



# Introduction to Evaluation Methods

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# Things to consider

1. Are you sure you need to do it?
2. What are you are trying to achieve (purpose)?
3. What level of involvement are you trying to achieve?
4. What type of participant do you want to involve?
5. How many do you need to involve?
6. Is your process focused on any particular groups?
7. Which policy areas are covered by your project?
8. Do you need a one-off event or a series of events?
9. What resources do you have?
10. Who is the information for?



# Things to consider

## Key point

- It is important to be clear about what you want to achieve and to select methods that are best suited to your purpose.



# Where can you start?

- Existing data
- Observation
- Accompanied visits
- Visitor comments
- Questionnaires
- Interviews
- Focus Groups



# Existing data

- What information have you already got?  
School bookings, visitor figures, mailing addresses, comments books, etc.
- What does it tell you about your visitors?
- How could you use it to find out more about your visitors?



# Observation

- **Tracking visitors around galleries / site**

Observe visitor flow, dwell time, behaviour, interactions.

- **Observing a single exhibit**

What learning is happening? Interactions, usability, problem exhibits.

- **Qualitative**

But can be turned into quantitative results.



# Observation

## Pros

- See what visitors do
- Highlight problems
- Record dwell time
- Non-invasive
- Good for getting whole team involved

## Cons

- Making assumptions
- Biased behaviour
- Time consuming

**Tell visitors you're doing it!**



# Accompanied visits

- Put yourself in your visitors' shoes.
- Often used for underrepresented groups where there may be a barrier to visiting.



# Accompanied visits

## Pros

- Good for understanding why
- Can probe and check

## Cons

- Time consuming to set up/gather data/analyse
- Temptation to try to improve visit instead of observing



# Visitor comments

- What visitors think and feel in their own words.
- Can be grouped according to categories e.g. ILFA GLOs. [www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk](http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk)
- Taking visitor comments further....



# Visitor comments

## Pros

- Easy to set up and gather data
- Honest responses
- Can identify enthusiastic people who care about your organisation

## Cons

- Data could be skewed by extreme views
- Limited options for follow-up if no contact details left



# Questionnaires

- Structured method to get information about:
  - People's opinions, thoughts, behaviours, beliefs, current attitudes
  - The person responding – where they live, their age perhaps, how many times they have visited, etc.
- Provides a snapshot of what people are thinking now.
- Effective at answering What? When? Where? How? but is less effective at identifying causes – the Why.

# Questionnaires

## Pros

- Large sample/ statistical data
- Flexible/ variety of formats
- Completed in visitors own time
- Quick and cheap
- Easy to answer
- Easy to analyse

## Cons

- Uncontrolled sample
- Low return rate
- Incomplete answers
- Simple questions
- Limited/ restricted answers
- Visitors can't qualify answers
- Rely on literacy skills



# Interviews

- In-depth, one-to-one discussions on a range of questions.
- Useful with known individuals and informed experts.
- Or to probe specific viewpoints.



# Interviews

## Pros

- Controlled sample
- Complex questions
- In-depth views
- Visitors can answer in own terms
- Chance to probe or clarify
- Include visuals / props

## Cons

- Time consuming
- Costly
- Biased comments/ answers
- Subjective interviewer
- Smaller sample



# Focus Groups

- Qualitative data - talking to people about their thoughts and experiences using open-ended questions from a prepared script to stimulate discussion.
- Involves encouraging an invited group of participants to share their thoughts, feelings, attitudes and ideas on a certain subject, they do not attempt to reach consensus or make recommendations.



# Focus Groups

- 7-10 participants. Min 4-5 for complex topic or when difficult to involve people. Max 12.
- Participants have 1+ characteristics in common relating to topic.
- Participants are not too familiar with each other.
- None hierarchical relationships.
- Best conducted in a series (3 to several dozen groups). Avoids extraordinary results e.g. a “cold” group.
- Structured by carefully prepared
  - “topic guide” - list of topics for discussion
  - “questioning route” - list of questions for discussion.
- Place = safe (permissive) environment to invite different perceptions and points of view.
- Moderated by skilled facilitator.
- Participants influence each other by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion.

# Focus Groups

## Pros

- In-depth views
- Open discussion – on set questions
- Group interaction encourages sharing of views
- Can include activities / objects to stimulate discussion

## Cons

- Difficult to arrange
- 'No shows'
- Small sample
- Shy participants
- Purpose not 'free' discussion = 'visioning workshop'
- Costly



# Where can you start?

Existing data

Observation

Accompanied visits

Visitor comments

Questionnaires

Interviews

Focus Groups



# Evaluation Tools

- Accompanied visits
- Behavioural mapping
- Eavesdropping
- Tracking
- Videoing
- Product/output of programme
- Diaries
- Photos
- Statistics
- Peer review
- Rating
- Task oriented e.g. drawing, role play
- Visioning
- Games
- Interviews
- Personal meaning mapping
- Discussion groups
- Questionnaires
- Visitor comments
- Texting
- Voting
- Focus groups



# Evaluation Tools

- Community Development
  - Conversation Café
  - Focus Groups
  - Deliberative Workshops
  - Opinion Polls
  - Design Charrettes
  - Online Consultations
  - E-Petitions
  - Area Forums
  - Blogs
  - Citizen Advisory Groups
  - Citizen's Summits
  - Forum Theatre
  - Consensus Conference
  - Citizens Panels
  - Citizens Jury
  - Dialogue
  - World Café
  - Participatory Budgeting
  - Online Forums
  - Mystery Shopper
  - 21st Century Town Meeting
  - Delphi Survey
  - User Panels
  - Planning for Real
  - Participatory Strategic Planning
  - Participatory Appraisal
  - Open Space Technology
  - Future Search
  - Deliberative Mapping
  - Appreciative Inquiry
  - Deliberative Polling
- Involve** - [www.peopleandparticipation.net](http://www.peopleandparticipation.net)



# Conclusion

- Make sure the method fits the purpose of the evaluation study rather than making the study fit the method.
- Ensure you have enough time/resources/enthusiasm to carry it out robustly.
- Don't be afraid to try new things!



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