

Evaluation for Funding

A guide to showcasing
your impact to funders



Introduction



Applying for funding can be the most time-consuming and stressful task for organisations, but it is often necessary to maintain the running of daily operations. It can also inject much needed funds into your event planning budget.

This handy guide will give you a list of easy-to-understand steps you can take to evaluate your impact, which in turn will help you produce stronger supporting materials for funding applications.

- What do funders look for?
- Aligning your strategies
- Supporting materials
- Evaluation benefits
- Resources

What do funders look for?

Understanding what funders seek is key to securing support. This section explores a key way to strengthen your application.

→ ORGANISATIONS WHO MATCH

A great place to start is to look for funders that align with your common interests, as well as ones that have similar strategic aims to yours. For example, a dance company would research for a funder with interests in the arts and cultural sector. Searching for funders that have supported similar organisations previously is also a good starting point.

→ EVIDENCE YOU ARE ACHIEVING YOUR AIMS

A track record is also important, as you need to be able to demonstrate that you can feasibly reach your goals and outcomes and make good on their investment. Having data to back up your narrative is a smart way to do this!

Know your benefits



Funders frequently seek organisations that deliver both immediate and long-term benefits to the communities they serve, creating a "ripple effect" of positive impact.

OPERATIONAL BENEFITS (OUTPUTS)

Clearly identifying these benefits can distinguish your application from others. For instance, if you are a Youth Dance Organisation, one of your goals might be to increase student participation in your classes. This would be considered an output of your operations.

QUALITATIVE BENEFITS (OUTCOMES)

You can also generate important benefits for communities. These benefits are also known as qualitative outcomes and are often a key criteria in funding applications. Qualitative outcomes are the changes that result from taking part in a program, activity or using a service.

EXAMPLE OUTCOMES

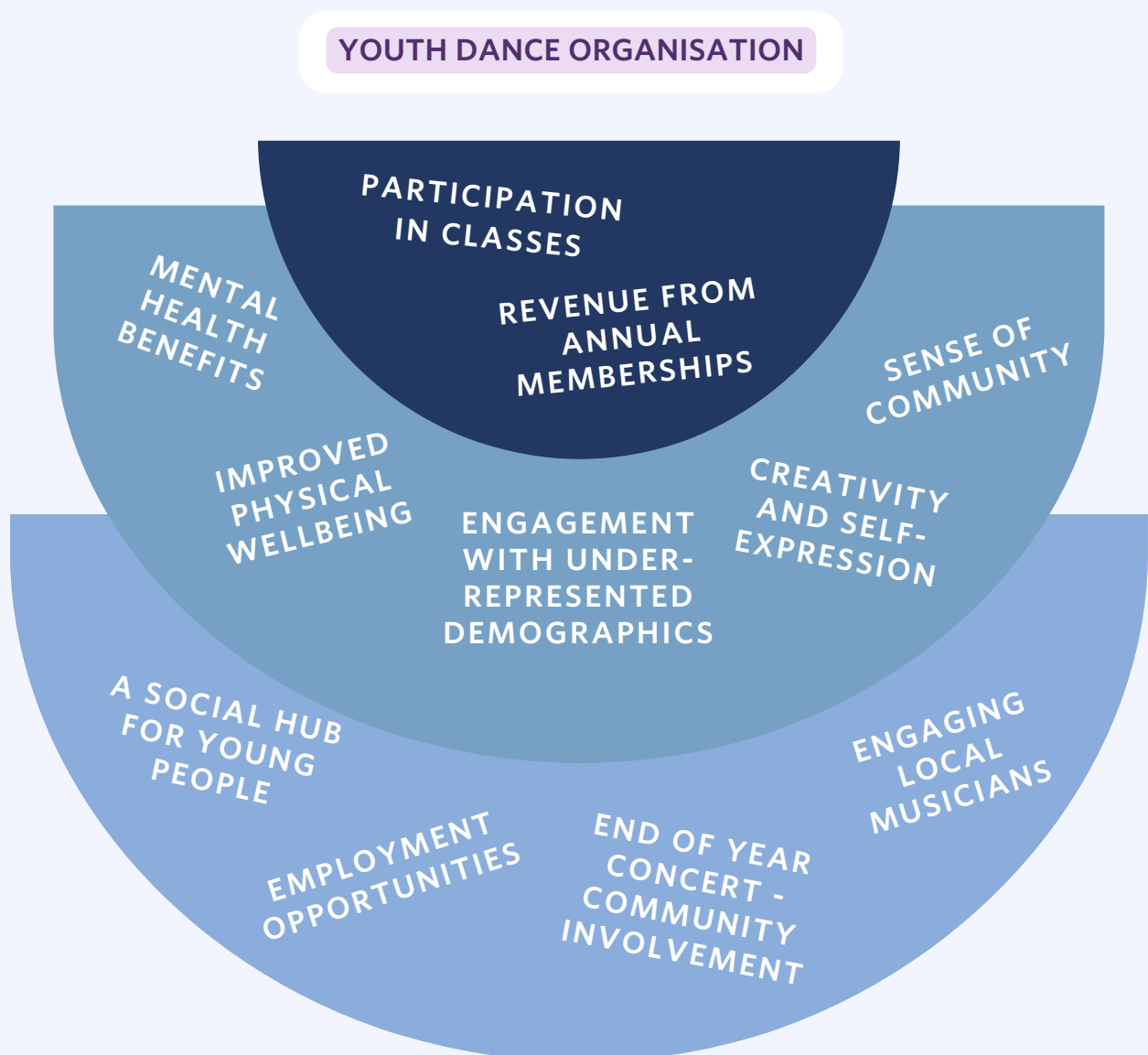
- Improved physical or mental wellbeing
- The creation of a sense of community
- A social hub for young people
- Encouraging creativity and self-expression
- Engagement of under-represented demographics

Map out your impact



You can brainstorm and map out your organisation's social, cultural, economic and community impact by visualising this ripple effect.

While your organisation acts as the catalyst, the benefits extend to both your target audience and the broader society in various meaningful ways. Below we have provided an example of mapping out the ripple effect for a Youth Dance Organisation's positive impact.



Aligning your strategies

Funders have strategies too!

It is also important to research your funder's greater social strategy. You can usually find these by searching '[funder name] + strategic plan!'

Taking the time to align your goals with your funder will show them that you are dedicated and have done your due diligence. It shows that you fully understand your project or organisation and the impact it has on the wider community.

We call this process a strategic alignment, whereby you map your own objectives against your funders' outcomes and then prepare an evaluation framework to match.

Show funders how you match



Establishing clear connections between your project and potential funders' goals is key to successful funding.

When seeking support for your projects, it's crucial to demonstrate how your work aligns with the priorities of different funders. Many funding organisations have similar objectives but express them in varied ways.

By mapping out how your organisation's goals align with those of your funders, you can more effectively highlight your project's relevance and meet each funder's expectations.

For example, you could use one measure like Inclusion ("I feel welcome and included") to report back against your achievement of criteria from three different funders!

TIP

Work smart, not hard!
Combine as many outcomes from funders as you can so that your evaluation isn't too long or repetitive.

Youth Dance Organisation Goal: Inclusion			
Funder	Lotterywest	Creative Australia	DLGSC
Funding Criteria	More people have a stronger sense of belonging in their community	A dynamic sector that is diverse and inclusive	Contribute to social inclusion, wellbeing, cohesion and vibrancy in regional communities

Supporting materials

How can you produce better supporting material?

Simply put, you need tangible evidence that you are making an impact.

Funders need proof of your success, and statistics are a great way to show this. Combining statistics with anecdotal evidence can produce a well-rounded snapshot of your program, event or organisation.

This, however, is a long-term approach and it is important to still collect testimonials even if other evaluation methods haven't been implemented.

New projects will especially benefit from testimonials, as program-specific evidence is often only available when acquitting the grant after the program has occurred.

You can then use a mix of prior feedback and comments in your next application!

It is all about telling a story with your data, but having the statistics to back up your claims.

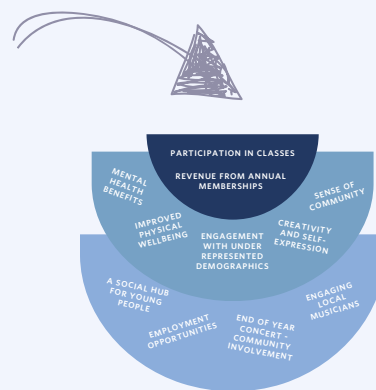
Collect your evidence



Translate your strategic goals into meaningful survey questions to gain insights into your project's impact.

Think back to the brainstorm exercise mapping out the Youth Dance Organisation's impact. How can we collect evidence that supports their narrative?

Surveys are an effective way to collect feedback. Using a platform like Culture Counts, you can gather data using standardised questions (dimensions) designed to measure impact. Survey respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement/disagreement with each statement (as shown in the table below).



Once you have collected responses, you will be able to report back on these goals and celebrate your successes. Combine with demographics and attendance data to paint a full picture of who you are engaging with.

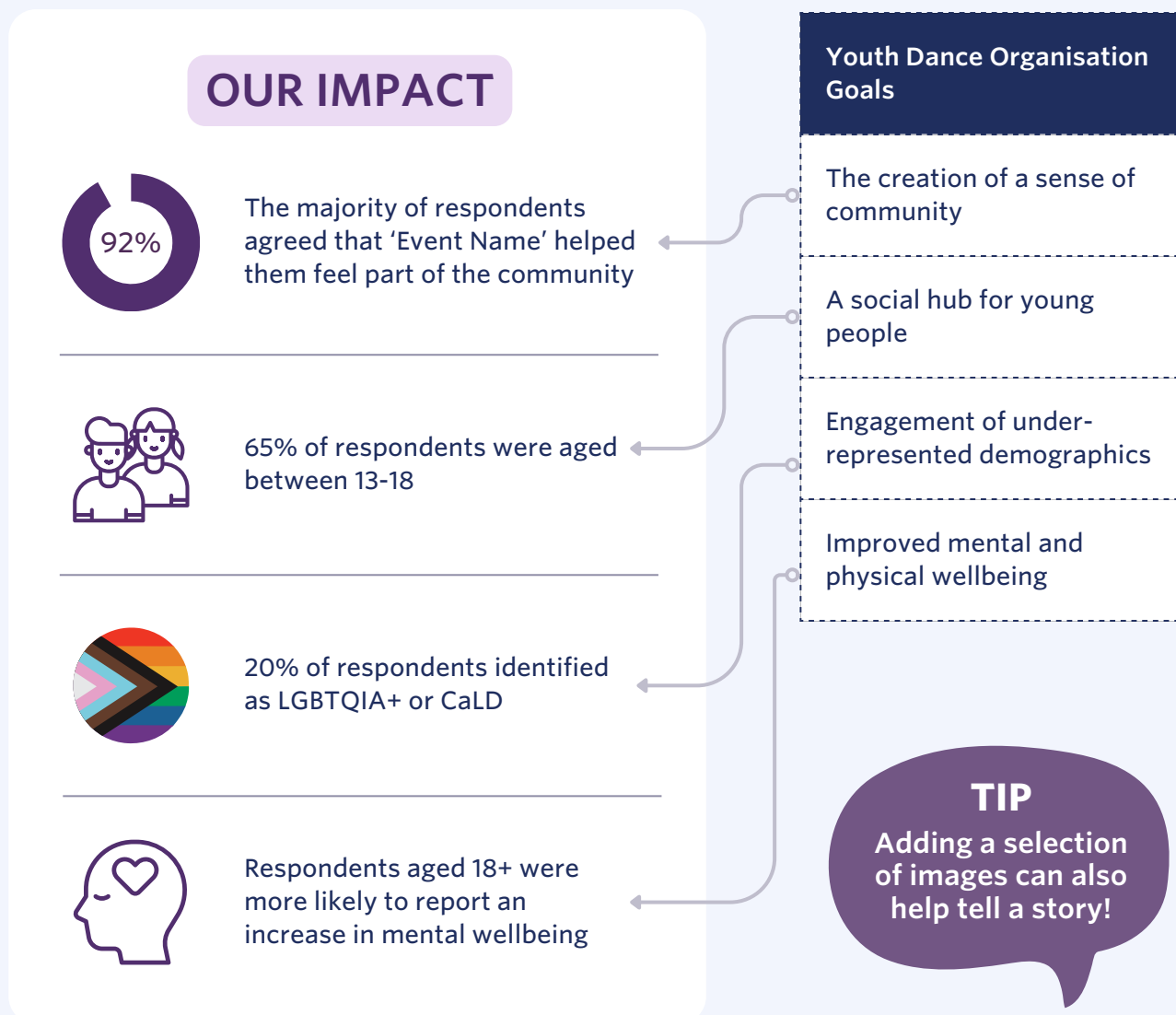
Youth Dance Organisation Goals	Dimension	Dimension Statement
The creation of a sense of community	Belonging	<i>It helped me feel part of the community</i>
A social hub for young people	Bond	<i>It helped me connect to others like me</i>
Engagement of under-represented demographics	Diversity	<i>It engaged people from different backgrounds</i>
Improved mental and physical wellbeing	Wellbeing	<i>It had a positive impact on my physical health and mental wellbeing</i>

Tell a story with your data



Show funders that you understand their strategies by relating their goals back to your statistics.

An effective way to present your data is to present your statistics in a meaningful way - such as reports or infographics (as shown below). These materials can be used as supporting documentation in your grant application.



Evaluation benefits

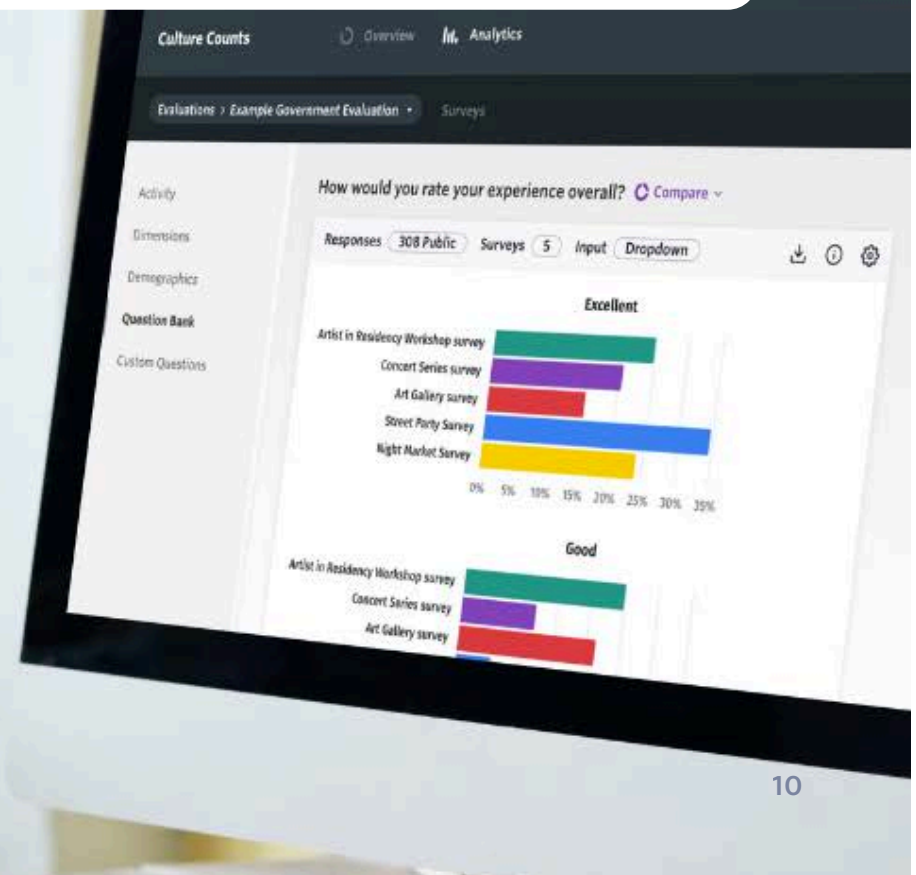
Why should you continue evaluating?

Consistency is key. Having an evaluation framework that you can duplicate and use over time is highly beneficial, particularly if you want to prove to funders that you are making an impact on the community.

Accessing a dataset that you can slowly benchmark and compare with will not only highlight areas where you have improved, but also identify gaps that need addressing.

A strong understanding of these gaps can help you specify in your application exactly where you will channel future funds to achieve the greatest improvement.

Funders like to see organisations that can pinpoint where the money will be going and evidence of strategic goals being achieved, rather than vague plans.



Tips and Tricks



There is a lot to consider when applying for funding. Use these easy tips to reduce overwhelm and create a clear plan.

FUNDING RESEARCH

- Review the programs supported by a major funder to understand an in-depth view of what they like to report, beyond the eligibility criteria.
- Annual reports can be a good source of information to understand what funding organisations are hoping to achieve.
- Consider the ethics involved in receiving funding from certain organisations and how this may impact your organisation. The implications here could be twofold - impacting your branding and perceptions, and potentially shaping your activities.

APPLYING FOR FUNDING

- It's better to tackle a small number of well thought out strategic grants than to throw yourself at everything that's available.
- Create a funding calendar, with application opening and closing dates - give yourself time to craft the perfect application benefit.
- Consider hiring a professional grant writer. Grant writing is an art and can take someone with previous experience to fully express your story.
- Have one person with ultimate responsibility for the application as too many voices can be a hindrance.

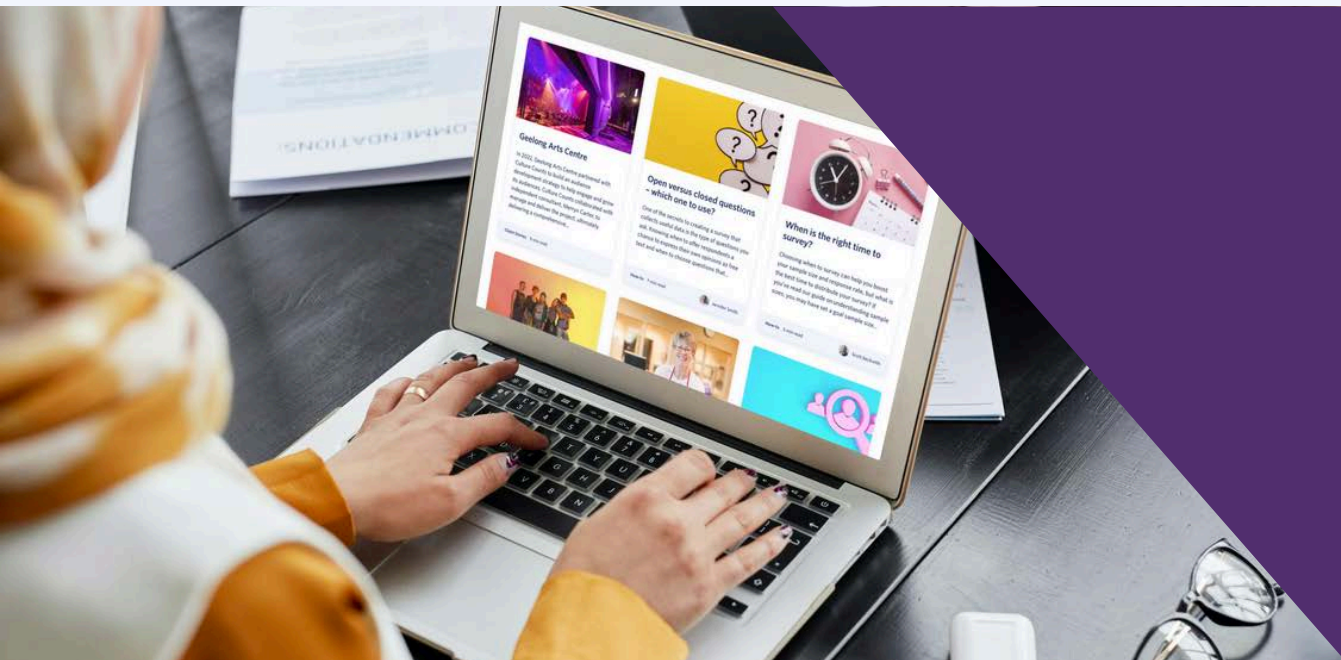
POST-FUNDING PERIOD

- Don't be discouraged if you are unsuccessful! Request and read through your feedback carefully and make a plan for next time.
- Communicate and collaborate with other groups - if appropriate, get in touch with your peers to gain insight on what they did to successfully apply for funding. If you have collaborated on an event, evaluate together and use the reporting in your individual applications.

PREPARING FOR ACQUITTAL

- Develop a survey template that addresses your strategic goals. This template can then be duplicated when evaluating a new event or program.
- Keep the wording the same on all questions - that way you can aggregate any data over time.
- Have a timeline of data collection plans, so you know when to send out any surveys.
- Consider a broader annual survey that you send out each year - you will be able to monitor changes in overall perception and engagement over time.

Resources



Visit the Culture Counts blog for more tips and tricks!

GETTING STARTED

- Why is survey consistency important?: culturecounts.cc/blog/why-is-survey-consistency-important
- Our Outcomes Framework: culturecounts.cc/blog/product-update-new-outcomes-framework
- Using surveys for market research: culturecounts.cc/blog/using-surveys-for-market-research

DISTRIBUTION

- How to distribute your survey: culturecounts.cc/blog/how-to-distribute-your-survey
- When is the right time to survey?: culturecounts.cc/blog/when-is-the-right-time-to-survey
- A guide to marketing channels: culturecounts.cc/blog/a-guide-to-marketing-channels

FUNDING

- Our top five funding tips: culturecounts.cc/blog/our-top-five-funding-application-tips



Interested to find out more?

Contact us at culturecounts.cc/contact to gain a copy of our Product Guide.

Evaluation Planning Timetable

EVENT NAME	EVENT DATE	TEAM LEAD	DISTRIBUTION METHOD	DATA COLLECTION DATES	INCENTIVE DRAWN?	NOTES
Summer Festival	12/12/24	Jane Citizen	Posters/Flyers Fieldworkers	12/12/24 - 19/12/24	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Posters ordered from printer on 1 December, Jane to collect
					<input type="checkbox"/>	
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