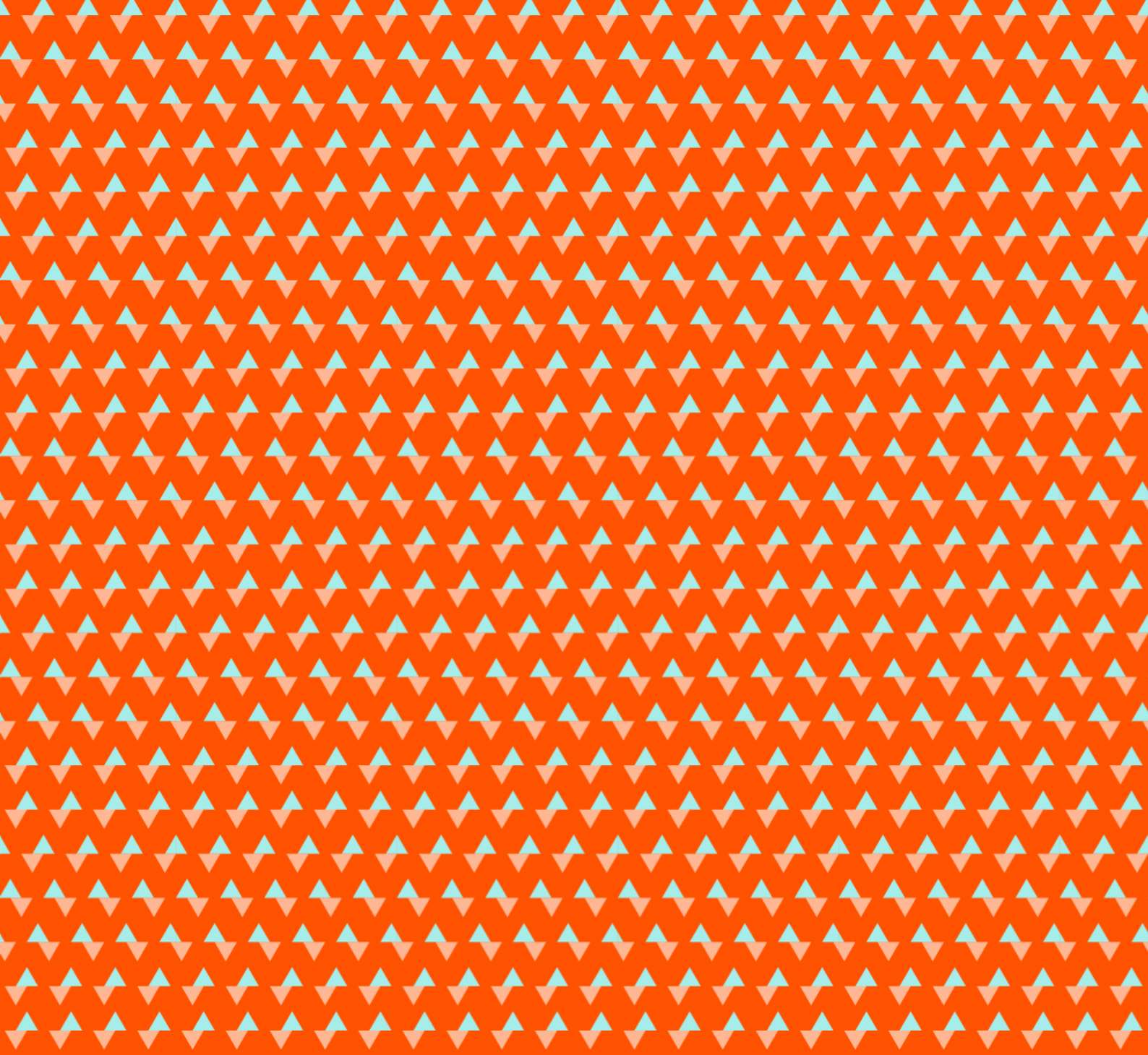




culture/SHIFT evaluation framework

Complexity-appropriate evaluation for arts-based
interventions in climate change projects

cultureforclimate.scot



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This is a living document that will be reviewed and updated as we gain further experience and insight.

We are committed to continue researching evaluation, building shared capacity and reflexively adapting our own approach.

We aim to update this document as we learn over time, trial and develop processes with stakeholders, or find useful resources to share.

This framework was developed by Emma Hall, in collaboration with Culture for Climate Scotland's culture/SHIFT team, as part of a SGSAH funded collaborative doctoral award at the University of Glasgow.

1. Overview

Culture for Climate Scotland's culture/SHIFT programme focuses on the role of arts and culture in transforming society and addressing environmental challenges. Tackling complex environmental problems requires more than political and technical solutions: it also requires a shift in our current culture.

In the past, culture/SHIFT has implemented arts-based methods to increase public engagement with environmental issues, such as climate change, marine protected areas and sustainable travel.

Arts-based methods can promote participation, change ways of thinking, galvanise action, encourage emotional connection and provide ways to gather and connect. However, these impacts are often challenging to evaluate.

Why is evaluation important for culture/SHIFT?

Evaluation plays a crucial role in the design, development and delivery of all culture/SHIFT projects. It helps us to understand how our interventions are implemented, what the impacts are and what we might change in the future.

Prioritising evaluation empowers us to:

- ▶ **Learn and be informed:** Evaluation provides evidence that informs our day-to-day decision making. We are always learning more about how our projects work and the diverse ways in which they make a difference. This evidence helps us to understand risks, to plan project support and to innovate new approaches.
- ▶ **Make a difference:** Understanding what works, and why, helps us to create arts-based interventions that make a difference. We use our evidence to inform the design and delivery of future projects, helping us to learn from our past experiences and apply this knowledge to create new, impactful interventions.
- ▶ **Be held accountable:** Evaluation helps us to be transparent and accountable to our funders, project stakeholders and the public. In a time of multiple crises, it is important to ensure our projects are both effective and ethical. We believe evaluation can help build trust in our work, and sharing learning can inspire others.

Why was this framework developed?

Despite these multiple benefits, evaluation remains an ongoing challenge for culture/SHIFT. We frequently encounter difficulties evaluating arts-based interventions due to the complexity and uniqueness of each project.

In 2020, evaluation was identified as a key challenge within the culture/SHIFT workstream. Culture for Climate Scotland (CCS) collaborated with the University of Glasgow to support a four-year PhD research project on arts-based interventions. One strand of this project focused on understanding why challenges existed for evaluation and what might help to navigate them.

Two culture/SHIFT projects were evaluated as case studies: Climate Beacons and SEASOH. We used learnings from these two projects to inform the thinking behind this framework, with the aim of providing a useful approach to evaluate future culture/SHIFT projects.

What did we learn about evaluation challenges?

In general, evaluation is a time-consuming and resource-intensive process that requires specific knowledge and expertise. However, working in an interdisciplinary, arts-based context introduces several additional evaluation challenges, including:

- ▶ **Multiple perspectives:** culture/SHIFT projects often bring together broad cross-sector collaborations. Partners might be unfamiliar with working in an arts-based context and may have differing understandings of either the intervention itself or the purpose of evaluation.
- ▶ **Process-led:** Arts-based interventions are often process-orientated, meaning that the initial intention or design of a project might develop over time. This process and the changes involved are often an essential part of the intervention and just as important as delivering an 'end product'.
- ▶ **Diverse outcomes:** Arts-based outcomes can be intangible and therefore difficult to observe or evidence. For example, it can be challenging to capture the emotional impact of a project, or how it changed people's ways of thinking. In addition, whilst funding often focuses on individual outcomes, culture/SHIFT projects often aspire to important collective, organisational and systemic changes, which are equally important to evaluate.
- ▶ **Unique designs:** Arts-based interventions are often unique and may employ a diversity of artistic disciplines or approaches over a project's lifetime. Given that each intervention has different aims and outcomes, it makes it difficult to develop a one-size-fits-all approach to evaluation in culture/SHIFT.
- ▶ **Unsuitable methods:** Given that there are no established methods for arts-based evaluation, it can be challenging to find methods that are non-intrusive and context appropriate, for example, when working with smaller participant groups or diverse ages. Often, qualitative methods are most appropriate, but they produce large amounts of data that can be challenging to analyse and from which it may be hard to draw robust conclusions.
- ▶ **Complexity:** Arts-based projects are often delivered within complex environmental and social systems, and interventions are frequently unique, deeply contextual, and aspire to multiple outcomes. In these circumstances, it isn't possible to directly control outcomes and often changes might be unforeseen. These factors introduce complexity and make it more challenging to ensure an appropriate evaluation design.

What did we learn about our evaluation needs?

It isn't inevitable that evaluation happens in a certain way – acknowledging this can help to challenge our assumptions and encourage new ways of thinking and working. Through our research into evaluation and our everyday practice, we have learned our culture/SHIFT evaluation approach needs to be:

Bespoke

▶ A one-size-fits-all approach is not possible for arts-based evaluation and traditional approaches are often not appropriate.

▶ Evaluation needs to be agile, responsive and tailored to the innovative nature of an arts-based approach and to the unique circumstances of each culture/SHIFT project, including resource constraints.

Holistic

▶ Our evaluation approaches need to be holistic in considering the whole collaborative process, rather than just the activities delivered.

▶ Whilst individual impact or behaviour change outcomes are often prioritised by funders, it is important to understand and evidence the diverse ways interventions affect collective, organisational and systemic change.

Values led

▶ Evaluation approaches need to align with our organisational values and the inclusive, creative and participatory ways in which we design our culture/SHIFT interventions.

▶ Artists, local practitioners and stakeholders need to be immersed in shaping evaluation and designing methods, as their unique knowledge and expertise can help us to generate more effective and appropriate approaches.

Complexity appropriate

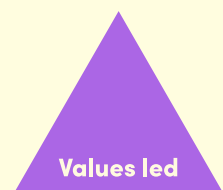
▶ culture/SHIFT projects are very diverse, but what they have in common is complexity. Interventions often operate at several levels, involve multiple stakeholders, and have many diverse and interacting components.

▶ Linear, traditional evaluation methods are not designed to contend with the uncertainty of complex interventions and therefore culture/SHIFT's evaluation approach needs to be complexity appropriate.

Reflexive

▶ Evaluation needs to inform future decisions and projects to promote an evidence-based culture of continuous reflection and improvement.

▶ Evaluation needs to be embedded from the beginning of projects to ensure learning can reflexively shape the design and delivery of interventions and provide us with the informed confidence to try new things.



Throughout this framework, we will refer to these points as our key evaluation principles. Whilst this entire framework is guided by these overarching principles, different sections or processes might be more relevant to one principle than another. We will indicate where each principle is particularly relevant within the framework using the icons shown on the previous page. For example, a particular stage or process that is 'reflexive' will be accompanied by this symbol:



What are the aims of this framework?

This culture/SHIFT evaluation framework aims to address our needs by establishing new processes and values to guide our evaluation approach. Ideas for the framework were developed by drawing on lessons learnt from action research and from desk-based reviews of external approaches.

- 1. To describe** lessons learnt from our research in relation to evaluating arts-based interventions, including our key principles.
- 2. To recognise** the value of a complexity-appropriate approach in navigating challenges and meeting our evaluation needs.
- 3. To provide** a practical and accessible guide for evaluating future culture/SHIFT projects. This framework will undergo a continued development and evolution as we improve our understanding and trial different processes and methods.

2. Complexity and evaluation



In the previous section, we mentioned the term **complexity** and identified our need for culture/SHIFT evaluation to be **complexity appropriate**.

Our aim in this section is to:

- 1. Define and explore** what these terms mean in relation to culture/SHIFT.
- 2. Understand the challenges** complexity introduces for project evaluation.
- 3. Examine** what a complexity-appropriate approach offers and how it aligns with our key evaluation principles.

What is complexity?

Complexity is a term that has been used across the social sciences, particularly in systems theory. It describes how the social world is made up of many diverse components that interact in unpredictable and dynamic ways. Social interventions are often complex, with unpredictable pathways, non-linear and unexpected outcomes, and components that adapt and change over time. This complexity arises due to the socio-ecological systems within which interventions take place, as well as the nature of the interventions themselves.

How do we encounter complexity?

The culture/SHIFT programme has a decade's worth of experience in using arts-based interventions to target environmental issues. When delivering our interventions we regularly encounter complexity at the following different levels:

1. Wider context

- ▶ culture/SHIFT operates within a dynamic social, political and economic context, with society, behaviour, knowledge, politics and decision making all evolving rapidly.
- ▶ Our work targets environmental issues, such as climate change, that span both social and ecological systems and have impacts that cross different temporal and spatial scales.
- ▶ Environmental issues often have many interdependent causes and diverse solutions, and responsibility is usually spread across different policy domains, sectors and actors.
- ▶ Usually, our work exists in complicated spaces where there might be many external interventions already taking place that target eco-social issues in different ways.
- ▶ Our project funding is often obtained from several sources and each funder might seek to address environmental issues in particular ways or have specific funding requirements.

2. Interventions themselves

- ▶ culture/SHIFT interventions are often locally specific, unique and seek multiple outcomes.
- ▶ Arts-based interventions employ a broad range of approaches that may evolve over time or differ across locations or events.
- ▶ Often, large numbers of partners or stakeholders are involved in designing and delivering culture/SHIFT interventions.
- ▶ People may respond to the interventions in multiple or unexpected ways that might be difficult to predict or anticipate in advance.
- ▶ Places always have a specific set of conditions and a history, which inevitably differs from other locations, and the success of our interventions depends on this unique context.
- ▶ Over time, the interventions themselves or the artists and local practitioners may change the context or environment in which they are operating.

3. Evaluation processes

- ▶ Greater numbers of stakeholders make it more challenging to design an evaluation approach or establish shared perspectives on the aims or outcomes of an intervention.
- ▶ It is common that responsibility for evaluation is shared between partners, meaning there is no central point of control for delivering an evaluation approach.
- ▶ Arts-based interventions can be more challenging to evaluate, potentially requiring specific expertise or context-appropriate methods to understand diverse or unexpected outcomes.
- ▶ Evaluation is usually undertaken in the short term and this timeframe is often misaligned with both the long-term aims of an intervention and the nature of environmental change.

For example, Climate Beacons targeted environmentally and socially complex climate issues across seven different geographical regions in Scotland. The project was delivered during the period of high activity surrounding COP26, with many interventions targeting public engagement on climate change and many external factors potentially influencing the changes observed.

At a local level, each Beacon developed a diverse programme of events that involved multiple partner organisations and an array of unique arts-based activity. To evaluate the Climate Beacons project, we needed to work with many different stakeholders to understand and evidence a diversity of outcomes over different temporal or spatial scales. Each of these factors resulted in complexity.

Why does complexity matter for evaluation?

Complexity poses challenges for the ways we might think about delivering our culture/SHIFT projects, how we design their evaluation, the types of methods we use to collect and analyse data, and the ways in which we communicate our findings. For evaluation, complexity matters because our understanding of how arts-based interventions work affects the ways in which we assess their impact.

Traditional evaluation approaches are often linear and designed to deal with projects and interventions that have fewer factors. Such factors can usually be known, controlled or predicted in advance, meaning that change is easier to understand and observe. Arts-based interventions involve complex change relationships due to multiple interacting factors, potentially across several levels or areas of implementation.

culture/SHIFT projects are therefore not suited to evaluation methods involving simple cause and effect. With arts-based interventions, the 'mechanisms' by which interventions work are often poorly understood, difficult to predict, or too complex to fully recognise. Unpredictable, interacting factors make it challenging to understand causal links, to anticipate or evaluate project impact, and to control project outcomes. As a result, employing a uniform, one-size-fits-all approach to evaluation or focusing on linear cause and effect is unlikely to be appropriate. By ignoring complexity, we are likely to develop inappropriate evaluation approaches that end up providing an incomplete understanding of project impact.

How can we work with complexity?

Importantly, we need to acknowledge this complexity as the starting point for any evaluation. Arts-based projects are not linear or straightforward and require a complexity-based approach that can help us to navigate uncertainty. As we researched and explored complexity-appropriate evaluation, it became apparent that the fundamental concepts broadly overlapped with our key evaluation principles, as outlined below. At their core, complexity-appropriate evaluation approaches are:



Flexible and non-prescriptive

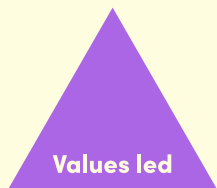
In complex conditions, interventions are dynamic and constantly evolving, with changing aims, context, modes of delivery, stakeholders or desired outcomes. Complexity-appropriate evaluation prioritises a flexible and responsive approach that is tailored to the unique intervention, rather than set out in advance.



Comprehensive and open

Complexity-appropriate evaluation underscores the importance of developing a shared understanding of the system we are working in, the intervention's context and design, and how we think it might work.

Establishing a comprehensive understanding of an intervention can help us to think holistically, navigate complexity in an evaluation and challenge our assumptions.



Participatory and collaborative

Complexity-appropriate evaluation highlights the importance of involving as many stakeholders and perspectives as possible. Collaborating widely can help us to gather different, interdisciplinary perspectives on change and develop nuanced and appropriate evaluation designs.



Qualitative and indicative

In complex projects, results may be indicative, rather than definitive, as it is often not possible to attribute outcomes observed to an intervention with complete certainty. Complexity-appropriate evaluation focuses on developing rich, qualitative pictures of how or why impacts occurred, any emergent or unexpected effects, who was affected and what their unique experiences were.



Iterative and learning centred

Complex projects are subject to unpredictable changes and unexpected outcomes, meaning that revision is often required. Complexity-appropriate evaluation emphasises iterative, embedded processes of reflection that help to ensure useful learning and development both during and after a project's lifecycle.

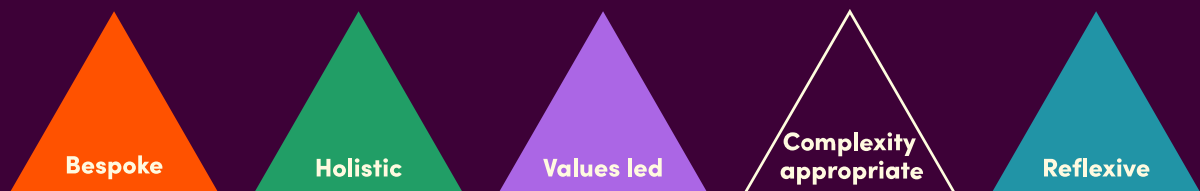
How has this influenced our culture/SHIFT framework?

We believe that adopting a complexity-appropriate approach as the underpinning concept or guiding philosophy for this culture/SHIFT evaluation framework can help us to design, manage and deliver evaluations that are appropriate for complex conditions and uphold our key evaluation principles. Focusing on complexity will help us to logically achieve each of our evaluation principles by:

- 1. Moving from a one-size-fits-all approach** to develop flexible and responsive evaluations that are tailored to the unique context and nature of interventions.
- 2. Building an informed understanding** of each intervention to understand holistically how change might work in context.
- 3. Reflecting culture/SHIFT values** by prioritising collaboration, participation and learning for our evaluations.
- 4. Developing the understanding,** skills and processes required to work with and navigate complexity.
- 5. Ensuring evaluation is embedded,** iterative and continuous to help shape the design and delivery of individual interventions and the wider culture/SHIFT workstream.

3. culture/SHIFT framework

For evaluating complex arts-based interventions



Our evaluation framework is structured in four sections and provides a series of questions to consider during an evaluation journey and an outline of what might need to be done at each stage:

A. Collaborative scoping: Collectively defining the requirements and scope of an evaluation, as well as key stakeholders to involve.

B. Defining vision: Building a collaborative vision of what change might look like and defining high-level questions to guide study.

C. Designing and delivering: Charting a process through evaluation design and implementation, including the choice of appropriate methods to collect and analyse data in context.

D. Communicating and actioning: Summarising considerations for reporting and sharing the findings of an evaluation, as well as developing processes to action future changes.

Whilst each section is addressed sequentially within the framework, there is no 'correct' process to follow. Complexity-appropriate evaluation is iterative and reflexive and therefore stages might occur at the same time, in a different order, or need revisiting and updating to ensure the evaluation approach is responsive to change.

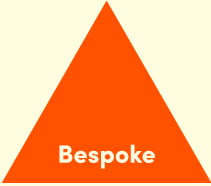
What are our aims for this framework?

Primarily, this framework is designed for internal use by the culture/SHIFT team to assist practitioners to design and deliver effective evaluations of complex arts-based interventions. It is also intended for sharing with culture/SHIFT stakeholders, artists, funders and project partners involved with our interventions, with each stage ideally occurring collaboratively. We anticipate that it might also be of interest more widely, for example to policymakers, organisations and project planners involved in designing, implementing or funding arts-based interventions, or in other sectors working with complexity.

Our framework is designed to be used from the outset of planning an arts-based intervention and referred to multiple times over the lifecycle of a project. We recommend reading the entire framework when starting a new project and referring to specific sections when useful and relevant. Prioritising evaluation at project outset helps to ensure the approach is integrated and meaningful. However, if a project is already established, you may still find transferable learning or best practice that can be adopted at later project stages.

Importantly, we aim to ensure our approach doesn't just mean doing more evaluation for the sake of it. Rather than a box-ticking exercise, evaluation needs to be embedded in a natural and streamlined way alongside project management. In each section, we emphasise the importance of both accounting for complexity and designing evaluation in a way that promotes proportionate, meaningful and collaborative inquiry. As part of our framework, we have also gathered a set of useful resources, methods and tools, with a full list found in the [Resources](#) section at the end of this document.

A. Collaborative scoping



Bespoke

This section aims to emphasise collaborative scoping as an essential preparatory phase in the evaluation process. Establishing dialogue with stakeholders early helps to clarify what is to be evaluated, build a shared understanding of the context you are operating in, and define the evaluation requirements. This stage is often overlooked and under resourced but is essential for defining key information for later stages, as well as establishing an ongoing stakeholder dialogue.

Summary of activities

- ▶ **Build initial understanding** of what you want to achieve by carrying out a landscape review.
- ▶ **Define practical requirements** including the scale of the evaluation and whether it is lighter touch or in-depth.
- ▶ **Determine evaluation scope** including which combination of impact, effectiveness and process you want to evaluate.
- ▶ **Manage stakeholder engagement** by carrying out stakeholder mapping to see who needs to be involved and when.

Building initial understanding

To ensure an effective evaluation design, you need to build a good understanding of your arts-based intervention and to carefully consider the changes you want to bring about and how. In culture/SHIFT, landscape reviews help us to gather this information, make connections and build stakeholder awareness and buy-in. In addition, reviews often provide a starting point for initiating early conversations on evaluation. For example, our review - [A History of Arts and Culture at COPs](#) - helped to identify a need for long-term, collaborative work across Scotland and provided an essential foundation for developing our evaluation approach in the Climate Beacons project. By inviting broad participation at review stage, we can collaboratively scope:

- ▶ Potential gaps or need for an arts-based intervention.
- ▶ Key issues an intervention is trying to address.
- ▶ Different audiences or beneficiaries.
- ▶ Changes an intervention may seek.
- ▶ How an intervention might be implemented and who might be involved.
- ▶ Any useful tools, resources or learning already available from previous interventions.
- ▶ The context an intervention will operate within.
- ▶ Any useful tools, resources or learning already available from interventions that have been done previously.

Stakeholders and local practitioners often have expert knowledge that can help to gather information, develop our understanding and refine our approach at this early stage. By explicitly starting conversations about evaluation, we can also avoid later problems and build awareness with collaborators, funders or commissioners. Landscape reviews can often help us to clarify an early approach to evaluation, including:

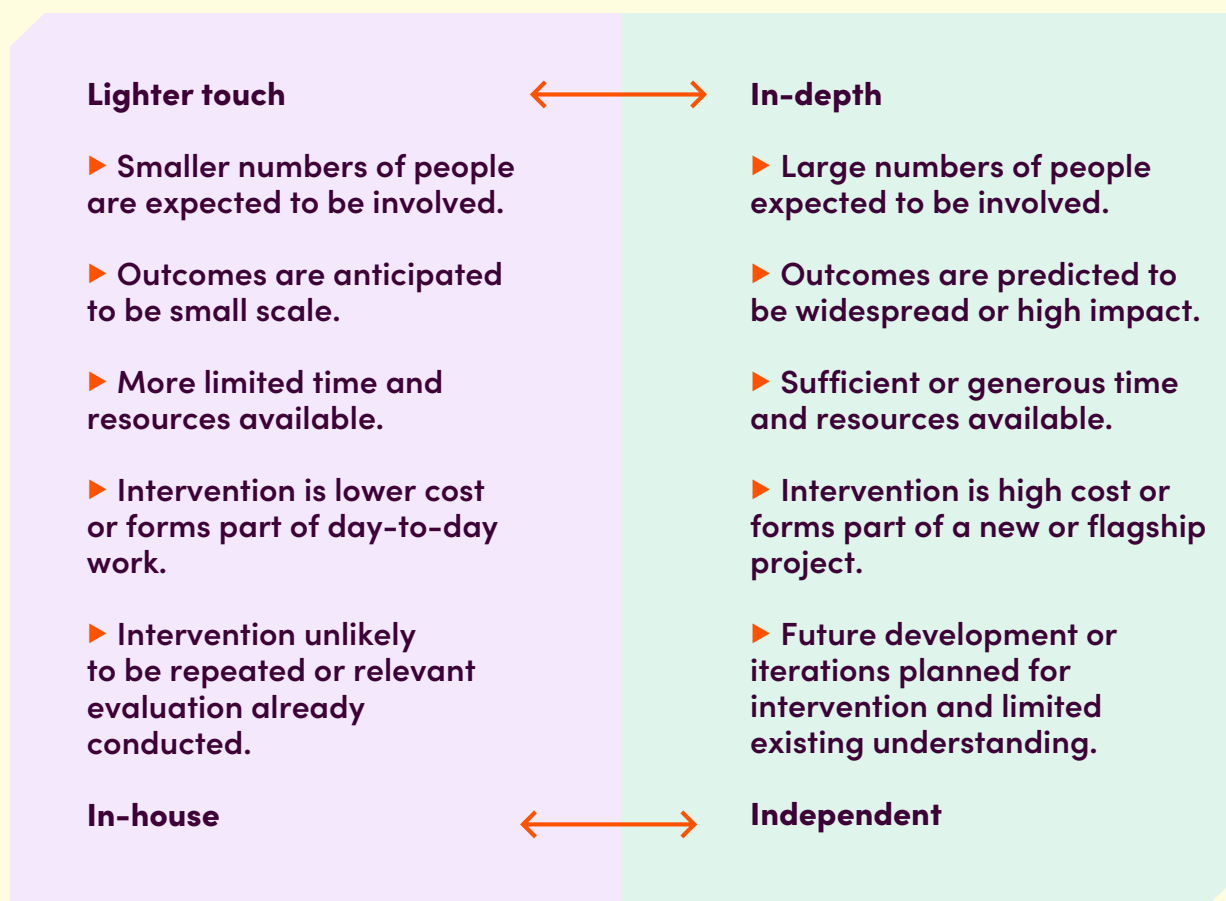
- ▶ Potential evaluation requirements and resources.
- ▶ Different stakeholders who might be involved in evaluation.
- ▶ Description of what might need to be evaluated and why.

If a project has already begun, relevant information will often be gathered in essential documentation, such as the project proposal, funding application or project description. However, it may still be useful to review these documents with stakeholders to clarify any changes, gaps or opportunities.

Defining practical requirements

As part of the early planning, it will be important to determine practical requirements of an evaluation, as this can significantly impact the potential scope, as well as the time, skills and costs required. Understanding the scale of evaluation necessary and who might carry it out are essential steps at project outset, ideally before the budget is decided or staff time is allocated. For example, evaluation could be undertaken internally by culture/SHIFT practitioners, collaboratively with other project stakeholders who are familiar with the local community, or externally by independent academic institutions or consultancy services. Usually, this decision will be based on the scale of evaluation required, which could range from light touch to in-depth (see below).

Scale often depends on the overall scope of the intervention design, the potential benefits and available resources. For example, a one-off arts-based intervention that involves smaller numbers of people may require a lighter-touch evaluation that could be handled in-house. However, a flagship project with significant potential benefits might require clear, independent evaluation.



At this stage, it is also important to consider the timings and deliverables involved in an evaluation as this might equally limit the extent of what can be achieved. Outlining the key management information available, such as main roles and responsibilities, important deliverables, an overarching timeline and any proposed or secured budget, can help to provide initial practical direction. Importantly, complexity-appropriate evaluation often involves additional preparatory and collaborative work, for example, co-creating a theory of change. This will require additional time and resources, and will need to be factored into any initial planning or funding proposals.

It might be helpful to advocate to funders why such processes are needed and to request additional resources. Defining key information in collaboration with a broad stakeholder group, including funders, can help build understanding, obtain buy-in and ensure practicalities are negotiated appropriately.

Determining evaluation scope

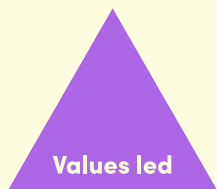
Evaluation approaches are likely to look very different depending on their purpose and scope. Collectively, with key stakeholders, it is important to develop a brief scope of work that identifies:

1. What will be evaluated.
2. What the purpose or objectives of the evaluation is.
3. What is outside the scope.

The focus of an evaluation needs to be defined, as it might vary from a one- or multi-year project, to a whole programme, like culture/SHIFT, or to a single event or arts-based approach. Given how broad evaluation can become, it is important to understand what is inside and outside the scope of an evaluation. For example, if the focus is a one-year project, the evaluation may only target arts-based activities that are within that 12-month period, meaning that longer-term impacts would not be addressed. Negotiating and agreeing this evaluation boundary with stakeholders is a necessary step, particularly for complex arts-based interventions.

Evaluation might also encompass several different goals, or prioritise one particular focus, depending on the context. For example an evaluation may seek to understand the impact of an intervention, in terms of the difference an intervention made and for whom. Or, an evaluation might try to understand how effective an intervention was in achieving its objectives or delivering value for money.

Alternatively, an evaluation may focus on process in terms of what can be learnt from the way an intervention was designed and delivered. Usually, in complex circumstances, evaluation will involve a combination of these different objectives, which can help to prioritise a learning-focused approach. Combining objectives promotes holistic insight and useful learning that can be applied in future projects. Agreeing the purpose and goals of an evaluation collaboratively at this stage will help with defining key evaluation questions in [Section B](#).



Managing stakeholder involvement

Involving different stakeholders and perspectives is essential for evaluating in a complexity-informed way and aligns with our values towards collaboration and participation. From the outset, it is important to identify:

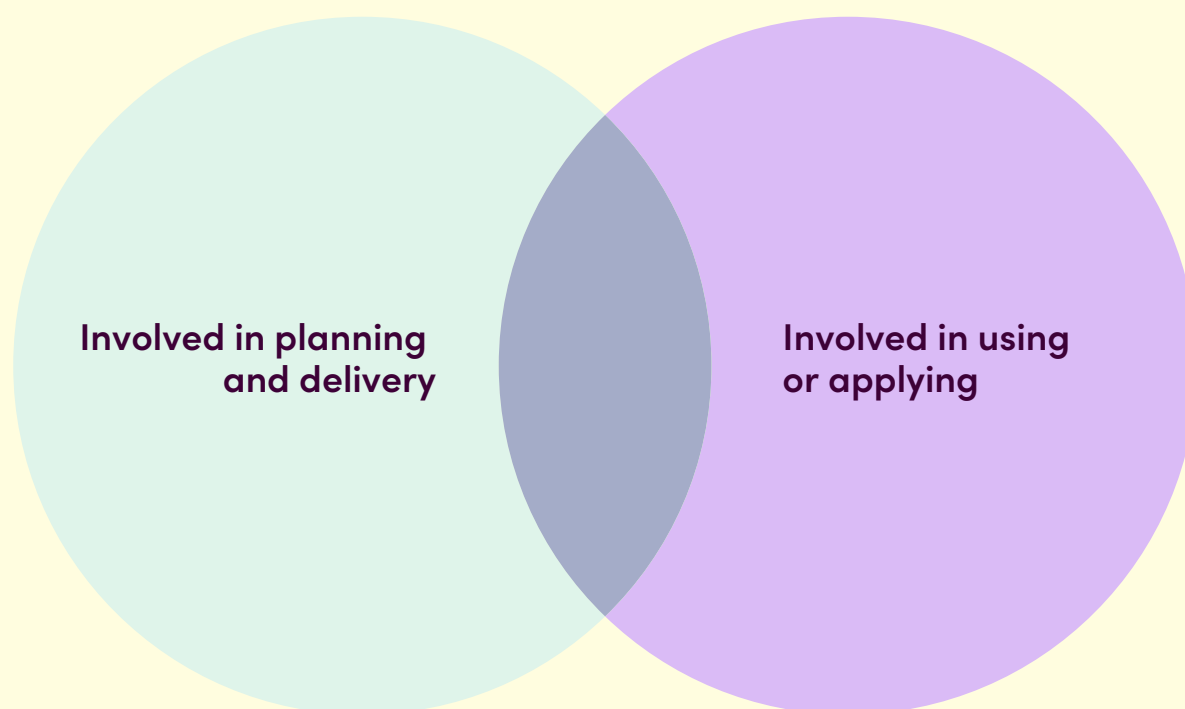
1. Who needs to be involved in the evaluation process.
2. How and when might they be involved.
3. Who sets the direction.

Understanding who will be interested can help us to shape evaluation design, build engagement and encourage stakeholders to use the findings to effect change. In culture/SHIFT, we often have many interested stakeholders, including project partners, artists, funders, academics and local communities, which can complicate decisions about who needs to be involved, when and how.

Understanding this stakeholder landscape can help us to plan when different stakeholders might need to be involved or what they might need from an evaluation. Separating stakeholders into two key groups can help us to better understand potential involvement. For example, some stakeholders might be more heavily involved in the day-to-day of project evaluation, such as designing an overall approach, commissioning evaluation, handling data analysis or participating in data collection. Stakeholders in this group might include:

- ▶ **culture/SHIFT project managers**, who can help to streamline evaluation activity alongside planned project activity, ensure resourcing and offer support throughout the evaluation design and delivery process.
- ▶ **Artists and local practitioners**, who can provide expertise in shaping and integrating data collection methods that are suitable for different audiences and contexts.
- ▶ **A strategic steering group**, who can offer valuable external insights about project evaluation, review evaluation reporting and suggest alternative approaches.
- ▶ **Academic researchers or consultants**, who are experienced in applying quantitative or qualitative methods, can help develop appropriate approaches for collecting data.
- ▶ **Project funders or commissioners**, who can check evaluation proposals or designs to ensure suitability for fulfilling required outputs or answering evaluation needs.

Other stakeholders might use the findings of the evaluation to effect change, for example, to inform their policies, decision making, future project development, management practices, advocacy or reporting. These stakeholders may include policymakers, local community groups or academics, as well as stakeholders potentially involved in both aspects, such as project managers or local partner organisations.



Some stakeholders involved in planning and delivery may need to be involved earlier in the evaluation process, for example, in shaping what an evaluation might look like, designing a theory of change or outlining key evaluation questions. Others might need to be involved later, for example, in designing appropriate methods, facilitating data collection or analysing the data collected. With so many stakeholders, it can be important to outline who gets to set the direction and make decisions about the evaluation process. Will decisions be made by one central person or organisation or will responsibility and decision making be shared across different partner organisations? culture/SHIFT interventions often share decision making and therefore it can be useful to establish some form of governance structure or guidance. For example, we have previously used evaluation steering groups to reflect a diversity of different stakeholder perspectives in guiding our decision making and shaping evaluation design and delivery.

For stakeholders interested in applying the findings, we might need to think more about how we conduct the evaluation in a way that aligns with their potential uses, or how we engage them early to build interest and support. It will often be impossible to engage all stakeholders and to meet their diverse needs, especially within the time and budget allocated. Instead, it may be necessary to ask: how do we want the evaluation to be used? In culture/SHIFT, we are always looking to effect change ourselves and therefore might prioritise internal learning and reflection, or we might choose to target specific people or organisations we believe could apply the findings effectively in their practice and policy. By scoping the different stakeholders involved and their potential interests, we can start to ensure our evaluation and reporting approach is relevant and meaningful to our target groups, as described in [Section D](#).

In summary, this section emphasises the importance of collectively defining practical requirements, clarifying evaluation purpose and identifying key stakeholders early on. Scoping can help to refine evaluation intentions and bring in informed stakeholders from project outset, as well as providing the rationale and groundwork for subsequent phases, including [Section B](#).

B. Defining vision

Following initial scoping, further discussions will be needed with culture/SHIFT stakeholders to think about the desired evaluation approach, what change might look like and the key underpinning questions for an evaluation. Ideally, discussions should be integrated alongside the early stages of project planning and development to streamline evaluation and mitigate additional burden.

Summary of activities

- ▶ **Make space for dialogue** by holding an anchoring meeting to agree on evaluation aims.
- ▶ **Plan the approach** by reviewing different approaches available and seeing what fits your aims and resources.
- ▶ **Vision the change** you want to see by developing a theory of change.
- ▶ **Design evaluation** questions, aiming to balance usefulness with the resources available to do the evaluation.



Making space for dialogue

In complex interventions, it might be necessary to review expectations with stakeholders, such as project funders and collaborative partners, to ensure everyone is 'on the same page'. Although it might be difficult to carve out, it is important to create space to think about what complexity means for evaluation and to negotiate what can be achieved in context. culture/SHIFT projects often involve partners and funders from diverse sectors and disciplinary backgrounds, each with different needs, expectations and pressures in relation to evaluation. Stakeholders may also be unfamiliar with the need for a complexity-based approach when evaluating arts-based projects. By engaging stakeholders early, we can start to build a shared awareness of complexity-aware evaluation and what it looks like.

An initial anchor meeting with project funders, commissioners and collaborative partners can be a useful way to openly discuss expectations for the upcoming project. During this meeting, it can be useful to raise awareness of [Section 2](#), especially why complexity is important to consider in culture/SHIFT and what a complexity-appropriate approach means. Stakeholders might be more familiar with linear ways of thinking and therefore diplomacy may be required to explain clearly why this approach is necessary and to negotiate differences in perspective. In addition, it will be important to discuss the potential benefits and implications for different stakeholders:

- ▶ **For funders and commissioners**, it will be important to justify the rationale behind a complexity-based approach and to emphasise that whilst findings are less likely to quantify effects with certainty, they are more likely to offer rich and transferable learning that can be usefully applied in future.
- ▶ **For project or evaluation managers**, it will be essential to recognise that complexity-based approaches are often more challenging to design and manage, as they involve many different stakeholders and are likely to change and adapt over time. However, complexity-based evaluation does not mean more evaluation for the sake of it. Instead, by actively integrating evaluation within project processes, we can help to ensure designs are proportionate to the nature of the project and resources available.
- ▶ **For artists and practitioners**, a complexity-based approach may mean working flexibly as plans adapt and change, embracing different ways of doing things or trialling new and innovative methods. By participating actively in the design, artists and practitioners can help to ensure evaluation is both practical for them and appropriate for the communities or participants they are working with.

We understand that this kind of evaluation is more challenging to commission and manage, but it is increasingly necessary for understanding multi-scalar, multi-outcome, eco-social projects. By adopting a complexity-based approach, we aim to encourage a new mindset towards arts-based evaluation and to challenge assumptions of what evaluation should look like.

Over time, we hope this approach may become the norm for those commissioning, funding and evaluating arts-based interventions. However, it is important to acknowledge that our differences in expectations and needs may not be reconciled in the short term, as they are ultimately a reflection of our wider cultural values, beliefs and power dynamics, which are difficult to shift. By making space and time to discuss these issues with stakeholders early in the project, we can share our rationale and aim to build a shared outlook and approach.

Planning the approach

Evaluation approaches are broad conceptual ways of structuring an evaluation and shaping what it is possible to do. As this document has outlined, in complex circumstances it is often not possible to undertake more traditional evaluation approaches that test direct cause and effect, such as experimental designs. However, several different evaluation approaches can be appropriate in complex circumstances, such as theory-based evaluation, developmental evaluation, participatory evaluation or hybrid designs. At this stage, it will be useful to review different approaches and determine which of the above will be most useful for your proposed evaluation.

This framework is designed around a hybrid participatory and theory-based approach to evaluation, which is often most suitable to the complexity found in culture/SHIFT projects. In culture/SHIFT, we generally use theory-based approaches, which are often participatory in nature and involve setting out and testing a theory for a project (usually in a theory of change, see below). This process helps us to understand how activities might lead to desired outcomes. We can then collect evidence to test and refine the theory to establish whether an intervention worked and how or why it may have resulted in change.

Hybrid participatory processes also help us to develop locally relevant and meaningful evaluation, build shared capacity and ensure learning and growth. However, it can be challenging to draw definitive conclusions, manage stakeholder involvement and ensure sufficient time and resources. Before progressing, it will be important to review if a participatory, theory-based approach is appropriate for the aims of your evaluation, the level of complexity involved and the available resources.



Visioning change

When using a theory-based approach to evaluation, a key question to explore with stakeholders is: What might change look like? In culture/SHIFT, we have spent a lot of time thinking about change and aim to create transformative change through our projects and interventions. This means working towards a way of doing things that is completely different to how things are now. To achieve such a cultural shift, we need change at many different levels of society and across many different groups of people. In our interventions, change often occurs at different scales, for example, locally with different individuals or groups, collectively across communities or project partnerships, or systemically through changes to institutions, policies and practices. Ultimately, all these different scales contribute towards transformative changes in our culture.

In culture/SHIFT, we have observed the potential for arts-based approaches to contribute to meaningful change across each of these different dimensions. Whilst funding is often allocated for shorter-term projects, we are always also designing for and thinking about changes over the longer term. This influences the way we think about, design and evaluate our interventions. Stakeholders can have very different perspectives on change and therefore it is important to establish a dialogue about what change might look like to them and how arts-based interventions might bring about change in context.



Co-creating a theory of change

For complex projects, developing a theory of change provides an important process for clarifying a shared vision and understanding of what change might look like. Collaboratively working to develop a theory of change can help stakeholders to refine ideas of what ‘impact’ looks like in context and how an intervention might achieve its aims. In addition, developing a theory of change can often help to reflexively inform the design of the intervention itself, focus attention on potential unintended consequences and initiate collective thinking about evaluation. culture/SHIFT projects are unlikely to achieve their aims in linear ways and therefore it may be more challenging to develop a ‘theory’ for how interventions will work. However, this process remains important to undertake as it helps to ensure interventions are carefully considered and intentional. Whilst it isn’t possible to describe the process here in detail, we have provided useful guides in the [Resources](#) section. Generally, to create a theory of change, it will be necessary to think about:

- ▶ The **context** of the intervention planned, the issue being addressed and what else is happening in the same space. Often much of this contextual information will have already been gathered in [Section A](#).
- ▶ **Intervention groups** that you plan to influence directly, for example, specific age ranges, organisations, communities or staff members, potentially with certain characteristics relating to your target issue.
- ▶ The **desired impact** of the intervention overall, in terms of long-term social and/or environmental change.
- ▶ **Short-term outcomes** that describe how changes to target groups might lead to long-term impact over time.
- ▶ **Arts-based approaches** or activities that will be delivered in different contexts to help realise outcomes.
- ▶ **Significant assumptions** made in our theory of change, for example, about the way change happens, about external influences on project delivery or any potential unintended impacts that might occur.

In [Climate Beacons](#), we worked to co-develop our theory of change with the help of funders in the early project stages. However, this meant that the theory was ultimately disconnected from the work of local practitioners and artists on the ground. We learnt that broad involvement is crucial in the theory of change process as each stakeholder will have a different understanding of how change happens, as well as unique knowledge and expertise to contribute. Encouraging involvement at this stage from funders, local practitioners, project co-ordinators, artists and community members can help to manage conflicts, set expectations and increase support for later evaluation design and data collection processes.

In conditions of complexity, no attempt at modelling change will be perfect. Often there will be competing perspectives based on different stakeholder backgrounds or needs, or our theories may become too open-ended or complicated to be useful. It might be necessary to pause during the process and take stock, reviewing what information is useful and negotiating differences in understanding. It is important to see the theory as a work in progress and something that can be updated over time. Indeed, complex interventions often require theories to be updated or adapted as changes are made to the intervention, as new findings emerge, or as knowledge and understanding grows. However, in the short term, it is useful to produce collaboratively a short document or summary diagram of the initial theory that provides a clear overview to share with project stakeholders and a reference point for initiating further thinking around evaluation.



Defining evaluation questions

Agreeing a working theory of change provides essential groundwork for thinking about evaluation more broadly and setting questions to guide an evaluation approach. Outlining high-level questions at this stage can help with framing the evaluation design, data collection and reporting. This process is often informed by the initial project scoping, as explored in [Section A](#), as well as the [theory of change](#). To design evaluation questions, it is often useful to review the aims of an intervention, the purpose or objectives of an evaluation and the potential uses of evaluation findings by key stakeholders. For example, an evaluation that focuses on process might have very different key questions to one focused on impact. In culture/SHIFT, we often prioritise a learning-focused approach, which involves questions across each of the following dimensions:

Impact

- ▶ What was the impact of the project? Did the intervention achieve its intended outcomes?
- ▶ Who was affected by the intervention and in what ways? How did the outcomes vary across different locations, activities or target groups?
- ▶ Did the activities make a difference in the ways we thought they would? Were any unanticipated outcomes observed?
- ▶ How confident are we that change occurred due to the intervention?
- ▶ Is there likely to be a meaningful impact in the long term?
- ▶ What lessons did we learn about making a difference in future projects?

Process

- ▶ How inclusive was the implementation of arts-based activity?
- ▶ In what ways was the project able to reach intended audiences?
- ▶ To what extent did project processes support intervention outcomes?
- ▶ Did the project generate meaningful collaboration between project partners?
- ▶ Was our choice of outcomes or our evaluation approach feasible and proportionate?
- ▶ What lessons did we learn about delivering future interventions?

Effectiveness

- ▶ What aspects of the intervention worked best in terms of realising outcomes and why?
- ▶ How well did an intervention work in comparison to similar projects elsewhere?
- ▶ To what extent was the intervention cost effective or did it offer best use of resources?
- ▶ How was the intervention's effectiveness influenced by external factors or context?
- ▶ In what ways could the intervention or the evaluation be improved in future?
- ▶ How might we apply the intervention or the lessons learnt effectively in other contexts?

In complex circumstances, understanding impact can become more challenging as it is often not possible to attribute outcomes with complete certainty or to quantify changes. In culture/SHIFT, we are therefore better at developing rich, qualitative pictures of how or why impacts occurred, learning who was affected by a project and what their unique experiences were, identifying unexpected outcomes, understanding the influence of context on how an intervention was received, and assessing whether similar impacts might be likely if an intervention was repeated elsewhere.

It can be tempting to draft a long list of potential questions, but it is important to draft a useful list that is also proportionate to the resources available. In culture/SHIFT, an upper limit of three high-level questions with specific sub-questions might act as a rough guide, but this will depend on the nature of the intervention, as each question requires significant time, resources and data to answer. The initial questions selected will often evolve during an evaluation, for example, as findings emerge, new data becomes available or due to resource limitations. By involving stakeholders and maintaining regular dialogue, different parties can help to shape the initial question design and be kept up to date with any changes.

In summary, this section emphasises the importance of making space to think about complexity and evaluation, what change looks like in context and how this understanding can help to shape our high-level evaluation questions. Allocating time to this process can assist stakeholders to build a shared understanding, clarify expectations and refine the information necessary to guide the design and delivery of evaluation in [Section C](#).



At this point, it might be useful to revisit initial documentation developed in [Section A](#) if your understanding of either the intervention itself or scope of the evaluation has changed following discussions with stakeholders.

C. Designing and delivering

By this point, stakeholders should have a shared understanding of the intervention, a collective vision of project outcomes and a realistic idea of what is possible in terms of evaluation. This section aims to build on this groundwork and offer a collaborative process for working through different design and delivery stages.

Summary of activities

- ▶ Initiating the design process by reviewing objectives and resources and starting an evaluation plan.
- ▶ Understanding data requirements, including what data is needed to answer the evaluation questions.
- ▶ Identifying data sources, including key groups you need to collect data from and any sources you will have to create.
- ▶ Selecting appropriate methods for collecting data, which should be effective while avoiding being too intrusive.
- ▶ Working out practicalities, including a log of key roles and an evaluation timeline showing when things need to happen.
- ▶ Planning methods to analyse and interpret the data using appropriate methods by creating an analysis plan.
- ▶ Implementing the evaluation, running a design review to ensure the approach is right, creating a communication plan for all the stakeholders involved and holding regular reviews.

Initiating the design process

To initiate the design process, it will be useful to collectively review material already gathered, such as the evaluation objectives and practical information discussed in [Section A](#), as well the theory of change and evaluation questions in [Section B](#). Keeping this material in mind when planning an evaluation can help to ensure a relevant and meaningful approach. At the outset of the design process, it can be useful to clearly identify any defined timelines for an evaluation, required deliverables and the scope of available resources. We suggest adding these details to an evaluation plan and adapting this document in response to the prompts below. This document can provide a practical guide to accompany evaluation delivery and can be shared with relevant stakeholders.



Understanding data requirements

Clarifying data requirements at an early stage can help to ensure that the overall evaluation process and information collected is targeted and useful. To understand the data requirements, it will be necessary to refer to the overall evaluation approach, the theory of change and the guiding evaluation questions. For theory-based approaches, data is often both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data is useful for providing a measure of whether our outcomes are being reached, but can fail to provide the context or detail needed to understand how or why our interventions are working. Collecting qualitative data can help us to develop deeper, richer insights into our projects, their effects and how or why interventions might be effective.

With this in mind, we can start to ask what quantitative and qualitative data we might need to test our understanding of change and answer our key evaluation questions. For example, if the theory of change identifies increased volunteering as a mechanism for change, it might be useful to collect descriptive insights of volunteers' opinions, experiences or changes in habits. If our evaluation questions seek to understand organisational impact, it might be useful to collect numerical data on the number of people completing training, the number of new partnerships created or the number of organisations working to reduce their carbon footprint. culture/SHIFT interventions are often delivered in multiple locations or using different methods. Thinking about the different data requirements in terms of participants, locations or activities can also be a useful way to plan the different information needed.

As part of this process, it can be helpful to outline key groups you will be collecting data from, as they will form your participants in the data collection. In an ideal world, you might want to collect data from everyone who interacts with an intervention. However, culture/SHIFT projects can have many different participants and therefore require a more strategic approach to selecting respondents. It will be necessary to choose specific groups of people to take part in the evaluation. Whilst this might not be representative, this approach ensures a diverse range of views and opinions are captured, and detailed information is collected in different contexts. This can help with ensuring rich and diverse insights are collected across different locations or activities.

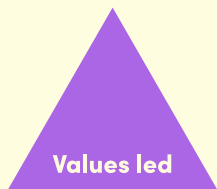
Identifying data sources

After determining data needs, it is useful to think about who might be able to provide this data or how we might obtain it. To provide different sources of data, we could collect information from participants, project collaborators, booking systems, databases, existing surveys or social media. By looking collaboratively at our data needs with stakeholders, we can start to understand what sources of data already exist, or where there might be gaps. For example, stakeholders may already have access to the following data:

- ▶ **Data collected for admin purposes:** For example, we often work with theatres and concert halls that regularly collect audience data as part of their day-to-day work. This data can be a low-cost way of finding out background or baseline data for a project, such as the number of people who currently travel to shows by car.
- ▶ **Publicly available surveys:** Governments or local councils collect regular data that might be relevant, for example, on travel choices or attitudes towards climate change. These surveys might be too infrequent or lack detail, but can offer useful background or baseline data, for example on local public transport usage or levels of climate concern.
- ▶ **Social media interactions:** It is not uncommon for organisations we work with to have an active online presence and good levels of engagement on social media. This can provide a potentially useful source of both quantitative and qualitative data through polling, reactions to previous events, tracking new followers and reading comments about an intervention.
- ▶ **Monitoring data:** Many organisations are used to collecting important data, such as the number of people attending events, their age, location or gender, or recording how budget is being spent. Existing ways of collecting monitoring data, such as a booking system or online events platform, can provide an important and low-cost way of understanding the impact or reach of interventions over time.
- ▶ **Relevant data collected for another purpose:** Our project partners may have ongoing or recently concluded project evaluations, which could provide relevant information for the project proposed, particularly in terms of baselining trends or useful background information.

Understanding existing data sources can make evaluation less expensive and time consuming, although it will be necessary to clarify data access before sharing or analysis can begin. However, it is likely that existing sources will not respond sufficiently to the data needs. Therefore, it may be necessary to design new sources that can fill the data gaps. New data sources might be quantitative, such as closed-question surveys, polls, carbon accounting, network mapping or attendee records. In culture/SHIFT, they are more likely to be qualitative, for example, interviews, focus groups, diaries, case studies, open-ended survey questions, video recordings, participant observation or field notes.

Collecting data from several different sources, both quantitative and qualitative, can help to build confidence in an evaluation and provide a holistic understanding. For complex interventions, it will often be necessary to use a combination of different qualitative and quantitative methods as part of a hybrid or mixed-methods design. This initial data collection design may need to be iteratively adapted as an intervention progresses.



Selecting appropriate methods

Selecting appropriate methods is very important for arts-based interventions as it can be challenging to collect data from participants whilst not detracting from the impact of the activity itself or inclusivity of events. Whilst it isn't possible to provide a detailed overview of different data collection methods in this section, we have provided relevant links in the [Resources](#). At an early stage, we can clarify if our collection methods are appropriate by asking if they will:

- ▶ Address our key evaluation questions or tell us something useful about our theory of change.
- ▶ Help us to achieve specific evaluation goals, such as capturing unexpected results, or generating useful project learning.
- ▶ Be burdensome for respondents or for the project team delivering or analysing.
- ▶ Be appropriate given the context of the intervention or nature of arts-based activity.
- ▶ Be proportionate to the resources, time and skills available.

Our choice of methods in culture/SHIFT can vary depending on the presence of particular groups of respondents, which may include people of different ages, including children, different levels of literacy or access to technology. It will be important to consider the circumstances in which methods will be delivered and how methods will need to be tailored in response, potentially requiring diverse approaches for different locations, activities or audiences.

In culture/SHIFT, we have found that developing both the methodological design and the questions themselves with local partners and artists on the ground is essential. Collaborative development is often the best way to ensure more innovative, appropriate and flexible data collection approaches are integrated into the design of activities, as well as more meaningful and sensitive question designs.

In our experience, quantitative methods, such as surveys, can often feel more intrusive at arts-based events, especially if the questions are not designed in collaboration with the artist or integrated into the activity. In past culture/SHIFT projects surveys have had low response rates, resulting in a partial view of project reach and outcomes.

Partner organisations also observed how surveys can obstruct relationship building with communities and compromise emotions elicited by event interactions, if not designed appropriately. However, sometimes surveys might be the only way to collect project information quickly and at low cost. They can be helpful for assessing available knowledge or awareness about a topic, measuring attitudes or emotions and understanding audience preferences.

In complex circumstances, it is important to include open-ended questions in any survey designs to ensure that the data collection is more sensitive to unexpected outcomes. Unanticipated impacts are particularly important in culture/SHIFT and can remain undetected if closed, quantitative measures are used in isolation. However, care also needs to be taken to ensure surveys don't become too long, complex or burdensome for participants.

We have found that qualitative methods often work best for evaluating culture/SHIFT interventions, as they provide rich data on how and why an approach might be working and can help to detect unanticipated outcomes. Qualitative methods are also important for understanding the reasons why participants might behave, think or feel a certain way, particularly in response to an intervention, and whether they felt safe and comfortable during an activity. In addition, we have found reflective conversations with collaborators are an effective way to build a more comprehensive picture of project achievements and to share project learning. More traditional qualitative approaches include participant interviews, focus groups or observations, but we have also found network and system mapping approaches useful for understanding more about our interventions.

Arts-based evaluation methods are also increasingly common and can include techniques such as drawing, storytelling, photography, performances or collage. These methods can elicit rich qualitative data about participants' thoughts or experiences, but often require unique skills from the artist or evaluator to support the creative process and facilitate conversation. In culture/SHIFT, we have experimented with arts-based methods in the past but intend to explore this topic more fully in our future projects.

Working through practicalities

After selecting appropriate methods, it will be necessary to spend time thinking about the different practicalities involved in collecting data, for example, how often data should be gathered, who will be involved at each stage or how data will be stored. The following bullet points outline key questions to help to clarify and refine your data collection strategy:

► When will you gather the data?

It will be necessary to establish a schedule for how often data will be collected and how this might align with existing project activity, reporting and deliverables. Producing an evaluation timeline can help to define when data collection will occur and outline who might be involved at each stage. This can help to ensure the collection of data is both systematic in detecting change and streamlined alongside existing project activity. Qualitative methods can be more time consuming and therefore it might be necessary to plan additional time and/or resources depending on the methods selected.

► How will you collect ethical and high-quality data?

Data collection must be both ethical for participants and of high quality for those involved in analysing and using the data. Individuals might participate in an evaluation as either members of the public, participants in events or as project partners or creative practitioners. It is essential to collect data in alignment with ethical principles that protect confidentiality, minimise burden and avoid harm, and to design participant consent and information forms that help to ensure voluntary consent.

Whilst there are no established quality standards for complexity-appropriate evaluation, it is important to ensure data collection is accurate and consistent. By building quality assurance processes into the evaluation design, we can help to generate confidence in the data collected. These processes might include training or guidance for members of the project team, checking the quality of the data in-house or organising reviews by a steering group to scrutinise the data collected or the findings.

► How will data be shared and stored?

Organising efficient sharing, handling and storage of data across a project can help to ensure data processing and analysis is more streamlined, ethical and transparent. Agreeing processes for data sharing and storage will be necessary in advance of beginning an evaluation. Ideally, storage methods should align with the existing systems you use or the tools you are using to collect the data. For example, it might be useful to create a data bank to store anonymised surveys, interview transcripts, pictures, drawings or videos, as well as key details on how the data can be used and when it was obtained.

► **Who is responsible for different tasks?**

It will also be essential to define key roles for those responsible for data collection and analysis. For example, roles might include planning the evaluation, finalising consent forms, collecting data, running training sessions, setting up data access, managing the implementation or providing regular updates as the project progresses. Outlining roles in the evaluation plan can be useful for identifying the staff time and commitment required but will often need a process of negotiation between managers, partners and artists to ensure fair division of time, skills and resource.

► **How will data be analysed?**

Prior to collecting the data, it is important to think about your analysis plan. Analysis involves looking for patterns in the information gathered to build understanding and interpret the data in response to your evaluation questions. It is important to think about what analysis might look like during the design phase as it will be very different depending on the nature of the data gathered, as well as the time, software and skills available.

Analysis and interpretation

Analysing and interpreting your data helps to draw insights in relation to your key evaluation questions and depends on the type of data collected and evaluation aims. For example, if the data is quantitative, you might be able to determine the reach of an intervention over time, describe the involvement of specific groups, summarise participant attitudes or compare changes against data pre- and post-intervention. If the data is qualitative, you might be able to understand participant's opinions, emotions and experiences, which can offer useful perspectives on how or why something occurred. Finally, if socio-demographic information was collected, it might also be possible to interpret this information by factors such as age, gender or postcode.

In culture/SHIFT, quantitative data will often involve smaller numbers of participants due to the nature of our interventions. It is important to be transparent about the number of people involved and what the findings might mean as a result. Smaller samples might still provide useful information, but the findings are likely specific to the context they were collected in, rather than generalisable more widely.

Qualitative data analysis often involves analysing what people say in interviews, questionnaires, focus groups or project documents. For arts-based interventions, qualitative data might also be visual, in terms of pictures, drawings or videos from activities. There are many different analysis approaches that can be used to analyse qualitative data, such as thematic analysis (where data is coded according to themes or ideas), content analysis (used to quantify patterns and trends), or narrative analysis (which looks for stories of change, anecdotes or case studies). It will be important to select an approach that is appropriate for answering the key evaluation questions and to follow a systematic process.

In culture/SHIFT, we often use thematic analysis, which broadly requires the following four steps:

- 1. Familiarisation:** Reading and re-reading the data or looking at pictures and videos to become familiar with the content and to form an initial impression.
- 2. Generating codes:** Identifying key sections of textual data or interesting visual cues and sorting the material into basic categories by using 'coding' to describe relevant concepts. Coding can be deductive, with categories already established in relation to the evaluation questions, or inductive, with categories developed from interesting items in the data itself.
- 3. Defining themes:** Collating coded items together into groups that are meaningful in relation to your evaluation questions or represent recurring patterns across the data.
- 4. Interpreting themes:** Identifying important themes and interpreting the data in response, ensuring it accurately reflects the evidence. For example, identifying recurring patterns and trends across different themes, any significant or unexpected differences, or how views and experiences might vary depending on respondent characteristics.

In culture/SHIFT, we have previously used [Miro](#) to work through these stages collaboratively, but qualitative data can be challenging to analyse and interpret in large quantities due to the time required and complexity of information involved. For larger data sets, it might be necessary to use a software package to help with coding, organising, searching or visualising qualitative data, or to involve independent researchers or evaluators to validate the process.

For quantitative data analysis, online survey platforms often have simple analytical tools embedded within the software that help you to analyse the data and depict the information using charts or graphs. Alternatively, a database can be established in Microsoft Excel and analysis conducted manually, although this may require additional training. For more complicated analysis, such as comparing pre- and post-intervention changes, usually specialised statistical software and skills will be required.



Typically, it is good practice to have more than one person interpreting the data and to compare or 'triangulate' different quantitative and qualitative data sources during the analysis. We are aiming for our analysis to offer credible and well-reasoned arguments about the significance of our data in relation to our evaluation questions. Triangulation can help us to improve our understanding of complex issues and to ensure our interpretation of the data is reliable and valid.

It will be useful to refer to the theory of change and key evaluation questions developed in [Section B](#) to ensure analysis and interpretation is targeted towards the original evaluation objectives. However, it is important to keep in mind that complex interventions often result in diverse and unpredictable changes, meaning that our findings may look very different than expected. For example, we might observe that a culture/SHIFT intervention directly targeting individual behaviour change was also successful at creating shifts in institutional policies and practices. It is important to recognise and investigate both significant intended and unintended outcomes, as it enables us to better understand the holistic value of our work and to support transformative change in future projects.

Implementing an evaluation

Whilst findings are typically published at the end of an evaluation, complex interventions can benefit from regular reviews and updates. Before implementing an evaluation, it is important to undertake a design review to help to ensure the evaluation is relevant and appropriate, or if alterations are needed:

- ▶ Is the design aligned with the knowledge, skills, availability and resources available?
- ▶ Is the design appropriate for the nature of the intervention?
- ▶ Are key stakeholders in agreement with the evaluation design and proposed timeline?

If not, it will be necessary to rethink and streamline the design, or to negotiate additional support. culture/SHIFT projects often involve a broad range of partners who may have different skills or resources. Some partners might feel more confident than others and therefore it is important to consider how we can support different partners to deliver. This could involve outlining a programme of additional support, such as skills training, hands-on data collection or internal handling of analysis and reporting, to ensure partner organisations have the capacity and skills to undertake the proposed evaluation.



After ensuring the design is feasible, the next step is to initiate implementation. At this point, your evaluation plan should include clearly defined evaluation activities, a timeline of what should happen when and an overview of who is responsible for each activity. In culture/SHIFT, those responsible for managing the evaluation will need to co-ordinate the implementation of activities, communicate with key stakeholders and reflexively update evaluation plans or resolve any issues as they arise.

Despite careful planning, delivering an evaluation will be challenging as culture/SHIFT interventions involve many different stakeholders and activities, as well as high levels of uncertainty. To assist managers in navigating this complexity, it will be useful to develop a communication plan and introduce regular review points, which can reflexively inform the evaluation design as the project progresses.

Developing a communication plan

Agreeing a communication plan can help evaluation managers handle the number of different stakeholders involved in delivering an evaluation. In culture/SHIFT, stakeholders might include members of the project team, an evaluation steering committee, artists and local practitioners working on the ground, funders or academics. Setting out a plan and timeline for communications in advance can help to ensure key stakeholders are regularly engaged and able to feed back comments and suggestions into the evaluation design, as well as staying updated on progress, changes or emerging findings as they occur.



Introducing regular review points

Traditionally, implementation would be inflexible and linear in terms of working to deliver an evaluation plan designed at project outset. Given the complexity of culture/SHIFT interventions, it is likely that an evaluation design and timeline will need to be agile and adapt over time as circumstances change or key findings and insights emerge. The following questions can help during project delivery check-ins:

During delivery

- ▶ What have we learned so far?
- ▶ What changes are we seeing?
- ▶ Have we observed anything unexpected?
- ▶ Can we strengthen the changes observed?
- ▶ Is our theory of change still appropriate?
- ▶ Do we need to change our approach?
- ▶ What information are we still missing?

Whilst culture/SHIFT projects usually involve ongoing informal reviews between artists and practitioners, it can be useful to formalise regular check-ins, for example, through dialogue, self-assessment, focus groups, interviews or written reflections. Ideally, methods should be chosen that can be integrated within existing data collection plans or streamlined alongside regular project meetings.

Review points during delivery can help to keep the evaluation plan and data collection strategy up to date. Similarly, at the end of an evaluation, it can be useful to collaboratively reflect on the process:

Retrospective

- ▶ Did we achieve our evaluation aims?
- ▶ What useful learning was gained?
- ▶ Was our evaluation approach appropriate?
- ▶ Were sufficient resources or time available?
- ▶ How can we act on our findings?

Working reflexively in this way can help us to adapt to complexity and uncertainty both during the evaluation process itself and in the long term as we learn and adapt.

Overall, this section emphasises the importance of tailoring your evaluation design to the unique context of an intervention and available resources. Involving artists, local practitioners and key stakeholders is essential throughout the design and delivery process to ensure different needs are considered, encourage shared responsibility and develop a meaningful approach.



During evaluation design and delivery, it may be necessary to revisit and update the theory of change or key evaluation questions developed in [Section B](#). In addition, the evaluation plan and timeline developed in [Section C](#) will need regular updates as implementation progresses.

D. Communicating and actioning

Evaluation reporting is often thought about as a final step at the end of an intervention for communicating project impact, particularly to funders. In this section, reporting is reframed as an embedded activity and an important communication process for actioning change.

Summary of activities

- ▶ Plan and produce reports with a dissemination plan that shows what methods should be used to reach different target groups.
- ▶ Action learning by applying evaluation reporting to future work and holding linking events.



Bespoke

Planning reporting

Evaluation is most effective when the findings and lessons learnt are communicated effectively and have an impact on target stakeholders. Reporting can help to shape our understanding of how culture/SHIFT interventions work, inspire changes in our own practice and others', share our processes transparently and support future funding applications with evidence and learning. Thinking about and planning communications at the design stages can encourage more relevant and meaningful evaluation and dissemination. The following points provide guidance on what to consider when planning reporting:

Thinking about requirements

In [Section A](#) we reviewed the practical or essential requirements of an evaluation, including deliverables. These requirements might include different anticipated outputs and/or timings that need to be adhered to. Certain stakeholders, such as project funders, may have reporting templates or key deadlines for outputs, such as progress reviews, impact reports, informal feedback, monitoring forms or lessons learnt. It is important to consider requirements carefully and to write them into evaluation planning from the project outset to ensure deadlines can be met and necessary information collected.

Establishing target groups

Similarly, in [Section A](#), we reviewed the different stakeholder groups that might be involved in using or applying the evaluation, including culture/SHIFT practitioners. Stakeholders might be interested in using findings directly to influence or assess the current intervention, or indirectly to influence future policy or related project work. When thinking about reporting, it is useful to revisit this list to understand the intended audience, their specific needs or communication preferences and what our objectives might be in influencing them. For example, some stakeholders may be more interested in early findings that affect the design of the intervention, whilst others might be interested in the overall impact or lessons learnt. Thinking through and mapping these different groups and their specific needs can help to ensure a tailored reporting approach.

Planning for regular review

Working with complexity is likely to require more frequent reporting and learning processes. Forward planning is necessary to plan more regular feedback opportunities that can help to guide project delivery in ‘real time’, as discussed in [Section C](#). It will be necessary to consider any additional requirements for feedback as a result: how regular reporting might need to be, who may need to attend or be involved, and what findings might be useful for shaping design and delivery at different times during the project process.

Developing different formats

Format can make a big difference to the impact of findings for different stakeholders. When reviewing your key target groups, it might be useful to think which format is likely to have the greatest impact. For example, a 20-page report might provide a useful record of the project, but a short lessons-learnt document might be more appropriate for internal use or mid-project reviews. Similarly, whilst a one-page memo may be essential for policymakers, a video, poster or infographic is perhaps more accessible for public presentations, external meetings or conferences. Alternatively, it could be worth sharing select findings on social media or in a newsletter to reach out more widely.

Given that complexity evaluations are unlikely to produce succinct quantitative summaries of key project outcomes, communications might require detailed qualitative explanation of emerging patterns and observations, which might suit some formats more than others. Determining the format of reporting early can help to ensure sufficient time and resources are made available.

Scheduling sufficient time

The process of developing and publishing communication outputs can require significant time in terms of liaising with the communications team, planning, drafting, editing, reviewing, designing and publishing. It will be necessary to allocate sufficient time and resources for each of these stages. Scheduling time for review is particularly important in complex evaluations as it can help to clarify the interpretation of results and ensure key messages are clear and consistent in answering the evaluation questions. Reviews can be done internally with other culture/SHIFT team members, with an evaluation steering group or externally with independent scrutiny. Often, this process can help to ensure stakeholders are on board with emerging findings and that the format of findings is suitable for different audiences.

Once these aspects have been considered, it can be useful to produce a shared dissemination plan to accompany and guide reporting, as well as outline key milestones. Ideally, the plan should include: (a) the goals and objectives of reporting, (b) the target groups, (c) the information or content required, (d) the format of different outputs, (e) key reporting dates and deadlines, (f) who is responsible, and (g) the resources available. Writing a plan can help to negotiate expectations, clarify schedules and determine responsibilities from project outset. Ideally, the plan could be shared with key stakeholders and kept updated, as well as published in brief on your website to build awareness and interest in the reporting more widely.

Producing reporting

It is challenging to outline a guide of what reporting might look like given the differences in the target groups, format and requirements for different culture/SHIFT projects. It can be helpful to undertake a review of evaluation communications that you find clear, interesting or meaningful to develop an understanding of what might be required in terms of approach, structure and content. Overall, it is important that the findings answer the overarching evaluation questions that informed the study, as outlined in Section B. If specific questions are more relevant to certain target audiences, then different outputs might seek to prioritise or answer certain questions. Generally, reporting will need to review and interpret the data available, draw rational and well-evidenced answers in relation to the key questions, and provide accompanying visualisations, narratives or quotes that help the reader to understand.

For culture/SHIFT, it might be useful to consider more innovative or inclusive approaches that align with the nature of our interventions. For example, this could include more creative, participatory or narrative approaches to reporting that help us to communicate meaningfully about the value or impact of the intervention.

Finally, in complex circumstances, it is unlikely that we can report or attribute changes to an intervention with certainty and it will be necessary to describe and acknowledge these limitations.



Actioning learning

It is important for culture/SHIFT that an evaluation has real impact and use for us internally as well as for stakeholders, funders, policymakers and across the wider sector. Therefore, alongside reporting, it is essential to prioritise a process of reflection, learning and action. This process is particularly important in conditions of complexity, as it enables us to learn and adapt over time. Developing a learning plan can provide a useful way to outline the learning objectives for a project evaluation and identify actions that could help to achieve these aims. It is important to actively consider the processes or mechanisms that can support evaluation findings to have impact, both internally and externally.

In culture/SHIFT, this might look like:

- ▶ **Prioritising lessons learnt or recommendations:** We can prioritise regular feedback during a project to adapt an intervention reflexively, as well as developing useful reference guides to share our learning with likeminded stakeholders.
- ▶ **Consulting widely:** We can support and deliver processes to engage stakeholders and collectively determine reflections, recommendations and priority actions to implement over time, both internally and with stakeholders.
- ▶ **Linking evaluations together:** Rather than just evaluating on a project-by-project basis, we can collect our evaluations together centrally and bring together overarching insights about our interventions or shifts in our learning over time.
- ▶ **Building awareness and relationships:** We can spend time understanding the policy landscape, identifying potential key stakeholders, building connections and relationships, and learning their needs in relation to our evaluation outputs.
- ▶ **Embedding reflexive action:** We can ensure evaluation is used for planning current or future projects, programmes or strategic decisions by outlining review dates. For example, evaluation findings could be revisited when writing funding applications, at team meetings or during annual planning.

In this section, we have discussed the process of planning reporting, building a dissemination plan and actioning learning for change. To promote successful evaluation, we need to ensure our findings are communicated effectively and that the right processes and mechanisms are in place for our findings to have an impact.



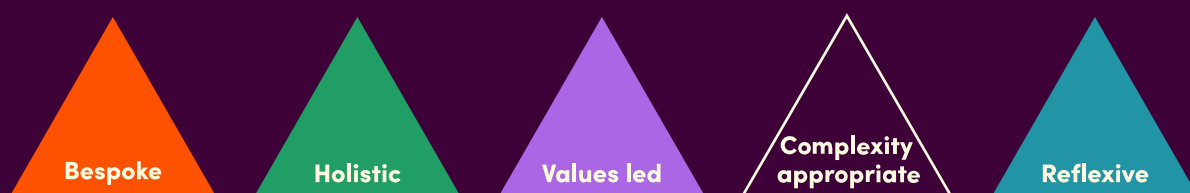
Following this section, it could be useful to revisit your data collection and analysis plans in [Section C](#) to ensure that these align with your reporting requirements and dissemination plan.

4. Summary

Evaluation and complexity can seem broad and daunting concepts to engage with, but we regularly encounter both in our day-to-day work in culture/SHIFT.

Evaluation has implications for the ways in which we design and implement our arts-based interventions, how we engage with stakeholders and how we evolve our approach over time. By acknowledging our principles towards evaluation and the influence of complexity on our work, we can start to build evaluation approaches that are tailored to culture/SHIFT. This document offers a way of thinking about evaluation and complexity, as well as a practical framework for embedding good practice. To support this framework, we intend to share our ongoing learning by collaborating widely, advocating for complexity-appropriate evaluation and developing further resources and tools to accompany this guide.

Overall, we hope that this framework provides a flexible and responsive approach to evaluation that can help navigate complexity and contribute towards culture/SHIFT's aim of a more environmentally sustainable, resilient and just society.



5. Resources

An overview of resources we have found useful in shaping our culture/SHIFT evaluation framework and for conducting past evaluations:

Principles and ethics

- ▶ Co-created [Evaluation Principles](#) by the Centre for Cultural Value to help guide evaluation within an arts and culture context.
- ▶ Collective code of [ethics](#) created by in-situ, including guiding principles for ethical engagement in arts practice and evaluation.

Complexity

- ▶ Strategy blog written by CCS's Ben Twist [exploring complexity theory in relation to changing audience travel practices](#).
- ▶ Overview of [Complexity](#) by BetterEvaluation as a priority cross-cutting theme, with links to relevant resources and blogs.
- ▶ Visual overview of [key complexity features](#) by Dr Joanna Boehnert and CECAN, many of which we have observed in culture/SHIFT projects.
- ▶ [Evaluation framework](#) commissioned by Defra to assist policymakers in designing complexity-appropriate policy evaluation.
- ▶ [Evaluation toolkit](#) designed by CECAN to help policymakers commission and manage evaluation in complex systems.
- ▶ [Supplementary guide](#) by CECAN on handling complexity in policy evaluation as part of HMT's Magenta Book.

Theory of change

- ▶ [NPC's ten-step guide](#) to the process of creating a theory of change as a foundation for interventions or evaluations.
- ▶ Guidance by BetterEvaluation on both [developing](#) and [managing](#) a theory of change, including relevant methods and resources.
- ▶ Blog by BEAM Exchange discussing what a '[complexity aware](#)' theory of change process and output might look like.
- ▶ Report by NPC outlining how a theory of change can support a [systemic approach](#) to addressing complex problems.
- ▶ Creatures' [Nine dimensions](#) tool for evaluating creative practices provides different ways to talk about what change might look like in a creative arts-based context.

Managing evaluation

- ▶ CCS's [culture/SHIFT methodology](#) describes our approach to project development in culture/SHIFT and how this links to evaluation.
- ▶ General [manager's guide](#) by BetterEvaluation providing overarching guidance for those commissioning or managing evaluations.
- ▶ Guide by Centre for Cultural Value on [co-creating evaluation](#) and common steps for managing co-creation in evaluation design.
- ▶ [Tools and resources](#) collected by Municipal-Artist Partnership, including example reports, evaluation worksheets and example plans.
- ▶ Diverse list of resources collected by the [Creative & Credible](#) project in supporting different phases of the evaluation process.
- ▶ General resources by INTRAC on [monitoring and evaluation](#), including guides to [qualitative](#) and quantitative [data analysis](#).

Creative methods

- ▶ General overview of common data collection methods by both [UCL](#) and [INTRAC](#).
- ▶ Blog on '[Arts-Based Methods in Evaluation 101](#)' by ANDImplementation provides an overview of creative methods in evaluation.
- ▶ Doc Society's [Impact Field Guide](#) provides a 'measurement toolbox' of techniques for understanding impact in a film context.
- ▶ [Toolkit](#) by FailSpace emphasising the importance of acknowledging failure in an arts context and tools to support critical reflection.
- ▶ Old Fire Station's [Storytelling Evaluation Methodology](#) uses storytelling techniques to help identify outcomes and evaluate impact.
- ▶ Just FACT's [Creative Evaluation Toolkit](#) includes guidance on different creative methods for documenting and sharing.
- ▶ Curiosity Carnival's [case study guide](#) provides a set of practical evaluation tools for use in different arts-based contexts.



Finally, do you have any reflections on this evaluation framework?

It is intended to be a living document, and your thoughts and feedback can help to ensure the approach evolves over time to meet culture/SHIFT's ongoing needs.

Email your feedback to info@cultureforclimate.scot.



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