

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

W | Western Illinois
University
MUSEUM STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

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TODAY'S TOPIC

- What is evaluation? What is summative evaluation?
- Why do summative evaluation?
- What are some practical approaches to summative evaluation?

QUESTION

Are our exhibits and programs meeting the anticipated goals?

Do our exhibits and programs meet visitor learning and experience goals?



“Thinking evaluatively means walking a mile in the shoes of our visitors in order to understand and respond to their needs, perceptions, and experiences.”

From *Thinking Evaluatively: A Practical Guide to Integrating the Visitor Voice* by Jull Stein, Marianna Adams, and Jessica Luke, American Association for State and Local History Technical Leaflet #238, 2007.

WHAT IS EVALUATION?

Evaluation is the systematic collection of relevant information about audiences to inform and improve our work.

Key points:

- Systematic = same process & questions, intentional
- Looking for the Visitor's Perspective
- Current goals are the guiding measure

TYPES OF EVALUATION

Front-End Evaluation

- What does the community know or feel about a topic?

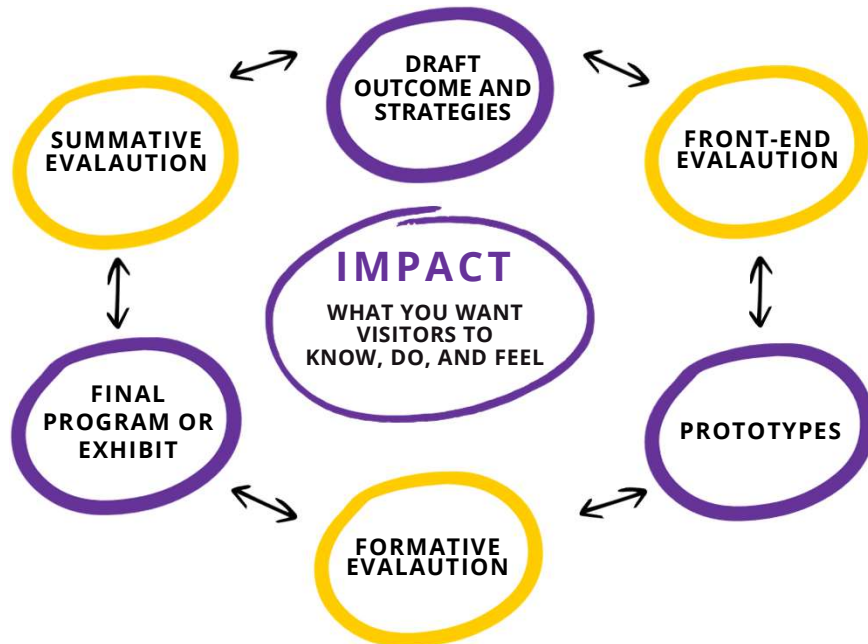
Formative Evaluation

- How can we improve the project as we develop it?

Summative Evaluation

- Did the project achieve its goals and objectives?
Did it meet visitor learning and experience goals?

EXHIBIT /PROGRAM DESIGN PROCESS



SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

Purpose

1. Assess effectiveness
2. Determine impact
3. Inform decision-making

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

Conducted at or near the end of the exhibition or program.

Measure outcomes:

- What did visitors learn, do, and experience? What was the impact on the visitor?

Assess effectiveness:

- Identify what specific aspects of the program or exhibit led to these outcomes.

Inform program improvement:

- It can be used to make small changes and improvements.
- Informs the next project.



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Benefits

- Provides a comprehensive assessment.
- Identifies areas for improvement.
- Promotes accountability and transparency.
- Supports evidence-based decision-making.
- Demonstrates impact.
- Increases stakeholder engagement.



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Challenges/Limitations

- It can be resource-intensive, requiring time and effort to collect and analyze data.
- The data collected during summative evaluation may be subject to bias, such as social desirability bias.
- Difficulty of measurement and generalization.
- Limited stakeholder involvement can be problematic.
- Must consider ethical considerations.

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Doing It Yourself

- Clearly define exhibit program goals.
- Place reasonable expectations on you and your team.
- Start small: select a focused question/ identify a small group of visitors to start.
- Make it a team effort. Get other staff involved.
- Be creative about the methods to collect data.
- Analyze and interpret the results.
- Use results to inform future projects.

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Methods

Observations: spend time on the floor.

Surveys: Design a half-page attractive card to hand out or use a QR code linked to a Google Form.

Ask more than once: Provide multiple opportunities for feedback.

Talk to your visitors. Ask visitors directly. Use your short survey as the interview questions.

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Methods

Piggyback Opportunities: If you have special tours, programs, or events with a captive audience, ask them to give feedback on a particular program, exhibit, or concern.

Advisory Groups: Think of developing targeted advisory groups for families, K-12 teachers, youth/teens, or a specific cultural community.

RESOURCES

Thinking Evaluatively: A Practical Guide to Integrating the Visitor Voice by Jull Stein, Marianna Adams, and Jessica Luke, American Association for State and Local History Technical Leaflet #238, 2007.

Diamond, Judy. et al. *Practical Evaluation Guide: Tool for Museums and Other Informal Educational Settings*. 2nd ed. Lanham, Md: AltaMira Press, 2009.

Share Evaluation Toolkit, Copyright: SHARE Museums East 2020 found at <https://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk/resources/evaluation-toolkit-for-museums/>

Evaluate to Advocate: Using Data to Tell Your Story, <https://aaslh.org/evaluate-to-advocate/>

Visitor Studies Association, <https://www.visitorstudies.org/>

Visitor Studies Manual at [Tracking & Timing | Visitor Studies Manual \(wordpress.com\)](https://www.visitorstudies.org/wordpress.com)

Feel free to contact me with questions

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