Information sheet

Self evaluation and Grants for the Arts

Contents

Grants for the Arts

1   Grants for the Arts

Grants for the Arts (GFTA) is our Lottery-funded grant programme for individuals, arts organisations and other people who use the arts in their work. Grants are available for activities carried out over a set period and which engage people in England in arts activities and help artists and arts organisations in England carry out their work.

Activities we support must be clearly related to the arts and must be project-based, up to a maximum of three years in length. Grants normally range from £1,000 to £100,000 and we can fund up to 90 per cent of the cost of an activity.

All applicants must also read the '[How to apply guidance](#)'. Download it from our website or contact us for a copy.

2   Self evaluation and Grants for the Arts

Evaluation is a valuable tool for learning and involves critical analysis of your activities. Applicants will be asked to tell us how they plan to evaluate the project, and must evaluate their work at the end of the activity.

Evaluation involves gathering evidence before, during and after an activity and using it to make judgements about what happened. The evidence should prove what happened and why, and what effect it had. The evaluation should help you to improve what you are doing during the activity and inform what you do next time.

3   Evaluation helps artists and arts organisations

Artists and arts organisations should make evaluative judgements about their work. There are clear benefits to you if you evaluate your work.
- evaluation helps with planning, as it makes you think about what you're aiming to do, how you will do it and how you will know if you've succeeded
- ongoing feedback keeps you on track and helps to avoid disasters
- evaluation helps you to adapt/change as you go along
- evaluation is a good way of dealing with 'quality assurance' – you're keeping an eye on things to make sure quality is maintained

- evaluation helps prove the value of what you are doing
- evaluation records your contribution to the field you are working in
- your evaluation can help others working in the same field
- information you collect can also be used for reporting back to those with an interest in the activity (e.g. participants, funders) and telling others about what you've done
- the evidence you collect can support future funding applications

4   Evaluation helps us

If, as artists and arts organisations, you evaluate your work and share the results, it helps others to contextualise their work, develop new ideas and learn from what you did. For this reason, being honest about the results of your evaluation is essential. The participants and funders of your work, and other artists and arts organisations, need to trust your evaluation: it should be honest and explain problems and things which weren't as successful, as well as showing what the activity achieved.

5   What sort of evaluation?

Evaluation takes time and resources, and you cannot evaluate all activities in the same way and in the same depth. Evaluation can be more or less formal, and more or less detailed, to suit your purpose. Evaluating process is as important as evaluating product: your evaluation should explore the quality and impact of both.

The way you approach evaluation will depend on the type of project or activity you are doing, and whether you are an individual or an organisation. For example:

- if you are an artist working on the research and development of an artistic idea or a new way of working, your evaluation may involve just you. It could involve others too, such as artists who are working with you on the activity or people outside the activity who are giving you feedback on your work. You will be making artistic judgements about process, materials, form and content. You will also be making judgements about the results of what you did and what you have produced

Grants for the Arts

- if you are an arts organisation developing an artistic idea, your evaluation will possibly include artists, directors and other project staff. It will involve artistic judgements and perhaps an assessment of the impact on your organisation and its audience

- if you are an arts organisation running a participatory activity, your evaluation will include project staff, including artists and those participating in the activity, whether they are young people, schoolteachers, adults or other individuals or groups

- if you are working in partnership with other people, they should always have the chance to say how they feel about a activity through the evaluation. This applies to everyone, from funders through to participants in a community project.

6   Planning the evaluation

You should start thinking about evaluation at the planning stage of a project. The main focus of your evaluation will be the planned outcomes (your aims, objectives and targets) and whether they were achieved. You should also build in checks to ensure that unplanned outcomes are not missed.

You can organise an evaluation yourself or you can ask someone else to do it for you. Either way you need to include it in your budget, as whoever does the evaluation will need to be paid for their time.

The things you need to consider when planning an evaluation include the following:

- What kinds of information or evidence you are going to include in your evaluation – e.g. what people say, what they have done (process and finished work), what you have done, how an audience has responded?

- What questions you are going to ask?

- How you plan to answer those questions – this is really about what sort of information you need to answer the questions and how you will collect it. Do you need numbers (e.g. 50 people attended 20 workshops) or information

Grants for the Arts

with more depth? Useful evaluation usually combines both types of information

- When you should collect the information. As a minimum you need to collect information at the end of your activity but if you can ask questions at the beginning of the activity, you will have a 'before' picture against which you can look at the 'after' picture to assess change.

- How you will collect the information? You may already have some of the information you need, perhaps from previous evaluations or findings from market research. There are many different ways of collecting information. e.g. – keeping a register, asking people in a questionnaire, asking them to video their thoughts about a project, keeping a diary, taking photographs, etc..

- How you are going to make sense of the information you have collected?

- How you are going to present the results of the evaluation?

- Who you are going to share it with and how?

Moriarty (2002) reminds us that 'self-evaluation is hard work and time-consuming. The reward is that it can give us the ability to do things beyond the best of our present available knowledge'.

7   Further Information

Our website provides information on a comprehensive [evaluation framework](#)

7.1   Other guides and resources

- Ellis, J (2004). Practical monitoring and evaluation: a guide for voluntary organisations. London: Charities' Evaluation Service. A comprehensive guide to monitoring and evaluation aimed at small and medium-sized voluntary organisations. You can buy the full guide (Basic, Advanced and Toolkit) or the shorter basic set (Basic and Toolkit) from Charities Evaluation Services, 4 Coldbath Square, London EC1R 5HL. The website

Grants for the Arts

has other downloadable guides to self-evaluation, including Cupitt, S and Ellis, J (2003), Your project and its outcomes. London: Charities Evaluation Services and Community Fund. First steps to monitoring and evaluation is also useful. Go to http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/ and click 'about monitoring & evaluation'.

- Ball, L (2004). The artist's development toolkit. An interactive resource, athttp://www.itool.co.uk/Interactive/artdev/register.php. This toolkit provides self-reflective material for artists and for art and design students. It aims to help users to review their achievements and explore ways in which they can develop themselves and their practice.

- Moriarty, G (2002). Sharing practice: a guide to self-evaluation in the context of social exclusion. London: Arts Council of England. This guide focuses on processes which can be used by arts organisations, individual practitioners and participants to reflect on and develop their practice. It also discusses why self-evaluation is important for all artists and arts organisations. Available at http://www.takingpartinthearts.com/, News, July 2003.

- Arts Victoria (2002). Evaluating Community Arts and Community Well Being. Available atwww.arts.vic.gov.au. This guide presents a complete approach to evaluating community arts work, using a framework based on process, impact and outcomes. It has practical guidance on planning, conducting and presenting an evaluation. There are lots of sample tools, such as sample evaluation indicators, a focus group outline, a sample participant questionnaire and project journal guidelines.

- Walker et al (2000). Prove it: measuring the effect of neighbourhood renewal on local people. London: Groundwork, New Economic Foundation and Barclays PLC. This guide describes how to measure the effect of community projects on local people, on the relationships between them and on their quality of life. Explains how to involve local people in setting targets and gathering information. Can be downloaded at www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources/202/

- UK Evaluation Society's website has many online evaluation resources: www.evaluation.org.uk

6

- There is some useful generic what is evaluation and why is it important on the Funding Central website: www.fundingcentral.org.uk

- CultureHive is a free resource to help you discover and share best practice in cultural marketing. The website features evaluation case studies, toolkits and research articles: http://culturehive.co.uk/

8   Contact us

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