

**Proving your worth? Reporting to funders? Want to know if what you are doing works?
...don't get worried.....
Get REAL!Research Evaluation and Learning**

Free Short Course: Applying Research Techniques to Evaluation

After participating in this course, learners should be able to:

1. Plan and evaluate a research project within given time constraints.
2. Use research methods to trace relevant information.
3. Select and critically evaluate data - your own primary data and secondary data from existing material.
4. Prepare and complete 'good enough' evaluation.

Applying Research Techniques to Evaluation will be delivered over a 4 week period, on 26th February, 4th March, 11th March and 18th March. (And yes we do mean 2008!) Each of the 4 sessions will last a maximum of 3 hours, and will be held in the morning, afternoon, twilight or evening, depending on what best suits the majority of participants. The Course will be delivered at an accessible local venue.

In order to benefit from this Training, participants should:

1. Have the support of their group or organisation.
2. Have a current or prospective opportunity to put the learning from the Course into practice.
3. Have basic general I.T. skills.
4. Be committed to attending all 4 sessions and a minimum of 3.

The Course tutor is Martin Halton of the Seedley and Langworthy Trust, supported by David Atkinson of HITS and Melissa Critchley of Age Concern. SALT is a community development trust based in Salford, Greater Manchester, established in 1997 to support the residents of Seedley and Langworthy through the SRB5 regeneration programme. One of its key services is its in-house community-research service – social research and development that aims to provide quality research, evaluation and training to the public and 3rd sectors. HITS, Age Concern and SALT have been working collaboratively over the past 15 months on a number of research and evaluation projects.

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Feedback from Applying Research Techniques to Evaluation – Course 1

Method – “Suggestion box” self evaluation (completed towards the end of session 4)

Theme	Comments
Delivery of Training – length, pace & time	<p>“I thought the delivery of the training was very good – enjoyed the variety of expertise from the trainers”.</p> <p>“Training was very informative although at times felt rushed. It was difficult to understand everything without spending time reading through literature”.</p> <p>“Well delivered – enjoyed the input from the 3 speakers rather than just one person throughout because people shared their particular experiences of research with us which was helpful”.</p> <p>“Delivery of training excellent – very relaxed atmosphere which made it easy for people to contribute. Pace of training just about right. Liked use of small group activities to get you thinking about putting into practice things learnt”.</p> <p>“Excellent – very clear and easy to follow however, too much in each session and I felt a bit rushed sometimes. Feel I learnt a lot and will be able to use it. Enjoyed having different trainers – think one would have been too much. Nice listening to examples and seeing what’s out there. Enjoyed the group work – very interesting”.</p> <p>“I thought the delivery of the training was very good”.</p>
Handouts & Literature	<p>“Received plenty and all in plain English with no jargon. I have referred back to them and understood clearly”.</p> <p>“Brilliant handouts – very relevant to the course and able to refer to them frequently. Better still – no jargon is</p>

	<p>used and clear/concise – easy to understand”.</p> <p>“Was useful to receive typed-up notes of sessions and handouts were all very useful. List of resources also will be beneficial for further research/learning”.</p> <p>“Happy with the literature provided which I thought was extremely relevant to the sessions. Thankful of the notes that were discussed the week prior – useful websites etc.....”.</p> <p>“Copious! But I suppose necessary due to the nature of the subject. Found websites useful for additional information”.</p> <p>“The handouts received were very useful and will help in preparing evaluations in the future”.</p>
<p>Relevance of Course Content</p>	<p>“I have learnt a lot and have come away with some good ideas to use in future evaluations”.</p> <p>“Very relevant to my work. Made me think things out first before I rush head long into something and prepared me for the work I have to do for the funders (end of) financial year”.</p> <p>“Training was extremely relevant as constantly need to evaluate and evidence impact of work. Also learnt a lot from other people on the course”.</p> <p>“Thought all content was relevant to my work and to evaluation. Gained exceptional knowledge of how this could be applied to enhance the service I provide”.</p> <p>“The course has provided useful information and will help towards preparing evaluations in the future”.</p> <p>“Found it very relevant – especially in terms of making sense of the theory of</p>

	<p>“Venue was fine – very convenient for me! Useful to have parking at community centre. Coffee break and biscuits much appreciated too and generally made to feel welcome”.</p> <p>“Fine after week 1”.</p> <p>“Thought the venue was fine – large enough (except for 1st week). Easy to reach and to travel to – drinks/biscuits available”.</p> <p>“The venue and facilities were adequate although the 1st session felt very cramped. The rest of the training was in a larger room and was much more appropriate”.</p> <p>“Venue was very good”.</p>
<p>Suggestions</p>	<p>“Too much packed into too little time – need longer sessions or a couple more weeks. Be interesting to meet up with everyone in a month or two to see how everyone got on and what they have done”.</p> <p>“Thought that although the course seemed to be very intense and packed with information – and maybe short on time that it was necessary in order to remain focussed on the subject matter”.</p> <p>“Overall the course was enjoyable but it is important to recognise that people do have different levels of understanding and some can absorb more information more quickly than others. It may be that too much information was given in too short a space of time”.</p> <p>“Bacon butties, please!!! But apart from that well done, I’ve enjoyed the 4 sessions – and funny enough – not bored once!!”.</p>

Applying research techniques to evaluation

Learner feedback from Course 2 – June 2008

1) Relevance of Course Content

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Absolutely timely for our work. It was just what we now need to be preparing for• We would have gone about doing research evaluation anyway, but without as much conviction, knowledge and enthusiasm• The whole process in 4 sessions is vital to understand before you even start planning for the evaluation• All became very clear in the final session
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Great• Perfect for my needs to perform an evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very relevant – it covers all angles
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PERFECT timing• Has enabled me to apply learning into my workplace, far more effectively than I would have been able to do prior to attending the training• Practical examples used helped the ‘academic learning’ – easier for me to understand and relate it to my own evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extremely relevant to me – feel as though I’ve done a large part of the planning and thinking process for a new piece of work I’m doing• Was really helpful to get input from tutors and other colleagues on the training
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More relevant than I imagined!!• Comments and personal stories helped to make the course “real”
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I think that the course is becoming more relevant to me• Different from what I expected it to be (in a good way)

2) Style of delivery

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2/3 presenters was good – varied responses, voices, perspectives, support• Flip-chart better than power-point. Far more interactive. Good feeling that we as a group were having our responses valued• Liked the way we could work on our own projects to put knowledge gained into immediate practical application• Informal, relaxed style suited me• Always willing to value our own input to topics rather than feel there was an amount that had to be covered in a given time – Good!!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fantastic• Informal• Relaxed• Interactive• Group work• Open• Thought provoking

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relaxed, helpful • Good group work • At times felt confused with some delivery • Not too keen on presentations – feel out of my depth especially if not sure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal and relaxed • Good balance – listening & participating • Different inputs from varied experience of trainers • Effective use of group dynamics (small/whole group work)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different styles of delivering used and methods which helps keep interest and variety and gives us opportunities to try different activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group work very helpful to clarify ideas and “bounce” off other people • Presentations a bit nerve racking to start with but got better with time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liked the variety of learning styles used – there were still some people in the group that I never got the opportunity to work with • Liked that we didn’t sit down too long in one place • Never got round to completing homework, seemed a lot to do!!!!

3) Personal Learning/Outcomes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Far greater knowledge of the processes to make the evaluation rigorous and robust • Made me aware that the research involves a lot more work than originally thought • Engendered personal enthusiasm for the research development • Gave a chance for me and my colleague to plan our meetings in between course sessions. More effective for us
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding of how to conduct evaluations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have learned a lot – proof will be in the practice • Some weeks better than others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning exceeded my expectations when signing up for training • Perfectly timed with my own project at work • The outcomes have more than met my own objectives • Can definitely use this learning in my work place immediately • Given me more confidence to apply my learning to ‘real’ evaluations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I’ve had some experience of conducting evaluations but with no particular training – the course has helped very much – feel I’ve got a more professional approach – different methods/tools to use in my work – more ideas of where to go for support, other data/research I could use etc.... • Lots of things I didn’t know/wouldn’t have considered before – a more focused approach to evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great! I have learned loads and feel more confident in tackling the big “E”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to put together an evaluation and the processes involved • Networking opportunities were great • Felt well supported and sure of future support if needed

4) Delivery of training – length, pace & time

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length – fine • Good to have 2 or 3 different tutors here at the same time – varied input
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length – just right, would like a follow-up – how your evaluation is going • Pace – at times a bit fast and confusing for me • Time – good, breakout sessions good to get your mind together
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot of information to work through – required additional time away from group for me to really grasp some concepts and make sense of how it applied or not to my own evaluation • Sessions mainly paced well – sometimes felt rushed at the end due to amount of content • Time was effective – breaks in sessions also weekly intervals to allow time for information to sink in before moving on
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just right time, not too long to blow your mind • At a steady pace
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of information to take in but handouts help as “back up” if doing work at home/workplace • Length of sessions ok – any longer and lunch would need to be provided! • Pace/time fine • Tutors very knowledgeable, friendly and informative – create an environment which allows us to contribute without fear of not giving “right answers” • Different perspectives given by different tutors which is interesting and informative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length – 4 weeks/sessions is enough and course very in depth • Pace – fast and furious if you have no prior knowledge!! • Time – OK – very tiring though as at the end of each session it is difficult to give 100% concentration for the rest of the day!!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length – OK, a little long for my levels of concentration but helped with mixture of activities • Putting aside 4 sessions on the run each week was hard and impacted on my ability to do my job • Time – good working in the morning, more alert • Timings were good, always important to start and finish on time

5) Handouts and Literature

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handouts useful for extra reading between sessions • I personally would have benefited a bit more from the tutors talking through the handouts during the sessions • Working handouts very useful for our own project planning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were enough to make you think about evaluations and what should be included
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covered learning on the day • At times needed to be handed out after each subject, not before – gave away answers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handouts were really useful for clarifying learning from session prior to

<p>moving on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very useful in referring back to, while planning out own evaluation (i.e. plus points/negative points of questionnaires) • 'Planning' template extremely useful and effective as a working tool to devise own evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At times, there felt a bit too many handouts • Good references/signposting to other resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful – lots of information during sessions so we need 'back up' for later work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very helpful and relevant • A good aid for when at home and trying to remember details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of handouts, perhaps more than I'm likely to read but who knows their usefulness in the future? • Really glad that all the work was typed and ready to read the following week, very useful in remembering who had said what • Like the ease in which the 'evaluation plan' can be filled in, simple and easy to understand

6) Venue & Facilities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Really good welcome from staff at start of each session • Plentiful supply of tea, coffee and biscuits • Comfortable rooms • Plenty of work rooms to vary environment • Parking no problem, despite no private car park
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good – small and cosy • Friendly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good – right size of room for the group • Might be difficult for people who don't drive to access
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent for this training • Access and parking great • Room was appropriate size and additional rooms to work in • Very friendly and welcoming – able to get own tea etc..... • Biscuits were fab!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venue really friendly, accessible • Facilities good, enough space to work and move around in smaller groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venue lovely – tea great, biscuits even nicer!!! Thanks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great, lovely biscuits!

7) Further suggestions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibly a buddying-up system after training with peers – (particularly those who are on their own from their organisation) • Be beneficial to meet up again after 2/3 months – progress/support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible additional time/sessions to fit in all of content or restrict content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet up as a group in 4-6 months time – we're all involved in doing evaluations at work and would be good to catch up – bounce ideas off

tutors and each other and discuss what's gone well/been difficult in our own evaluation work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think the course title is a bit off putting and isn't very user-friendly! • Think a softer, more relevant title may be - "Evaluation for idiots! Or An Idiots Guide to Evaluation & Research – the reason for this being if I can do it – so can you!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wasn't sure what the course title was clear enough? All got confusing, didn't understand what 'REAL Training' was, probably just me! • I did really enjoy it but found it hard to commit 4 weeks of my time • Wondered if it could be condensed or taster session at first then more in depth training for those who wanted it? • Facilitation great, varied personalities but did we need 3 people? • Could have done with an e-mail before the start with course outline, times etc.....
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need at times to be spoken in plain English and not research jargon for those of us who have never undertaken evaluations before
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review in 6-12 months • Share good practice etc....