



Appendix: Evaluating a Creative Climate Project

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Evaluation is different from project monitoring. Whereas monitoring is a way of merely recording if outputs are delivered, evaluation is a more meaningful way of learning from the project and focuses on the desired impacts or outcomes as well as the events, workshops or ‘things’ that are delivered. Evaluation should also recognise and explore unforeseen outputs and outcomes, both good and bad, as well as changes to the planned process and additional or reduced inputs.

In general, evaluation should explore a number of elements:

- the **outcomes** of the project: the desired changes that should result from the project, which are related to the overall challenge being addressed;
- the **outputs** of a project: the things that are done or created in the course of the work, which may be physical or practical (such as a workshop);
- The **process** of the project: how the outputs and outcomes are achieved;
- And the **inputs**: what was needed and invested to make the project happen.

As Creative Climate projects are a new area of work for most people involved, evaluation can help in many ways:

- Evaluation during the project (*formative evaluation*) can help make sure it is on track and make it better where new opportunities or flaws in the programme are spotted.
- Using end-of-project (*summative*) evaluation, project partners can review and learn from their own experience to improve future projects.
- Outcomes and outputs can be reported clearly to participants and stakeholders.
- Reports to funders and other stakeholders can evidence the benefits of the project, and future funding applications can be backed up with evidence of results and learning.

¹ <https://www.creativecarbonscotland.com/>

- The process employed can be analysed and reported to parties during the project, making it more transparent and perhaps increasing engagement and support
- The inputs can be clearly tracked, to improve budgeting and resource allocation both during the project and at the end, aiding planning of future projects.

Designing the evaluation

Evaluation should be designed at the very beginning of the project. Although it may seem premature, discussing what impact the project seeks to achieve at this stage enables the development of a practical evaluation plan. These questions may guide this initial discussion:

- **Who needs to understand the impact of this project?** Is it exclusively the project partners and Creative Ireland? Or are there other funders, strategic partners, colleagues, participants, institutions, or other individuals who need to know what happened? Having this audience in mind will help you identify their priorities, and the best way to present the information.
- **What form of evaluation is needed?** Quantitative evaluation records the numbers of people involved or activities delivered. This is often most relevant to inputs and outputs. Qualitative evaluation asks more questions about the nature of what has happened and has been achieved: people's perceptions of it, the depth of engagement etc. This will explore the outcomes and the process of the project more clearly.
- **What indicators or milestones might suggest that the impact will be reached?** Such indicators can show that progress is being made; not passing a milestone may indicate that the project has changed direction, or that it is going more slowly than anticipated. The organisation or partners can then review the action plan to realign the project or adapt the plan to match the unforeseen opportunity.

Methods of Assessment

For each indicator you have identified as indicative of change, select a method of assessment which will enable you to evidence whether the change has occurred (and to what extent). These can include both formal and informal approaches and can be implemented over the course of the project to track progress (*formative*) as well as on reflection at the end of the project (*summative*).

Potential methods of assessment include:

- **Surveys:** a survey may be conducted by people filling in a questionnaire on paper or online, or an interviewer asking people the same questions.
- **Interviews:** these may be structured, when the interviewer follows a specific script, or loosely- or un-structured, when the conversation allows the interviewee and interviewer



to follow the organic development of the conversation. The latter allows for more unforeseen topics to be discussed, whilst a structured interview may gather more detail about particular elements of the project.

- **Focus groups:** these are when a group of people discusses a topic under the guidance of a facilitator. The aim here is that the knowledge gained is that of the group, not a collection of individual responses: people listen to, respond to and may agree or disagree with each other, and so the group forms a body of knowledge that builds on the individual participants' knowledge to create a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts.
- **Personal reflections and narratives:** project team members, event participants and other stakeholders can be asked to provide their own observations and thoughts about what has been achieved or the process or tell their stories about what has happened.

Build the evaluation into the project delivery to identify when your chosen methods of assessment will be used, who will collect the information, and in what form it will be captured. For example, if your action plan includes a workshop activity with local residents, you might film short interviews with the participants before and after the workshop to capture their expectations, experiences and reflections. These can then be reviewed to understand the output and outcomes of the workshop.

Communicating the evaluation

Once the project is complete, it is good practice to share the learning of the Creative Climate Challenge project with all the stakeholders directly involved, and any other interested parties who may also wish to work in this innovative way. Typically, this is done in the form of a publicly-available case study, which includes:

- A description of the concept of the project
- A description of the challenge the project addressed
- Details of all those involved
- Details of the process and action plan activities undertaken
- Reflections on the changes that took place, unexpected outcomes and challenges encountered
- Examples, testimonials and images

As the audience for this case study is likely to be those from both artistic/cultural backgrounds and professions and those from climate change/adaptation roles, the language and discussion should be accessible to all.

What are the challenges of evaluating a Creative Climate Challenge project?

There will be no one-size-fits-all approach to evaluation. Instead, the approach has to be responsive to the unique set of circumstances which shape the project. There are two unusual aspects which can challenge traditional models of evaluation:

- **These projects create change:** if a project’s intention is to disrupt existing ways of thinking, or to creatively influence ways of working, this means that planned outcomes are often intangible.
- **Different Partners have different expectations:** the cross-sector collaborative dimensions of Creative Climate Challenge projects combine partners and funders from different disciplines and different expectations of the project and its evaluation. Each partner may need to be open to tailoring the evaluation process to suit the innovative nature of the project, rather than use traditional processes familiar to them.

Using a Theory of Change

Creative Climate Challenge projects will probably seek to bring about long-term change as well as more immediately. A Theory of Change describes how a particular approach will be effective over time, showing how change happens in the short, medium and long term to achieve the intended impact. A Theory of Change therefore starts with the desired long-term outcome and works backwards through the stages which will contribute towards reaching that outcome.

If one is needed for your project, all the project partners should be part of developing a Theory of Change which describes how the project addresses the challenge and achieves the intended impact. It is important that everyone understands how activities and their outputs contribute to outcomes. In designing it together, you can be clear about the assumptions made, and the factors which help or hinder the process. When delivering an action plan, referring back to the Theory of Change can help refine activities, or aid decision making between different potential actions.

