
Evaluation methods

Below is some brief information on evaluative methods and a useful question bank.

Personal meaning mapping

You can build this method into sessions by asking the group to respond to key words such as 'museum' before and after sessions (stressing that there are no right or wrong answers).

Focus group

Possible questions to ask young people to gauge reactions to sessions.

- If your friend said that they wanted to get involved in a similar project, what advice would you give them?
- What would you tell a friend about the project?

It's also good to ask the curators and other museum staff involved in other departments what they feel were the strengths and weaknesses of the project, and what they feel they got out of it.

Observation

- Record any agreements or disagreements between participants.
- Note down any significant words or phrases that they use.
- What are the themes that are emerging from their discussions?
- Try and record these observations in relation to the broad learning outcomes identified i.e. skills, enjoyment.

End of session/beginning of session

- This is a more informal way of collecting data.
- Use of post-it notes or as part of a group session, large piece of paper with various headings on it such as 'what I learnt/ found out today/ yesterday' – 'what did I enjoy most about today? Why?'

Questionnaires

- Keep to one side of paper.
- You can include open ended questions such as 'what did you enjoy most about project' for qualitative data or align questions with statements the person agrees most with such as 'definitely no', 'probably no', 'don't know', 'probably yes', 'definitely yes' for statistical data.

Focus group

- A great way to get group to talk in more detail about their feelings, perceptions, ideas and experiences of the project.
- Not more than two hours – provide refreshments and carry it out in a comfortable environment for the group.
- Use pictures/objects etc. to stimulate discussion/response.
- With permission – discussions can be recorded for discussion later.

Evaluation question bank

Participants

- Had you visited the museum before taking part in this project?
- Did you feel that your opinion was valued in the project?
- Were there any barriers to you taking part in the project?
- Do you think you will visit the museum more in the future because of the project?
- Would you recommend the museum's projects to a friend?
- Did you gain skills in any of these areas as a result of the project?

Museum staff

- When did you get involved in the project?
- Has the project affected the way you view the object?
- Do you think it is reasonable to think that under-represented groups can give new perspectives on the museum's collection?
- From your perspective, was the Talking Objects project a success?

Facilitator/practitioner

- Was it easy to engage the participants?
- Was the step by step methodology useful?
- Did you feel supported by museum staff?

Observers

- Was the group leader well prepared for the session?
- Was the activity appropriate for the participants present?
- Did the session value the ideas of the participants?