EVALUATION STEPS

STEP 1: EVALUATION PLANNING PHASE

WHAT RESOURCES DO WE NEED TO GET STARTED?

We suggest you create a small working group that will oversee the development and implementation of the evaluation project. The evaluation team will work together to discuss the purpose of the study, decide on methods and data collection timeline and procedures, and produce an analysis plan, as well as a reporting and dissemination plan of the results. An evaluation team will encourage ownership among staff and drive the project forward to meet internal goals and objectives.

In addition to the working group, you will need:

- A minimum of one staff/volunteer member to conduct observations and enter data;
- Access to a computer;
- Access to a printer;
- Paper to print data coding sheets; and
- Access to Excel for data entry.

HOW DO YOU COLLECT THE DATA? WHAT METHODS DO YOU USE?

This study utilizes observations as a method to answer questions about visitors' use of the interactive family galleries. Researchers designed a one page observation form that records visitors' basic demographics, attendance, types of interaction, behaviors, and use of an interactive station or activity during a set period of time. In addition, an observation protocol was created that outlines specific instructions for how to use the observation form.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE? WHO SHOULD WE OBSERVE?

For this study, we suggest committing to a minimum of eight hours per month for *each* interactive station/activity evaluated. However, your evaluation team can discuss your institution's needs and may decide to spend more or less time observing an interactive station/activity. The length of each, individual observation can vary, but we suggest 30-minute segments per station until the full eight-hour quota has been met. In developing your scheduled times to observe, consider which times in the space are your busiest. Observing during busy periods will allow you to assess how space is used during its peak operational time; additionally, it will ensure that there are visitors in the space to observe. Conducting observations during quiet and moderate times is also possible—again, it depends on what questions you ultimately want to answer.

Before collecting any data, identify your target audience. For example, the Family Learning in Interactive Galleries [FLING] study focused on intergenerational groups with children between the ages of five and twelve. Your museum may want to look at how the interactive space is being used by another age group. For example, you may decide to observe teenagers and will need to adjust the schedule for the needs of that group.

STEP 2: DATA COLLECTION PHASE

CREATE A DATA COLLECTION SCHEDULE

Once the working group is set and the goals and objectives are outlined, you will need to create a data collection schedule, as well as identify the interactive station(s)/activity(ies) that will be the target(s) of your observation. We suggest you create a plan that will outline the exact days, times, and data collector(s) who will be conducting the observation at each interactive station/activity.

TRAIN THE DATA COLLECTORS

Before you fully implement your study, we suggest you conduct some basic training with your data collector(s). Visit the family gallery together and jointly decide where the observations should take place. For example, the observer will want to stand in an area that facilitates full view of the station/activity being observed without being so close as to make visitors uncomfortable. Discuss important observation strategies and troubleshoot potential issues that might arise. For example, because this is non-participant observation the observer needs to be discreet with data gathering and observation, so you would want to emphasize that he/she try to “blend in” and limit his/her influence on the visitors. Or, if a visitor should ask what the observer is doing the response should always be, *“I am conducing an observation activity to assess how visitors are using the interactive station/space. It is anonymous in nature and for our internal use only.”* If the visitor is satisfied with the response and happy for the observation to continue, the data collector should do so, however, if there is any level of discomfort demonstrated by the visitor, instruct the data collector to halt the observation and reschedule for another time.

As part of the training, you will want to want to review the Observation Protocol with your data collectors. This document explains in detail how to record data into the Observational Form and what behaviors (or evidence) observers should be examining. You may also view the video: **Observational Toolkit**

STEP 3: DATA ENTRY PHASE

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE DATA AFTER YOU COLLECT IT?

After the data is collected, it needs to be systematically entered into a database. There are many different types of data entry software that range in functionality, pricing, and availability (e.g. Excel, Survey Pro, SPSS, and so on). For the purpose of this toolkit, researchers created a database in Excel, since most organizations have access to that software.

The Observational Database was designed so that information gathered from the Observational Form can be systematically entered and stored into one organizing system. The Observational Database is intended to be a flexible document and is adaptable depending on the needs and focus of the art museum.

STEP 4: DATA ANALYSIS PHASE

THE DATA IS ENTERED, NOW HOW DO WE MAKE SENSE OF IT?

The Excel Observational Database was created to be user-friendly and adaptable to your organization's needs. The database is set up with formulas that will run basic descriptive statistics. In order for the formulas to run properly, care has to be taken so that data are entered accurately. Refer to the Data Entry and Analysis Protocol for detailed instructions on how to enter data and analyze results.

STEP 5: REPORTING PHASE

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO REPORT OUR FINDINGS?

There are many ways that you can chose to report on your findings, including a traditional written report, a short memo or executive brief, a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation, and/or a group discussion/seminar. For this study, we produced a more traditional written report. A Report Template, as well as two example reports (from the Frist and High) are included for your reference.