

First steps in... Evaluation



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- downloading it from www.hlf.org.uk;
- emailing enquire@hlf.org.uk;
- phoning our helpline on 020 7591 6042;
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- using TextDirect 18001 020 7591 6042.

If you require a copy of this guidance in an alternative format (large print, braille, or audio version), or if your first language is not English, we can provide it in the appropriate format or language if you ask us. It is also available in Welsh.

1 Introduction

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund sustains a wide range of the UK's heritage for present and future generations to experience, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks, and historic places to archaeology, wildlife and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage and help more people take part and make decisions about its future.

We give grants to support a wide range of projects involving the local, regional and national heritage of the United Kingdom. We have three main aims.

To receive a grant your project must:

- help people to learn about their own and other people's heritage.

Your project must also do either or both of the following:

- conserve the UK's heritage for present and future generations to experience and enjoy;
- help more people, and a wider range of people, to take an active part in and make decisions about heritage.

This guidance provides you with a short explanation of the evaluation work that we want the organisations we fund to carry out. It is mainly aimed at applicants to our grant award programmes of £50,000 or less – **Your Heritage and Young Roots**. We have produced a much fuller guidance document *Evaluating your HLF project* that gives a lot more detail about how to go about evaluation, along with ideas of different ways of getting feedback about your project. Once you have read this short version you may feel you would like to look at the longer one to develop plans you may have for evaluation. Both pieces of guidance has been written in conjunction with **nef** (the new economics foundation) who have wide experience in working with community groups and funders in developing evaluation methods. We suggest two simple tools produced by **nef** for evaluating your Your Heritage or Young Roots project at the end of this note.

2 What is evaluation and why do we want it?

HLF wants to fund projects that make a difference – to heritage and to people. In the Your Heritage application pack we ask you to show your project plan in the format shown below. Your original HLF application form, therefore, can be the starting point for your evaluation. Evaluation means looking back on the story of your project and comparing what you thought, hoped or expected would happen against how things actually turned out. In particular you will want to know whether the changes you expected to achieve were achieved. **This reflection on the project story – looking back on what you did, and finding out how well it worked – is what we mean by 'evaluation'**. We believe that evaluation is worthwhile because it leads to better projects.

What?	When?	Where?	Who will carry out the activity?	Who is the activity for?	What will you achieve?
Describe the individual activities you will do to meet your project aims. (This includes any physical work.)	Give the dates the activity will start and finish.	Tell us where the activity will take place.	Tell us who will be responsible for carrying out the activity.	Tell us who the activity is aimed at.	Explain in detail what you will achieve by doing the activity. Use target numbers where possible.

3 What we expect from projects we fund

You will want to have periodic reviews during the implementation of your project to check if it is on track and whether any adjustment is needed. However, the progress reports that HLF requires you to complete during the delivery of your project only deal with the financial details of project spend and whether the planned implementation of capital works and activities is on track. We will not expect anything more detailed than this during the implementation of your project.

At the end of your project, though, we will expect some evaluation feedback from you, in two parts: -

1. An **evaluation** that compiles quantitative (e.g. numbers of activities, visits etc.) and qualitative evidence (e.g. personal accounts of participants) to tell the story of the project, and which makes a comparison with the aspirations first laid out in your application. All applicants must produce an evaluation of their project and attach it to their completion and evaluation report. We will retain the final 10% of your grant until you have sent us this report. You may very well want to look ahead and include the data that we will collect in our evaluation questionnaire in your evaluation report (see below). The final format of your evaluation report is up to you. However, if you are looking for a starting point, a suggested template of report contents is provided in *Evaluating your HLF project*.

2. A follow-up **evaluation questionnaire**. We will send you this within one year of the completion of your project. This is to make sure that we get some consistent data from funded projects that we can use in our own research and evaluation. We will ask you for a small amount of quantitative data. It will include information such as the numbers of activities undertaken, the number of visitors you have received (where appropriate) and the amount of training or volunteer involvement in your project. For all of these 'outputs' of your project we will be interested in the types of people that have benefited as well as the overall numbers. This is so that we can report on the diversity and reach of our funding activity. Further details of this evaluation questionnaire can be found in *Evaluating your HLF project*.

HLF will use your evaluation in three ways: -

- We will review the feedback you provide, to help improve our own practice. This will particularly apply at the level of our regional and country teams, who will be the first to receive your evaluation reports.
- We will also want to use some of your evaluation work within the reviews we carry out of our funding as a whole, and we may want to include your results in external publications. However we do not wish to control the content or style of your evaluation reports and we do not expect to rely exclusively on feedback from projects for our own evaluation work. This means that we may still contact you to request the inclusion of your project in one of our own research studies.
- We will promote the messages from evaluation across the heritage sector. Since a key benefit of encouraging more evaluation is to spread learning, we will provide a mechanism for feeding evaluation stories from projects across the sector, through the HLF website and our advocacy work. Your evaluation reports will be promoted and made available through the HLF website.

4 What we will provide

HLF can make a contribution towards project evaluation costs, and these costs should be included in your budget. We can contribute between 1% and 3% of your grant amount towards evaluation. The exact amount we agree will depend on judgements about need and value for money, and there may be some cases where we decide a contribution from HLF for project evaluation would duplicate existing funding.

5 Some starting tips on evaluation

All good evaluations will incorporate data collected *before* and *after* a project has been delivered, to see whether and to what extent a change has taken place. But it is still possible to keep the process simple and manageable. For evaluation to be *useful* we believe that it needs to be shaped by four key principles.

- Look beyond outputs – though they are a good foundation the numbers alone do not tell the whole story. To evaluate change means looking at the real differences made by your project – this ‘difference’ is often referred to as the ‘outcomes’ of your project, or its ‘impact’. Very often outcomes happen at the level of the individual, and so the methods involved must be sensitive enough to pick up whatever individual stories are hidden behind the numbers.
- Tell the story – it is important to be clear about the link between activities and actions and the change that they are designed to bring about. This is about knowing *how* (not just *whether*) a particular activity is bringing about change, and requires an effort to understand the narrative of how outputs lead to the longer-term outcomes and impacts.
- Involve people in your evaluation and make it a conversation – a search for a meaningful narrative requires a dialogue, rather than a mere extraction of data from people.

- Choose indicators that matter – with a better understanding of how an activity or initiative is designed to bring about change it is possible to identify milestones along the path that demonstrate whether or not it is on course. The indicators (literally ‘ways of knowing’) that change is (or is not) happening can be a combination of numbers and descriptions of people’s experience, and must be chosen based on what people associated or benefiting from the project have identified as important to measure, and not just what is easiest to count.

6 Simple tools for evaluation

In their publication *Proving and Improving: A Quality and Impact Toolkit for Social Enterprise*¹, **nef** (the new economics foundation) sets out some steps and simple to use tools for carrying out evaluation. This is very suitable for the sort of projects we fund through the Your Heritage programme.

The **Storyboard Exercise** has been designed to help articulate how a project’s actions will bring about change. It does this by providing the framework to bring together a group of project stakeholders who then set down a shared view of why the project is important, what it aims to achieve, and how it is intended the outcomes will be brought about. This thinking tool helps a project officer identify the important questions that need to be asked in order to demonstrate whether or not change is happening. A group of people involved with the project or affected by it are invited to discuss eight prompts that together build the hypothesis, or ‘story’ about how they think the project will make a difference. Once the hypothesis has been established it is easier to identify the indicators that will demonstrate whether or not the project has made a difference. Both as a planning and as an evaluation tool the Storyboard provides a way for people to be involved in the planning and the evaluation of a project.

During implementation and particularly after the completion of the project another **nef** tool, the **Poster Evaluation Exercise** can come into play. This exercise is a ready-made workshop that offers people involved in the project the opportunity to look back and reflect on what the project has achieved, and to explore what can be learnt from the way it was delivered. It uses a large interactive poster with a timeline to which participants attach post-notes identifying the high points and low points of the project’s history. This timeline then forms the basis of a semi-structured discussion about learning and impact. The whole exercise can be undertaken over the period of a two-hour workshop and can either be self-managed or run by an external facilitator.

Both the Storyboard Exercise and the Poster Evaluation Exercise can also be accessed online at www.proveandimprove.org.

¹ For the Quality and Impact Toolkit, see www.proveandimprove.org

7 More help

For more detailed information on evaluation, see our guidance *Evaluating your HLF project*. This is a longer guidance note written mainly for applicants to our Heritage Grants programme (grants over £50,000). However, it does contain useful information on where to find more help.

If you would like advice on making an application, contact the HLF development team in your regional or country office or send in a pre-application enquiry form via our website.

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