

Inter Faith Week – evaluating impact and learning for the future

Monitoring and evaluating is not exciting, but it is good to do! It can help you plan an even more successful event in the future and it may also help demonstrate the importance of your work to your users and funders.

At the outset of planning, decide what you want your event to achieve (outputs and outcomes); then monitor it; and later evaluate to see how well it has met your objectives. Even if an event has not gone 100% as you had hoped, it can be an opportunity to learn and grow. And very often, evaluation will show that events have gone even better than people hoped!

Look to gather basic information such as:

- Number of people attending
- The drop-out rate, if you had pre-registration
- Diversity of attendees
- Contacts made
- Money raised, if relevant
- Social media engagement

Gather participants' opinions and observations. This might be gathered through:

- An evaluation handed to participants during the event or an online survey sent afterwards
- A collation of media coverage
- Social media statistics: comments, shares, retweets, mentions and new followers
- Possibly a small number of interviews
- A debriefing meeting of the organisers

If respondents are providing personal or contact information on a feedback form, a data protection statement should be included. This should explain why you are collecting the information, what you will use it for, who will see it, where you'll store it, and when you'll delete it. The Information Commissioner's Office has published guidelines on this, including for charities, on its website at www.ico.org.uk

Before your event, agree your outputs and outcomes, and in the light of that discuss and agree what the questions to participants will be. Some of the kinds of questions you might ask are:

- Did the event meet your hopes and expectations?
- Was it thought provoking?
- Was there a high level/quality of speaker(s) and/or participants?
- Did you meet and talk with people of different faiths and belief traditions?
- What was, in your view, the best thing about the event/activity?
- How could the event/activity have been improved?
- What did you think of the event location/menu/facilities?
- What is your religion and belief background/gender/age?
- Would you come to such an event again/recommend to a friend?

When doing your evaluation, draw together the information and views that you have gathered. Reflect together as organisers on some overall questions such as:

- Did the event or activity bring together a new pattern of participants?
- Did it create new patterns of contact engagement?
- If it was a social action project, who did it help and in what ways?
- Did the event or activity stimulate debate or new thinking?
- Did it inspire a commitment to a follow-up activity?
- Did the event/activity raise awareness or build profile of your group / project / organisation?

Good evaluation is useful to you, because it can help you to improve your future events. It can also be useful to other people. Aim to write up a short 'evaluation report' which explains clearly and simply what your event was, what the aims were, who attended, how you evaluated, and what you found out.

A number of toolkits and guides exist to help small groups and charities monitor and evaluate the impact of their activities. You may be interested in:
tinyurl.com/NVCO-knowhow-measuring-impact
www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/toolkit