

The evaluation of cultural projects and processes

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1. Evaluation - a tool at the service of cultural projects and policies

Evaluation expresses, above all, the desire to improve cultural projects that are already underway or not yet started. It is as applicable to projects which have already finished and were successful as to those which resulted in more of a sense of failure. In that regard, we are not evaluating in order to reward or punish the teams of professionals implementing the projects, but to always improve those projects in the present or the future.

At the same time, the evaluation of cultural projects is currently raising interest in terms of carrying it out properly and questions about how to do this. Social sciences and professional experimentation have provided multiple answers that are both conceptual and instrumental. They are both combined herein.

Said conceptual contributions to professional practice can be applied to the management of cultural policies. The main aim, above and beyond academic perfection, is to develop a useful tool for our work, although the former also helps to improve it. Therefore, the evaluation of cultural programmes, projects, facilities and actions must know how to adapt to the needs of the work of the institutions, teams

and professionals, and not necessarily the reverse if the desire is for it to be effective.

Lastly, nowadays, it is widely accepted that the evaluation of a cultural project is essential for knowing whether we are working in the right direction or whether we need to modify some aspect of that project. In recent times, it has become too common for the subject of evaluation to be a source of worry for some and a laboratory exercise for others. Without leaning to one side (“culture cannot be evaluated precisely and any attempt to do so will not reflect the reality”) or the other (“absolutely everything is measurable using mathematical precision”), we should make the effort to find the equilibrium point which gives projects the most credibility. The more complex the situation, the more necessary it is to provide evidence of the evaluation process.

2. Let's talk definitions

Defining evaluation helps to give it one meaning or another.

There are two main perspectives in evaluation:

- Looking backwards
This evaluation is often associated with a valued revision based on the work done to date, i.e.

an assessment which basically highlights the achievements and failures. Using a battery of pre-fixed indicators, it is checked to what extent the results that we planned were or are being achieved. In short, it answers the questions: how did it all go? Did we achieve the desired results?

- **Looking forwards**

This evaluation is associated with a revision exercise that is basically aimed at improving the continuation, next editions or other future versions of the project. It answers the question: what has to be changed to make it better?

Technically, they both use same instruments and methodology but the sense and final intention may vary from one perspective to the other. The option being used herein is the second: this evaluation makes more sense given that it allows subsequent operations to be improved. In doing this, we will clearly have to review the work carried out.

A summary and more complete definition would be:

Evaluation is a systematic process through which one obtains the necessary information about the results, planned or otherwise, and the functioning of a cultural project. This is done in order to find out to what extent the objectives are being achieved and how the production is developing, thus enabling opportune decisions to be made to redirect the project via the modification of any of its aspects (ROSELLÓ, 2004).

3. The time to think about evaluation

In many planning schemes, the evaluation is placed at the end, as the closure of the project, or as a look back to contrast the diagnosis. However, it is preferable to place the evaluation throughout the scheme, in each of the phases, seeing as all of them can and should be evaluable. Therefore, the plan for evaluating the results should be proposed when the objectives are being defined, and the plan for evaluating the project's progress should be determined when defining the management elements: general planning, team training, communications plans, infrastructural requirements, budget, etc.

Planning the evaluation is not, therefore, just another phase of the project, instead it should be present transversally, in the majority of phases. We are thus dealing with a process that: starts at the design of each part of the project; is executed throughout the progress thereof; and is

complete once the project has finished with the execution of the aforementioned evaluation.

Consequentially, we will work on planning the evaluation of each chapter of our project's scheme, even though later we may group all aspects related to planning in a separate chapter.

4. Other terms used

There are other terms used as synonyms to evaluation and each one has its nuances and contributions:

- **Assessment:** a less committed term than evaluation, but used as a synonym.
- **Follow-up:** this refers more to the evaluation process than its results. It emphasises its continuous or permanent nature.
- **Supervision:** this can highlight the hierarchical nature of the evaluation process.
- **Control:** a generic term associated with evaluation.
- **Strategic control:** used more in the private sector. It indicates the checking or verification of a process, in order to correct any deviations.
- **Monitoring:** highlights the permanent nature of gathering and analysis of the data required to form the evaluation.
- **Report:** refers to the final document that features the evaluation results.

In a more exact sense, some authors consider that the diagnosis prior to the definition of a project is already in itself an evaluation of the situation in which we are preparing to intervene. Although this statement is correct in the formal sense and a lot of the methodology and instruments used can be the same, the sense is different: the diagnosis seeks to find out a situation in which we have not yet intervened in order to define a proposal for action. Evaluation, with the focus it is given herein, is a perspective of our interventions – first those in the past and then in view of the future.

5. Why evaluate a cultural project?

Let's identify a few reasons why we should evaluate.

- The main reason why we should evaluate a project, as we have already seen, is to improve it, either in terms of its current progress or in future editions: reorientation of objectives,

changes in content, strategy or activities, the provision of more resources, modification of the management and planning model, change of target audience, etc.

- It can also help to justify the need or suitability of a new push which may continue or complement the existing project proposals.
- This point tends to be less frequent, but why not add it? The results of an evaluation can help us to agree on the cancellation of the project if we detect that there is no reason for it to continue. When the proposed objectives have already been achieved, for example.
- Lastly, evaluation helps to make institutional decisions of an internal nature: a restructuring of the team, a professional recognition, a promotion, an award, an increase of resources; but also a punishment, a dismissal, a firing, a decrease of resources, etc.
- Outside of this reasoning, a project can be evaluated simply as a routine activity with administrative mechanics (it is evaluated and the document is filed) and does not have to have any repercussions.

6. Why do we NOT evaluate?

Just like there are reasons to carry out an evaluation, in practice there are also reasons not to do so. These tend not to be so explicit but they end up setting the facts in the teams and projects. To put it another way, if everyone recognises it as a key issue in the management of culture why do we find it so hard to evaluate our projects?

Let's look at some of the reasons:

- The ultimate reason for our project is the simple realisation of the activity (there is no project which goes further than this). Once it has been carried out, it is deemed that the project was properly developed. There are no other objectives; it is action for action's sake.
- Evaluation is neglected or deemed pointless. As there is seemingly nothing more urgent than the progress of the project, the evaluation is left for later, for 'when there's time'... but this time is never found.
- It is believed that establishing a rigorous process is unnecessary. All that is needed is our simple

perception. The team tends to fall into a state of complacency which defeats all critical spirit.

- The team looks for the perfect method to produce an absolutely reliable evaluation. They can become paralysed by their level of self-demand and never find the best way to evaluate, finally putting it aside.
- The team does not know the methodology of evaluation.
- The team is afraid of the results, especially when they must be presented to the public or to clients, sponsors, the media or the directors of the institution. They fear the consequences. The more information is shown, the more vulnerable they are to possible criticism.
- The team believes that the results of the evaluation, whatever they may be, will not affect the future of the project and will not lead to any substantial changes. The logic of the project is out of phase with its own evaluation. It is sometimes therefore seen as a waste of time.
- The team finds it difficult to establish direct causality between the interventions and results which may be due to other factors in the same context.
- Evaluation is seen as something that is outside the team, as something to be done by someone else or another agent.
- The team has a tendency to keep the information they have and they find it hard to present it in public.
- The process is seen as an evaluation of the team and not something that is for the team.
- The team's contacts (supervisors, clients, sponsors, etc.) do not value the efforts made in the evaluation and barely look at it.
- If no-one asks us for it... why do it?

The consequence of all these situations is, for one reason or another, the evaluation of a project ends up not being done or is not done with the necessary rigour.

7. The advantages of evaluating a cultural project

In closing this first part, we must be clear on the arguments in favour of evaluation. Therefore, even if no-one asks for it, recognises it or appreciates it, as professionals we must have the conviction that we are working correctly. To sum up, here are some of the arguments.

The evaluation of a project helps the team to:

- Redirect the purpose and application of the project in order to achieve the desired objectives and to optimise the resources used to do this.
- To improve future editions of the project.
- To generate new proposals for new projects or interventions.
- To innovate in projects so as to not always do the same things.
- To compare, with caution due to differences in contexts, various projects or interventions.
- To be able to demonstrate successes to third parties.
- To show a planning and evaluation method to new people in the team or in the profession.
- To appreciate and value, within the team, the work done and to display the obtained results, whether they are positive or negative.
- To generate, within the team, debate that goes beyond the elements of the action.
- To show the public the team's interest in results and to publish those results.
- To portray an image of seriousness and professionalism to third parties.
- To check the project and its reports in the future, identifying the causes of success and failure in our own projects and those of others.

8. What areas do we evaluate?

Once we have a clear conviction that we must always carry out a good evaluation of our actions, we can now look at how to do it. The first thing we must ask ourselves is: exactly what areas do we have to evaluate? To do this we need to refer to the scheme we used to create the project: the evaluation will take place in the different sections of that scheme.

These are:

Presentation

Brief Summary

I. Contextual Basis of the Project

1. Aims
2. Territorial Dynamic
3. Sectorial Dynamic
4. Fitting into the Context of Other Policies

5. Origin/Background
6. Internal Analysis of the Management Organisation

Diagnosis

II. Definition of the Project

7. Target Audience
8. Objectives and Planning of the Evaluation
9. Contents
10. Strategy Lines
11. Action
12. Management Models

III. Production of the Project

13. Planning of the Project
14. Organisational Structure and Human Resources
15. Communications Plan
16. Infrastructural and Technical Requirements
17. Administrative and Legal Aspects
18. Economic and Financial Management
19. Other Factors
20. Evaluation Process

Bibliography (if deemed necessary)

And from this we establish five areas of evaluation, with each one corresponding to a part of the scheme.

Area of the context

- We will evaluate the good diagnosis of the context. Was the project's starting point correct? This involves checking to what extent we did a good analysis of the situation in which the project was based and whether we did a good diagnosis. In no circumstances should this be an excuse to justify not having achieved the desired objectives. Doing an incorrect analysis of the context is as serious as executing the project incorrectly.

Area of the results or objectives

- We will evaluate the obtained results, measuring them using previously established quantitative and qualitative indicators. This indicates the project's effectiveness: have we achieved the objectives we set ourselves? This is undoubtedly the most important part of the evaluation, requiring the greatest focus of our efforts, time and energy. We will be measuring to what point

the desired objectives/results were achieved. This therefore justifies the correct way of developing or having developed the project and how to continue.

Area of the definition

- We will evaluate the other aspects that define a project in order to find out to what extent they were well established and if they fulfil their purpose of contributing to the achievement of the objectives. There is no universal and definitive list of evaluation indicators for the definition of the project.

Area of the process

- We will evaluate the functioning, based on the plans, of all the elements that form the project’s production or management process. This indicates the project efficiency in the event that the desired results are achieved.

Area of the impact

- Lastly, we will evaluate the project’s repercussions in the long term and on a large scale. Sometimes this is the observation of its contribution to a larger programme or plan. The impact evaluation generally has a political nature and we might not carry it out ourselves, as it could be done at a higher level within the institution or directly by an external client.

9. How do we evaluate?

In each case, we need to know what worked best and worst, and ask ourselves the reasons why it occurred thusly. Additionally, we will propose solutions for improvements, whether this is for an ongoing project or at the end of a project that may or may not continue.

To do this, we will use a complete set of tables which goes beyond the list of successes and failures. We can use this both for the evaluation of objectives or results and for the evaluation of the definition and process.

Positive aspects			
Element of the process/ result	Positive aspect	Reason	How to maintain it
...			
...			

Negative aspects			
Element of the process/ result	Negative aspect	Reason	How to maintain it
...			
...			

Let’s look at some examples:

Evaluation of objectives or results

Positive aspects			
Element of the process/ result	Positive aspect	Reason	How to maintain it
Objective 1:	Mostly achieved (80% of the desired result)	The team was well aware of the importance of achieving objective 1	Carry on motivating the team
...			

Negative aspects

Element of the process/ result	Negative aspect	Reason	How to maintain it
Objective 2:	Only a small part was achieved...	The public's reaction was not foreseen	Create conditions to gauge the public's reaction
...			

Evaluation of the process

Positive aspects

Element of the process/ result	Positive aspect	Reason	How to maintain it
Production	The deadlines were met	The supervisor was very strict in this aspect	Maintain the work levels and level of strictness
...			

Negative aspects

Element of the process/ result	Negative aspect	Reason	How to maintain it
The infrastructures	The technical apparatus did not always work well	Nobody knew how the technical apparatus worked	Hire an expert in the technical apparatus
...			

10. When is evaluation carried out?

The evaluation of a project takes place in all of its phases:

- Design/planning (before carrying it out)
- Execution (while it is taking place)
- Afterwards (when the project has finished)

Two complementary perspectives are used in this:

“Film”

This is constant evaluation throughout the project. It is continuous but not detailed evaluation. It is used to detect dysfunctions in the present, in order to keep track of the most important aspect, i.e. the overall result. Due to its immediacy and rapidity, it provides results that are not very detailed but very current. It occurs through regular, quick meetings in which the team gives a general recap of the project. Above all, it evaluates the production process and small, immediate results. It enables on-the-spot decision-making to redirect the progress of the project. It is based on perceptions but also on the indicator values that can be measured at the time.

“Photo”

This is evaluation that is carried out periodically at various, specific moments of the project and especially at the end. It is a more detailed evaluation of a fixed moment which is in the past. It is used for the detection of successes and errors so that the project can be redirected, if necessary, or to start thinking about the next edition. The most important aspect is the specific state of the project at a given moment. It obtains detailed and in-depth results but they are out-of-sync as the project is still ongoing or has finished. It takes place via reports or specific meetings on an assessment of the project status, using precise instruments and data. It evaluates the overall project, including all its phases.

These two types of evaluation are complementary to each other, providing the best of each aspect and that which is not provided by the other. The longer the project goes on for, the more justified the use of both systems.

In each case, the evaluation must be scheduled into the working calendar of the management team. If this is not done at the beginning, it is difficult to think about once the team has begun working. In some cases, the cost of the evaluation phase has to be factored into the budget (external experts, the ordering of reports, etc.).

11. Who does the evaluation?

Similarly to the previous section, there are two possibilities here that can also be complementary.

Internal evaluation

This is done by the team itself “from within” the project. It is carried out by the same people who designed and manage the project. This has the advantage of them knowing a lot about it but the disadvantage of it being harder to be objective, especially if they are deeply invested in it.

Generally speaking, it is preferable for the entire team to be involved in the evaluation, so that everybody understands that it is a team responsibility and everyone’s job. This also means that each person can and should accept their part of the successes and failures.

External evaluation

This is done by an agent outside of the team and it occurs “from outside” of the project. If it is done by someone with no hierarchic relationship to the team, it becomes more like support or consultancy. If it is done by someone from a higher hierarchic level, it becomes more like control/supervision. It has the advantage of being more objective as it comes from a point of view that is less invested in the project and in the effects of the results, but the disadvantage is that the evaluator will not know as much about the project.

12. General methods of evaluation

Very generally speaking, there are four types of evaluation and in cultural management we will essentially work with two of them, although the other two can always be of help in specific moments and situations. Let’s have a look at them:

Experimental evaluation

- This is based on the comparison between an unaffected situation and different situations in which some sort of intervention was made. It is the most appropriate method for scientific tests in which one can control all the variables and modify or isolate a single one of them. In cultural project this tends not to be very useful for evaluations in the short term. It can help in observations in the long term when, in a certain situation, work is being carried out on a model which is different from the rest. This is the case of pilot projects. It obliges the team to be well aware of the influence

of all the existing contextual factors. Example: a management model is applied to three cultural facilities in the city but not to the other one. The result of the three is compared to the unaffected project over time.

Reflexive evaluation (also known as ante-post)

- This is based on the comparison between the ‘before’ and ‘after’ of an intervention. This is the most commonly used method in cultural policies and management, given that the analysis of the context is done twice, using the same methods for analysing the situation, if possible. The first evaluation helps to set the objectives and the second is used for checking whether they were achieved. This method allows us to monitor the evolution of a project over time, year after year, for instance. Example: we follow the track record of a festival over the last five years. We then evaluate its behaviour in the sixth year using the same indicators as before, if possible.

Transversal evaluation

- This is based on the comparison of situations in which similar interventions took place. This method is used to compare different projects or different parts of the same project. Instinctively, we do this very often. The aim is to give it a more structured dimension with elements that can be compared, bearing in mind that each situation is different. It is therefore a system in which everything is always relative. Even considering this factor, it can give indications of a dysfunction in a certain project. Example: we evaluate the tour of an artistic group in various cities of the country. We cannot always use the same indicators because each situation (city, venue, time, agents, etc.) is different.

Evaluation of opinion

- This is based on experts’ opinions, without having to find specific comparative data. This is the least concise of the methods but it is often quicker, easier and cheaper to apply. Even if it is always present, this method can be a good complement to the others but it must not be

the only one available. It helps to give an initial, momentary impression of how the project is going or of its final result. It sometimes lets us know what the figures aren't telling us. It is almost indispensable in highly qualitative or subjective evaluations. Expert opinions can be very significant in projects. Example: we want to evaluate the quality of a work of art displayed in an exhibition for local artists.

None of the methods are exclusive. It is usually beneficial to use a combination of the various methods as they mutually enrich and complement each other.

13. Indicators - the tools of evaluation

Evaluation requires certain instruments which we call indicators. These help us to measure and find out, both throughout the project and when it ends, the detailed situation of the project, the results obtained in comparison to those expected, and the application of the production or management phases.

There is no universal and definitive list of valid indicators for the evaluation of all projects. If each project has its own objectives, it must have its own evaluation indicators. Each team must establish the evaluation indicators which are most suitable for measuring the success of their project. However, some indicators of results and, above all, processes (number of attendees, deviation from budget or media impact, to give a few examples) can usually be found in many projects. In many cases, the team must create new indicators which give precise information about their particular project.

An evaluation indicator informs us of a situation or a result. If it is not contrasted with a value of reference, it is a simple piece of data without much purpose. By comparing it with a known value (with that of the previous year or another project, for example) it provides us with information about the project's progress. The team must then analyse the reasons behind any changes they observed. The result obtained from the sum of the indicators then helps to make decisions - a single indicator will rarely allow us to properly evaluate a project. This is because the sum of various indicators offers us the possibility of measuring the attainment of all the objectives and this, in turn, will lead to the confirmation of whether or not or to what extent the project (i.e. its objectives) was a success.

Example:

- The diagnosis indicates that last year an average of 350 catalogues were sold in each exhibition.

- The current objective is to "increase the average number of catalogues sold in each exhibition to 400."
- The evaluation indicator will be: "the average number of catalogues sold in each exhibition." The application conditions will be similar to the following: within a given period of time, not including gifted copies, including internet sales, not including returned and lost copies, etc.
- The result obtained will give a sense of how close we are to selling 400 copies. A margin of $\pm 10\%$ can be included so that if the number sold is between 360 and 440, the objective can be considered achieved. If it is well below that figure, it will be deemed a failure: the objective was not achieved. The reasons for this will have to be sought. If the figure is well over this, it will be seen as a spectacular success... but then the following question will have to be asked: why did we not predict a bigger result?

Depending on the contents of the evaluation, there are different indicators in the different areas into which the project is organised, as explained above. Shown below are just a few of the possibilities.

Area of the context

These measure the setting in which the project takes place and how said setting evolves. There will be indicators which help to find out about the territory, the sector, the policies, etc. These enable a project diagnosis to be carried out (see the context or diagnosis section in the Design of Cultural Projects chapter).

Example: the number of libraries in a town (for a project to encourage reading).

More specifically, the evaluation can go ahead if we know how:

- To properly present, justify, debate and document the objective(s).
- To properly analyse the territorial context in which the project takes place.
- To fully understand the cultural sector on which the project is based.
- To detect the existing policies which could provide context and coverage.
- To identify the background and references,

The definition of the indicators will depend on the objectives of each project. They measure whether or not or to what extent the proposed objectives or desired results were obtained.

whether these are the same as or different to those used as inspiration or support.

- To properly analyse the strengths and weaknesses of our organisation or work team.
- To know a lot about the public audience (if they are considered part of the context).

Area of the results or objectives

These are impossible to generalise. The definition of the indicators will depend on the objectives of each project. They measure whether or not or to what extent the proposed objectives or desired results were obtained.

Example: the number of new membership cards registered in local libraries during the time in which a reading encouragement project was running (assuming that increasing the number of library members was an objective).

Area of the definition

These measure to what extent the definition elements (i.e. target audience, content, strategies, actions and management model) of the project, aside from the objectives, were well established and if they fulfilled their purpose of contributing to the achievement of the objectives. Shown below are some of the most commonly used ones, based on the different chapters which form the definition of the project.

Example: involving neighbourhood associations in a project (as a strategy) has helped to achieve the objectives of a reading encouragement project. Without these associations, the objectives would have been impossible to attain.

In general and in terms of evaluation indicators regarding the choice of target audience, we ask ourselves:

- Was the chosen group the most suitable for achieving the objectives? Did we know much about it?
- Could we act homogeneously towards the whole group? If not, what aspects of the group were too heterogeneous (age, background, level of interest, etc.)?
- How did the target audience respond to our proposals? Who responded and was their response better or worse?
- Was there concordance between the target audience and the objectives?
- Did the interaction between groups (if any) work well?
- Would it also have worked on another group?
- Which other target group would be preferable next time?
- Was the target group the most appropriate for our type of organisation?
- Was the target group the most appropriate for our resources?

Evaluation indicators of the project's contents

- Was the chosen content the most suitable for achieving the objectives? If not, what other contents would enable us to achieve them?
- Was the content appropriate for the target group?
- Was the content suited to our identity and our type of organisation?

Evaluation indicators of the project strategies or methodology

- Were the chosen strategies the most suitable for achieving the objectives? If not, what other strategies would enable us to achieve the objectives?
- Were the strategies appropriate for the target group?
- Were the strategies suited to the identity of our organisation?
- Were the strategies suited to our resources?

Evaluation indicators of the project's actions

- Were the actions the most suitable for achieving the objectives? If not, what other actions or types of action would enable us to achieve the objectives?
- Were the actions appropriate for the target group?
- Were the actions suited to the identity of our organisation?
- Were the actions suited to our resources?
- The Actions/Activities chapter also assesses the development of the following.
- Were the actions carried out according to the planned criteria?
- Did any aspect of the actions need to be changed? If yes, was the reaction correct?

Evaluation indicators of the management model of a project

- Was the chosen management model the most suitable for achieving the objectives? If not, what other management model would enable us to achieve the objectives?
- How did each of the agents involved work/respond? Did they comply with the established plans and agreements?
- Was the management model suited to the identity of our organisation?
- Was the management model suited to our resources?
- Did all the agents feel comfortable with their responsibility in this management model?

Area of the process

These measure the rational use of the resources used to achieve the objectives.

Example: the correct functioning of the infrastructural resources employed in the project. It is a supposition that if the resources fulfil their function, the project will progress more efficiently and therefore the objectives will be attained more easily.

This section does not have a single list of indicators either, but shown below are some of the most common ones, ordered in chapters of the production. In terms of evaluation indicators of the production planning, we are especially interested in finding out:

- Were the work deadlines met? Why?
- Were the tasks well defined?

- Were they well timed and sequenced (i.e. their duration and place in the schedule)?
- Were the tasks appropriately assigned to persons and teams?
- Could this have been done in another way?
- Did unforeseen tasks have to be resolved? Why? Were they resolved well?
- Was the meeting of deadlines well monitored?
- Did the team know how to handle the possible deviations from the schedule?
- Proposed improvements for future occasions.

Evaluation indicators of human resources

- Was the work team well defined (number of persons, training, profiles, duties, etc.)?
- Did the coordination work well? What was better and what was worse?
- Was the attainment and circulation of information, the decision-making and the implementation of decisions correct?
- Did the relations and coordination with other institutions and teams function well?
- Were conflicts and disagreements resolved?
- Could this have been done in another way?
- Proposed improvements for future occasions.
- Evaluation indicators of the communications plan
- Did the communications/diffusion enable the success of the activities? Were the objectives achieved in consequence?
- Was the target audience the most suitable?
- Was the plan coherent with the principles of the institution?
- Did the message, channels, supports, instruments, quantities, locations and costs, etc. function well?
- Did the sponsorship plan (if any) function well?
- Could another type of communication been used to get better results?
- Proposed improvements for future occasions.

Evaluation indicators of infrastructures and of logistical and administrative requirements

- Did these work in favour of the activity? What was better and what was worse?
- Were the incidents resolved correctly?
- Proposed improvements for future occasions.

Evaluation indicators of the economic and financial management (this chapter may be viewed separately as an economics report).

- Did the budget follow the planned income and expenditure? Why? Did the team know how to react to detected budget deviations?
- Did the financing/treasury plan function well?
- Proposed improvements for future occasions.

Area of the impact

These measure long-term achievements. They may not be measured by the team itself but instead by a supervisor with a wider perspective of the whole or the timeframe.

Example: a gradual, year by year increase in reading levels in the town. This is measured with surveys on cultural habits and can be cross-referenced with data on library usage, bookshop sales, etc.

Different projects and their objectives may require:

- Quantitative indicators: measurements, registers, etc. These provide precise data which we can use to classify, tabulate and compare, etc. They are unique, undisputable and shared with everybody.

Examples: the number of tickets sold for a concert, the people who attended a circus show in the street, the documents consulted in a local cultural archive, the hits on a website, etc.

- Qualitative indicators: observations, expert opinions, etc. These provide personal perspectives which can sometimes contradict one another but which help us to see aspects that the figures do not always indicate.

Examples: criticism in the media of a certain project, the experts' opinions of the works displayed in a biannual exhibition, the stance of cultural entities on a cultural proposal, etc.

Like many other times, the combined use of quantitative and qualitative indicators helps us to get a much more solid and complete idea of the results.

14. Indicator characteristics

The characteristics of evaluation indicators must be very particular for them to be truly useful to the team (especially the qualitative ones). In many cases we can simply rely on the usual indicators and at other times they must be specifically designed for the project. Whatever else they may be, indicators must be:

- Linked to the specific objectives and contents of the project.
Indicators depend on the objectives, whether this is a direct relation (each objective has its corresponding evaluation indicators) or whether this is related to the whole (the group of objectives corresponds to the set of indicators), as applicable.
- Up-to-date.
Indicators must be regularly updated due to changes in the context, objectives, team, instruments and the evaluation possibilities.
- Fixed prior to the start of the project's production (i.e. those for the process) or its realisation (those of the results).
In order to be objective and honest, the indicators must help us to carry out the evaluation and not the reverse: i.e. do not create the most convenient indicators based on the observed results... this will surely wrongly define the success of our actions. Avoid the creation of "made-to-measure" indicators, which give a false sense of success, when the project has ended: this means we will always find a reason to believe that the project went well.
- Objective, neutral and non-interpretible.
The entire team must share the notion of what needs to be measured and how to do this, without subsequent interpretations which do nothing but justify the reason for not achieving an objective or an aspect of production that went poorly. To do this, it is advisable to debate the indicators within the team and to not prematurely consider them as understood, thus generating confused reports. The question we must ask is: are we sure that the measurement of these indicators will enable us to find out whether we actually achieved the objective?
- Easily measurable.
We must be able to check the indicator as easily as possible so that it is useful to the team. Indicators that are very interesting and exciting but hard to measure are not especially useful.

- Accessible based on our resources.
Like the previous point, if the measurement of certain evaluation indicators is conceptually very simple but extremely costly or complex due to the means at our disposal, then it becomes impossible to produce any real products.
- Reliable or trustworthy.
Indicators must give the same result when they are measured more than once in the same context and project. In any case, any change in the indicator must correspond to a change in the variable being measured.
- Sensitive to small changes in context.
In culture, we often work with small developments in the habits of people in the entire population. An indicator must therefore be capable of detecting these possible minimal changes.
- Long-lasting.
Indicators must be comparable within the same project over time so as to observe their evolution, especially when working over the long term.
- Comparable with those of other projects.
As far as possible, it is advisable for indicators to have a universal nature which enables us to compare one project to another (with all due caution due to the different realities in terms of context).
- Provable by third parties.
In order to guarantee their objectivity, it is essential for indicators, in terms of their attainment and registration, to be provable by agents outside of the project who can attest their authenticity at any given time.

The SMART system

There is a simplified version of the aforementioned criteria that can be applied to objectives and therefore to the evaluation indicators. It is identified by the acronym SMART:

- Specific: clear, concrete and detailed.
- Measurable: quantifiable.
- Agreed to: with consensus and accepted.

- Realistic: possible, attainable.
- Time constrained: limited or fenced in by time.

Some authors define the “A” as Achievable or Attainable.

15. Instruments for obtaining information

Often, the difficulty of evaluation lies not in setting an indicator but in finding the way to measure it and in obtaining a value for it. Social science provides us with a number of instruments which, when well developed, can help us to obtain information and opinions. These are a few of them:

- Registers: censuses, existing statistics, minutes of meetings, internal work documents, etc.
These are documents which show concrete data and information that is useful for evaluation. They may be generated by the team itself or by other agents (public institutions, research foundations, etc.). They help us to obtain both quantitative and qualitative information. Often, these registers help us, at the appropriate time, to establish the project diagnosis.

- Advantages: they are easy to obtain, they usually contain a lot of information and they are reliable.

- Disadvantages: they are incomplete and they do not always contain the information we are interested in.

- Measurements: the counting of people, ticket stubs from sales, economic income and expenses, etc.

These are the result of methods which are usually applied by the team itself to obtain very precise quantitative information. They can be defined before the operation takes place.

- Advantages: they are very precise, they measure exactly what we are interested in and they are long-lasting, etc.

- Disadvantages: there are few disadvantages apart from the need for qualitative systems to understand them better. They usually take time and staff to gather them.

- Surveys: of opinions, habits, etc.
These are a good method for finding out the opinions of people in general and participants in our project in particular. They are carried out using technical sampling techniques or are applied to all users if the figure is manageable. It is important to know how to design a good survey in terms of topics, concepts, questions, response options, etc. There is an entire survey design technique that is worth rigorously following. They can be used to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data.
 - Advantages: they are the best way to obtain information and opinions from people, they are long-lasting and comparable, etc.
 - Disadvantages: they involve a complex technique which can be costly if not properly controlled, it is advisable to outsource them to professionals. They are not always applicable to our target audience, which may be reticent and provide misleading answers.
- Personal interviews:
These constitute a highly valuable qualitative method due to the quality of information that is obtained. They are based on the opinions of randomly selected people or people selected due to their perspective of the subject in question. The interviewer must be rigorous in the interview so as not to condition the opinions or waste useful information. There is an entire technique for conducting a good personal interview. Sometimes, interviews can be a good complement to surveys and other quantitative measurements.
 - Advantages: they produce information and nuances about data that other systems do not provide. It is a system that gives qualified opinions, it is low cost and does not require much time.
 - Disadvantages: the results are not very objective, they are difficult to generalise and compare. The interviewer must have a good interview technique.

- Group interviews:
These are a method for finding out opinions, positioning, information, etc. within a community. They are based on the random selection, with controlled variables, of a small group of people. Halfway between an interview, due to its dynamics, and a survey, due to its sampling mechanics, it is a quantitative method that consists of extracting information from a group that represents a community. They require a very good control of interview techniques.
 - Advantages: they are useful for obtaining information, especially qualitative data, that other methods do not produce.
 - Disadvantages: it is difficult to control the interviews, they are costly if done by professionals and the obtained information is not very objective or quantified.
- Observation:
This is a simple method to carry out but it is complex to analyse if one does not know how. It depends a lot on the observer's capacity for perception and their point of view. It is usually used as a complement to all the previous methods. It helps to understand situations which are only comprehensible via direct observation.
 - Advantages: it is simple to apply, it provides a lot of information and it is low cost.
 - Disadvantages: it is complicated to analyse that which was observed, it is difficult to generalise and quantify, and it potentially requires a lot of time.

16. Phases of evaluation

The evaluation of results, processes as well as other aspects, takes place over time in stages that must be followed to their conclusion. These stages are:

- Design phase: this is the time to decide on the suitability and the type of evaluation - its methodology, instruments (indicators and others), the schedule, the agents who will carry it out, etc.
- Descriptive phase: this consists of the gathering, ordering and systemisation of the information

about the planned aspects and also unforeseen events. It is carried out using the techniques and instruments designed in the previous phase.

- Comparative or valuation phase: this is the analysis and comparison of the data obtained in the descriptive phase and contrasting it with the values expressed in the design of the project. The aim is to find out to what point the expected or desired results were obtained (as pre-established in the objectives) and to look at other evaluable aspects.
- Process phase: having found out and valued the results obtained in the project, the aim now is to study the causes of those results and any observed changes, both whether these were failures (unachieved objectives or failed processes) or successes (positive objectives or processes). At this point, we are asking ourselves why these results occurred.
- Diffusion phase: if necessary, it is usually advisable to report the evaluation results to the team, to our superiors, to other agents or spokespersons or to the public. This may be done with anything from an internal technical report to a published and advertised paper.
- Decision-making phase: if necessary and above all in cases of projects that are still active or in successive editions, the evaluation results serve much more of a purpose if they help us to make some changes to the general direction of the project or to its operation mechanics.

17. Working method and final examples

To summarise and provide some more examples, shown below are 3 examples of varying complexity that share a common thread.

- The evaluation of results always stems from the pre-established objectives and the evaluation of a process always stems from the production design in the project's general scheme (see the scheme in section 8 of this document).
- The design of objectives or the production involves the definition of certain desirable values for the various variables that are being worked with. In the case of objectives, these are called results and they are usually numeric. In the case

of the production or process, they are shared standards that illustrate the good functionality of all aspects of the project.

- Defined below is a working method and a few instruments which will enable us to find out the new reality that came about due to our intervention. Numerous information gathering tools are used: documental research, observation, registers, surveys, questionnaires, interviews, meetings, group discussion, the writing of reports, etc.
- Having obtained the values of each variable (results or process), they are contrasted with the desired value and/or general standards. We thus obtain a ratio between the desired result and the one obtained.
- At the same time, we carry out a deliberation and look at the relative importance of each indicator compared to the others. Some will be more decisive and others less so.

Example 1 (quantitative indicator):

This is one of the simplest cases: quantitative objectives that are easy to measure and evaluate with a single indicator.

- Objective: to gain a 10% increase in attendance in a theatre festival compared to the previous year in which there were 1000 people. This figure comes from the diagnosis we carried out for our project.
- General method: a comparison between the 'before' (last year's result) and the 'after' (this year's festival).
- Indicator: number of spectators this year compared to those of last year.
- Desired value of the indicator: 1100 people (minimum).
- Instrument: counting the sales of tickets and invitations.
- Obtained value: 1200 people.
- Ratio: 1200 compared to 1000 is an increase of 20%. We have achieved and surpassed the objective.

Example 2 (qualitative indicator):

This is a case in which we need a qualitative evaluation as it is impossible to measure numerically.

- Objective: to increase the quality of the works exhibited in a visual artists' exhibition, as compared to those exhibited last year.
- General method: consult experts in the visual arts sector to find out their opinion. These are people who visited the exhibition last year and gave their opinion, which was somewhat unfavourable towards the quality of the art.
- Indicator: the opinion that the quality has improved in the sector.
- Desired value of the indicator: a favourable opinion of the art exhibition, considering it better than that of last year, in terms of the quality of the works.
- Instruments: interviews with experts, the opinion of the media, the positioning of art-based entities, the opinion expressed by the public in surveys, etc.
- Obtained value: favourable opinions, critiques and impressions.
- Ratio/result: the general opinion is positive, the quality of the artistic works is better than that of last year. We achieved our objective.

Example 3 (complex objective - complementary indicators):

This concerns a complex objective which is not measurable with just one indicator.

- Objective: to gain participation from cultural entities in the organisation of the town's celebrations.
- General method: a complementary combination of various indicators measurable both during and at the end of the process.
- Indicators: there is no single indicator which can measure the concept of participation but the combined sum of numerous indicators can guide us towards the detection of the project's success or failure.
- Desired value: different values will be applied depending on the indicator. In all cases, the desired and obtained values must involve a measurement of the success of the objective. The values can be compared with those of the two previous years of the same project and with values from other similar situations.
- Instruments: multiple instruments to measure the value of each indicator.
- Obtained values: those of each indicator after they have been measured with the instruments we have provided.
- Ratio/result: obtained values that are equal or better in comparison with those expected or desired. Generally speaking, we achieved our objective.

Indicators	Desired values	Instruments
Total no. of entities involved	22 out of 37	Minutes of meetings
Attendance of meetings	75% of the meetings	Minutes of meetings
Continued representation	80% compared the previous meeting	Minutes of meetings
Contribution to activities	3 proposals minimum	Minutes + observation
Responsibility for activities	Minimum 1 activity/entity	Programme
Cooperation in activities	5 in total from the programme	Programme
Debate to make agreements	90% in agreement	Observation
Collective decision-making	The 5 most important	Minutes + observation
Level of satisfaction of the entities	80% of the entities	Report + observation