Assessing the Impact of Arts and Creativity Interventions for Older People:
A Public Health Evaluation Toolkit Summary

Institute of Public Health

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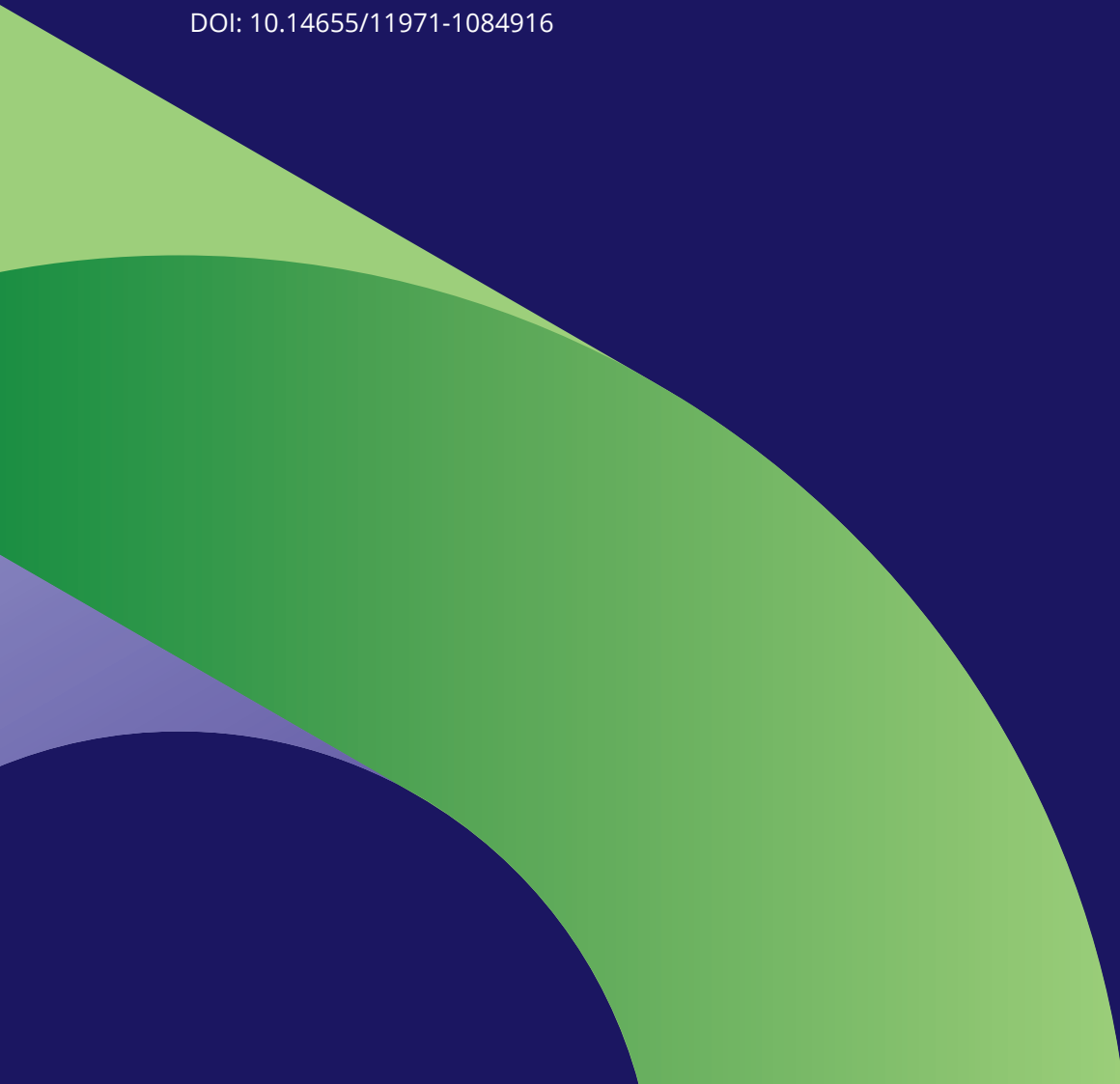
About the Institute of Public Health

The Institute of Public Health (IPH) informs public policy to support healthier populations in Ireland and Northern Ireland. We focus on promoting health and wellbeing, improving health equity, and reducing health inequalities throughout the life course.

IPH was set up prior to the signing of the Good Friday / Belfast Agreement in 1998 to provide support on public health policy to the Departments of Health and Chief Medical Officers in Ireland and Northern Ireland. It is jointly funded by the Departments of Health in both jurisdictions.

IPH undertakes research, provides evidence and analysis for public health policy development, and works with a variety of stakeholders at local and national level.

1 Introduction

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1

1. Introduction

In 2021, the Institute of Public Health carried out an evidence review on how arts and creativity can have positive outcomes for older people's health and wellbeing[1]. One of the recommendations identified the need for an evaluation toolkit for the arts and creativity sector to be able to better measure, record and assess the impact of their programmes. It was this work that led to the development of this toolkit.

This toolkit aims to support the arts and creativity sector* to design, plan, conduct, assess and report on evaluations of arts and creativity programmes and interventions within a public health context. It is hoped that this practical guide will help the sector to better understand and measure the difference they make to improving public health outcomes for older people. This can help to provide a greater recognition of the benefits that participation in arts and creativity can provide for positive health and wellbeing and active ageing.

The objectives of the toolkit are to:

- Provide a better understanding of the concept of public health and the importance of arts and creativity in promoting health and wellbeing in older adults.
- Provide support to increase your knowledge and understanding of what evaluation is and why it is important for your intervention or programme.
- Provide you with guidance on the approaches and tools you can use to prepare, plan, and implement your evaluation.
- Help you identify outcomes which matter the most to the people you work with and to your organisation.
- Help you to focus on the most appropriate tools you can use to measure health and wellbeing changes in outcomes for the people who use your service.
- Provide information for better reporting of project activities to better understand what works in different situations.
- Explain terminologies used in relation to evaluation and the different elements of your work. A resources and template section also provides examples and links to helpful guidance resources referenced throughout the toolkit.

The toolkit is not a definitive resource to evaluation as there are many existing resources and supports available, but it does seek to articulate the important steps in carrying out an effective and balanced evaluation as well as imparting practical advice on how to do it. This will help you to build an appropriate evaluation into your project and services.

* This includes those in funding, policy, designing, and delivering arts and creativity programmes.

[1] McQuade L. and O'Sullivan R. (2021): Arts and Creativity in Later Life: Implications for Health and Wellbeing in Older Adults. A Systematic Evidence Review. Institute of Public Health. https://www.publichealth.ie/reports/arts-and-creativity-later-life-implications-health-and-wellbeing-older-adults

Who is this toolkit for?

- This toolkit is primarily intended for those working within arts or community organisations (e.g., small projects, charities, non-government organisations, local authorities etc), in the arts, creativity and ageing sectors or those who provide or fund arts and creativity activities that aim to improve older people's health and wellbeing.

- It is designed to support those who wish to undertake an effective evaluation of their project or programme and implement the learning to inform and improve their services.

The toolkit is organised in five sections. The first section sets out the context, explaining the role and type of evaluations. The second section sets out the practical steps involved in undertaking an evaluation and building your portfolio of evidence. The third section provides some useful case study examples to show how this can be done in practice. The fourth section sets out the steps in moving forward and the fifth section features templates and resources to equip you to undertake your evaluation. You can access the toolkit here https://learning.publichealth.ie/.

2

Evaluation

2. Evaluation

What is evaluation and why should you evaluate?

There is increasing recognition of the role that arts and creativity can play in addressing public health and wellbeing priorities for older adults.

The need for arts and creativity practitioners and organisations to demonstrate the impact of their interventions and how they fit into the policy arena has become increasingly important.

Being able to plan and evaluate the difference you are making will benefit you and your organisation.

What do we mean by evaluation?

Evaluation helps us understand how well an arts and creativity project, programme or service has worked. We can do this through the collection and analysis of data using specific tools.

> *"Evaluation is a systematic process of the design, implementation, and outcomes of a programme or intervention. It involves understanding how a programme or an intervention is being, or has been implemented, and what effects it had, for whom, how and why."[2]*

Carrying out an evaluation helps us to understand if what we do makes a difference. It can help us learn what does or does not work, helping us to refine and make improvements in our work and incorporate this into future planning. It also helps us to report back those who have invested in the project and to potential funders.

Evaluation can happen before, during or after an intervention is administered but is usually most effective when designed at the outset, in conjunction with planning the intervention.

Evaluation helps you to:

- Monitor the progress and quality aspects of the work involved - activities , outputs , and ways of working.
- Gain a better understanding of the outcomes and the impact or difference you are making e.g.changes to participants, service users, stakeholders, or funders.
- Identify future opportunities for further improvement and attention.

[2] The Magenta Book: HM Treasury guidance on what to consider when designing an evaluation. 2020.

Assessing the Impact of Arts and Creativity Interventions for Older People:
A Public Health Evaluation Toolkit - Summary

5

Through your evaluation you will be able to answer questions that will help you to improve your work, such as:[3]

- **H*ow much did we do?* **This is about the amount or quantity of what your programme or intervention produced e.g., number of people attending, number of activity sessions delivered. *(outputs)*

- *How well are we doing?* This is about how well you provided your services, programme or intervention e.g., % customer satisfaction, % of activities performed well. *(effectiveness)*

- *How efficient was it?* This is about how well you used your resources e.g., value for money to improve outcomes. *(efficiency)*

- *What difference did we make and is anyone better off?* This is about the longer-term changes your programme or intervention had for participants / beneficiaries e.g, % showing improved skills, attitudes, behaviours, circumstances. *(impact)*

What are the benefits of evaluation?

Evaluation can have many benefits for your programme, intervention, and organisation:[4]

- By conducting an evaluation, you are able to recognise where your work is most effective, assess what has worked well and what you might want to change or develop further. This helps to improve your service and intervention and helps to promote greater health and wellbeing gains for participants / beneficiaries.

- By building the evidence through evaluation, you are able to better report and demonstrate the positive difference your intervention has made for the people that use it and show value for money to funders or commissioning organisations.

- By sharing the findings of your evaluation, you can increase awareness and understanding about the differences you are making to your key audiences.

- Staff, volunteers, participants, and carers, who are involved in the work are able to see evidence of its impact and achievement. This can help to create an appreciation of shared purpose and inspire staff and volunteers by seeing the difference they are making.

- By conducting an evaluation where stakeholders are involved in the design, delivery, and analysis process, you can create opportunities that enable them to voice and express their views freely. This offers inclusivity, valuable contributions, productive working relationships, supportive learning, confidence building and a sense of empowerment, as well as providing a more meaningful and higher quality service[5,6].

[3] Friedman, M. Trying Hard Is Not Good Enough: How to Produce Measurable Improvements for Customers and Communities.

[4] NCVO. Impact and Evaluation. Learn how to develop effective impact and evaluation practices in your organisation.2022. https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/strategy-and-impact/impact-evaluation/#/c

[5] UK Standards for Public Involvement; 2016. https://sites.google.com/nihr.ac.uk/pi-standards/standards

[6] Engage. Personal and Public Involvement (PPI). A central resource for involvement in health and social care research in Northern Ireland. https://engage.hscni.net/

Table 1: Types of Evaluation

	Needs assessment evaluation	Process evaluation	Economic evaluation[7]	Outcome/ Impact evaluation
Evaluation approach	This evaluation can identify who needs your service, how great the need is and any gaps in provision through a needs assessment.	This approach evaluates the implementation of your intervention and identifies opportunities to improve intervention design and delivery.	This approach identifies whether the allocation of resources within an intervention or across interventions are optimized for value for money.	This approach measures the level to which short, medium and long-term outcomes are met.
When to carry out	Before or during the planning of your intervention.	Before and during the delivery and monitoring of your intervention.	After the intervention has been implemented.	After the intervention has been implemented (determining impact can be up to 5-10 years later).
What is investigated	Review and mapping of existing evidence and services. Identify gaps in provision. Engagement with stakeholders to help understand current and future services, issues and potential risks to sustainability and growth. Helps to inform the planning of your intervention.	Barriers and facilitators to intervention delivery. Intervention progress, which include activities and outputs. How an intervention can be improved.	Cost-minimisation analysis (CMA) Cost-effectiveness (CEA) Cost-utility analysis (CUA) Cost-benefits analysis (CBA) Social return on investment (SROI)	Short-term changes in participant's attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge. Longer-term changes in behaviours and lifestyle factors. Changes in wider community contexts. Changes across wider policy contexts. Organisational changes, ways of working, allocation of budgets, quality of services.

7 See IPH's review of economic evaluation methodologies for the assessment of arts interventions for health and wellbeing in older adults (Crealey and O'Neill, 2021).
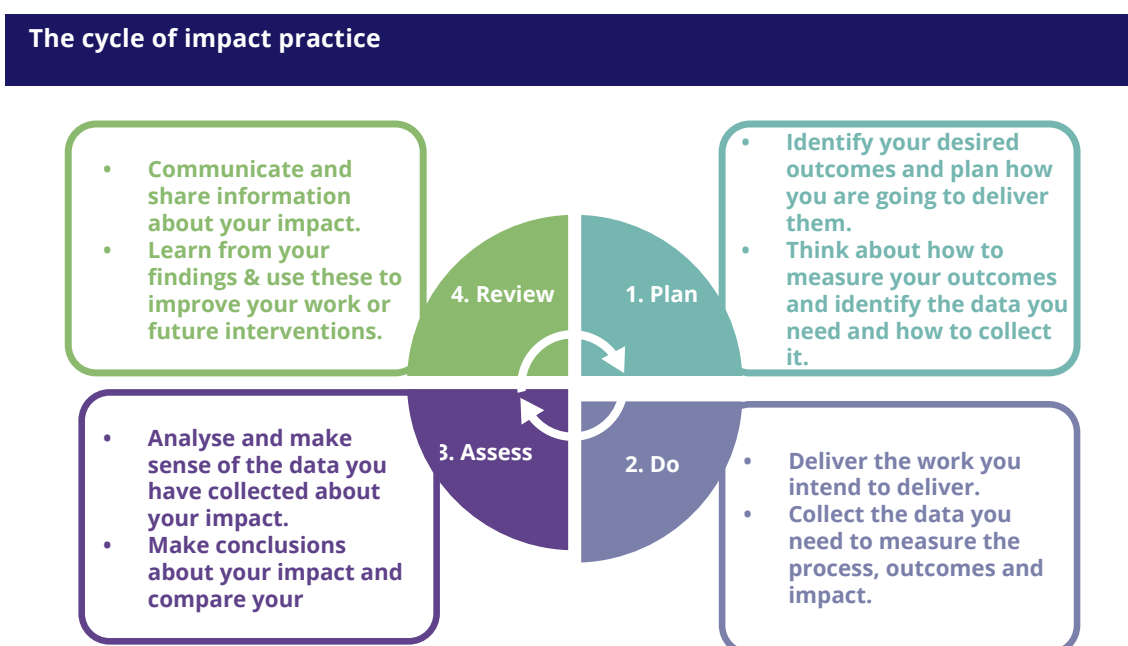
Assessing the Impact of Arts and Creativity Interventions for Older People:
A Public Health Evaluation Toolkit - Summary

7

What are the four main steps when conducting an outcome or impact evaluation?

There are four key steps you should undertake when evaluating the impact of your arts and creativity intervention, as illustrated below.

This includes planning the type of evaluation and the outcomes or impact you want to make. Planning how to measure it, collecting relevant information, and then sharing the information once it has been analysed.

The following graphic provides an overview of the main steps involved in the evaluation process and is based on the cycle of impact practice[8].

The cycle of impact practice

- **Communicate and share information about your impact.**
- **Learn from your findings & use these to improve your work or future interventions.**

4. Review

- **Identify your desired outcomes and plan how you are going to deliver them.**
- **Think about how to measure your outcomes and identify the data you need and how to collect it.**

1. Plan

- **Analyse and make sense of the data you have collected about your impact.**
- **Make conclusions about your impact and compare your**

3. Assess

2. Do

- **Deliver the work you intend to deliver.**
- **Collect the data you need to measure the process, outcomes and impact.**

Source: Adapted from Inspiring Impact & New Philanthropy Capital, National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2022

The four steps described in the evaluation cycle can help you to be clearer about what you are trying to achieve and how you will evaluate your intervention.

The flow diagram presented next provides an overview of the actions that you should undertake in relation to carrying out an arts and creativity evaluation.

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[8] New Philanthropy Capital (NPC). The cycle of good impact practice. https://www.thinknpc.org/starting-to measure-your-impact/the-cycle-of-good-impact-practice/

Actions when carrying out an arts and creativity evaluation

Plan
1. Understand why you are undertaking an evaluation and who it is for (e.g. funders or your organisation)?
2. Map out who your stakeholders are (e.g., participants or service users, funders, organisations) and engage with them.
3. Are you undertaking this evaluation yourself, in partnership with others or is there an independent evaluator?
4. Identify what resources you require (e.g., staff, materials, location), budget, expectations of funders
5. What are the risks and mitigations for the project?
6. Create a Theory of change and identify the outcomes your project hopes to achieve.
7. Create an outcome indicator map and data collection plan to show how you are going to measure change, when to collect the data and what measurements you will use to do this.

Do
8. Create baseline data (pre-project) prior to commencement of the project with your data collection tools.
9. Deliver the arts/creativity sessions or workshops as intended.
10. Collect:
    - Monitoring data (e.g., how many participants, how many sessions) and
    - Process data (what is working in the project, do you have to revisit some aspects such as recruitment or retention) as you deliver your service.
11. Include stakeholders throughout this process and gather feedback.
12. Collect post -project data (e.g., surveys, monitoring forms, focus groups, interviews, observations, or creative methods) to measure change on outcomes and identify learning.

Assess
13. Bring all your data together to make sense of it (e.g., Excel, SPSS, NVivo, Word etc)
14. Analyse and interpret your data to see how successful the work of the project was, how well you delivered and what difference you made. You can do this by providing total numbers, percentages or comparing mean scores. You can also theme your qualitative feedback or discussions.
15. Highlight the impact of your work and compare your findings against previous projects, similar projects or against other data sources (e.g., making life better, Healthy Ireland indicators etc).

Review
16. Make recommendations from your findings and set out future actions
17. Communicate and share information and stories about your impact with others (e.g. infographics, dashboards, videos, and reports)
18. Learn from your findings and use these to improve your future planning, work or interventions.

3 Conclusion

3. Conclusion

This toolkit sets out the practical steps required to design, plan and conduct an evaluation of an of arts and creativity programme or intervention in a health context, and how to assess and report evaluation findings.

To complement this toolkit, an interactive online learning pathway has been developed by the Institute of Public Health and is accessible at https://learning.publichealth.ie/.

It is hoped that this practical guide will be useful to a wide range of organisations, by providing the tools required to measure the impact and difference organisations can make to improve public health outcomes for older people.

Arts & Creativity – Lessons for Healthy Ageing Quiz

START COURSE

4

References

4. References

1. McQuade L. and O'Sullivan R. (2021): Arts and Creativity in Later Life: Implications for Health and Wellbeing in Older Adults. A Systematic Evidence Review. Institute of Public Health. https://publichealth.ie/reports/arts-and-creativity-later-life-implications-health-and-wellbeing-older-adults-executive

2. Treasury H. The Magenta Book: HM Treasury guidance on what to consider when designing an evaluation. 2020. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-magenta-book

3. Friedman, M. Trying Hard Is Not Good Enough: How to Produce Measurable Improvements for Customers and Communities.

4. NCVO. Impact and Evaluation. Learn how to develop effective impact and evaluation practices in your organisation.2022. https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/strategy-and-impact/impact-evaluation/#/c

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7. Crealey, G. and O'Neill, C. (2021). A review of economic evaluation methodologies for the assessment of arts and creativity interventions for improving health and wellbeing in older adults. Institute of Public Health. https://publichealth.ie/reports/review-economic-evaluation-methodologies-assessment-arts-and-creativity-interventions

8. New Philanthropy Capital (NPC). The cycle of good impact practice. https://www.thinknpc.org/starting-to-measure-your-impact/the-cycle-of-good-impact-practice/

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