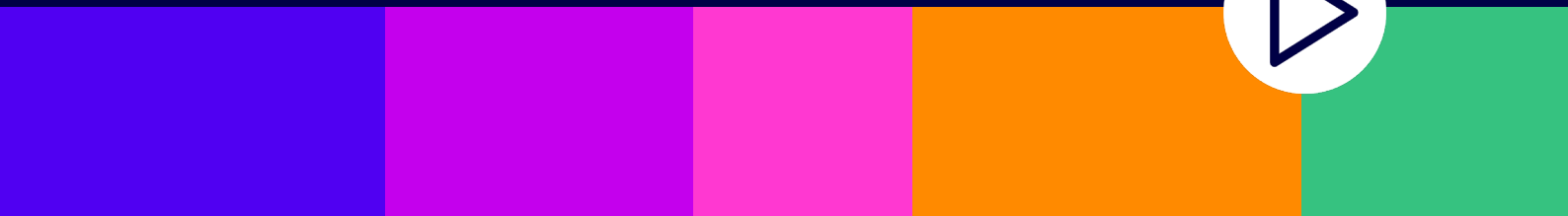




Evaluation Toolkit: Glossary

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Making Sense
of Media



Annex: Glossary

Many different terms are used when discussing media literacy evaluation. We have defined some of the most important here. It is important to note that there is sometimes overlap in the way that terms are used.

Assumptions

The assumptions in a theory of change/evaluation framework are the things which you can reasonably expect to be true, based on the available evidence.

Baseline

A baseline is the starting point against which to measure change. For a media literacy project, this could be the participants' existing level of knowledge about a topic, or their existing level of skills. This could be established using a quiz, survey, interview or focus group carried out with the target audience before the intervention takes place, and/or could be informed by previous research on similar audiences.

Base size

The base size is the number of people who were asked a specific question.

Causal effect

The causal effect of an intervention is the effect (change) that it is shown to have on its participants. It can be described as the difference between the outcomes for participants who have taken part in an intervention, compared to those who have not, or the outcomes for participants after an intervention, as opposed to before.

Counterfactual

When assessing the impact of a specific intervention, it is important to be able to compare any change detected with what would have probably happened without the intervention: this is the counterfactual scenario. This can be done by using a control group (an audience with similar characteristics to your target, without access to the intervention) or by using a baseline, i.e. comparing the skill or knowledge levels of your target audience before and after the intervention.

Data

Data refers to the information about your participants and their experience of your intervention that you gather during the research phase of your evaluation. It could be measurements, observations or feedback from participants. It can be qualitative (narrative) or quantitative (numerical). This data can be analysed and used to better understand the intervention, its outcome and its impact.

Data cleaning

Data cleaning refers to the process of removing or correcting data entries that are incomplete, incorrect or inconsistent. It is important to remove such errors in the data in order to avoid drawing inaccurate conclusions.

Effect size

The effect size measures the strength of the relationship between two variables. Although checking for statistical significance can tell you whether or not your intervention works, measuring effect size can give you an idea of the extent of the effect (or impact) of your intervention. A larger effect size indicates a stronger relationship.

Calculating the effect size of your intervention requires comparing numerical results from your treatment and control groups (or from the same group before and after intervention)

There are various methods that you can use to calculate effect size. For example, *Cohen's d* involves comparing the mean results from the two groups.

Economic evaluation

These evaluations will focus on asking you to consider the costs of your project relative to the benefits, asking questions such as "was the outcome worth the cost?" Or "could something else have delivered the same outcomes for less?"

Evaluation framework

An evaluation framework explains how the intervention will reach its goals: from the start of the initiative, beginning with resources available; to the end of the initiative, setting out the final and long-term impacts that the project is expected to achieve.

It sets out a logical and realistic outline of how inputs are used to develop project outputs, and how those outputs interact with participants' behaviour to achieve outcomes which lead to a lasting impact.

Focus groups

A focus group is a research method that involves bringing together a group of people with particular characteristics or experiences to discuss a topic. As a qualitative research method, this can be used to understand how and why people think or behave in a certain way.

In terms of media literacy initiatives, focus groups within your target audience could be used to help develop aspects of the intervention, while focus groups of participants could be used to determine what they have learnt and how it has changed their behaviour, or what they think could be improved about the project's activities.

Hypothesis

A hypothesis is a tentative statement or proposed explanation for a phenomenon or event, based on available evidence. It often predicts that there will be or won't be a correlation between two variables, one of which could be a media literacy intervention. A testable hypothesis is one which can be proved or disproved through experimentation. An evaluation should test whether or not a hypothesis seems to be true: for example, your hypothesis might be that your intervention will improve participants' knowledge or skills in a particular area, and your evaluation will determine whether it actually does.

Impact

Impact refers to longer-term change at an individual or societal level that can be attributed to the outcomes of an intervention. Impact is likely to be harder to measure than outcomes.

For example, the impact of a media literacy project could be:

- increased resilience to disinformation
- a change in the way that participants consume news
- an increase in the creativity of the audience regarding online media

Impact evaluation

Impact evaluation will focus on asking you to consider what the project achieved in terms of change for the target audience and/or wider society, and how well you met your objectives.

Indicators

Impact indicators and outcome indicators are the measurable pieces of evidence that allow you to track the changes that have taken place as a result of your intervention.

For example, for a media literacy project, an outcome indicator might be the change in score between a pre- and post-intervention knowledge quiz carried out by participants. Consistent, significant improvements in scores would indicate a positive outcome for the intervention.

Input

An input is something necessary to carry out an activity: it could be staff members, information/existing research evidence, or other resources.

For example, the inputs of a media literacy project could be:

- Two full-time staff members
- Research findings about the audience's key challenges in accessing information.

Interviews

Interviews are a research method that involve conversations between a researcher and a participant, often with questions or a discussion guide that is defined in advance. They allow you to ask detailed questions and gain a more in-depth understanding of how an intervention might have changed a participant's attitude and behaviour.

Likert scale

A Likert scale is a rating system typically used in questionnaires or surveys to assess people's attitudes, perceptions or opinions. Surveys will often ask their respondents to use a Likert scale of five (or seven) steps to rate the extent that they agree with a particular statement. These steps/options would likely be: 'strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree,' but could include further steps or a 'don't know' option instead of 'neutral.'

It is possible to code the results numerically (e.g. *strongly agree* could be 1, and *strongly disagree* could be 5) for purposes of data interpretation.

Logic model

A logic model explains the relationship between the inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes of your intervention.

Much of this information could also be contained in an evaluation framework.

Longitudinal data

In the context of media literacy, longitudinal data is evidence collected from the same participants over a period of time; for example, by asking the same questions. It allows you to track change over time.

Media literacy

Ofcom defines media literacy as "the ability to use, understand and create media and communications in a variety of contexts".

Outcome

An outcome is the result of an intervention, ideally a benefit received by the target audience. It is usually finite and measurable.

For example, for a media literacy project, outcomes could be:

- an increase in participants' knowledge,
- participants gaining a new skill; and
- a change in attitude among participants.

Outcomes framework

An outcomes framework involves clearly defining the outcomes you want to achieve, and prioritising them. You might separate them into benefits for individuals vs the community, for example. It helps to focus your work on the outcomes that matter to you, to link your activities to the outcomes you want to see, and to communicate these more clearly.

Much of this information could also be contained in an evaluation framework.

Output

An output refers to the deliverables of an intervention or activity. These could be products (resources produced, for example), or services (workshops or training sessions carried out).

For example, the outputs of a media literacy project could be:

- Ten workshops delivered, each attended by 14 participants.
- Ten lesson plans published, downloaded an average of 16 times.

Process evaluation

Process evaluations will focus on asking you to consider how you delivered your project, and the how far the way in which the project was delivered affected the final outcomes.

Qualitative data

Qualitative data is information that can't be counted: it is descriptive, and often for a media literacy initiative it will be narratives or quotes from participants.

It is usually collected through interviews, focus groups, observations, case studies or open-ended survey questions.

It 'gives voice to experience', and can be used to understand how people think or feel about something, and why they think or feel that way. Qualitative data that explains how a participant believes your intervention has changed their life is useful to provide to funders.

It can be combined with quantitative data for deeper understanding.

Quantitative data

Quantitative data is information that can be counted. For a media literacy intervention, this might include collating the responses to questions or statements with limited answers.

It is usually collected through surveys or questionnaires, and can include results from quizzes.

It can be used to understand what people think about something (from a limited range of options), and whether something has changed in their attitudes. Quantitative data can be gathered over time to produce longitudinal evidence which can add further proof of the effectiveness of your intervention.

It can be combined with qualitative data for deeper understanding.

Randomised control trial (RCT)

A randomised control trial involves a group of people with similar characteristics being randomly assigned to one of two groups: one which receives the intervention, one which doesn't. Carrying out the same evaluation methods on the two groups – surveys, quizzes, focus groups or interviews – helps you to assess whether your intervention made a difference or not. Randomly assigning eligible participants to the two groups helps to reduce the risk that other factors might explain a difference in results.

Sample

When conducting an evaluation, you might be able to collect some data from only a selection of participants: this is your sample. The sample size in relation to the overall group is important, as the statistical significance of your findings (which allows you to conclude whether or not something actually made a difference) is partially dependent on the sample size.

Stakeholder

Project stakeholders can include anyone involved in the project, including project funders or sponsors, other members of the team, or for larger projects, other teams.

Stakeholders can also include anyone who might be affected by the intervention, such as target audiences.

Statistical significance

Statistical significance refers to the likelihood that change observed is a result of an intervention rather than simply being by chance. It is calculated based on sample size compared to the total population, and variation within the population.

If your results are statistically significant, it means that they are very likely to be the result of your intervention, rather than random chance.

Statistical significance is usually described using a probability value, or p-value, which is always between 0 and 1. A smaller p-value indicates that it is more likely that your results are not due to chance. To calculate a p-value, you could use an online calculator.

Surveys

Surveys consist of forms or lists of questions and can generate both quantitative and qualitative data, depending on the kind of questions asked.

For a media literacy intervention, you might want to survey your participants before and after the intervention, or straight after and then several months later.

The type of survey you create depends both on your target audience, and what you want to find out.

Theory of change

A model which explains the problem you are trying to solve, how you are planning to do this, and what effect you expect it to have. It explains why you think change will result from your intervention and acknowledges the elements that you cannot control.

A theory of change provides a high-level narrative of the intervention and the theory behind it; it should be put together at the beginning of the project. Much of this information could also be contained in an evaluation framework.