Modules for training science shops' staff

Project Evaluation and Impact Assessment

SciShops

ENHANCING THE RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE EXPANSION OF THE SCIENCE SHOP ECOSYSTEM IN EUROPE

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1. Definition of project evaluation

Project evaluation is a systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project with the aim to determine the relevance and level of achievement of project objectives, development effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability (OECD DAC Glossary, 2002).

2. Types of project evaluation

Early stage (*ex-ante*) evaluation:

- in the preparatory phase of a project

Monitoring:

- during the project, with the aim of improving the project impact

Mid-term evaluation:

- to assess achievements half-way through the project

A final (*ex-post*) evaluation:

- shortly before the end of a project to determine the extent to which objectives were achieved and other questions about the whole project

Post-project evaluation:

- about one year after the delivery of the final report, to establish longer-term impacts of the project

4. Steps of project evaluation

Step 01 — Preparing the evaluation

Step 02 — Collecting data

Step 03 — Analysing results

Step 04 — Writing the evaluation report

Step 05 — Communicating the results

Based on PERARES Project Evaluations Evaluation Guidelines and Instruments (2013)

5. Tools for Science Shop project evaluation

The essential tool for Science Shops: the "PERARES Project Evaluation" toolkit (available online). Includes:

- Checklist for early-stage evaluation
- Questionnaire for mid-point evaluation
- Questionnaire for end-point evaluation
- Questionnaire for post-project evaluation

Science Shops are free to adapt / develop their own tools!

Also qualitative evaluation methods can be used: interviews, focus groups, evaluation meetings

6. Definition of impact assessment

Impact assessment is a tool conceived to rate the effectiveness of a project by determining the importance of changes triggered by those activities and measured against a baseline scenario.

Such changes cover:

- positive and negative impacts;
- intended and unintended impacts
- direct or indirect long-term results
- political, economic, social, cultural, health-related, technological, and environmental changes

7. Rationale behind impact assessment

Impact assessment is not a standard practice among Science Shops or, if done, it is not widely communicated (Stanescu et al. 2018).

Post-project impact assessment is beneficial for all Science Shops as:

- a tool to show accountability
- a useful source of evidence for future project proposals
- an argument for fundraising activities

Source: analysis of impacts of 31 selected Science Shops across Europe and beyond, conducted by SciShops project and based on the PERARES "Post-project evaluation" questionnaire (Stanescu et al., 2018)

In more than 50% cases of Science Shops, the projects:

- Increased stakeholders' knowledge of how research is done
- Increased researcher's interest in the subject
- Helped to develop ongoing relationships between academics and CSOs
- Influenced the direction of further research
- Showed the prospect to produce long-term impacts for the community, e.g. changes in public policy, legislation, awareness on the issue, etc.

8. Possible impacts of Science Shops projects (2)

Impact on internal stakeholders

STUDENTS:

- new knowledge and skills
- concept and practice of social responsibility
- building professional reputation

SCIENCE SHOPS:

- influence on choice of subsequent research topics
- increased interest of academics and students in community-based participatory research
- increase in research requests
- expansion of collaborations and networking
- establishment of new science shops

8. Possible impacts of Science Shops projects (3)

Impact on external stakeholders

- impact on CSOs: improvement of programmes or services
- increased trust in research
- increased citizen awareness/understanding about issues and involvement in tackling the problems
- citizen learning about the research process
- educational impact on citizens
- impact on quality of life improvement

Example: Science Shop InterMEDIU at the Technical University of Iasi, Romania; project "Evaluation of the quality of drinking water supplied in the city of Iasi", this Science Shop achieved the following project outputs [handout]

9. Steps of impact assessment

Step 01
Identify which potential impacts are relevant to the project

Step 02
Plan and allocate resources for impact assessment

Step 03
Select tools for impact assessment

Step 04
Decide what stakeholders need to be involved

Step 05
Perform impact assessment and write a report

Step 06
Communicate results

Step 07
Monitor the sustainability of impact

10. Tools of impact assessment

The essential tool for Science Shops: the "PERARES Project Evaluation" toolkit:
https://www.livingknowledge.org/fileadmin/Dateien-Living-Knowledge/Library/
Project_reports/
PERARES_Evaluation_toolkit_with_checklist_and_evaluation_form_2012.pdf

Includes questionnaire for post-project evaluation

Science Shops are free to adapt / develop their own tools

11. Best practices of Science Shops impact assessment

UTS Shopfront Community Program at the University of Technology Sydney (Australia):

- Annual impact report
- E.g.: https://issuu.com/utsshopfront/docs/shf057_fa1_impact_brochure_a4

Office of Community-University Engagement at the University of Victoria (Canada) co-sponsored a research project on Community-Engaged Research at the University of Victoria 2009-2015:

- identified 167 instances of impact at Uvic
- calculated that $21 million was secured in research funding for community engaged projects between 2009–2015
- Published a brochure with 12 impact case studies that illustrate the impact of community-engaged research occurring at the university
- https://www.uvic.ca/cue/research/our-research-projects/index.php.

Thanks For Your Attention!