CENTRE FOR CULTURAL VALUE

Making data work

A scoping survey to develop a mixed-methods evaluation framework for culture

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Executive Summary

Background: a deficit of cultural data?

There is increasing interest in the role, value and contribution of the cultural sector to national life and a recognition that cultural datasets are currently in a poor state of development and not fit for purpose.

Several challenges are evident, including:

- Inconsistent definitions of what we mean by cultural activities or the sector;

- Undue focus on quantitative approaches such as cost-benefit analysis;

- Limited or problematic data to populate any models of cultural value that we might generate.

Current methods and approaches to evaluation rarely involve those in the production of cultural activities, resulting in a sense of disconnect, particularly between the local and national levels.

What we set out to achieve

This project explored the tensions and challenges of data collection, use and analysis, and research and evaluation methods in the cultural sector.

A particular focus included involving creative practitioners in order to understand their perspectives.

The project also sought to identify opportunities for how funders, sector bodies and policymakers might better enable cultural data practices.

Finally, the project aimed to shape and inform the policymaking process by offering alternative approaches to understanding the impact of the cultural sector.

Our activities

A scoping exercise explored the challenges and opportunities around quantitative data, such as the **lack of common data standards** in existing large datasets.

The second workstream explored the **perspective of creative practitioners** operating at the local level and what data and evaluation methods might be helpful.

Thirdly, our work established a **mixed-methods planning framework** for practitioners seeking to evaluate the cultural sector.

Finally, the team **engaged with policymakers** at local and national levels in sharing insights as the project evolved.

What we found

- **Significant strengths in terms of current quantitative data resources** (with substantial benefit anticipated if these can be linked and made more accessible);

- **The primary source for quantitative data is developed for, with and by cultural sector organisations** (data relates to programming, management and marketing/fundraising offers opportunities for learning and evaluation);

- **Cultural organisations lack the resources to employ data scientists to benefit from data already collected or generated;**

- **The driver for evaluation data is often to meet funding requirements** (leaving creative practitioners less able to develop skills or processes for good qualitative or mixed-methods data gathering and evaluation.

- **Current methods and evaluation approaches fail to convey the social impact of cultural activity in any compelling way**

There was also a desire for:

- **Planning for impact and improvement** (using data and evaluation to set baselines or assess past performance and using this to help plan for future impact);

- **Robust data, methods and frameworks** (requiring good quality data to be collected and analysed using common standards impact);

- **Methodological diversity and innovation** (adopting mixed methods and data types to convey the distinctiveness and value of the cultural sector);

- **Building communities of practice around cultural data and evaluation.**

- **Common, underlying data infrastructure** (combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to connect different methods and sources, help develop common standards, and act as a repository of data and research findings

What next?

There is substantial potential to build upon the cultural sector's strengths, data resources, and capacity to improve impact and communicate value. Future development work could include:

- Developing common standards in quantitative data;

- Piloting a Cultural Data Trust;

- Developing policy/practice networks on cultural sector data and evaluation at local and national levels;

- A Cultural Sector Data Observatory to bring together, research and analyse mixed methods data sources;

- Testing and refining the evaluation planning framework with practitioners.

For more information, see: https://www.culturalvalue.org.uk/our-work/making-data-work/

Introduction

This report summarises the research undertaken within the ESRC-funded project Making Data Work for Public Sector Policy: A scoping study to develop a mixed-methods evaluation framework for culture.

The project ran for 15 months from January 1 2021 to March 31 2022 and was one of only ten projects funded under the ESRC's Research Methods Development Grants call from 163 applications.

The research team was interdisciplinary, comprising researchers from arts management, cultural policy, psychology and quantitative sociology who worked closely with industry experts from The Audience Agency and MyCake.

Research Context

Although there is an abundance of data emanating from the UK's world-leading cultural sector, protocols and practices of collection, collation, storage, analysis, and impact evaluation are sporadic and chaotic. Therefore, cultural data is incoherent and poorly aligned to national policy questions and decision-making processes, which means that policy decisions are often made in a vacuum of robust evidence.

Moreover, there remain seemingly intractable philosophical and disciplinary tensions and incompatibilities between how cultural data is captured and evaluated at the micro-level and how public spending is reviewed and allocated at the macro level. In short, there is a **crisis in cultural data**.

As one peer review articulated it: "The proposal makes a compelling case that a unified data approach for the evaluation of arts, culture and heritage-related activities is long overdue and that it needs to be mixed-methods and people-centred."

This crisis has come into sharp relief during the current COVID-19 crisis, highlighting significant gaps in cultural sector data and the primal and evolving role that arts, culture and heritage can play in bringing people together and supporting positive mental health and wellbeing in challenging times. However, **the cultural sector consistently fails to capture and convey its social impact in a compelling way**. This is partly because of structural problems and skills gaps in data analysis, research and evaluation.

These issues hinder the sector's resilience and compromise its ability to make a coherent and robust case for investment to key stakeholders, including HM Treasury, and cognate sectors and Government departments such as health and education. This is acutely problematic now that the entire sector faces an existential challenge as core audiences and visitors remain hesitant to return to many live cultural events.

The core aim of this project was to co-develop a mixed-methods cultural evaluation framework that would combine insights from large datasets with soft, qualitative data that capture the lived experiences of people who produce and consume culture, such as artists, producers, curators and audiences.

We hoped to develop a new strategic network to scope and test out possible solutions to the above problems through face-to-face consultations, discussions, webinars, and creative workshops. This network included the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and a wide range of national cultural organisations.

These organisations are committed to developing more robust data standards and protocols and fostering a more joined-up approach to cultural impact and evaluation. We aimed to do this by sharing their data and opening them up to research.

A secondary goal of the project was to shape cultural policymaking and, in so doing, to inform how public policy, in general, is developed.

We believe that public policymaking is currently too far removed from the people and places it aims to benefit. It is overly reliant on numbers that fail to tell compelling stories of the cultural sector's impact on society. Therefore, we hoped to demonstrate that a more **joined-up and people-centred approach to evaluating the impacts of culture on individuals and communities** would produce more reliable and credible data that might capture impacts in ways that reflect the particular ways in which different people and places experience culture.

We aimed to test our emerging data and evaluation frameworks by designing a comprehensive case study of Bradford. We chose Bradford because the city was mobilising to apply for the UK City of Culture in 2025. As part of this preparation, it undertook a detailed needs analysis that required a complex merging of cultural data with other demographic and health data held by the city.

Report Structure

This report summarises the key aims and findings of the project's four workstreams.

These are shown in Figure 1 (right), which illustrates how the workstreams were interconnected.

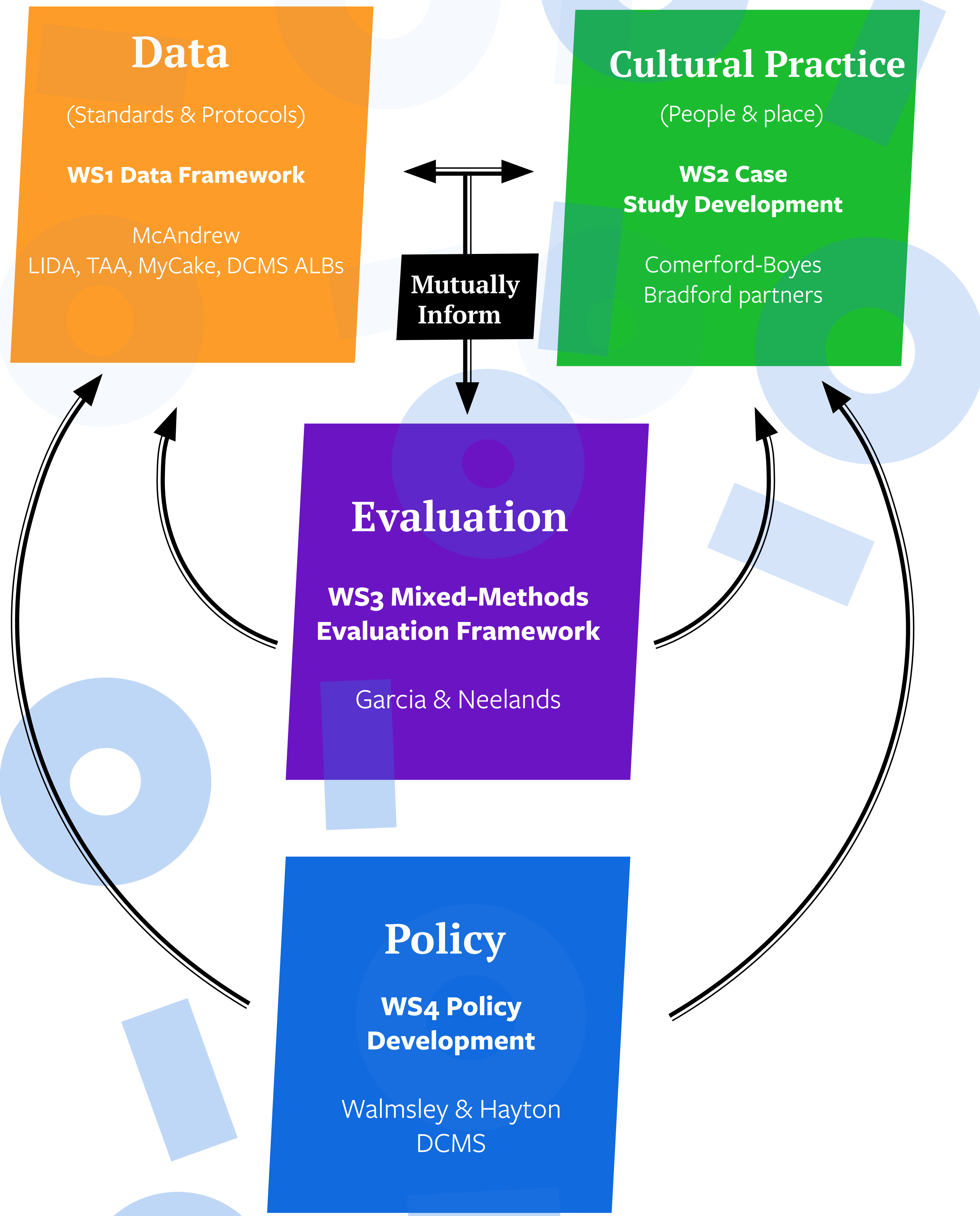
The first workstream (WS1) scoped out the cultural sector's quantitative data. It aimed to develop a **bespoke data framework** to help to make the sector's data collection and management processes more coherent and standardised.

The second workstream (WS2) aimed to explore how diverse methods might be fruitfully combined to provide **place-based insights into cultural value and impact by scoping out a case study of Bradford**.

The core objective of the third workstream (WS3) was to build on the findings of workstreams one and two to develop a **multi-dimensional evaluation framework** to inform cultural sector impact evaluation.

The goal of the final workstream (WS4) was to **engage with local, regional and national policymaker**s to promote the project and disseminate findings as they emerged with a view to securing future funding. All four workstreams involved stakeholder engagement through interviews, meetings, webinars and online workshops.

Following a summary overview of each separate workstream, the report provides a summary of the key findings and their implications before suggesting fruitful avenues for future research.



Workstream One: Quantitative Data

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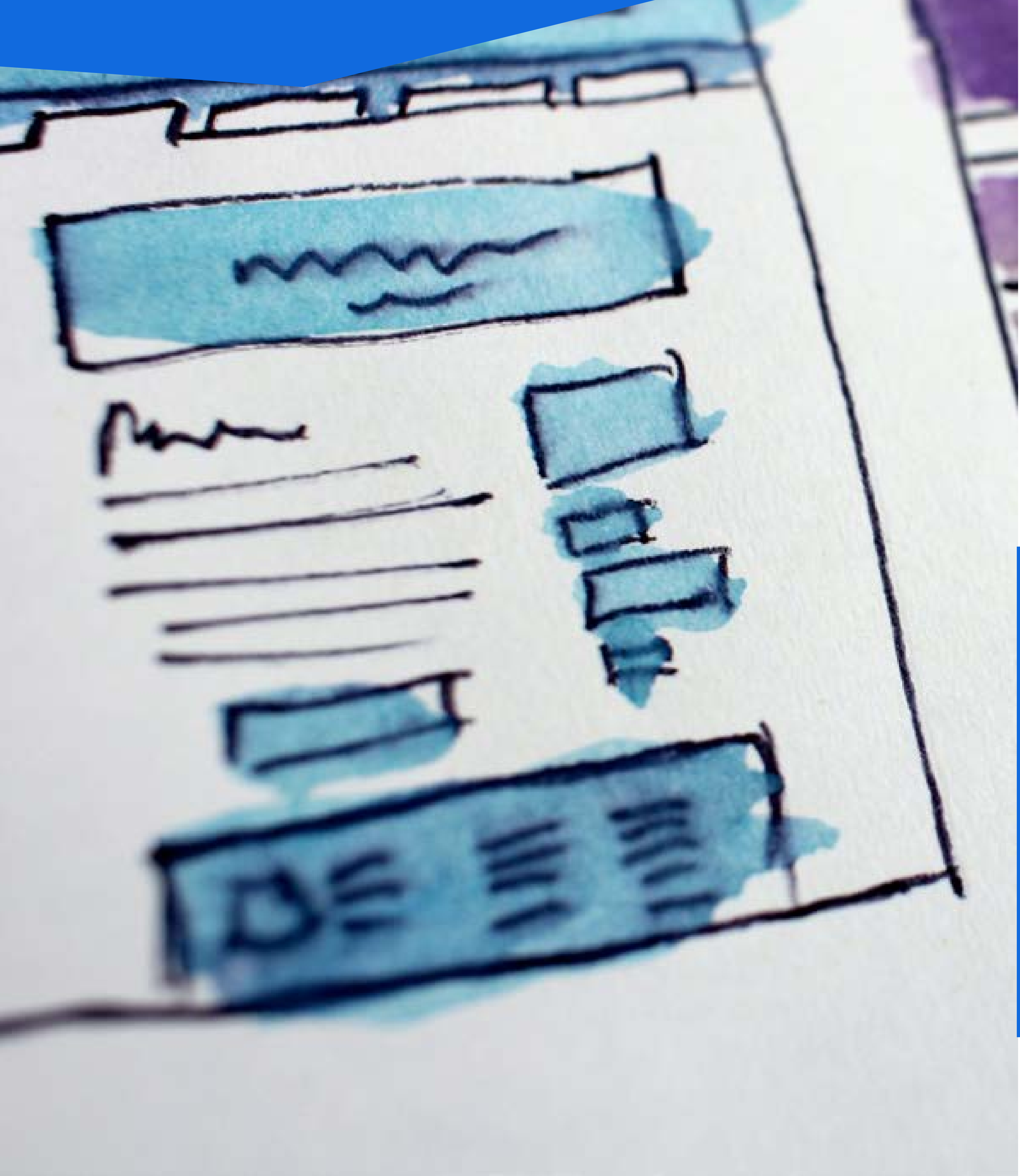

Introduction

This workstream interrogated why data matters to the cultural sector.

Analysis from a cultural policy perspective often focuses on the regional economy spillovers from the arts and culture. However, the not-for-profit cultural sector is also concerned with vital cultural and social objectives such as conserving cultural resources for future generations or bridging divides between cultural communities.

Cultural productivity and social impact increase if cultural organisations achieve those objectives more efficiently. Beyond maximising their objectives, there are also important sector-wide externalities which could be harnessed from a high-quality cultural data ecosystem. However, small organisations often struggle to exploit their data or recognise its value beyond their organisation.

> **"Investing in social infrastructure may be equally important as physical infrastructure for rebalancing the prospects of the UK's nations, regions, cities and towns [...] the libraries, cafés, cinemas, pubs and heritage assets on our high streets are becoming increasingly important in attract-ing people to the high street."**
>
> (Townscapes, Bennett Institute 2021, p. 5)

While they typically ensure that statutory and funders' reporting obligations are met, the capacity to exploit data further is low for all but the largest organisations.

The subsidised cultural sector currently has several great strengths and has benefited from important initiatives in the generation and use of data. Resources such as The Audience Agency's Audience Finder segmentation tool, available for small areas, and Culture Counts' evaluation data platform have made great insights available. Arts Council England commits significant resources to gathering organisation-level data and making it available, including extensive support to organisations making annual returns. 360Giving has established an important data standard enabling grant-making data to become open, benefiting the subsidised cultural sector alongside others. There is also a live community of interest in this area, crossing the private and not-for-profit sectors, academia, and the policy world.

There are also many challenges. Capacity to build sector-wide datasets and use them for sector-level and local area-level insight remains limited. The pandemic revealed that a substantial proportion of the cultural sector, in the form of freelancers and unincorporated associations, operates below the radar of major funders and sectoral bodies in terms of systematic data.

While commercial data sources can be informative and timely, they may be beyond the capacity of smaller organisations, and opportunities to share them beyond the commissioning organisation for cross-analysis remain very limited. Our workstream investigated these questions via a deskbased literature review, interviews withpractitioners, and testing of potential research project designs at an online academic/practitioner workshop.

The data landscape in the not-for-profit cultural sector

The not-for-profit cultural sector (henceforth 'the sector') is diverse, covering many cultural forms and organisations ranging from tiny volunteer-run unincorporated associations to high-profile, complex bodies such as the British Museum.

Organisations operating at different levels of scale, for various clients and sponsors, and in different cultural worlds, have varied data needs. They need data to monitor and enhance their performance and meet reporting obligations to funders and statutory bodies.

A significant proportion of cultural provision is delivered by unincorporated orsole-trader companies or trusts run by volunteers.

We devised a structured questionnaire to identify what types of data the larger arm's-length cultural bodies, funded directly by DCMS, capture regularly.

We also asked what external data sources they found useful and perceptions of the constraints limiting productive data exploitation. The questionnaire is available as an Appendix.

Response rates were low, reflecting the time constraints during a challenging period. It was also a demanding questionnaire schedule. There may be no single figure in an organisation with sole responsibility for the range of data sources we were asking about.

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'Data' is generated and used by different organisational functions (see next page).

We supplemented the questionnaire with a focused set of interviews with practitioners. We learned that improving data capture and usage has sector-wide and longer-term benefits but immediate costs in the face of extreme pressures. We also learned that cultural organisations' data science capacity is limited.

Finance, accounting and governance

Cultural Programming, collections management, and acquisitions

Development and fundraising

Marketing and audience insight, including digital data insight

Monitoring and evaluation (including for education and outreach and reporting to funders)

Opportunities from statutory and government administrative data

Statutory financial data is increasingly open via machine-readable data from Companies House. Small company accounts tend to provide relatively less information, and many organisations are not incorporated.

However, small charities tend to provide more detailed information so that machine-readable data from the Charity Commission for England and Wales can be combined with that from CH to generate sector-level estimates.

HMRC also captures data from organisations' tax returns in machine-readable form, although this cannot be shared across departments. The Office for National Statistics maintains the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) as a population frame for business surveys.

This is based on organisations registered with HMRC with VAT and PAYE as principal data inputs and data from Companies House, Dun and Bradstreet and other sources. This can generate measures of income, expenditure and salaries and covers entities not registered with Companies House or the Charity Commission.

However, its financial data is limited, so matching against data drawn from Companies House or other sources would provide the best coverage for the subsidised cultural sector.

Linkage requires a common reference number system to identify and match organisations or entities. 360Giving has done important work to generate a data standard to link different datasets to their registry to generate open grant data.

The IDBR generates a company record number against which Companies House company registration numbers and HMRC Unique Tax References can be matched. The IDBR company record number could accordingly form a unique reference number standard.

Should sectoral bodies require that members or bidders report this (or even company registration numbers), it would reduce manual data matching between different sources and agencies, such as Companies House and Arts Council England.

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Operational definition from the cultural sector: challenges and opportunities

Standard Industrial Classification codes (SIC codes) are not always effective for capturing industrial output, particularly where business models change over time. Cultural sector definitions also map poorly onto SIC codes, which are defined internationally. This combination means measurement of cultural output and official data on its geography is unspecific and thought to be significantly underestimated.

Drawing on innovations by NESTA and others (see Bakshi, Freeman and Higgs 2013), DCMS changed its approach to classifying the creative industries in 2014 via 'dynamic mapping'. This used standard occupational codes to identify companies employing a high percentage of creative workers, as defined by SIC codes. SIC codes are themselves currently under review, but those working on regional economics and innovation have identified different opportunities still. Indeed, SIC codes have been described as 'outdated' in principle: it is increasingly possible to define output at multiple scales and levels of granularity using textual data. This can be done by exploiting the rich unstructured data in websites and company statutory documents.

Organisations currently falling into different SIC codes can be reclassified as part of the same sector or subsector, so that cultural organisations can be grouped together at much more refined levels of granularity – for example, to identify the not-for-profit theatre sector.

Real-Time Industrial Classification enables firms to be allocated to more than one code and reallocated as their activities change, automatically rather than relying on self-identification. The Data City, for example, provides reports on new economy subsectors, including RTIC0064 'digital creative industries' covering 13235 firms, of which 924 fall into digital culture and heritage.

Company-level financial information by RTIC code is then provided on a subscription basis or with charges for specific extracts. An alternative could involve tighter definition according to funding sources, for example, by drawing up a directory of organisations that have received public or philanthropic foundation funding (via 360Giving) over a defined period, whether or not they currently do so.

There are also challenges relating to the measurement of output, for which turnover is only a proxy. An alternative is visitor attendances, mainly for cultural amenities that do not charge for entry. The value of Kirkstall Abbey, for example, will not be demonstrated straightforwardly by a combination of SIC code and turnover: it is owned and managed by the local authority and can be visited for free. Its value could be supplemented by surveys of visitors to demonstrate satisfaction or the effect of the amenity on local house prices. However, this requires reliable methods to generate measures that can be shared and compared across amenities and organisations.

Official sources and large scale surveys

A range of sources are used by those providing sector-wide analysis to examine cultural engagement and audiences.

Cultural engagement generally takes place in niches, each of which is of minority interest, accordingly difficult to capture accurately in surveys unless samples are large.

An important example includes Taking Part, 2004/5 to 2019/20 (waves 1-15), covering c.170,000 respondents. Other sources capturing cultural engagement, relatively underused in the study of cultural policy, include the Next Steps: Longitudinal Study of Young People, Millennium Cohort Survey, Active Lives Survey, and Understanding Society, waves 2/5 (2010-11, 2013-14).

Access is provided via registration with the UK Data Service, with masking of local-area identifiers to reduce the risk of disclosure of individuals. However, local area identifiers can be made available via Secure Access following vetting and 'secure researcher' training and accreditation.

Among surveys designed to generate economic indicators, the most relevant are the Labour Force Survey (LFS), Living Costs and Food Survey, Annual Business Survey, UK Innovation Survey, Business Structure Database Longitudinal Survey, and Small Business Survey. The LFS has been used more extensively to analyse the cultural and creative sector. There is a small academic literature on the cultural and creative sectors in the regional studies tradition using the business surveys above, but they remain remarkably under-used.

Skills, capacity, and organisational models

Those with the requisite skills can command high salaries in the technology sector, where 'average' data scientist salaries are in the £40,000-£50,000 range and higher in large cities.

Research and insights posts are advertised in Arts Professional at considerably lower salary points. Indeed, the average data scientist commands a salary similar to those at which regional arts centre chief executives are recruited.

Given their salary structures and financing, most subsidised cultural organisations do not have the capacity to develop and retain a team of data scientists. This implies that such skills are more likely to be bought in or acquired ad hoc internally by staff as needs arise.

This is not to say that a narrow focus on investment in analytic capacity is what the sector needs most of all right now. However, general-purpose data outputs, products and support would increase their capacity, for example, with regard to providing evidence for bids.

Prospects for projects with sector-wide and public benefits

Sector-level bodies, funders, academic researchers, consultancies and cultural development organisations all have interests in bringing data sources together and making data more accessible for productive reuse.

Accordingly, we have identified a range of shorter- and longer-range projects that would add value to the subsidised cultural sector and those concerned with its effectiveness.

A Cultural Observatory

There is a need for high-quality small-area estimates of cultural participation, cultural workforce and cultural sector output drawing on existing data assets.

The Audience Agency already publishes excellent small-area estimates of audience segments (Audience Finder) which exploit the Taking Part survey alongside their own proprietary data. MyCake provides estimates of non-profit representation by local area to ward level.

Besides this mapping, estimates of cultural non-participation below the local authority level are not widely available and not currently provided alongside demographic measures for the area.

Such estimates would be valuable for assisting funders and local authorities with identifying "cold spots" and organisations with a mission to expand access. Openly-available estimates of cultural engagement by cultural form and local area would also help organisations target marketing activity by cross-referencing against internal mailing lists.

Organisations would also benefit from combining local area estimates of participation and non-participation alongside summary statistics on the area – poverty, ethnic diversity, health, etc. This would assist organisations in assessing priorities and scoping a cultural project, particularly where aligned with funders' interests in social impact.

Sport England provides useful examples of interactive tools exploiting the Active Lives surveys, where responses on activity and inactivity can be explored at the local authority level. This was made more feasible by the Actives Lives surveys having very large sample sizes.

Such local estimates could be generated using model-based small area estimation approaches, where random population samples are not large enough for traditional methods. Such methods, including multilevel regression with poststratification, have recently become better-known via election forecasting and niche marketing.

These methods could also generate estimates of local area cultural workforce and presence, drawing on the data in the official surveys such as the Annual Business Survey. While the Office for National Statistics cannot release identifying data, it might also be possible to generate or compile measures for companies externally and attach them to sources such as the ABS or BSDL. This is possible where a company reference number is available for ONS staff to make the merge, returning non-disclosive aggregates (for example, at the local authority level) to researchers.

Accordingly, model-based approaches may help generate important new estimates of cultural firm outputs at the area level or other aggregated levels, just as is possible using data on individuals within areas. One challenge for generating high-quality model-based estimates is that high-quality demo graphics and cultural engagement measures are needed at the area level. The Census or Annual Population Survey can provide the former.

Good-quality measures of cultural participation, engagement or amenities at local area levels would help sharpen area level estimates further. A geocoded directory of cultural assets and venues would be invaluable here. The 2021 Bennett Institute Townscapes report made a persuasive case for an open data repository summarising data on community facilities to assist those bidding for schemes such as the Levelling Up Fund or Cultural Recovery Fund (pp. 51-52).

Relevant data on social and cultural infrastructure facilities ('points of interest' in Ordnance Survey terminology) for local areas include libraries, heritage data, and cultural venues. Other useful area-level cultural data could include music examinations by local authorities using Ofqual data. Ordnance Survey data are available for a fee. Some of these sources are already open. Others could be available on request.

> **"One challenge for generating high-quality, model-based estimates is that high-quality demographics and cultural engagement measures are needed at the area level."**

Harnesing digital data

Besides the opportunity to generate measures by real-time industrial classification, there are other possibilities regarding digital data. Potential audience and stakeholder interests can be identified via publicly-available search data. Some platforms can be scraped – for example, Twitter - to monitor cultural discussion over time.

Besides the opportunity to generate measures by real-time industrial classification, there are other possibilities regarding digital data. Potential audience and stakeholder interests can be identified via publicly-available search data. Some platforms can be scraped – for example, Twitter - to monitor cultural discussion over time.

The UK Internet Archive, although now a little dated, also offers possibilities for generating measures of cultural presence for small areas (see Stich, Tranos and Nathan 2021's study of clusters in Shoreditch). This has already been used to assess the relative presence of locally-focused versus nationally-focused businesses.

A potential extension is available to assess the relative presence of culturally-focused local websites by modelling website text. This could provide a proxy for cultural infrastructure or the cultural economy at the postcode level.

The University of Edinburgh is also scoping options for a data service using events listings data. These could further enrich small area estimates published by a cultural observatory. Challenges with regard to exploiting such opportunities include the scarcity of relevant skillswithin academia. Equally, those with such skills externally do not tend to make results available free at the point of use. Investment in public research efforts might therefore add social and broader economic value.

Potential reform to capture data from DCMS-sponsored museums and arm's length bodies

Cultural organisations funded directly by DCMS are not subject to the same reporting regime as the National Portfolio Organisations funded by ACE. They are not required to use the same evaluation framework as each other nor share data with an agency.

Those performance indicators required by DCMS are provided regularly and published online. These organisations also gather data for their internal performance indicators. They work hard to ensure consistency in data capture and that standard approaches to internal evaluation are followed across different sites or exhibitions.

Digitisation of collections is a separate and resource-intensive, long-term investment programme involving URIs and international metadata standards to ensure interoperability and machine-readability. Major museums also invest in collections management systems to enhance virtual programming and online exhibitions, provide more access to collections, and improve revenues and efficiency of data capture.

For open data to be useful, it has to have enough volume and timeliness to be informative. While the KPI data provided to and made available by DCMS is valuable for demonstrating that organisations are following management agreements, it may be less useful for broader insight at a sectoral level. This is because the data is too highly-aggregated and lacks spatial and temporal detail.

One challenge is that because entry is generally free to the major museums, a large proportion of attendance is unticketed and counted using sensors. It may nevertheless be helpful for CRM systems to feed into The Audience Agency just as NPOs are required to do for those tickets which are booked in advance or where zero-price tickets are issued.

It may also be valuable to require that museums make daily visitor and web traffic data open. However, any such request or change to key performance indicators would need a clear rationale given the additional reporting burden. It was also suggested by an expert interviewee that Google Maps visit data could be used to make estimates, supplemented with reliable data on peak popularity and visitor numbers for a cultural venue.

Thirdly, a shared platform for fielding customer satisfaction surveys (where attendees are asked 'would recommend a visit' type questions) would allow the analysis of how satisfaction varies across comparable ALBs and over time, as is currently possible for NPOs feeding into The Audience Agency.

Cultural Data Trusts

A final proposal is that the cultural quantitative community should investigate options for cultural data trusts.

Data pooling and the sale of non-personal data are already well-developed, including in the cultural sector. Data unions already exist to pool personal data with consent. With data trusts, there is an additional fiduciary duty on trustees to share the personal data of those providing it in their interests, in a trusted environment, whether financial or otherwise.

While there are already laws and additional mechanisms to govern data (for example, the Market Research Society Code of Conduct or university ethics processes), the trust model may unlock further opportunities.

GDPR already makes accessing personal data possible, but it remains inconvenient. Accordingly, it is not yet straightforward for individuals to choose to share (for example) their Kindle or Netflix data in a way that would generate additional insight. If a cultural data trust existed, holding data in a secure, trusted research environment, data sharers could be given incentives (such as vouchers or enhanced membership benefits) to share culturally-specific personal data in a way which is valuable to the sector and policymakers.

Cultural data via Open Banking data

Developments in Open Banking might enable sharing of personal transactions with expenditure category codes. At present, such data could be made available by individual banks for local areas by postcode of the account holder, subject to no individual being able to be identified.

Secondly, organisations can access open banking data so long as they register as a regulated provider, are enrolled in the Open Banking Implementation Entity (OBIE) Directory, and are authorised to provide secure open banking-enabled services. These must either offer account information services such as budgeting help or price comparisons, or payment initiation services, which could include retailers. A cultural consortium could conceivably provide the latter across the sector and, in return, access to rich and spatially-sp ecific expenditure data.

Cultural data trust for internal financial data

It is conceivable that pooling financial data via a trust – either via an organisation's accounting software or HMRC, by an individual's or organisation's request – could be made a requirement of public arts funding or enhanced funding. This would allow understanding of the financial position for the sector as a whole, or for subsectors, at a higher frequency than Companies House or Charities Commission data feeds permit. Such data are currently available via ONS Research Service, so long as no individual company can be identified.

> "A cultural data trust might accelerate innovations and help with generating more reliable and real-time estimates of the cultural workforce."

Cultural data trust for workforce data

It is difficult to generate reliable estimates of the freelance and volunteer workforce, for example, via the Labour Force Survey, for freelancers or organisational and wider survey data for volunteers.

One complement could be to invite those participating in surveys of freelancers to share their LinkedIn handle so that estimates of the freelance sector can be updated and greater insight built up over time. Creative and cultural workers may be happier to do so and share larger volumes of personal data should they perceive it to be protected by a data trust and held in a trusted research environment.

It is possible for government, academic and arms' length bodies' (such as Arts Council England) studies to capture and store such data. However, the infrastructure to do so, and the ability to demonstrate trustworthiness, is still underdeveloped. A cultural data trust might accelerate innovations in this area and help with generating more reliable and real-time estimates of the cultural workforce. This mainly applies to workers not captured by HMRC systems as employees or those not covered accurately by the Labour Force Survey.

Conclusion

There is a need for real-time or higher frequency estimates on both consumer/audience and industry/organisational sides – and policymakers and funders would also benefit from access to integrated insight.

DCMS and major funders do not currently have sufficiently high-quality, granular data on where the creative economy is performing well and how it is differentiated, bot spatially and in terms of the focus of activity of different organisations.

This makes it challenging to identify priority areas for intervention and support – whether to address areas of low cultural demand, activity and investment or support clusters which need public investment to grow further. There is exciting work underway, primarily within private organisations and made available on a subscription basis.

The challenge for those concerned with cultural development and cultural and social infrastructures is making such insight available more broadly, to the benefit of cultural organisations with a socia
l or educational mission and public bodies at multiple levels.

Workstream Two: Scoping a place-based case study of Bradford

Lou Comerford Boyes, Sue Hayton
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Introduction

The main objective of workstream two was to work closely with Bradford based creative and cultural organisations and individuals to explore the potential of a future, substantial case study of and for Bradford.

This scoping study focused on gaining a deeper understanding of how the value, meaning and impact of creative and cultural activity in Bradford is currently captured and understood, as well as creating a clearer picture of what organisations and creative practitioners aspire to with regard to gathering more robust, compelling and engaging evidence bases.

Fundamental to our approach was recognising that those actively involved in creative making should be given a real opportunity to have agency in the co-creation of research and evaluation activity and outputs. To achieve this practitioner-centric ethos, we ran an iterative series of events where each event informed the next step.

Firstly, we facilitated an explorative, discursive creative practitioner workshop to inform the design of a semi-structured interview schedule. This was then used to conduct one-hour to one-hour-30-minute 1:1 interviews with seven Bradford-based organisations.

These interviews, in turn, informed a wider sandpit event designed to advance further collective thinking about a Bradford-based case study of the future. An artistic commission also informed the sandpit, enabling the selected creative practitioner to lead reflective activity and discussion in the sandpit. The creative lead was supported to do this by an additional creative practitioner event (six attendees in total) in advance of the sandpit.

A series of headline findings arose from analysing the above events and interviews' qualitative textual and discursive outputs. All of the data centred on the following major themes:

Current Activities: people describing the evaluations, data gathering, and reporting they are currently doing. Relatively brief information was shared in interviews with regard to this, usually along the lines of what organisations are 'required to do' by funders.

Aspirations: there was a lot of discussion about what organisations aspire to in the near/medium term/ future. Much of this focussed on thoughts and plans for evidence gathering that has not yet started, including reaping the benefits of using mixed methods and acknowledging the complementarities of quantitative and qualitative data;.

Challenges and barriers: a significant proportion of the discussion centred on the many challenges, sometimes barriers, that creative practitioners and organisations are trying to navigate. The known complexities and perceived difficulties of the improved evidence gathering they aspire to was a strong theme in the data; and

External Involvement: while creative practitioners and organisations were generally warm to the idea that creative practitioners could be research agentic and lead research, it was notable that most of the organisations had either already engaged an external research partner drawn from academia or "expert" consultants or planned to. Our participants saw externality as highly desirable, and interesting discussions were had as to how this sits with the idea of critically subjective insider research.

Current evaluation and research practices - and what might be better

There was so much perceived worth in the creative and cultural activity that people are involved in, but robustly capturing what it means and compellingly measuring its value is highly challenging.

There was so much perceived worth in the creative and cultural activity that people are involved in, but robustly capturing what it means and compellingly measuring its value is highly challenging. Participants expressed a genuine desire to be involved in meaningful evaluative research that is strategic and well planned, rather than have the funder-required feedback, monitoring and evaluation forms stand as the sum of the evidence gathering; the latter was frequently talked about negatively. However, commonly felt constraints preventing better evidence gathering, both in terms of planning and doing, included lack of time, resources, people and research skills.

There was some critical discussion about roles and responsibilities, and whether it was appropriate for creative practitioners to take the lead in evidence gathering, especially as that could be disruptive to leading the creative activity. Participants reflected that so much is not captured or could be better captured. Still, there is a risk that if capture becomes too much of a focus, this could be a burdensome overload and may even alter behaviours and, therefore, negatively impact creative outcomes.

The complementarities of quantitative and qualitative data were acknowledged, and organisations attributed advantages to both approaches (this does not equate to evidence that organisations are already running robust mixed methods research programmes). On the qualitative side, individuals' narratives and stories of their experiences were seen as key and, as such, are currently actively heard by projects and organisations. However, organisations felt that it is paramount to be able to present these to funders and policymakers in a compelling fashion – and this is where the difficulty can lie.

Creative practitioners and organisations also talked about the insight and 'lightbulb moments' they experienced when working but noted that these could be very hard to capture in the heat of making, doing, delivering, etc. There was a desire to capture better and present compelling case studies, possibly longitudinal ones.

On the quantitative side, some felt it was important to be able to robustly evidence relationships and linkages in a causal way so that funders can see 'size of effect', but research skill or lack thereof can be an issue here. A methodological challenge here can be when data is required to be anonymised into 'generalised' demographic, i.e. group data, as this renders it unsuitable for evidencing longitudinal impact on individuals.

No examples of theoretically or methodologically informed research or evaluation into cultural and creative activity came through in the interviews, even though one of the organisations interviewed was a large established epidemiological research project in its own right. It is necessary to mention this absence because of the nature of the funds for this scoping project, and moreover, in light of the intention to underpin any future case study with robust social science approaches and protocols.

Interestingly more than one organisation used in passing the phrase 'theory of change' but did not elaborate or indicate they were following any structured theory of change model or process.

'Ethnography' and 'ethnographic approach' were also briefly mentioned as a possible good fit for the type of work organisations were yet to embark upon. Still, it was too early in their delivery plans to know what this would look like or entail.

The mandated data reporting as a funding requirement was often described as 'painstaking', 'burdensome', 'dull', 'goes nowhere', 'informs nothing'. Participants recognised that it is challenging to develop standardised metrics that work sufficiently well in various contexts. There was openness to and appetite for novel and creative data capture/evaluation but no developed ideas from organisations as to what this might look like; it was expressed more along the lines of: "It would make sense, given the nature of the work itself".

The potential benefit of baseline data – recognising where it exists or creating it – was acknowledged, and there was agreement that it was important to use baselines to thoughtfully offer compelling accounts of differences. It was felt that better data sharing might be possible if activity across the city and region were more connected and cohesive. If organisations were more able to show economic impact attributable to activity convincingly, this might lever more funding.

“There is a risk that if capture becomes too much of a focus, this could be a burdensome overload and may even alter behaviours and, therefore, negatively impact creative outcomes.”

Challenges, barriers and difficulties

Beyond the complexities of doing good research, one of the challenges that came across strongly was the lack of connectedness, the absence of any identifiable entity that could help create the desired networks.

Beyond the complexities of doing good research, one of the challenges that came across strongly was the lack of connectedness, the absence of any identifiable entity that could help create the desired networks. Greater collation of the city-wide offer might be of benefit. It was felt that the foci of activity were too localised, scattered, ephemeral and generally unconnected to a bigger picture.

Another challenge that emerged was the need to explore and negotiate what 'artist', 'art', 'creative', 'culture' really mean: who gets to decide what does and doesn't count? As yet, there seems to be no real shared understanding. Some organisations emphasised the importance of being inclusive and creative about what, and therefore who, does and does not count.

Organisations and creative practitioners felt that community should be at the heart of project and programme design and delivery. Some felt that communities themselves should lead on creative projects instead of artists – this is part of the recurring theme as to who gets to decide what is art: to empower and develop the talent in the community rather than rely on people already recognised as artists.

There was an acknowledgement that project failures and negative experiences could offer valuable learning curves that have rich potential to inform future work. Still, not everyone felt that it was safe to share these.

People feared that sharing perceived failures or projects that did not work out as planned could be detrimental to their reputation and lead to the loss of future work or funding.

Organisations reflected that it is hard to keep the day to day going without the added complexity of turning things into big research projects. Moreover, for some, a big focus on research could 'over-intellectualise things' and run the risk of creative and cultural engagement becoming disconnected from 'reality on the ground'. Participants reflected that there already is insufficient time to explore partnerships and negotiate collaborative practice before projects start, so adding research into the mix can exacerbate existing problems.

So much of the activity that should make a difference and be of value has not yet been started. This is understandable given the delays due to the pandemic, the bidding stage Bradford 2025 was currently at and the timelines for Born in Bradford's focus on creativity and wellbeing. In much of the discussion of creating better project evidence bases, people related this to work they were about to do and not necessarily to work they had done.

Artists as researchers

No robust examples of creative practitioner-led research came through in the interviews. There was, however, the occasional brief and anecdotal mention of a creative practitioner collecting some feedback. The idea of artists functioning as researchers was, on the whole, considered in a positive light.

Nevertheless, it was interesting that most organisations had already engaged an external research partner or planned to. Moreover, they saw this as necessary and highly desirable, which seemed to challenge the notion of artistically-led research.

Where researchers had been recruited, they did not specify whether these were research organisations such as universities, individual research academics or consultants.

Conclusions and next steps

The findings of this scoping study suggest that it is too soon to finalise a detailed design for Bradford as a case study. We found that there appears to be some consensus on a desire to improve data capture and introduce more creative methods. There also seems to be a frustration at third party expectations of monitoring and evaluation.

There is evidence of an increasing coherence across the city and a suggestion to build a 'community of evaluation/research practice', but it will take time and investment to establish a shared agenda and agree on a methodological approach.

To move immediately to researching a case study would risk overlaying an imposed process on the city rather than continuing the co-creation and collaborative ethos started here. Instead, the next step or phase should seek to achieve the orientation, planning, coalescing, negotiation and relationship building that is so clearly needed given the findings above.

“Some felt that communities themselves should lead on creative projects instead of artists. This is part of the recurring theme as to who gets to decide what is art.”

Workstream Three: A framework for cultural evaluation

Beatriz Garcia
and Jonothan Neelands

Introduction and Process

The main objective of this workstream was to advance the case for mixed-methods evaluation frameworks.

As argued in our original Case for Support, an important challenge to the quality and availabilityof data in the culture sector is the dominance of specific measures of value over others and the lack of more diverse voices to define methods appropriate to the subjects being assessed.

To address this limitation, we explored options to encourage greater diversity, sensitivity and culture-specificity in evaluation methods and evaluation approaches more broadly.

Our workstream evolved in parallel to an AHRC-funded exercise involving a two-year-long co-creation process to establish evaluation principles for culture.

The advancement of commonly agreed evaluation principles was considered essential for any sustainable evaluation framework for the sector. It was the first milestone in this workstream.

Our evaluation work was also informed by developments in the first two workstreams, complemented by an extensive literature review, key stakeholder interviews and an end-of-project webinar. The resulting outcome is a prototype tool (Planning a Framework for Evaluation: Embedding a Culture of Learning), which we outline later and attach as an Appendix.

Co-creating a set of Evaluation Principles for culture

Work on the co-creation of evaluation principles started back in 2020 but expanded thanks to the contributions and expertise provided by this project. It involved the following:

Working group:

establishment of an evaluation working group, comprising 46 representatives from across the sector and UK-wide.[1]

Workshops:

Four 90-minute workshops attended by an average of 30–40 participants each, involving sub-group discussions and professional facilitation.

Public Webinars:

Two webinars open to a broader public, both of which attracted 150 to 200 attendees each.

Public Launch:

The first version of UK national evaluation principles for culture was launched in November 2021 and published online.[2]

Public Engagement:

A year-long public engagement process is in place throughout 2022. This final exercise is being managed by the Centre for Cultural Value, with funding from the AHRC, Arts Council England and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

[1] Evaluation Principles working group: https://www.culturalvalue.org.uk/evaluation-principles-working-group/
[2] Evaluation Principles for Culture: https://www.culturalvalue.org.uk/our-work/evaluation/evaluation-principles/

Key principles for evaluation

Beneficial Committed to learning and/or change Ethical Applicable	**Robust** Rigorous Open-minded Proportionate
People-centred Empathetic Many-voiced Socially-engaged	**Connected** Transparent Aware Shared

Documentation review and stakeholder interviews

Garcia and Neelands built extensively on their twenty-year trajectory leading major national data gathering and evaluation exercises, including the Impacts '08 Evaluation programme, the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad Evaluation programme and the Coventry 2021 UK City of Culture Performance Measurement and Evaluation Strategy, to name a few.

We assessed in detail widely used data and evaluation tools such as Audience Finder, ACE's Impact & Insights Toolkit; available guidelines and toolkits such as the RSA Cultural Learning EvidenceChampions Handbook or ACE's Joint Cultural Needs Assessment Guidelines; and explored mixed-method visualisation models such as SAGE's Methods Map. We also conducted in-depth interviews with data and evaluation leads across the UK.

The prototype for our proposed Planning Tool was presented at a webinar in March 2022, attended by the Centre for Cultural Value Evaluation working group and ESRC project stakeholders.

Findings

A growing number of culture sector representatives are keen to advance their understanding and application of evaluation practices.

After more than three decades of evaluation-related discussions, stakeholders accept the importance of improving the quality of data collection, assessment and dissemination techniques.

There remain, however, a series of critical challenges. Some of these challenges are being overcome, while others remain unresolved and critical.

Lack of expertise and appreciation about what evaluation can do for the sector

This is due to:

- Evaluation has often been seen as an 'obligation' rather than a learning opportunity.

Opportunities for change:

- Since 2019, this challenge has been debated broadly across the sector;
- The Centre for Cultural Value – established as a national initiative to help advance the case for the sector – is perceived as a positive driver for change; and
- The Evaluation Principles co-creation exercise is seen by cultural funders and the cultural sector as a significant step to overcome this challenge – particularly the 'lack of appreciation' for evaluation as an opportunity for learning.

Failure to capture and convey the social and cultural impacts of culture compellingly due to:

This is due to:

- Skills gaps in data analysis and data presentation;
- Poor data collection protocols: issues with quality & relevance; and
- Quantitative bias in public policymaking: a lack of opportunity to explore innovative or creative methods best suited to the sector.

Opportunities for change:

- The leading culture data-gathering and management agencies are fully aware of this challenge. They request more opportunities for engagement and open debate with funders. Establishing agreed principles and adopting common planning tools for evaluation is seen as a positive first step towards improving quality;
- Concerns around the 'quantitative bias' in public policy making can be addressed by a more empowered sector, with greater capacity to engage in conversation around their evaluation needs. Stakeholders agree that common principles and planning tools can assist in this task; and
- Findings emerging from workstreams one and two coincided with responses to workstream three interviews regarding current limitations in the implementation of 'creative methods'. While sector representatives are keen and interested in exploring a more comprehensive range of creative and artist-led methods, they insist there are no resources or time. There is also a perception of 'no appetite' from funders. They believe more mediation and support are needed to advance this case.

Issues with the quality and relevance of data

This is due to:

- Disintegration between large national public datasets and local and regional and qualitative data; and
- Cultural data are collected, collated, managed and evaluated in sporadic or fragmented ways. This has led to a lack of comparability and longitudinal take or has resulted in increasingly standardised frameworks that ignore specificities.

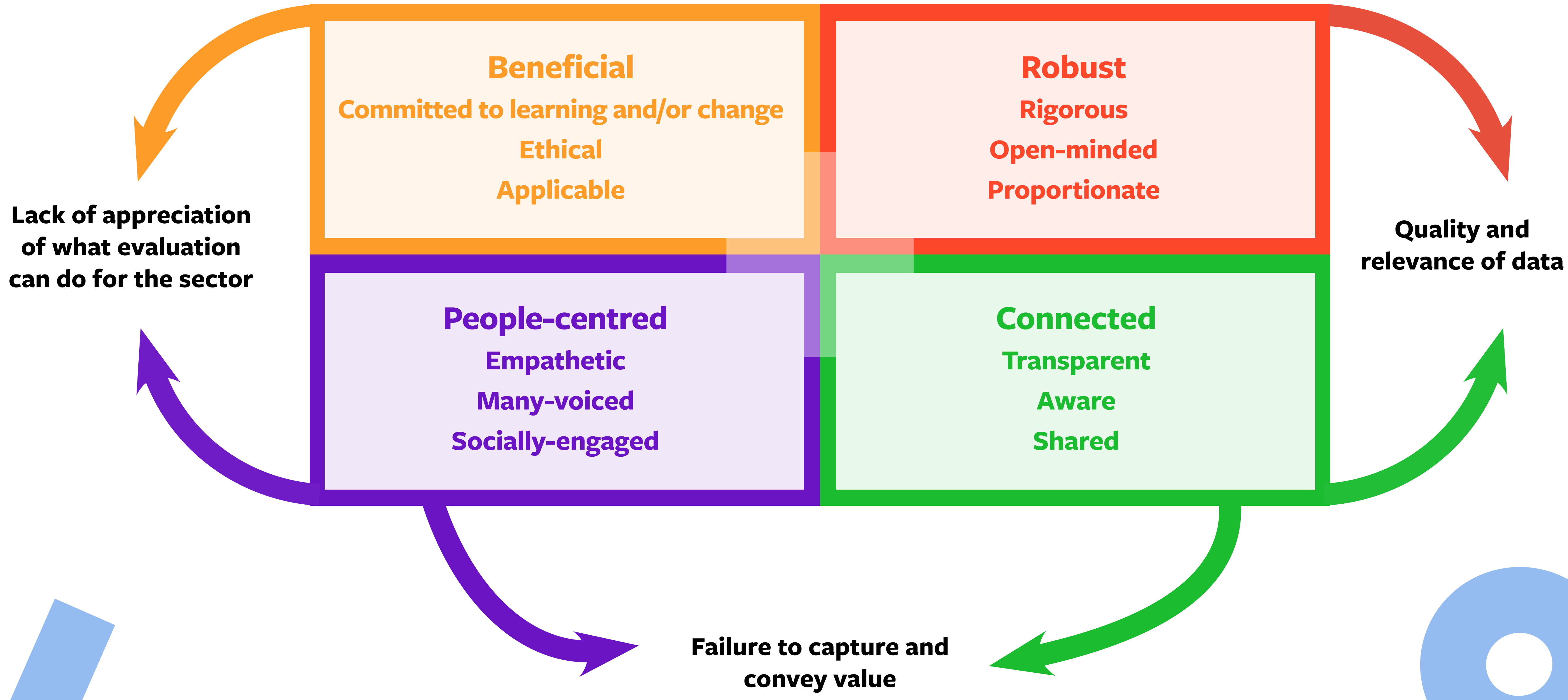
Opportunities for change

- Stakeholders highlighted some advancements in the sector's capacity to correlate national and local data, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The planning tool being proposed is designed to facilitate flexibility.
- As noted earlier, the above challenges are reflected in the articulation of commonly agreed Evaluation Principles, which try to address them. The visual below indicates how the principles may assist the sector in addressing classic challenges.

As noted earlier, the above challenges are reflected in the articulation of commonly agreed Evaluation Principles, which try to address them. The visual on pages 38 and 39 indicates how the principles may assist the sector in addressing classic challenges. These findings were vital to informing the development of our proposed evaluation tool.

Workstream 3

Addressing classic challenges to evaluation



Outcomes and proposed solutions

The tool we propose is named: 'Planning a Framework for Evaluation: Embedding a Culture of Learning' and is attached as Appendix 1.

The emphasis is placed on planning instead of a specific framework for evaluation, given the impossibility of determining a single framework suitable to all contexts. The critical message to the sector is the need to understand evaluation as a participative learning process that should be helpful and empowering to all stakeholders.

Rationale

- The proposed tool is set up as a helpful document aimed at its final users;
- It is about engineering a practical response to evaluation needs;
- It builds on well-established practices (i.e. the extensively tested 'theory of change') and advocates building on – rather than departing from – established models of practice;
- The tool is presented as a prototype to test, modify, adapt, simplify and use;
- It offers easy-to-follow guidelines applicable to the culture sector and comparable to other sectors;
- Evolving in parallel to the wide acceptance of Evaluation Principles for Culture, it is expected that this tool can help advance the adoption of more diverse and culturally-sensitive methods for data capture.

The tool has been designed to address the following tensions:

- Time – value/usefulness
- Scale – requirements
- Accountability – 'truth' and learning
- Numbers – stories & witness
- Outputs – outcomes
- Public funding – public accountability and scrutiny
- Measurement – evidence
- Formative – summative; process and product

Core characteristics

- The tool is not a singular evaluation framework but rather a framework for informing evaluation processes and dialogues;
- Practical output: develop a prototype that is user-friendly and useable at different scales for different purposes;
- Practice-based in practice: evaluation is integral to envisioning, funding, planning, delivery and reporting;
- Focused on the vital elements needed whatever the scale;
- Responsive to the trends and requirements for reporting to different audiences;
- Informed by the Centre for Culture Value
- Evaluation Principles and other workstreams in the ESRC project;
- Advocating for mixed methods, both in terms of 'evidence' and 'measures'.

Key assumptions

- Evaluation is more productive if it is embedded in an organisation's culture of learning and curiosity about what works, what doesn't work so well, and why and how it works, based on evidence and reflection;
- Evaluation depends on there being a champion in an organisation who is passionate
- about evidence-based learning, reflecting and acting on successes and 'failures';
- Evaluation is, therefore, an ongoing process that begins at the planning stage and carries through beyond a project to inform what happens next;
- Evaluation is about measuring the impact or change that a project will make to people and places – it is a process of measuring the extent to which a project has lived up to the expectations, strategic objectives, and creative intentions set out at the planning stage;
- Evaluation should include the responses of audiences and participants in projects, as well as artists, creatives and other professionals engaged;
- Evaluation is based in practice: in what people do and how they might improve practice by testing ideas, capturing data and reflecting on impact.

Workstream Four: Policy Engagement

Ben Walmsley
and Sue Hayton

Introduction

This workstream aimed to engage directly with policymakers at local, regional and national levels to foster a more interdisciplinary and people/place-centred approach to policy development.

To address our research question regarding how a mixed-methods data and evaluation framework might best respond to the HM Treasury preference for the cost-benefit analysis model of policymaking and evaluation, we aimed to consult with cultural funders and policymakers.

We sought timely feedback on our evolving frameworks from the first two workstreams.

A closing webinar was planned to allow open discussion about the opportunities and challenges raised by the frameworks and by the piloting work conducted under workstream two.

Our activity unfolded in a much more iterative and responsive way than initially planned. When we began the project, DCMS had already embarked on its Culture and Heritage Capital Programme [3] which was officially launched as our project started in January 2021. DCMS invited Walmsley and Hayton to give feedback on their draft framework.

We used this opportunity to highlight the need for diverse cultural evaluation methods, including qualitative, ethnographic, and creative methods.

We also championed a more urgent focus on intangible as well as tangible heritage and culture.

3 See https://www.gov.uk/guidance/culture-and-heritage-capital-portal

Cultural data taskforce

Our close relationship with DCMS also led to us being invited to join a new cultural data taskforce designed to address the fragmented nature of financial and workforce data. Our influence on this taskforce enabled us to influence the inclusion of audience data into the scope of the taskforce.

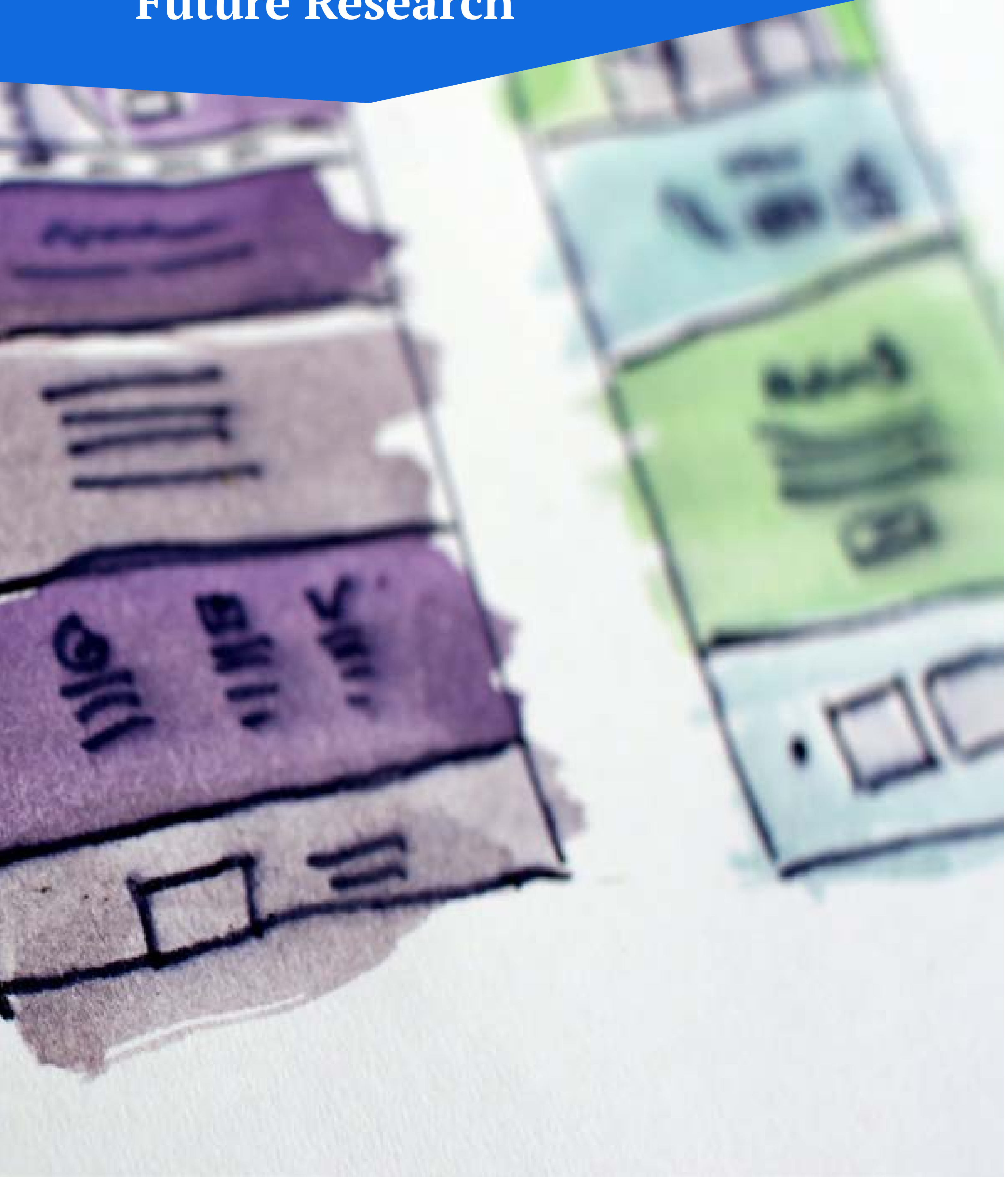
On the back of this, DCMS invited us to jointly host a cultural data roundtable, which will take place in May 2022. At this roundtable, we will present our key findings on data and discuss the implications for evaluation and further investment. This event essentially replaced the need for a dedicated webinar for this workstream.

In the course of the project, we also engaged with national policymakers across the four UK nations via our Covid-19 research project4 to support them with audience data insights in real-time as the pandemic unfolded. We shared good practice across the four nations through the Centre for Cultural Value's dedicated policy engagement network. We co-produced a set of policy recommendations, including a call for a national cultural data observatory based on the findings from WS1.

Finally, we engaged with local and regional policymakers. We did this through a series of postdoctoral policy placements funded by AHRC through the Covid-19 research project[4] and by engaging directly with the new metro mayoral network, with whom we discussed the need for robust, mixed-methods and multi-dimensional cultural evaluation. Significantly, we discovered a shared interest in cultural impact evaluation in local council and city regions and are continuing our engagement with these networks to influence change based on the findings of this project.

4 See **https://www.culturalvalue.org.uk/the-team/covid-19-research-project/**

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications on Future Research



Cultural data

Our research has highlighted that data is currently not optimised in the cultural sector. Given their salary and financing structures, most subsidised cultural organisations do not have the capacity to develop and retain staff with data science skills.

For most organisations, such skills are likely to be bought in or acquired ad hoc internally by staff as needs arise. Small organisations, in particular, often face significant challenges in optimising their data for the purposes of impact evaluation.

Combined, these challenges mean that the full value and impact of cultural production and engagement are currently **under-represented in policy terms**. Moreover, current data protocols mean that it is challenging to map the sector's output, geography and infrastructure.

Our research has identified several opportunities to address these historical challenges. A national cultural observatory is an obvious way to improve and standardise how cultural sector data is collected, collated, managed and analysed in real-time. Future research needs to address the mechanisms required to realise this ambition.

Though reliant on academic skills such as quantitative data analysis and cultural economics that are in short supply in cultural fields, such an entity offers exciting potential to harness digital data and facilitate more innovative data capture from cultural arm's length bodies. An observatory could also enable such organisations to bring their significant data sets onto a national data framework alongside The Audience Agency's Audience Finder data.

Another obvious solution to the current fragmentation of cultural data would be for funding bodies to require their grantees to list their IDBR company record numbers to form a unique reference number standard.

This would reduce manual data matching between different sources and agencies. The cultural quantitative community should also investigate options for cultural data trusts. This could open up opportunities to obtain cultural data via Open Banking data, accelerate innovations in cultural data capture (e.g. via LinkedIn) and help with generating more reliable and real-time estimates of the cultural workforce.

Challenges of a creative and case-study based approach

Our research in workstream two uncovered an openness to and appetite for novel and creative data capture and evaluation. However, it also highlighted a lack of innovative work in this area and frustration with third party expectations of monitoring and evaluation.

We also observed a lack of ideas from organisations regarding what a more creative approach to data capture and evaluation might look like.

One of the critical challenges expressed by our case study research participants in Bradford was the lack of connectedness of cultural activity, which mitigated against a more joined-up approach to data capture and analysis. Participants felt that better data sharing might be possible if activity across the city and region were more connected and cohesive. They believe that if organisations were more able to show economic impact attributable to activity convincingly, this might lever more funding. There was also an acknowledgement that project failures and negative experiences could offer valuable learning curves that have rich potential to inform future work. However, not everyone felt that it was safe to share these. This reflected findings from the recent AHRC-funded Failspace project.[5]

Ultimately our research indicated that it will take time and investment to establish a shared agenda and agree on a methodological approach. Therefore, we concluded that it is too soon to finalise a detailed design for Bradford as a case study. If we decide to embed a city-based case study in our stage two research, the following research phase should focus on relationship building and coalescing a community of cultural data and evaluation. This should be done iteratively and organically to meet the ethos and timescales of the practitioners and organisations involved. This may, of course, speed up if Bradford is successful in its bid to host the UK City of Culture in 2025.

[5] See Jancovich, Leila, and David Stevenson. 2021. Failure seems to be the hardest word to say. International Journal of Cultural Policy

Cultural evaluation, policy engagement and next steps

There remain a series of critical challenges for cultural sector evaluation: lack of expertise and appreciation about what evaluation can do for the sector; failure to capture and convey the social and cultural impacts of culture in a compelling way; and issues with the quality and relevance of data.

Some of these challenges are being overcome, while others remain unresolved and critical. However, there is a growing appetite for progress and momentum for positive change, led by the new Centre for Cultural Value. A growing number of culture sector representatives are keen to advance their understanding and application of evaluation practices. After more than three decades of evaluation-related discussions, stakeholders accept the importance of improving the quality of data collection, assessment and dissemination techniques.

Given the impossibility of determining a single framework suitable for all contexts, we have designed what might be more accurately described as an evaluation planning tool (see Appendix 1). Our key message to the sector is the need to understand evaluation as a participative learning process that should be helpful and empowering to all core stakeholders.

We have been engaging with funders and policymakers to share our insights and findings into cultural sector data and evaluation throughout the project's lifetime. Through the Centre for Cultural Value, we are continuing this work with a view to obtaining additional funding to implement our data and evaluation tools and frameworks and to achieving our vision of a national cultural observatory.

Acknowledgements and credits

Project credits

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For further information please visit **http://www.culturalvalue.org.uk/making-data-pb/**

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p 26: We Are Bradford from Bradford Science Festival 2020.
Photo © Science Museum Group

p 32: Imperial War Museums: Museum visitors explore Refugees, a free season of major exhibitions, new artistic commissions and immersive events taking place across both IWM London and IWM North in 2020 and 2022
Photo © IWM

p 42: Socially distanced visitors at the Unfinished-Business: the fight for women's rights exhibition at the British Library St Pancras
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WORK IN PROGRESS
PROTOTYPE DRAFT ONLY

EVALUATION FOR CHANGE

PLANNING A FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION; EMBEDDING A CULTURE OF LEARNING

ESRC Making Data Work for Public Sector Policy:
A scoping study to develop a
mixed-methods framework for culture

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WARWICK
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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND ASSUMPTIONS

In this introduction, we suggest an approach to evaluation that is flexible and can be tailored to the scale and scope of the work you intend to evaluate. We don't want to provide a single framework for all purposes, rather we will consider what the essential components might be for a framework that works for you. We have focussed on the basics of planning and evaluation that you are likely to need to think about whatever the scale of your project and organisation.

We are making some important assumptions here:

- Evaluation is more productive if it is embedded in an organisation's culture of learning and curiosity about what works, what doesn't work so well, and why and how based on evidence and reflection.
- Evaluation depends on there being a champion in the organisation who is passionate about evidence-based learning, reflecting and acting on successes and 'failures'.
- Evaluation is, therefore, an ongoing process that begins at the planning stage and carries through beyond a project to inform what happens next.
- Evaluation is about measuring the impact or change that a project will make to people and places – it's a process of measuring the extent to which a project has lived up to the expectations and creative intentions set out at the planning stage.
- Evaluation should include the responses of audiences and participants in projects. As well as artists, creatives and other professionals engaged.
- Evaluation is based in practice; in what people do and how they might improve practice through testing ideas, capturing data and reflecting on impact.

BEYOND THE REQUIREMENTS GIVEN

Artistic and cultural work of whatever scale often depends upon external funding from several different sources. The larger the organisation is – a National Portfolio Organisation for instance – the more reporting requirements there are likely to be. But even freelancers and small local organisations can be required to give an account of how funding has been used and to what effect.

In some cases, artists and organisations can see the requirements to evaluate and report to funders as an unwelcome 'extra' that distracts resources from their creative work and intentions. They may feel that evaluation requirements are just that and don't add value to the quality and direction of their work. Interpreting and learning from data on audiences, for instance, can be difficult to do without some training.

On the other hand, freelancers and organisations with a culture of learning and curiosity are more likely to use funders' requirements to inform the planning, delivery, and reflection on projects; to see evaluation as integral to all dimensions of their work – as an opportunity to learn and develop.

MAKING THE MOST OF FUNDER'S REQUIREMENTS

To make more meaningful use of a funder's requirements, and build a culture of learning, you might:

- Start a dialogue with funders at the point of bidding. Explain what is distinctive about your project and what you want to learn from it. Agree on what your baseline and expectations will be and how you want to measure progress – how you want to show the extent to which the project progresses towards the finder's priorities for impact [see the next section for more guidance on identifying a baseline]. Many funders are interested in investing in new ideas work but also for innovative evaluation methods.
- Use Area Profiles if you are a larger organisation that benefits from The Audience Agency support, to better understand their local populations and cultural needs. Smaller organisations might include the cost of a local Area Profile in their funding requests.
- Make more meaningful use of pre and post surveys, by including the questions that really interest you – not just those required. Visit the Impact and Insight Toolkit site and find categories of questions that you might ask according to what you want to know. You can freely include any of these in your own surveys.
- Make your use of evaluation to guide learning, a strength in bids for funding. Being clear about the change you seek and how you will get there will strengthen your funding bid.
- Show that you have an active culture of learning from previous projects.
- Build resources for evaluation into your bids. 5% or more may allow you to use an evaluation consultant or external eye to lead learning and impact work. Ask local universities for support.

MEASURING PROGRESS NEEDS A BASELINE AND PROGRESS INDICATORS

There are many ways of 'measuring' progress and the model that follows assumes a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches. It is about capturing numbers but also the stories and felt experiences they represent. Authentic stories and lived experiences can be used as 'measures'.

What counts as evidence in an evaluation will depend on context and who the evaluation is for and why it's being done. The key is that whatever form the evidence takes it must describe an evidenced change from a baseline position to a post-project change.

To know if a participatory or co-created project has improved levels of wellbeing, for instance, you need to establish what the baseline of wellbeing is at the start of the project and what changes might be expected as the project progresses.

The evidence for this might come from using tools like the ONS4 in pre and post surveys or it might come from participants setting out and then reflecting on their own expectations of how the project will support their own wellbeing; from interviews, journals, artwork and other sources.

To know if a project has led to more inclusive audiences or a particular target audience you need a baseline to measure progress against. The freely available version of The Audience Agency's (TAA) Audience Finder can help build an audience strategy based on the cultural tastes and preferences of different post-codes in their catchment area. At a cost, TAA provides other tools to help you consult and connect with different communities.

Once a baseline is established a set of progress indicators needs to be identified. The best progress indicators are precise, easy to interpret and give insight into the quality and quantity of change. They should represent the markers you will want to use to monitor progress towards change within the time and resource limits of the project. Indicators might, for example, include expected increases in target audience numbers; percentage increases in survey responses to quality and relevance of the project; expected changes in confidence and wellbeing; expected increases in income and investment.

In the model that follows progress indicators are needed for the **outputs** – what you produce – and for the **outcomes** – what actual changes were achieved as a result of the project. Progress indicators are your evidence for the extent to which change is happening.

WHEEL OF CHANGE AS AN APPROACH TO PLANNING AND EVALUATION

In this section, we introduce, define and explain how our proposed evaluation framework, the Wheel of Change, works and can be implemented. We define the process of moving from impact and ambition to actual results as a **Wheel of Change (WoC)**.

This idea is based on the Theory of Change frameworks that are commonly required by funders and others to support project proposals. We propose the WoC as a planning tool that needs to be put in place before a project commences to guide delivery and progress towards realistic and measurable outcomes.

We begin by explaining the stages of the WoC approach and relevant evaluation priorities for each stage. The idea is that evaluation is embedded in and contributes to each stage of the WOC. We then look at the **Evaluation Learning Cycle** that is linked to the WoC. Finally, we offer a case study example of the WoC in action.

Crucially, the WoC needs to be shared and owned by all involved in the project.[1] In large organisations, it is essential that the WoC, or any other evaluation plan, is championed by the senior leadership team and guides planning, production and delivery.

Every project and organisation will need to find its own **balance** between capturing **standardised evaluation data** that may be required by funders, or for supporting evidence of economic or social value and more **context-specific** evaluation data about the quality of the project as it is experienced by those taking part and what it means for them.

Standardised evaluation data methods are often based in metrics and numbers. They emphasise a standard of evidence that is measurable and can be compared to baselines and other projects and places. For instance, increases in participation; changes in audience profile; protected characteristics. Quality metrics are often required by funders who need comparative data with other projects they fund and evidence of how their funding has made a difference.

Data that is context-specific to the project will be more complex, inclusive, multi-layered and meaningful to those directly involved. It is likely to be highly local and uses a wider range of measures from journals and creative writing to pre and post evaluation workshops where those involved agree on what is to be measured and how.

Standardised evaluation data can be more powerful in attracting funding, advocacy and influencing policy. But specific data can be more powerful for those who have lived experience of the project and what personal, social, and artistic learning has come from it.

Artists, organisations and producers in different places with very different scale, resources and purposes for a project, will adapt and edit a Wheel of Change to their own requirements and those of funders.

1 Useful links and principles to support co-creating evaluation cycles include:
https://www.theaudienceagency.org/tools/community-consultation-toolkit
https://socialvalueuk.org/resource/principles-of-social-value/
https://www.commonapproach.org/common-foundations/

WHEEL OF CHANGE

The Wheel of Change begins with hope that a 'problem' can be changed and a positive statement of what the intended change will look like – **What needs to change? What is the change you seek? What are the right words to express this?**

The hope is supported by a carefully thought-through plan of how the change can realistically be achieved with the resources available. Part of the planning of a WoC is to work out how you will evaluate what you deliver and to what extent the project has reached its ambition – what evidence will be captured at each stage and how will it be used to inform planning, delivery and learning.

There are **five stages** in the Wheel of Change planning and delivery process. They provide the strategy – or narrative – of how you will work towards your desired change and how you will know what impact it is having. Each step in the circle is also a stage in the evaluation process.

The Circle begins with a statement of **impacts and ambitions** and then considers the resources (**investments**) available, and the **activities** needed to produce **outputs** that will lead to measurable difference (**outcomes**) which then loop back to the initial **impacts and ambitions.** How and to what extent has the project contributed to the desired change and creative intention? How will you know there has been a change? What will count as evidence for you and your project?

This is where the baseline and progress indicators come in. The baseline captures the starting point for the WoC – what is the problem that has been identified and what evidence of this do we have? The progress indicators provide evidence of the changes made over the life of the project.

The WoC is described here in a clockwise motion, but you can find your own path through the stages. You might want to identify the expected outcomes when you envision the impacts and ambitions and then consider investments, activities and outputs. You might start with identifying investments and then think about the change these investments might lead to. However, you use the WoC there just needs to be a clear through line between the stages based on achieving change.

IMPACTS AND AMBITIONS

We begin by describing the problem the project addresses and envisioning the change you want to make – not as an 'objective' but as a statement of what an impact will actually look like if the project is successful. What difference will the project make to people and places? The ambition for impact is the beacon that leads the SoC process. It may not be achievable as the result of one project and it may take time to be realised in full. But the desired impact guides and informs the work that needs to be done. It keeps a collective focus on ambition and longer-term results. As far as possible, the impact should be negotiated and agreed by all involved so that there is a common focus, ownership and desire to make the change happen.

EXAMPLES OF IMPACTS AND AMBITIONS:

- Arts and culture make a significant contribution to wellbeing and civic pride.
- Our work challenges and is relevant to the needs and interests of our audiences/participants.
- Young people shape and influence the work we do and discover their passion for arts and culture.

POSSIBLE EVALUATION QUESTIONS:

How and by whom have the impacts been decided? Is there a shared understanding of what the change will look like? What is the need or problem the impact seeks to challenge? (eg. Is it new and/or more inclusive audiences? Is it an increase in cultural participation? A social or cultural innovation? Inspiration? Improved financial resilience? A place-based need for civic pride and Increased levels of wellbeing?).

SOURCES OF DATA THAT CAN INFORM THE SCALE AND SCOPE OF THE DESIRED CHANGE:

Eg. Baseline audience/participation data; population data; local knowledge; consultations; funder requirements.

1. INVESTMENTS

What we can achieve (Impacts) will depend on the level of investments we have available. The kinds of resources that make a project possible include its dedicated budget but also people who can commit varied amounts of time, talent and expertise. There can be financial and/or people investments from partners, other stakeholders or volunteers; the quality and suitability of available workspaces is also a key resource; the investment of evaluation and learning resources.

POSSIBLE EVALUATION QUESTIONS:

How much progress towards the impacts can the available resources be expected to achieve? What is the best use of resources to maximise impact? Can the project expect to draw in additional resources as it develops? Will there be opportunities to create income from the project? What expectations do the investors have – eg. adding cultural, social and/or economic value?

2. ACTIVITIES

Depending on the investments available, what cultural and other activities are needed to produce outputs that are aligned with the intended impact/s? *What* needs making, doing, organising, marketing? *Who* will be responsible and involved in these activities? *How* will these activities lead to outputs?

POSSIBLE EVALUATION QUESTIONS:

To what extent are the activities guided by and aligned to the impacts? What expectations do artists, co-creators and other producers have for the work? How is progress towards outputs being captured and monitored? To what extent Is the activity inclusive in terms of who is involved and their leadership capacity?

SOURCES OF DATA THAT CAN CAPTURE AND INFORM THE ACTIVITY AS IT DEVELOPS:

Material from workshops and consultations; demographics of who is involved from postcodes and surveys; interviews; creative capture of the 'journey'; media visibility; audience segmentation strategy to determine expected audiences; impact on levels of confidence and wellbeing from co-creation or participation activity; blogs.

3. OUTPUTS

Outputs are produced by the activity – an event, an experience, an exhibition, a marketing campaign. These are the *products* of the activity, so to speak. They are intended to contribute directly to bringing about culture-led change.

POSSIBLE EVALUATION QUESTIONS:

Have the outputs reached and/or included their priority audiences? If not why not? How have different audience members responded differently? To what extent have the expectations at the activity stage been met? What has each output contributed to the aligned outcomes? What success indicators have been put in place or are required by funders?

EXAMPLES OF OUTPUT PROGRESS INDICATORS (BASELINE AND/OR EXPECTATIONS):

- Actual attendance figures compared to baseline or expectations
- Increase in numbers from priority audiences
- Profile of participants compared to baseline and /or expectations
- Quality of performance or experience captured through audience/participant surveys
- Pre&Post artist and producing team survey findings (meeting expectations and process learning)

SOURCES OF DATA THAT CAN CAPTURE RESPONSES TO AND EVIDENCE FOR THE OUTPUT/S IMPACT:

Audience/Artist surveys; postcodes and demographics of audiences and participants; Impact and Insight Toolkit or similar to evaluate the quality of output and experience; actual attendance data compared to expected audience; social media analysis.

WORK IN PROGRESS
PROTOTYPE DRAFT ONLY

4. OUTCOMES

The outcomes are the short-term and measurable changes that will contribute to the impacts described in the first stage of the circle of change. Impacts may not be fully realised – they are supposed to be ambitious and aspirational. The outcomes should describe the changes that can be expected and can be evidenced, that will make a direct contribution to achieving the impacts. What changes can the investment, activity and outputs make possible? The logic of the SoC is that if you start off with a big ambition and then *plan* how investments can be used to create activities that lead to outputs that are in turn aligned to short-term outcomes, that will contribute to the longer-term impacts.

EXAMPLES OF OUTCOMES:

- New voices are celebrated and given a platform for performance to a wide range of audiences.
- Co-creation drives work that is relevant and innovative and engages new audiences.
- Local cultural organisations work together to plan and deliver creative opportunities for young people.

EXAMPLES OF OUTCOME INDICATORS:

- Number of participants who have not been showcased previously
- Number of projects/work which are co-created
- Programme is representative of the local area
- Number of cultural organisations actively in partnership planning and delivering creative opportunities for young people
- Young people involved in creative opportunities have gained new interests, experiences and skills
- Number of participants demonstrating positive increases in wellbeing through use of recognised scales

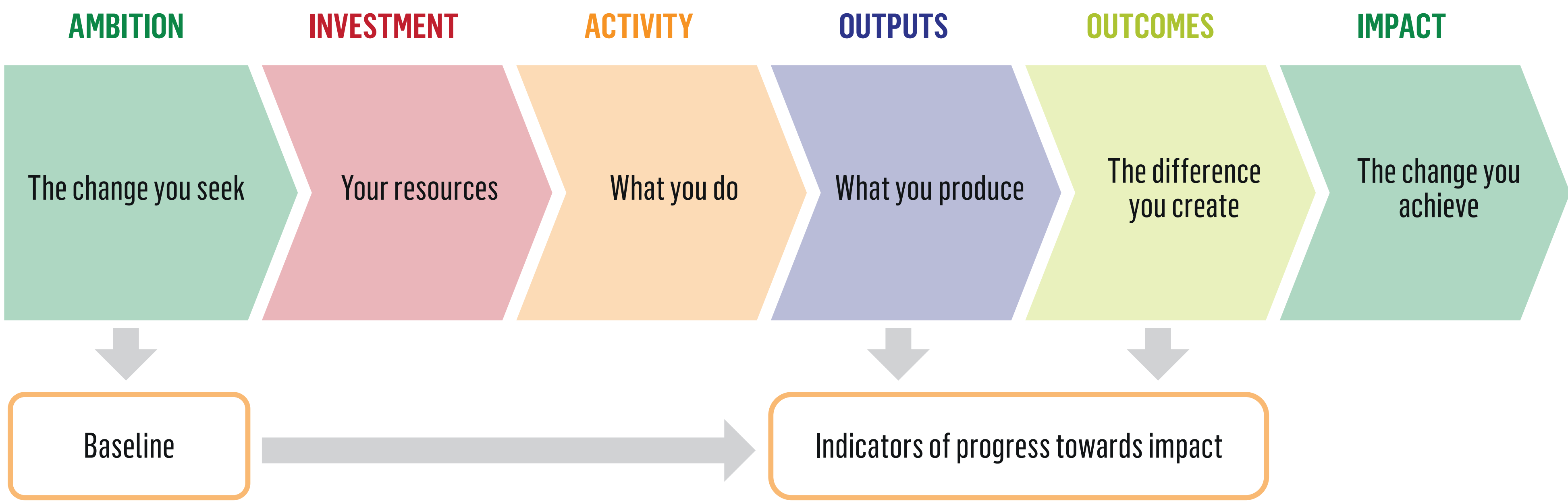
POSSIBLE EVALUATION QUESTIONS:

What material evidence is there that the output/s successfully contributed to outcomes? Were the outcomes sufficiently ambitious? What success indicators have been put in place or are required by funders? How will these be measured both in terms of quantity (audience numbers and demographics or revenue, for instance) and quality (stories, individual and collective 'journeys)? How have the outcomes supported progress towards longer-term impacts?

SOURCES OF DATA THAT CAN CAPTURE AND MEASURE EVIDENCE FOR THE OUTCOME:

Baseline data; KPIs or targets set; surveys; aggregated data from previous steps; reporting to funders, stakeholders and organisation; learning insights from the project that identify strengths and weaknesses; evidence to support how and why outputs have been successful or less successful in achieving outcomes.

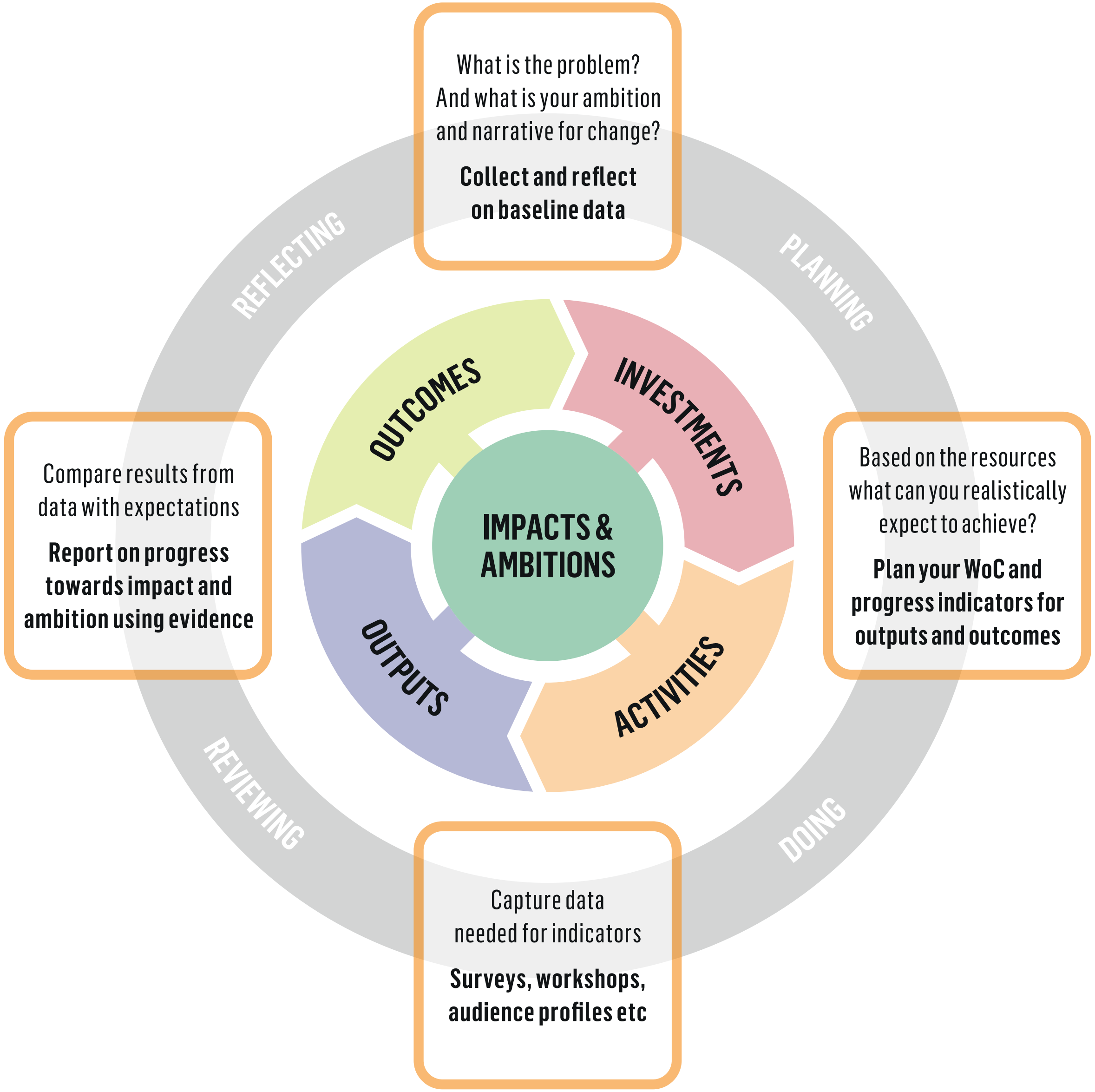
SUMMARY OF THE WHEEL OF CHANGE AND KEY EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS



THE EVALUATION LEARNING CYCLE

In this section, we offer a model of evaluation as a learning cycle. Evaluation is most valuable and most valued in organisations and practices that embed a culture of learning in everything they do, as evaluations are done in this way to offer insights into what works and how but also what may not work so well and why. The Evaluation Learning Cycle (ELC) borrows from Action Research models that are frequently used in health and education to identify problems and what actions might be taken to improve practice. The basic **Action Research Cycle has 4 Stages: Reflect on Problem. Plan action. Act and collect data. Review, report and reflect.**

The ELC stages are:



WHEEL OF CHANGE CASE STUDY:

This is an example of a worked through WoC from a small arts organization that specialises in nurturing, developing and performing new writing that represents the distinctive voices in their local communities[2].

The organization depends on project-by-project grant-funding from multiple local and national sources. In this case, the organisation has applied for £5k a National Lottery Project Grant to part-fund a new writing project focusing on seldom heard, community voices.

This funding will provide for a media campaign to identify local storytellers who are then invited to a series of local writing gyms supported by professional writers including the artistic director for the organisation. These gyms will lead to a selection of new writers who develop their work for a series of rehearsed readings and final performances.

The activity and outputs are aligned to a cultural outcome that focuses on the organisation's work and represents its mission statement to showcase new and local voices. This outcome is intended to contribute to a wider place-based impact for citizens to have pride and confidence in their abilities which the local cultural ecosystem is supporting. In this case, the impact is shared by other place sectors including the Local Authority, Education and Public Health.

CREATIVE INTENTIONS:

At the planning stage the organisation used the Insight and Impact Toolkit lists of dimensions to help them to agree on their intentions and expectations for the project and the evaluation process. These included:

PARTICIPATION	PERFORMANCE
• **Responsiveness:** 'The organisers responded well to the needs of the group' • **Experimenting:** 'I felt comfortable trying new things • **Feedback:** 'I got helpful feedback' • **Creativity:** 'I feel more able to express myself creatively' • **Empathy:** 'It helped me understand other people's points of view' • **Identity:** 'It helped me to see myself differently' • **Completion:** 'I feel more confident about knowing when my work is finished' • **Skills (writing):** 'I improved my technical writing skills • **Network:** 'I have increased my network of people to support with my writing'	• **Challenge:** It was thought-provoking • **Distinctiveness:** It was different from things I've experienced before • **Relevance:** It has something to say about the world in which we live • **Cultural Contribution:** 'It provides an important addition to the cultural life of the area' • **Relatability:** 'I could relate to the emotions expressed by the characters' • **Independent Interpretation:** 'I felt free to make my own meaning with the work' • **Intimacy:** 'I felt close to the artists/ performers • **Place:** 'It made me feel proud of my local area' • **Content:** It reflected a broad and inclusive range of voices' • **Pride:** It strengthened my cultural pride'

2 Other examples of small organisations using a logic model for innovative planning and evaluation:
https://wearedarts.org.uk/creative-directions-in-the-community/
https://spiritof2012.org.uk/creative-arts-east-our-day-out-pha/

INVESTMENT	ACTIVITY	OUTPUTS	CULTURAL OUTCOMES	PLACE IMPACT
• Writer/s fees • Hire of venue spaces • Admin • Marketing and comms • Evaluation • £5k Lottery funding	• Organising social media campaign to collect local stories • Commissioning professional writer/s • Recruiting representative voices for the gyms • Identifying accessible venues for gyms • Selecting representative voices from gyms • Rehearsing and performing in local venues • Evaluating participation and performance	• Social media campaign surfaces local stories • Writing gyms led by professional writers • Rehearsed readings • Public performance of monologues reflecting on place and identity • Monthly local writers group established **Output indicators** • Number of participants in gyms/ performance compared to expectations • Demographics and postcodes of participants and audiences compared to expectations • Increased well being and confidence for participants • Increased confidence and ability as writers	• New voices and talent are supported and showcased • New writing network established to express local identities and sense of place **Outcome indicators** • Participants feel more able to express themselves creatively • There is an increased supportive network of local writers • Audiences recognize the relevance and distinctiveness of the performances	**Citizens have pride and confidence in their place and abilities**

EVALUATION METHODS:

The organisation is committed to measuring the extent to which this new writing project does contribute to the expected (cultural) outcome. They have identified a set of output and outcome indicators that will provide the evidence they need. They will use several evaluation methods to capture both the numbers and the stories generated by the project.

These could include some of the following:

- **On-reflection journals** kept by the professional writers and the new voices participating in the outputs stage – in multiple forms including blogs and illustrations.
- **Story of change workshops** held with the participants in the writing gyms to understand individual expectations for the project, held at the outset and closure. These will establish the extent to which different participants' initial expectations have been met differently and to what extent.
- **Post-code capture** at every stage and in every encounter to understand where participants and audiences are coming from. Local Ward profiles and other data from Local Authority sources will tell something about the postcode's local neighbourhoods in terms of ethnicity, health and income inequalities.
- **Surveys**
  - Surveys of participants and audiences to collect individual demographics in terms of protected characteristics, age and gender.
  - Surveys using Impact and Insight Toolkit items to capture perceptions of quality and the distinctiveness of the project.
  - Surveys for participants including questions about levels of confidence and wellbeing pre and post engagement.
- **Social media analysis** of responses to campaign and subsequent messages relating to the project.

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