



Review of Terminology from Navigating Evaluation Basics

1. Research and Evaluation

- a. **Research** is scientific inquiry undertaken to discover knowledge, test theories, and generalize across time and space. Research informs science. (Patton, 2014)
- b. **Evaluation** is undertaken to inform decisions, clarify options, identify improvements, and provide information about programs and policies within contextual boundaries of time, place, values, and politics. Useful evaluation supports action. (Patton, 2014)
- c. **Role of Research in Evaluation** is to inform both planning of exhibits programs and services as well as evaluation designs. Planning is supported by research that provides proof or evidence about what is known. Evaluation designs do not need to include questions about what is already known.
- d. **Evaluation Types** in informal learning settings include front-end, formative, remedial, and summative. These types parallel the planning, development, and design process.
 - i. **Front-end evaluation** aims to provide important findings about audience characteristics before development.
 - ii. **Formative evaluation** aims to improve something during its development.
 - iii. **Remedial evaluation** aims to improve something before it is available to a larger target population.
 - iv. **The summative evaluation** aims to provide evidence to help people make judgments about something.
 - v. **Audience research** refers to studies of potential and prospective groups who may access the offerings of an institution. Audience research may help you define your target audience in planning and in sampling a population in an evaluation.

2. Terms Used in an Evaluation Plan

- a. **People and Groups**
 - i. **Evaluation audiences**—Groups of people who will use evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations to make decisions and take action. These may include the project team, administrators, board members, and funders.
 - ii. **Evaluation stakeholders**—Groups of people who may benefit or be at risk as a result of an evaluation. These include evaluation audiences as well as staff members in other departments, visitors to museums, patrons of libraries, community organizations that use institutional offerings, taxpayers, local government, and citizens.
 - iii. **Target audience**—The population of people you plan to experience an exhibition, program or visitor service. Generally, this audience is defined by demographics, levels of knowledge, attitudes, and skills, or entering the narrative.
- b. **Evaluation Questions** are the overarching questions an evaluation study aims to explore. These are not the questions asked directly to respondents.
- c. **Evaluation Phases** are named for the purpose of evaluation activities as they change over time (as the study progresses): Preparation, Planning, Data Collection, Data Analysis, and Reporting.

3. Terms in Planning and Logic Models

Logic Models graphically depict your program, exhibition, initiative, project, or even the sum total of all of your organization's work. They are sometimes referred to logical frameworks, theories of change, or program matrices. They serve as a foundation for planning, development, design, and evaluation. (Innovation Network, no date)

- a. **Resources** are what the institution provides to support the project. They include staff members' time and expertise, budget, and external advisory groups.
- b. **Activities** in some Logic Models refer to the type of informal learning activities or services the target audience will experience. These include programs, exhibitions, and visitor services such as orientation, ticketing, or wayfinding programs.
- c. **Short-term Outcomes** are immediate effects of an informal learning experience.
- d. **Long-term Impacts** are ways in which people change things they do or think in their daily lives and how these changes affect society.

4. Evaluation Methods

Evaluation Methods are ways in which data are collected and analyzed. The major categories are quantitative and qualitative. Three major types are interviews, observations, and records.

- a. **Quantitative methods** involve numerical data and can be analyzed using statistics.
 - i. **Descriptive statistics** refer to mean, median, mode and range of a group of numerical data.
 - ii. **Inferential statistics** determine the probability of some result occurring in numerical data by chance. Larger samples and more representative samples are needed to use these statistics in the analysis.
- b. **Qualitative methods** involve textual data and can be analyzed by coding or through the constant comparative method.
 - i. **Coding** refers to the assignment of category names to groups of verbal responses.
 - ii. **The Constant Comparative method** refers to the ongoing identification of similarities and differences between data cases. **Cases** can refer to individuals, groups, or implementations of learning experiences.
- c. **Samples** are the portion of a larger population from which you select respondents or subjects from whom you collect data or about whom you collect data.
 - i. **Respondents** are the people in a sample from whom you collect data. In some situations, they are called subjects.
 - ii. **Representative samples** have similar proportions of characteristics of the respondents in the study/method that are similar to characteristics in a larger population, generally your target audience. Example: A representative sample may have similar demographics (age, gender, ethnic identification, locals, and repeat/first-time visitors) to your institution.
 - iii. **Purposive samples** are selected to have characteristics important to answering the questions of a study. Example: A study to answer the question, "Do Adults with other adults use interactives at the same level frequency as Adults with children?" would purposively sample visiting groups of these two types.
 - iv. **Population samples** involve trying to collect data from and about everyone who participates in an informal learning experience. The higher the percentage of people from whom data are collected the more trustworthy the data are in reaching findings, conclusions, and recommendations.