Research Design Checklist

The following template should be used for the design of social research projects. Use this template to consider the scope and scale of social research initiatives.

Overview

This template details how an evaluation might be designed. Social research is deployed to uncover indicators and points of evidence that might be used to describe and make some sense of social phenomena.

But to do this, research must be carefully planned and enacted, with the overall design of the social research project standing as key to its success.

Key Sections

The following sections are key to the *Research Design Checklist*:

- **Research Purpose**- clearly articulating the purpose of the research is vital. In most cases, a good research initiative draws from a straightforward and clearly articulated statement of purpose. This purpose should state what is required from the research.
- **Research Questions**- the research questions mobilise the *Research Purpose* and convert the statement of the research purpose into a set of workable questions. But as with the statement of the research purpose, these questions should be straightforward and clear.
- **Data Collection Techniques**: these are the 'tools' via which data might be collected. The techniques used in social research will vary according to whether the research is Qualitative or Quantitative. Mapping both the approach to research and the techniques that will be utilised to uncover viewpoints is an important aspect of research planning. **Module 3 and 4 of the *Social Research Toolkit* detail data collection techniques.**
- **Analysis**- once evidence has been uncovered via the data collection techniques *analysis* is required to make sense of the data and to generate conclusions from the research inquiry. How analysis is undertaken, and which aspects of the data are noted and used as evidence will determine what assessments are made. **Module 5 details processes for analysing data and presenting research findings.**
- **Presentation of Findings**- following the collection and analysis of data, findings from the research can be developed in response to the research questions. This is the culmination of the research and the point at which a response to the *Research Purpose* and *Research Questions* can be offered.

If the social research initiative is tied to a specific program specified within a *Program Scope and Evaluation* form, the design of the research should clearly articulate the concerns detailed in the relevant *Program Scope and Evaluation* file.

The Research Design Checklist

Purpose:

Notes:

The Purpose should state clearly what the research intends to do. This should be a straightforward statement; for example: "*This project seeks to evaluate Council's youth engagement initiative; 'Young Songwriters'".*

Project Connections:

Does this research fulfill an evaluation stage for a Program Scope and Evaluation process:

YES NO

Program Name:

Accompanying Program Scope and Evaluation:

Notes:

A clear sense of how this research fits into a larger research agenda and the *Project Scope and Evaluation Process* should be noted.

Research Questions:

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Notes:

Research Questions need to be considered carefully to ensure that they remain achievable. Each Research Question should focus on a specific aspect of the phenomena under investigation. As a general rule, and given that these questions will drive the evaluation, they should also remain straightforward and be easily interpreted. For example; 'How did young people rate the *Young Songwriters* initiative?'; 'How did the *Young Songwriters* initiative engage the target demographic?'

Tips for Research Questions:

- Avoid 'yes' 'no' questions, and instead design questions to provide flexibility in gathering data.
- Always ensure that questions relate to the *Purpose*
- Ensure that questions can be responded to, and do not imply time frames for data collection and data types beyond the scope of the research.
- There is no limit on the number of questions that might be asked, but in general 3-4 questions should provide scope to effectively undertake a research inquiry.

Data Collections Techniques:

Qualitative Techniques

Interview: ☐ Observation: ☐ Document Analysis: ☐

Quantitative Techniques

Survey: ☐ Statistical counts: ☐

Digital and Social Media

Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn): ☐ Digital Media (Blogs, Websites): ☐

Location/s of Data Collection:

Time/s of Data Collection:

Data Storage:

Data captured are stored under *Program Scope and Evaluation* file No.:

Notes:

Data Collection Techniques are covered in Modules 3 and 4 of the Social Research Toolkit.

Codify the application of these techniques into a structured data collection strategy.

Consideration should be given to:

- who will collect the data and the availability of research personnel
- participant ‘overload’ and ensuring that the collection of data via interview and survey doesn’t annoy or disturb participants
- the location and availability of data for data collection
- the time-frame for data collection and when data collection will occur with reference to other workflows
- contingency planning; if it emerges that a specified data collections technique yields low data response, has a range of data collection techniques been incorporated into the design to enable other forms of data to be collected

Analysis:

Theme 1:

Theme 2:

Theme 3:

Theme 4:

Theme 5:

Theme 6:

Notes:

At this stage, the evaluation will now have a data set, from which analysis might commence. But before any firm response to the Research Questions might be made, the data will need to be organised and framed so that they provide evidence. This effectively involves *sifting* and *sorting* the data to remove the erroneous and inconsequential and highlight the indicative and significant.

The identification of themes in the conduct of Analysis is covered in Module 5 of the Social Research Toolkit.

Outcomes:

The presentation of findings will include:

Formal Report to Council:

- Presentation to Elected Representatives	YES	NO
- Report for Managers	YES	NO

Report to Community:

- Public Consultation	YES	NO
- Electronic Dissemination	YES	NO
- Media	YES	NO

Formal Report for Filing:

- Report to be included with *Program Scope and Evaluation* File No.:

Notes:

It is at this point that the outcomes of the evaluation are produced and the assessment of the event is presented to stakeholders. Usually, a report or similar document that details the findings drawn the evidence will be produced.