

Evaluation Glossary

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Below are some of the common terms that are found in training materials, reports, and funding guidelines.

Documentation—the process of recording what happened, or creating a record of a project, usually with little or no judgment attached. Documentation methods may include meeting notes, audio and video recordings, letters and memos, journals, press coverage of events, etc. In some instances, documentation materials may be used for evaluation.

Focus Group—a common method of gathering qualitative research, where a moderator conducts a group discussion among six to eight people in order to learn their opinions, attitudes, and thought processes about a given topic. The group dynamic encourages a deeper level of discussion and allows the moderator to probe for important topics.

Generalizability—the extent to which findings from your evaluation and its sample reflect the population studied. Generalizability depends on factors such as the design of the evaluation, the sample size, and selection process.

Goal—the projected and desired end result(s) of a program, project, or effort.

Inputs—the resources that go into developing and implementing programs, including staff time, funds, equipment, etc.

Outcome Monitoring—the regular (periodic, frequent) reporting of program results in ways that stakeholders can use to understand and learn from those results. Monitoring efforts should be closely tied to program goals. Examples might include new community partnerships formed, unexpected successes or encouragement by participants, long-term effects, and relationships built.

Outputs—the quantifiable, measurable, and distinct end products of a program. Examples are audience size, ticket revenue, and number of performances.

Performance Indicators—agreed-upon measures to assess a program's success. Indicators define terms such as “usefulness” and “effectiveness” within the context of the program and specify how they will be measured. Indicators ask and answer the following questions: How will we *know* if our program is “successful” (or “useful” or “effective”)? Performance indicators for a presenter might be audience size, number of subscriptions sold, or positive stories from residency activities. In the same situation, indicators for an artist or dance company may include revenue generated by the residency or relationships established with the presenter.

Population—the entire group of people you seek to study and learn about in your evaluation, such as audiences, dance teachers, artists participating in your school program, members, etc.

Program Evaluation—efforts to systematically assess the performance, and particularly the outcomes and impacts, of programs and policies.

Purposeful Sampling—a sampling practice in which people are intentionally selected because they have a distinct set of characteristics that are of interest to the researcher. For example, in reviewing their own program, arts funders may opt to interview grantees from select disciplines who fall within a designated budget range and have received repeat funding.

Qualitative Research—involves study and analysis of variables designated by words or labels and non-numerical differences. Includes in-depth, open-ended interviews but also direct observation, written items on questionnaires, journals, notes, and program records.

Quantitative Research—involves study and analysis of variables and categories that express numerical distinction.

Random Sampling—a process that gives each person in the population an equal chance of being included in the sample. Usually the most preferred method of selecting participants.

Research—systematically and empirically gathering information about a topic of interest.

Sampling—the process of selecting individuals or entities to participate in an evaluation, usually with the goal of being able to use the findings from these people to make inferences about the population you are serving and studying.

Stakeholders—all individuals who hold a stake, or value, in the success of your program. Can include staff, board, artists, funders, dancers, teachers, and/or participants.

Strategy—a discreet step taken with the express purpose of meeting a goal.

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