

The benefits and barriers of evaluating your work (UCL Public Engagement Unit 2014)

Benefits of evaluation:

- It can help with your project planning - it makes you think about what you're aiming to do, how you will do it and how you will know if you've succeeded
- Collecting feedback throughout your project or work keeps you on track and helps to avoid disasters
- It helps you to adapt or change as you go along
- It is a good way of dealing with 'quality assurance' - you're keeping an eye on things to make sure quality is maintained
- It can be used to prove the value of what you are doing
- It can provide evidence of your contribution to the field you are working in
- It can help others through sharing your learning
- Information you collect can be used for reporting back to those with an interest in the project (e.g. participants, funders) and telling others about what you've done
- The evidence you collect can support future funding applications

Barriers to evaluation:

- There is no "off the shelf" way to evaluate
- There is little consistency in practice
- It can take time, energy and money
- Some people feel that they do not have the suitable skills to evaluate
- You might receive negative feedback, or hear something you may not like
- It can be challenging to get honest feedback on your project
- There are a lot of evaluation tools and methods, and it can be difficult to know which tools to use when and with whom
- People might worry about why you're evaluating the project – is the project threatened? Is the work coming to an end? Is evaluation or advocacy? Are you only looking for success stories?
- Poor evaluations can be confusing and unhelpful