, five stalls were selected in the fun day to represent the main types of activities on offer, and visitor counts were conducted in 15-minute periods spread out across the day, including visual assessments of diversity criteria (for example, gender, broad age categories). Examples of data analysis from the Queen Mary University of London Festival of Communities include content analysis of social media comments linked to the festival, and quantitative (descriptive statistics) and qualitative (thematic analysis) of data from questionnaires.

2.7 Using the evaluation results

Once the data has been collected and analysed, the evaluation findings can be used to improve engagement practice and report immediate outcomes and impacts of engagement. Broadly speaking, there are two types of use for evaluation findings:

- Formative feedback that can be used to help the research team and funders improve public engagement in the future
- Summative feedback that you can report to those who are interested in what happened (for example community groups, funders or for the Research Excellence Framework)

There are almost always opportunities to learn from the experience of doing public engagement, and an effective evaluation will provide lessons that can enhance future practice. Where indicators in the evaluation planning template (section 2.8) show you have not achieved what you had hoped from engagement, it is worth considering (with your team if possible) what you might do differently. In longer-term projects, it is useful to evaluate your engagement continuously so you can adapt your practice in response to this feedback during the project.

When reporting the benefits of engagement, first identify who is interested in the results of the evaluation. Then you can identify the most appropriate way to communicate the findings to each of these different interested parties in the most relevant way. Where actions have been identified to enhance on-going or future engagement, it will be necessary to establish responsibility for doing these actions and following up to check that practice has improved as a result of the evaluation.

Case study illustration

Evaluation findings from the Queen Mary University of London Festival of Communities were used to communicate outputs and impacts from the festival to community organizations who co-organised the festival with QMUL, local press, funders and the University community. Formative feedback from the evaluation was collected using the evaluation-planning template in section 2.8 (p. 26). This identified a range of indicators with associated evaluation tools that were used to capture the delivery and immediate outputs of public engagement and impacts as they occurred. This was then supplemented via interviews with members of the organizing team, and used to formulate specific recommendations for improvements that could be made for future events.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2.8 Full evaluation planning template

The template below provides a logical framework for evaluating the design of planned engagement activities and selecting evaluation tools that can indicate whether or not the delivery of public engagement activities is working and desired impacts are being achieved.

If you are pushed for time, focus on the delivery/outputs and impact rows of the table below (included in the quick start guide at the front of this toolkit).

Design	**Have you evaluated the design of your public engagement?**	
	Does the design follow good practice, underpinned by sound ethics?	*Have you systematically identified relevant publics (and stakeholders)?*
		Do you understand the expectations and specific benefits each group is likely to derive from engagement?
		Have you identified and made contingencies for any risks and assumptions?
		Have you tested your activities and sought feedback from relevant publics?
	How well do you know the context you are working in, and have you adapted the design of your activities to this context?	*Do your proposed engagement activities match the interests and needs of your target publics and their social and cultural context?*
		Is there experience of engagement and existing trust between members of the research community and publics?
		Do you have sufficient resources and support for engagement in this particular context for example, professional facilitation, event planning etc.?

Delivery Outputs	**What immediate outputs do you want to deliver from engagement?**	**How will you know you delivered these outputs?** *Identify indicators to show whether your delivery of public engagement activities is providing the immediate outcomes you want*	**What tool will you use to track your progress?** *Identify evaluation tools that will enable you to track the indicators you have identified*
Impact	**What benefits or "impacts" do you want to achieve from engagement?**	**How will you know you achieved these impacts?** *Identify indicators to show whether your public engagement is leading to "benefits" or impacts*	**What tool will you use to track your progress?** *Identify evaluation tools that will enable you to track the indicators you have identified*

Steps:

1. Design: answer questions about how you designed your activities to evaluate whether or not your design is likely to work

2. Delivery/outputs:
    - Clearly state the delivery of outputs and impacts of public engagement that you expect to see
    - Identify indicators that can be used easily and reliably to capture the delivery and immediate outputs of public engagement
    - Think about what evaluation tools (see Part 3) you will use to use to capture data for each of these indicators. Think about the resources associated with each evaluation tool, for example whether you have enough people, time, materials and equipment to use the method

3. Impacts:
    - Clearly state the benefits or "impacts you want to achieve from engagement
    - Identify indicators to show whether your public engagement is leading to "benefits" or impacts
    - Think about what evaluation tools (see Part 3) you will use to use to capture data for each of these indicators. Think about the resources associated with each evaluation tool, for example

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