

While planning and implementing an event, it's crucial to think about the benefit of an evaluation. Evaluation planning needs to take place during project/program/event design.

STEP ONE:

Design your evaluation plan. There are three main steps for conducting an evaluation:

1. 1. Collecting Data
2. 2. Analyzing Data, and
3. 3. Evaluating Data

How will you collect data (surveys, interviews, observations?) Who will analyze the data? Who will interpret the findings and create the format for reporting findings?

STEP TWO:

Determine how you will collect data, both existing and new resources. For instance, you might source financial reports, audience statistics, participant comments, grant panel feedback, and more to initially gain an understanding of your current performance and that of your peers. To capture the performance of new activities, you'll likely need to develop data-collecting methods or update the protocols for their use. And you have many options! You might use observations and informal interviews during the event or consider formal follow-up interviews, a review of technologically accessible data like ticket-sale reports, or an assessment tool such as a survey. SurveyMonkey is a great free online resource to create surveys for participants. The platform has a bank of certified questions that can help you create a great survey.

STEP THREE:

Craft a thoughtful and clear questionnaire that gathers information about participants' knowledge, behaviors, and experiences surrounding your event. As a best practice, always note the confidentiality of the survey and the value it will add to your work. Let participants know in the text of your survey that their responses are anonymous and you value their feedback. Share your draft survey with peers to be sure you are asking what you think you are asking.

STEP FOUR:

Share your evaluation instrument with participants. If you are conducting pre- and post-event surveys, be sure to allow ample time for completion of the pre-event survey.

STEP FIVE:

Review and analyze the collected data. If you use SurveyMonkey or another online platform, remember to close the collection tool to prevent additional responses once you begin to analyze. Compile all of your data in a predetermined and consistent manner that allows you to compare and contrast and begin noticing patterns. Did respondents use similar terms to describe your program? Are there common themes or expressions that are conveyed? You'll also want to conduct any statistical tests such as frequencies, percentages, and ratios during this phase.

STEP SIX:

Draw your conclusion from your data. Be sure all pathways to decision making are documented. How did you arrive at your conclusion? Assess your analyzed data to determine the overall value and outcome of your event based on the analysis. What worked well? What areas could be improved? What surprised you? It is helpful to share your evaluation in report form with your team so that all have access to it for future reference.