

Suzanne Gorman - Applying Principles in Context

Suzanne Gorman: I'm Suzanne Goldman. So, Maya, what we look to do is, we try to kind of bring together organisations and individuals who passionately want their work to enable social change. But for us in particular, it's about racial justice in the arts. And so, the way that we do this is, we do this in three ways.

Firstly, we make work—that's theatre work—that's led by South Asian African Diaspora or other global majority artists. Secondly, we engage with young people and also underrepresented communities through participation projects. And finally, we promote workforce diversity across the arts. We are this small organisation, and I must admit, to be honest, navigating evaluation can be particularly challenging. So, I think there's that kind of practicality that when you're in a small organisation, you're putting a production on and you're trying to get the evaluation. We don't have an external evaluator, which is something that I think we as an organisation would like to employ in the future. But again, that's a challenge because of finances.

One of the things I wanted to talk about was how useful I find the aims of our organisation and a real clarity around what it is that we're doing in our three strands of work as a basis for all of the evaluation processes that we set because we use them when we're planning our projects and whenever we're planning our projects with our partners, with our artists, our facilitators, those aims will all the basis by which we will then develop something maybe a little bit more specific for each separate project. But knowing what it is that we want to achieve is really, really key for any evaluation process.

I think what that really does for us is it makes just really crystal clear what it is that we as an organisation want to achieve. I think it's just really simple. So, it means that when we are looking to create a programme of work, we are very, very clear whether it meets our aims.

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Whatever we're creating needs to meet our acts. But also, I think when you're looking at it because we're project funded, so everything we have to go out to the funders. Then one of the kinds of useful elements of that is that actually, you can really see whether what it is that you're proposing that meets your own aims. Is it actually going to meet a funder's aims and therefore in a best-case scenario, you're never going to be approaching funders and skewing your own vision and aims in order to actually then get the funds for us because we're a small London based organisation, but we very much see our work needing to be national because we're telling national stories, not London centric stories.

For us, actually this year we ran for projects in four different cities all at the same time, and we realised we were taking quite a big step up with a very small team. So, actually part of the evaluation for us as an organisation is about, yes, we did manage all of those projects at the same time.

Again, a key learning for us will be about how we want to manage something similar if we're doing that again because we want to grow as an organisation, but make sure that we've actually got the capacity internally to be able to fulfil our ambitions. So I think it's about taking things slowly and making sure that you are always reflecting before you take those next step forwards.