The following information is extracted from materials provided as part of a 2014 workshop, “Approaches to Evaluating University Outreach Workshop,” led by Sandra Laursen of the Ethnography and Evaluation Research Center and Susan Lynd of CIRES. Much of the information came out of a research study commissioned by the Office of Outreach and Engagement (Laursen & Archie, 2012).

Additional workshop materials may be accessed at http://outreach.colorado.edu/faculty-connection/faculty-resources#Evaluation

Possible Evaluation Strategies for Outreach and Engagement Projects

Some are methods we have used as evaluators; some were suggested or implemented by outreach teams across various project types. While not all are scientific approaches, they may provide useful formative feedback and guide you in selecting approaches or outcomes of further interest.

Any project type

- Contact hours, number and demographics of attendees/participants (outputs). OUO will ask you for contact hours and numbers of participants in different categories.
- Informal observation: it’s amazing what you can learn when you pay attention!
- Anecdotal evidence (thank-you notes, conversation): not systematic but a starting point to identify outcomes of importance to participants

Type 1, teaching model: Outreach based on faculty expertise but not strongly integrated with scholarship

- Document analysis (e.g., work produced by participants as part of the activity)
- Pre/post tests
- Surveys or questionnaires (pre/post/follow-up)
- Participant journals, reflections or debriefings (individual or group)
- Focus groups or interviews
- Formal observations or video (e.g., classroom observation)
- Web analytics (for online resource dissemination projects)
**Type 2, engagement model:** Outreach strongly integrated with faculty scholarship

- Quantitative or qualitative research methods appropriate to the project
- Abstract from scholarly works related to project
- Excerpts from annual report to other funders or from scholarly work related to project
- What outcomes can be best attributed to the outreach award, or what value was added—even if multiple sources of support contributed to the overall effort?

**Type 3, performance model:** Outreach presented in one-time events or series with different audiences each time

- Exit survey
- Postcard or internet-based survey
- Visitor observations or interviews

Some online “evaluation toolkits” address specific areas of work. We like the philosophy of the toolkit offered by the Evaluation Trust for community and volunteer organizations:

> People tend to worry about methods—but getting the questions right, and thinking who you need to involve are more important. You are using everyday skills of making contact, getting people to speak, and listening and taking notes—only in a more planned and rigorous way.

The chart of methods appropriate under differing constraints seems useful for selecting evaluation methods for university outreach.

**References**


See [http://www.colorado.edu/eer/research/outreach.html#Evaluating](http://www.colorado.edu/eer/research/outreach.html#Evaluating) for the complete report and executive summary.
### Brainstorming worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience(s)</th>
<th>Objectives or desired outcomes</th>
<th>Ideas for documenting each outcome</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is served by your outreach project inside CU? Outside CU?</td>
<td>What does the audience gain from participating, e.g. knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, enjoyment, exposure, appreciation? What gains have you observed? What do you surmise or hope for? How do the outcomes follow from your program design?</td>
<td>Think about method (how you’ll find out), opportunity (when &amp; where), content (what you’ll ask), how you’ll analyze, what you’ll report. Who can help you do it? How will you know if your program works as intended? (feedback)</td>
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