

6.1) Evaluating your project



Introduction

This section of the toolkit will help you in evaluating your anti-sectarianism project. It includes information on why it is important to evaluate, while highlighting what evaluative approaches might work best for your project.

A summary of evaluation techniques and skills, as well as example methodologies from the Leith anti-sectarianism project, is also included.

Evaluation? What's it all about?

In it's simplest terms, evaluation is the measurement of *the difference* you are trying to make.

Exactly what this difference will be however, will vary depending on what your project is hoping to achieve.

In relation to your anti-sectarian work for example, you may want to target local football fans to capture evidence on their attitudes to sectarianism. Alternatively, you may want to deliver educational workshops aimed at improving your groups' ability to challenge sectarian actions.

Regardless of what activity you choose to deliver however, evaluation is integral in order to highlight the positive work you deliver. Moreover, it can underline areas of your work that may not have quite gone to plan.

Why evaluate?

Evaluation has many benefits and can add direction, clarity and focus to the work you are undertaking.

Evaluation can provide feedback on progress you have made. It can also define key successes and achievements, as well as highlighting areas of work that need to improve or need further work. This in turn can help you to improve the quality of the work you are delivering overall.

Evaluation can also prevent the loss of direction and provide evidence on whether you should continue with a piece of existing work. Moreover, it can help establish whether a piece of work has reached a natural end point.

Top tips for evaluating!

Evaluation should enhance your work rather than impede on what you're trying to achieve. The best ways of evaluating are often the simplest, requiring the least resources.

Try not to look at evaluation in terms of either success or failure, but rather as an on-going process. Ideally evaluation should be integrated into your practice and should be incorporated from the outset.

Although evaluation is integral to your practice, too much focus on it can impact on the atmosphere in your group. Your evaluative practice should complement the work your doing, not disrupt it.

Funders want to know as much about what *does not work*, and the challenges you have experienced, as they do your successes. Don't hold back on sharing what didn't quite go to plan!

You can't rely on assumptions of what your doing works. By appropriately evaluating your practice, you can highlight exactly what has worked and what has not.

The evaluation you conduct can be built into informing policy and practice. Don't underestimate the benefit sharing your evaluative practice can have.

What should you be evaluating?

Now that we have clarified why it is important to evaluate, we next have to consider what things we should be evaluating.

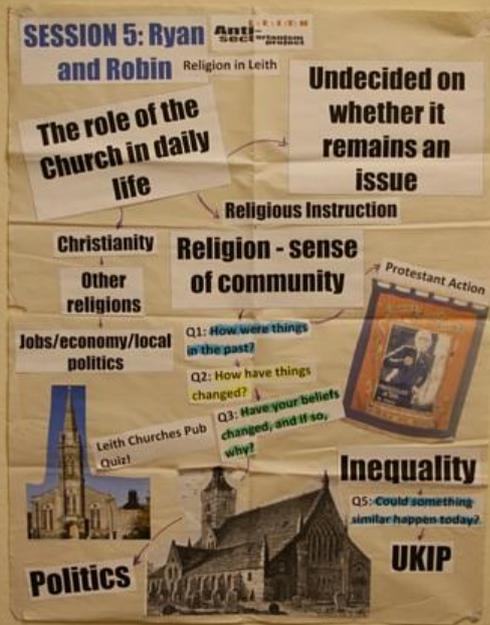
Another important question to ask is who is the evaluation for and what is it attempting to show?

In regards to evaluating your project, choosing which methods/methodologies to use can be challenging.

You need to be clear about the questions you are trying to answer, as well as what you are evaluating. This will help to determine what methods you will use and what questions need to be asked.

One useful technique to consider is to have clear goals set at the start of your project. These goals can then subsequently be evaluated.

Example methodologies from the Leith anti-sectarianism Project



Mind Maps - evaluative methodology

Mind maps fed back at the start of each session.

Each mind map captured the key parts of the previous weeks session.

Bold writing and visuals used to be eye catching.

Mind maps were a great way to inform participants of sessions they had missed. Also great for new participants to see what had been going on.

Hand outs of the mind maps were also provided during the final OHP session, which were positively received by our participants.

Picture Building - methodology

Really engaging method and was great for getting our participants focussed on discussing what they felt were the key issues of sectarianism.

We asked our participants to record their thoughts on to paper. Depending on learning styles of your group, this may develop differently.

This method allowed our participants to capture visually their ideas.

We encouraged our participants to bring along objects that helped convey what they had learned from attending the OHP, to further aid discussion.



For more information on how the picture building methodology was utilised, please check out section 2.12 of the toolkit.