World Book Night evaluation 2015: research specification

Introduction

World Book Night is an annual celebration of reading and books that takes place on 23 April. It sees passionate volunteers give out hundreds of thousands of books in their communities to share their love of reading with people who don’t read regularly or own books. Roughly half of the books are given away by individual volunteers (who each give out 18 books) and the other half by institutions including prisons, schools and colleges, libraries and homeless shelters. World Book Night was first celebrated in the UK and Ireland in 2011, and has been run by The Reading Agency since late 2013.

The Reading Agency is a leading independent charity whose pioneering work brings the joy of reading to the widest possible audience across the UK, in partnership with the public library service. The charity’s mission is to create and deliver innovative reading opportunities inspiring more people to read more, encouraging them to share their enjoyment of reading with others and celebrating the difference that reading makes to all our lives. The Reading Agency is funded by Arts Council England.

Background

In 2014 World Book Night was evaluated via surveys with individual and institutional volunteers as well as surveys with libraries and bookshops who act as collection points for individual volunteers. We received a particularly good response rate from the volunteers that gave out the books – with 57% completing a survey about their experience. The evaluation report is available here: http://www.worldbooknight.org/resources/670.

A small scale, light touch evaluation of book recipients was also conducted and included in the above report. A link to complete a survey was included in every book, and 194 responses were received – which would represent an overall response rate of 0.08% of all recipients. The results were likely skewed towards more engaged and proactive recipients. Therefore, whilst the results are not representative, they do give a snap shot of feedback about recipients’ experience.

This year, we intend to repeat the evaluation methodologies that we have used previously, but promote the recipient survey more effectively to try to encourage a higher response. For example, we will make the messaging about the survey clearer within the books and ask volunteers to tell recipients about the survey when giving out the books.

In addition, to gain a more in depth understanding of the impact of World Book Night, we would like to commission a qualitative evaluation of the impact on recipients – which is the subject of this specification. The evaluation will investigate in particular whether receiving a World Book Night book has impacted on the reading habits of recipients who do not usually read for pleasure.

Research specification

The first stage of the research will be to develop a theory of change model via a workshop with key individuals involved in the programme, to map the programme outcomes. The model will then be used to
guide the focus of a qualitative impact evaluation which will investigate the impact of receiving the World Book Night book on a small sample of recipients.

**Aims:**
The evaluation should involve people who received books through volunteers and through institutions. It should focus on best practice outreach; instances where we are confident that the books are reaching people who are not already frequent readers. We envisage using targeted convenience sampling, rather than a random approach.

The evaluation should investigate whether these people:

- Read the WBN book and what they thought of it
- Changed their reading habits as a result of receiving and reading the book, potentially including the following outcomes (depending on theory of change model):
  - Reading more often
  - Enjoying reading more
  - Talking more to others about reading
  - Borrowing or buying more books
  - Joining a reading group
  - Sharing their love of reading with others
- Enjoyed taking part in WBN and what their experience of the programme was

In addition to the core focus on evaluating the impact of WBN, the project should consider how a larger scale impact evaluation with recipients could be undertaken in the future, drawing on the learning from this evaluation.

**Methods and sampling:**
We have in mind that focus groups would be the most appropriate methodology for evaluation, but welcome recommendations on this. Individual interviews conducted face to face or by phone could also be considered.

We envisage participants for the research will be identified via a small number of proactive volunteers and institutions involved in giving out the books. We believe that it will be relatively straightforward for institutions giving out books to collect contact details for the people that received the books, but this could be more of a challenge for individual volunteers giving out the books.

The research proposal will need to recommend the process for how contact with recipients can be established, without placing too great a burden on volunteers and institutions or negatively impacting on the gifting process.

The proposal should also highlight how the research will reach a representative sample of recipients; including those who may not have read their WBN book. Exploring the reasons for this would help us improve the programme for the future.
It would also be useful to include short interviews or surveys with the volunteer giver and the institutions involved in giving out books to the recipients that take part in the research. This would add greater context to the evaluation about the way in which recipients are identified and the way books were given out to those involved.

We would like recommendations on the number of recipients, volunteer givers and institutions that should be involved in the research. It would be useful if you could propose a number of options that you feel we should consider, outlining the corresponding costs and highlighting the approach that you feel will balance providing reliable data with delivering the research for a cost effective price.

**Outputs:**

The following outputs are required:

- Final report of the findings, approximately 30 pages in length (inclusion of supplementary appendices may be necessary and can be discussed as the project progresses).
- A free standing executive summary of up to four pages.
- Presentation of key findings on completion of final report at The Reading Agency’s office at the Free Word Centre in Farringdon, London.

The final report should include:

- An agreed theory of change model for WBN
- Full analysis of findings
- Conclusions about the areas where WBN has impact
- Recommendations for improvements to the programme
- Recommendations for future large scale impact evaluation approaches

**Timetable**

Recipients will receive their World Book Night book on 23 April 2015.

We would like recommendations about how long after receipt of the books the qualitative research should take place – to allow time for impact to be felt, but to ensure that the research is completed when respondents can still recall WBN and talk about their experiences. We do not have a fixed timeline in mind and this should be driven by how to best gather meaningful data, but with result available as soon as is possible. The final report needs to be completed by January 2016 at the very latest.

We need to have a fully confirmed research plan in place in advance of World Book Night.

A draft report should be made available approximately three to four weeks in advance of the final report, to allow time for commenting and revisions. It is the expectation that the final report will be made publicly available, on The Reading Agency’s website.

A strategy for dissemination should be included in the proposal.
Tender requirements

Staff: The research team should have a high level of expertise and significant experience in conducting similar pieces of work, with relevant knowledge about programmes to encourage reading. Tenders should describe the skills and experience of each individual (attach brief CV) and their expected contribution.

Risks: Tenders should clearly set out the key risk factors for the success of the project and a proposed risk management approach.

Ethics: Tenders should address any anticipated ethical issues and problems and how these will be dealt with.

Data protection and informed consent: Contractors shall comply with all the provisions and obligations under the Data Protection Act (1998), including the eight data protection principles and all subordinate legislation.

Costs: Costs should be itemised under the following headings:
  - Salary costs for each project team member to be involved in fulfilling the contract (along with the daily rate and number of days input for each project team member)
  - Other administrative costs
  - Fieldwork costs
  - Travel and subsistence
  - Overheads (if applicable)

Costs should be inclusive of VAT and state whether VAT is chargeable. Full cost details of any proposed subcontracts and how these will be managed should be included.

The **maximum budget available for this research project is £20,000.** Tenders should set out a payment schedule related to key milestones.

Shortlisting procedure

Tenders will be evaluated on best value for money. This will be judged on the basis of:

- How well the tender responds to the brief and the robustness and suitability of the proposal
- Relevant skills and experience of the research team, including track record of producing similar work of a high quality and to deadline
- Level of understanding of the research topic
- The adequacy and quality of proposed project management and risk management arrangements
- Plans for an effective dissemination strategy
- Overall costs
Tenders should therefore provide the following details:

- An elaboration of the issues for study
- Details of the proposed methodology
- Relevant information about the organisation
- The names and relevant experience, in terms of subject knowledge and skills, of those involved
- Staff time commitment to the project (in days)
- Timetable
- Arrangements for administration and management of the project
- Costs

The timetable for the tendering process is as follows:

- Tenders invited: 3 March 2015
- Submission deadline: 20 March 2015
- Project commissioned: 6 April 2015

The closing date for receipt of tenders is at 5pm on 20 March. A full electronic copy of the tender including any annexes and supplementary material in MS Word or PDF format should be emailed to laura.venning@readingagency.org.uk

Responses to the invitation to tender will be shortlisted and the relevant organisations will be notified by 27 March and invited to interview at the Reading Agency’s offices week commencing 30 March. The contract will be awarded by 6 April and work will commence immediately.

Any enquiries should be directed to laura.venning@readingagency.org.uk