

Section 11 - *Evaluation*

Introduction

The fact that this is by far the largest section in the manual reflects the importance of evaluation in the day-to-day lives of community workers. In the last manual a challenge was thrown down for community workers and community groups to take control of the evaluation agenda and to make it a useful process for them as well as the funders.

While the articles in the 2001 skills manual still provide a firm foundation for planning and undertaking evaluation work, the range of articles in this section reflects our growing awareness of the complexities involved in trying to evaluate community development work itself and the impact of the work of groups. Issues such as unintended consequences and distance travelled are explained along with the principles for participative evaluation.

Some of the articles examine the rationale for the different approaches they suggest, measuring the impact on people's lives, the Theories of Change model, an outcomes approach and soft outcomes.

There are many different ideas and techniques proffered which will enable all members of a group to engage effectively in the evaluation process of their group, from visual exercises, through using videos, and capturing people's stories.

FCDL have an NOCN resource pack on Monitoring and Evaluation with handouts, exercise and guidance notes which explore the definitions of monitoring and evaluation, examines different participatory approaches and techniques, and how to design and carry out effective evaluations.

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MEASURING WHAT IS IMPORTANT – THE IMPACT ON PEOPLES LIVES

Introduction

At the Central Scotland Forest Trust we create woodlands to improve the lives of the people who live and work across Central Scotland. Planting trees, creating access routes, changing landscapes and protecting biodiversity are only some of our activities. We do this for people because we know that the presence of trees can make them feel better in all manner of ways. We need to know the social, health and economic benefits that our activities bring about, so we have developed a process to measure the feel-good factor and to capture it so that it can be used in future projects.

We carried out an extensive baseline evaluation of what people really want and value in their local environment exploring issues such as leisure opportunities, health improvements and the psychological benefits of knowing that there are green spaces nearby and using them. We found that the perception of an attractive, natural landscape offers comfort and security.

We know that many people in Central Scotland wake up to a pretty unattractive and uninspiring view from their windows, and that this impacts negatively on their hopes, pride and self image. We believe that community involvement in environmental improvements can instil an element of pride, community spirit and a belief that change is possible. We are committed to the idea of evaluating the physical and social benefits of forestry and regeneration projects. Through our Social Impact Study we are able to measure how people perceive and use the results of our environmental improvements and also how they feel about them. In the past, the outcomes of any environmental improvements have tended to be skewed towards the physical, rather than the social, outcomes. Our work is an attempt to redress this balance and capture the impact on the quality of people's lives.

Full details of our Social Impact Study are on our web site www.csft.org.uk/about/publications/141-social-impact-study-documents. In this document we outline the key aspects of our methodology in a 'Toolkit' which can be adapted for a wide range of situations.

The key elements of our evaluation approach.

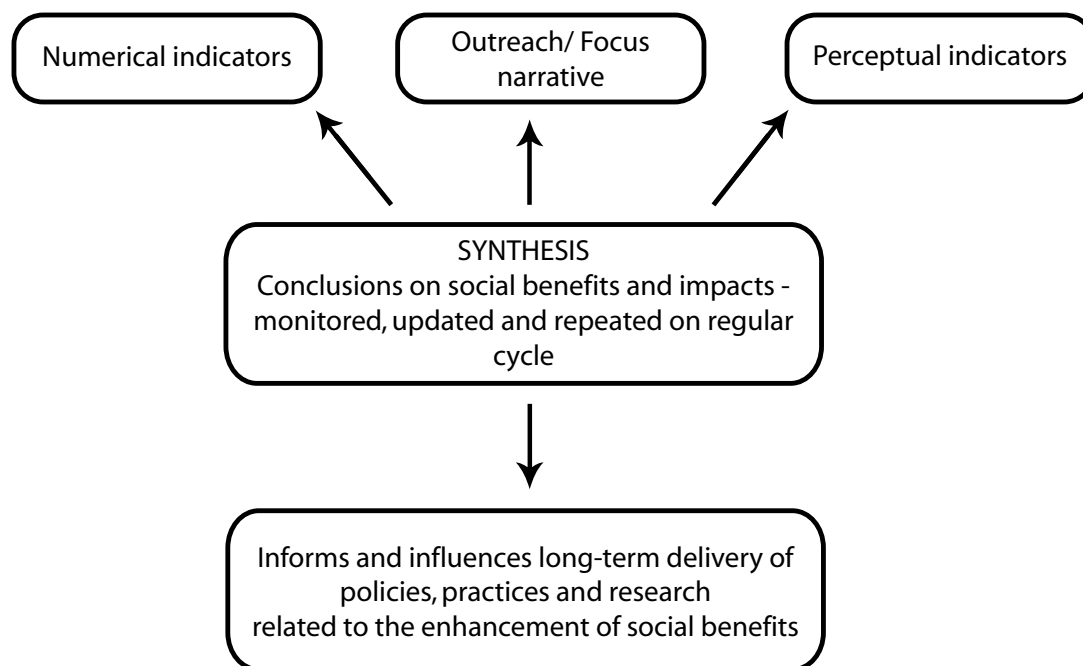
After exploring what we wanted to achieve, we decided that rather than a suite of indicators, what we really needed was a robust process which could accurately reflect the social impact and benefits of the Forest over time.

The various aspects of the approach:-

1. Developing several numerical indicators which could be gathered by a simple but comprehensive recording form
2. Introducing attitude and behaviour statements into random individual surveys to be undertaken throughout the Forest area
3. Using questionnaires at sites and events
4. Conducting focus / discussion groups with 8-12 residents each time

5. Undertaking outreach work to find out the views of those whose voices are not so easily heard

The data collected provided us with numerical information – how many new footpaths were created; perceptions – how people felt that their health was improving; and qualitative information in the form of narratives.



The details

1. The Surveys

- On-site – 50 questionnaires at 9 different sites.
- At events – 50 questionnaires at 3 different events
- Random individual surveys – 750 questionnaires across different locations with different levels of activity

We used structured questionnaires with a mix of open and closed questions and attitude and behaviour statements. Our interviewers took on a mobile role, wandering around the sites / events and stopping people at random.

2. The Outreach Work

Outreach is an important stage in a consultation process as it enables groups and individuals who would not normally come to pre- arranged meetings / focus groups to contribute their ideas, views and opinions about the Central Scotland Forest, the work of the Trust and the benefits and impacts of the Forest.

Outreach work can be held with a wide range of different groups including:

- Children and young people
- Older people
- Black and Minority Ethnic Groups
- Disabled People and their carers

The additional views gathered from the groups consulted through outreach often add an interesting and varied dimension to the views gathered from other methods such as focus groups and surveys. We used

people with experience of participatory appraisal techniques, and those working with children needed to be police checked.

Our principles were

- Always meet on their terms, at their times and at their venue
- Give an introduction to the session and what you aim to get out of it
- Send through copies of the notes taken at the session for their information

Children and young people

These sessions can either take place at school, college or at a youth club. It is best to keep the session interactive, short and fun. This usually involves getting the participants to write or draw their thoughts on post-it notes, which then get added to charts drawn on flip chart paper. Spider diagrams also work well with young people.

Children can be targeted through their school. Most schools are happy to help, but the following need to be borne in mind when contacting schools. Care needs to be taken in selecting schools and the timing – at certain times of the year, exams, SATs etc., schools are rather preoccupied with their internal requirements and will not be receptive to participating in research. Involvement will also, to a certain extent, relate to the level of interest of the head teacher or the ability of the researcher to convince them of the benefits of taking part!

Older people

Generally, these sessions will be structured and will be conducted in small groups, focusing on a set of questions, with maps and photographs to spark discussion. Interactive methods can also be used, including timelines and mapping exercises. In general, organising sessions through sheltered housing schemes appears to be most productive.

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups

Consulting BME groups usually takes more time as it will be important to build up contacts in the community. There may also be issues of language and the need for translators and translated material. Sessions held with some BME communities are usually split, with men and women having separate sessions, but check this out as different communities will have different protocols. Focus group formats work well (eight people in a group) with discussion taking place around a set of agreed questions.

Disabled people/carers

The approach taken with these groups will vary depending on the size of the group and the nature of their impairments. Usually, small group discussions work well, with the discussion being prompted by maps, photos and information leaflets.

3. The Focus Groups

Focus groups are a well-established method of getting additional 'qualitative' information to complement the quantitative data gathered through surveys. Many research programmes adopt this approach of combining the two forms of data to ensure a completeness and robustness to analysable data. A focus group in effect is a guided and 'focused' informal discussion session with a fixed number of participants who will 'bounce ideas off each other' and tends to create 'more than the sum of their parts' compared to carrying out a series of one-to-one interviews.

In practice, it may often prove more effective to use already established groups, such as a tenants or residents association, rather than to try to build new contacts. Make initial contact with the group's

chairperson or secretary to determine when the group are next meeting and arrange a suitable timeslot on their agenda – there is no point going if you are allotted just a 20 minute slot at the end! Normally an hour to an hour and a half is needed.

Alternatively, in an area that does not have existing structures, a group might be either identified via an advertisement or from residents who participated in the Random Individual Survey and asked to take part.

For examples of all the questionnaires we used, the templates for collecting and analysing data please see the Toolkit on our web site www.csft.co.uk

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EVALUATING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: USING A FOCUS ON OUTCOMES

Introduction

Evaluation can be described as the use of various sources of information about the work of a project or organisation, to make an assessment of its progress towards achieving its aims.

Evaluation can serve several purposes, including:

- Demonstrating the value of community development
- Accountability – to community groups, activists, managers and others
- Learning and development – helping to assess how well we are doing, and how to improve.

Involving people in an evaluation

I would like to suggest that, especially in a community development context, the question of who should evaluate is really important. It should involve all the various stakeholders in your organisation: the community groups you work with, staff, activists, volunteers, management committee, funders, other agencies with which you have important links, and so on.

Try to involve a wide range of these stakeholders in the evaluation process. This can lead to a shared sense of ownership of the results of the evaluation process, and a shared commitment to acting on these results. It can also help to overcome suspicion of evaluation, which is sometimes perceived as a form of external interference and control. Involving community groups in evaluation can also be a very empowering part of the community development process; it can increase their influence, skills and confidence.

Aims, Activities and Indicators

One way of evaluating is to begin by looking at the aims of your work. This is an approach that has been developed by Charities Evaluation Services¹. This is a brief indication of some of the main points of their approach.

1. Begin with the overall aim, and then break this down into several specific aims. In a community development context, an example of an overall aim might be 'to improve the quality of life for excluded communities'. A specific aim might be 'to make local services and developments more responsive to local needs'.

These examples are given simply as illustrations, adapted from a case example on the Charities Evaluation Services website. It is important to decide on your own aims – in that way, the process of evaluation can be a learning and empowering process.

2. Think about the activities that you undertake in order to achieve your aims. Sometimes, organisations and community groups have difficulty distinguishing between an aim and an activity. It can help to think of the words that are used to describe aims, and those used to describe activities.

'Aim' words are 'change' words – they describe the changes you are seeking to bring about through your work: to increase, to improve, to reduce.

In describing activities, you will be using expressions such as 'to run (a particular activity)', 'to provide', 'to train', 'to advise', 'to support', etc.

3. Think of indicators which will show that you are achieving your activities (output indicators), and

¹ Charities Evaluation Services – www.ces-vol.org.uk

that your organisation's work is bringing about changes in the lives of the people you are working with (outcome indicators).

Use the information you gather to check if you are on course with bringing about your intended outcomes. If not, this may be a helpful sign that you need to reconsider the activities you engage in. Try to be aware of any unintended outcomes, positive or negative.

Using this process

This approach requires the process to be put in place at the beginning of a project or piece of work, so that monitoring and evaluation activities take place alongside other community development activity, informing reflection on practice and development of practice.

It is appropriate to use in relation to policy initiatives and funding streams that have a focus on outcomes, eg. Local Area Agreements, Every Child Matters, the Big Lottery fund. It can also be a helpful approach in other contexts as it can demonstrate achievement, improve effectiveness, and encourage learning.

Involve stakeholders, including staff, activists, and community group members, at all stages of the process if possible, from setting aims to discussing what we have learnt, and how to disseminate this learning.

Value qualitative as well as quantitative information. Quantitative data has its place – counting heads and counting money, for example, can be valuable for some purposes. If we are to take seriously a focus on outcomes we must also look at qualitative information – such as the opinions of members of community groups, their perceptions of the effectiveness of our work and of the changes the work has brought about in people's lives.

Look out for unexpected outcomes. Sometimes these are positive surprises to be celebrated, to learn from, and to build upon. Sometimes unexpected outcomes are negative – as for example, in the case of a youth project that decided the young people it worked with needed to learn about health issues such as drugs. They brought in speakers to deliver talks on these subjects. The intended outcome was that the young people would be better informed about these health issues. What actually happened was that the young people stopped coming to the youth project – because they had not been consulted and involved in planning this piece of work, and found the talks boring.

Be open to learning, including opportunities to learn from mistakes – 'That was a mistake. Sorry. But good, because it is an opportunity to learn'.
(R.Chambers, Participatory Workshops, Earthscan, 2002).

Useful contacts

Charities Evaluation Services – www.ces-vol.org.uk CES offers training on this approach, including the National Outcomes Programme, and has a range of useful publications.

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REFLECTING ON PRACTICE - THEORIES OF CHANGE AS A TOOL FOR PLANNING AND EVALUATION

Introduction

Funding regimes in the UK have become much more outcome focused and interested not so much in what a project or group is doing, but in how it demonstrates the impact of its work. This has always been difficult in community development work where much of the emphasis has been placed on reflecting on the quality of the development process rather than its results.

Community engagement has become a cornerstone of a wide range of government policy; from health development plans to crime reduction strategies. As a result there have been a number of reports that have tried to provide 'indicators' of change in communities. These are often purely about numbers:

- (Putnam; 2000)¹ measures social capital (the strength of community networks) by a calculation of the number of formally constituted groups in an area, times their active membership
- The PAT 9 report on Community Self Help (1999)² and Chanan (2004)³ introduce measures of community engagement in terms of voluntary / community groups per head of population and the number of people who are working with, or aware of, such groups within a neighbourhood.

These measures, do not, however, say much about the quality of community involvement – or the potential of engagement to bring about change.

Theories of Change

Theories of Change (ToC) was developed as an evaluation framework for exploring the impact of complex community based initiatives (CCIs) in the United States in the late 1980's and 1990's⁴. ToC helps us think about how do we know we are changing a particular situation, particularly when there may well be other agencies working on the same, or similar issues within a locality or with particular interest groups.

As an approach to evaluation it can be useful both in reflecting on community development work practice and the changes it hopes to bring about. However, it can also be used as a means of project planning by asking a series of fundamental questions:

- What is the situation we are trying to change (context)?
- How are we going to change it (activities/process)?
- How do we know things are changing – in the short, medium and longer term?

On the next page there is a diagrammatic view of Theories of Change Approach.

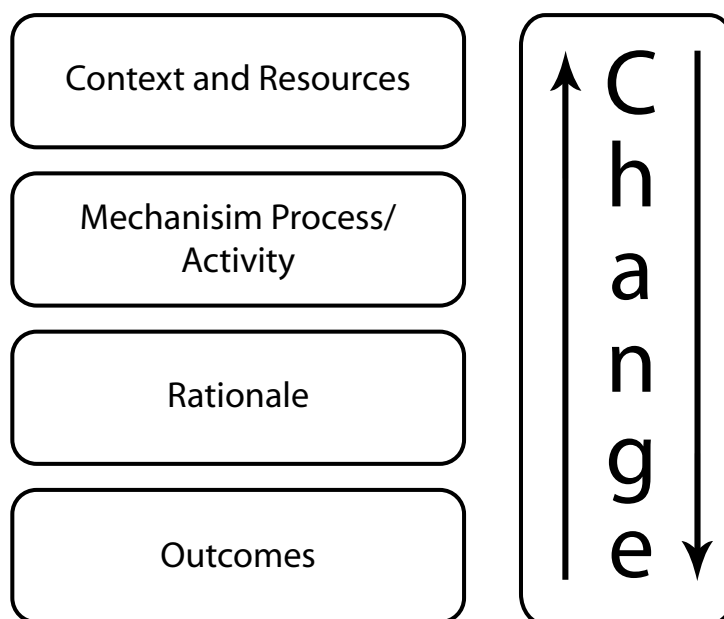
1 Putnam, R. (2000), *Bowling Alone: the collapse and revival of American community*, Simon & Schuster, New York

2 Policy Action Team 9 (1999), *Community Self Help*, Home Office, London

3 Chanan, G. (2004); *Measures of Community*; Active Communities Directorate, Home Office, London

4 Fulbright-Anderson, K., Kubisch, A.C. & Connell, J (1998), *New approaches to evaluating community initiatives (vol2)*, Aspen Institute, Washington

A Diagrammatic View of Theories of Change Approach



The first step is to decide what it is we are trying to change, and having done this ToC asks participants to reflect on the following issues:

| | |
|--|--|
| The context , and changing contexts, within which an initiative has evolved | The national, regional and local policy contexts in which an initiative evolves and its 'internal' organisational context – and how these impact / change the initiative |
| The processes or activities used to effect change | What an initiative actually does / its interventions |
| The rationale behind the approach taken | Why an initiative adopted the particular strategies it did, rather than taking a different approach |
| Short / medium term outcomes | What were the results of those strategies – over 6 / 12 / 18 months? |
| Longer term outcomes | What has been learned from implementing the strategies – overall impact – have the original goals set been achieved? |

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REFLECTING ON PRACTICE - USING THEORIES OF CHANGE

The Advantages of Theories of Change

There are a number of advantages to using a Theories of Change approach to planning and evaluation.

1. ToC can be participatory. Participants are asked to reflect on the local context and how this might be, or is, changing – it is not a ‘top-down’ approach.
2. ToC asks participants to ask why they are doing something – and why they feel a particular approach might be more effective than another. For example, why might a Saturday Supplementary School be more effective in raising educational attainment and cultural awareness rather than running an After School / Homework Club
3. ToC does not require the use of one particular approach to planning and evaluation. Traditional techniques such as questionnaires, interviews and surveys may be used, but so too might more arts and story telling based approaches
4. ToC enables people to review progress as a project develops, rather than simply reviewing it ‘after the event’
5. ToC allows projects to adapt their original plans and goals to changing circumstances
6. ToC reflects the processes used to bring about change as well as the outcomes of particular actions or activities
7. ToC encourages participants to learn from activities and use that learning in the future, rather than simply judging what has happened.

The Difficulties of Theories of Change

The approach does have its limitations, particularly when looking at long term projects. For example the issue of attributing outcomes remains problematic where a number of initiatives are working in the same area with similar desired outcomes. The rationale, which underpins a particular approach, may be unclear – or modified by political expediencies – or there is a lack of evidence on why stakeholders viewed a particular intervention or approach to be more effective than others. When the approach is applied towards the end of an initiative, its formative role (informing development and change within the initiative) can be lost.

Arriving at one, accepted, narrative for a complex initiative can be difficult because of changes in key personnel, stakeholders and local contexts (in terms of organisational focus / core activities). Participants in the evaluation may remember their particular involvement (sometimes over a short period of time) rather than having a collective memory of the initiative as a whole.

Tools for Using Theories of Change

Introducing ideas for evaluation and strategic planning can feel intimidating. There is a jargon (such as using the term Theories of Change) that can be off-putting. In which case it is important to start with the key questions the ToC approach asks – what is it we want to change, and how are we going to change it?

ToC can be introduced in a number of ways, by using visual techniques or more formal planning grids. The approach is adaptable, but careful consideration needs to be given in advance on how best to use

the model:

- To plan
- To evaluate
- To help people learn

Two different approaches to presenting ToC are introduced in the pages overleaf.

Exercise: Introducing Theories of Change

Step 1: ask participants - either using the 'grid' (next article) or the weather symbols (if using the evaluation tree which is explained later in this section) to identify the current context they are working in and what is it they are trying to change

Step 2 -; participants should identify the ultimate goals (again using the grid system or 'visual' apple pies)

Step 3: identify the activities that will be / are being used to bring about change and why these particular activities/processes have been adopted – rather than others (again this can be done using the grid system or visual symbols linked to post-it notes on the tree trunk)

Step 4; agree the short and medium term outcomes that might suggest progress is being made against overall goals (the apples needed to make the 'apple pies')

Participants using a Theories of Change model may also want to reflect on the resources they have available – as this will affect their capacity to influence change and achieve goals.

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REFLECTING ON PRACTICE - EVALUATION FRAMEWORK EXAMPLE: SATURDAY SUPPLEMENTARY SCHOOL; REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN

| Context | Process/ Activity | Rationale | Short and Medium Term Outcomes | Long Term Outcomes |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| <p>Refugee and asylum seeking children identified as more likely to have unexplained absence, or be excluded, from school.</p> <p>Refugee and asylum seeking children 'under-achieving' at Key Stage 1 & 2</p> <p>Lack of education services specifically addressing the needs of asylum seekers and refugees</p> | <p>Supplementary School with small class groups offering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Literacy » Numeracy » Cultural identity and » Mother-tongue literacy programmes. <p>Teachers and assistants drawn from different communities, but including adult refugees/asylum seekers.</p> | <p>Evidence from elsewhere in the UK and Europe that supplementary schools offering national curriculum courses as well as work on cultural identity and mother tongue literacy are particularly effective in enhancing educational attainment</p> | <p>Short Term; Children attend supplementary school Schools report drop in unexplained absences from school Schools and supplementary school reports greater self-esteem amongst refugee pupils</p> <p>Medium Term Improved pupil assessments for refugee children Reduction in temporary exclusions</p> | <p>Reduction in permanent exclusions</p> <p>Refugee and asylum seeking children achieve 'better than predicted Key Stage 1 & 2 results</p> <p>Increased parental involvement in schools</p> |

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REFLECTING ON PRACTICE - DEVELOPING A PROJECT EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

| Context | Process/ Activity | Rationale | Short and Medium Term Outcomes | Long Term Outcomes |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| What are the key contextual factors, which may either have an impact on your project and / or be changed by the project? | What are the main activities and processes through which you hope to achieve your intended outcomes? | Why do you think that what you are doing will achieve the desired change (strategic rationale)? | What are your planned short and medium term outcomes which will indicate that you are on course to achieve longer term goals? | What are the intended long term outcomes of your project / programme? |

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REFLECTING ON PRACTICE - VISUAL WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT OUTCOMES AND GOALS

Another way of introducing Theories of Change is visually – using the image of a tree, which you need to draw on a flip-chart. You will also need copies of all the following symbols for all participants to use. Basically the tree can be said to consist of the following parts which have been ascribed a particular meaning.

The roots represent the resources we have (time/ staff/ equipment etc.). Post-it notes can be used

The tree trunk is the activities we are using to bring about change and why we are using these particular activities. Post its can be used.

Apples are short and medium term outcomes

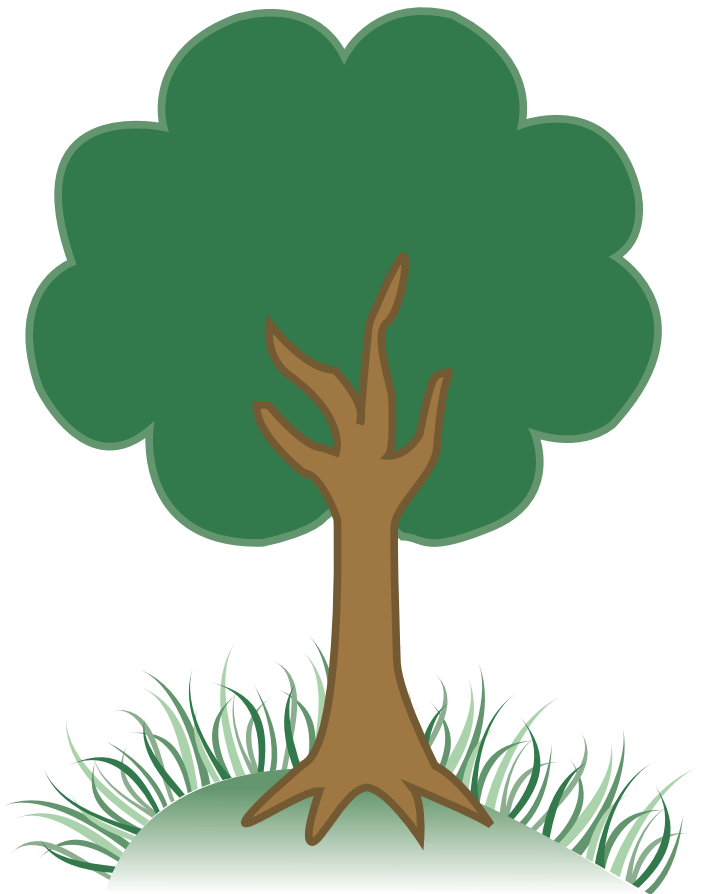
Apple pies are long-term goals

Weather symbols which represent what will help/ hinder progress (sun shapes, clouds, lightening etc)

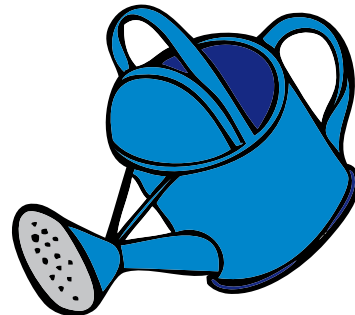
You can use the tree model in different ways depending on what aspects you want the participants to focus on. You need to give people, in pairs or small groups, opportunities to think about a particular aspect and to make their comments on post-it notes and/ or around the symbols (leave a wide margin when you copy them). When people have contributed to the model you need to give people time together to discuss their different views and to draw out lessons from the shared exploration.

You can start with exploring what the roots are that you can draw upon and what activities these resources would allow a group to run, or you could start with targets they want to meet, or long term goals to achieve and work down the tree to what activities would help meet these and then what resources would be needed.

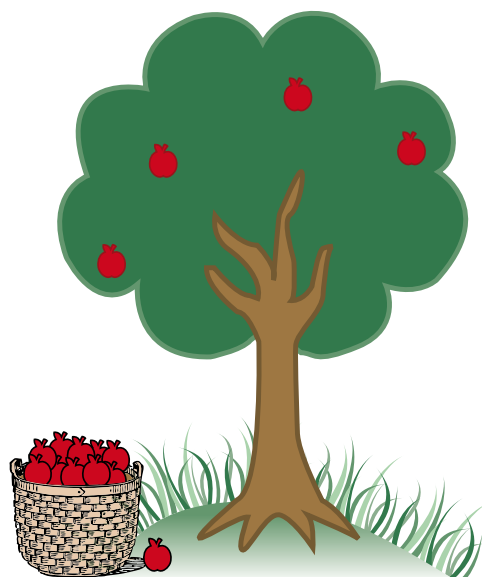
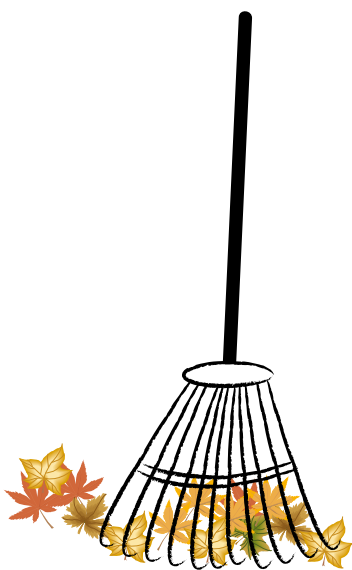
Wherever you choose to start, and to focus on, you need to encourage people to move beyond just making statements about what is or could be, to asking why they think that might work rather than another approach, what other options might there be, and what have they learnt that might change the future.



Activities

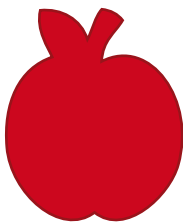


These symbols can be used to create discussion/ post-it notes on the things we are doing. It is also important to think about the rationale for the activities we are undertaking – why are we doing this – rather than that? Is there evidence that a particular approach is more effective?



Short and medium term outcomes

The apples on the tree represent the short and medium term outcomes which will help us to achieve our goal.



Long term goals

The apple pie represents the long-term goals



Context

The weather symbols represent the context in which a project is developing



The sun represents things that will help



The cloud represents factors that may help or hinder



The lightning represents threats

Contact:

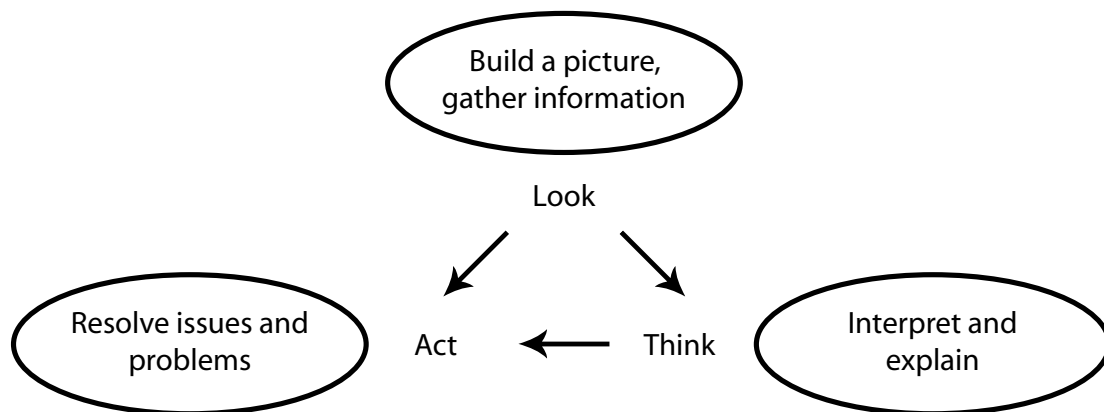
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DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO EVALUATION - ACTION RESEARCH

Action research is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants ...to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, and the situations in which these practices are carried out (Carr and Kemmis 1986:162¹)

According to Stringer² (1999), community-based action research is:

- democratic, enabling participation of all people
- equitable, acknowledging people’s equality of worth
- liberating, providing freedom from oppressive, debilitating conditions
- life enhancing, enabling the expression of human potential



| Traditional Model | Alternative Model |
|---|--|
| Banking evaluation | Dialogical evaluation |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characterised by objectivity, scientific approach, standardised procedures and more formalised research techniques • High degree of managerial control and reliance on quantitative measures • Usually carried out by external agent. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characterised by subjectivity, creativity, participant observation, unstructured interviews, “reflection-action” and qualitative information • Less formal, designed as an integral part of development/change • A process of empowerment carried out by people directly involved in project or programme. |

1 Carr W, Kemmis S (1986): *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research*. Falmer Press, London.

2 Stringer, E. T. (1999) *Action Research 2e*, Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage.

Principles of participatory evaluation

- Participatory evaluation focuses on learning, success and action
- The evaluation must be useful to the people undertaking the work that is being evaluated
- The evaluation is ongoing and builds in ways to let all participants use the information gathered throughout the project, not just at the end
- Recognition that progression and change is built into the evaluation
- Responsibility for framing specific evaluation questions, indicators of success and realistic timeframes lies with the project's lead body
- Participatory evaluation makes it possible to recognise shared interests amongst those doing the work, the people the work is designed to reach, project funders and other stakeholders
- Participatory evaluation recognises the expertise and experience of community groups
- Participatory evaluation increases the acceptability of and support for the evaluation process
- Participatory evaluation can produce more meaningful results that can be used by projects and programmes alike to improve work being done and to influence policy

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SETTING OUT YOUR EVALUATION STRATEGY

What is evaluation?

Put simply, evaluation is an assessment of the effectiveness of project performance and practice. An evaluation process is by definition a carefully considered, replicable approach designed to give an accurate picture of a project or service from different angles.

Measuring the effectiveness of any project depends on the clarity of project or service objectives. Objectives may focus on value for money, meeting specific needs or reaching a particular sector of the community. While they form a basis for measurement they need to be considered alongside project outcomes (intended and unexpected) and impact.

Why evaluate?

- To learn from experience
- To communicate success through evidence
- To secure funding
- To influence policy
- To fulfil contractual responsibilities

What is an evaluation strategy?

The evaluation strategy sets out the terms of engagement for the assessment of the project or service. It considers issues relating to the design of the process (“What do we need to measure?”) as well as practical considerations (“What is the evidence we need to gather to measure success?”).

Setting out your evaluation strategy

The evaluation strategy needs to address the following questions:

- **Why** you want an evaluation
- **Who** wants the evaluation to be done
- **When** the evaluation will be carried out (interim, end of scheme)
- **What** the evaluation will encompass—questions to be asked and information to be collected that relate to quantity, quality and processes/ management; criteria and indicators to be used
- **Scope** of the evaluation: is it a project, a group of projects or the programme as a whole; is it particular groups of people or its wider impact on a neighbourhood as a whole? Is it the internal operation of the project or partnership?
- **How** the information will be collected
- **Who** will assume responsibility for managing the evaluation
- **Who** will carry out the evaluation (e.g. self evaluation or external contractors)
- **Consider and provide for any additional needs**—training for staff and volunteers who may be part of the evaluation team

- **How much** the evaluation will cost (depending on the size of the project, allow 3-10% of the budget)
- **How** results of the evaluation will be used: written report, website, video presentation
- **How** you will ensure that the requisite skills and experience are in place, if necessary by arranging for training for staff and volunteers in the basics of evaluation
- **What** information already exists that can be used (e.g. monitoring records, minutes of meetings, planning and policy documents, survey data)
- **External information** that may be useful to your evaluation (e.g. Community Plan, Local Action Plans, Learning and Skills Council strategic objectives)
- **What** information you need to gather and the tools you can use to do so: surveys and questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with key employees, partners and service users, observation of meetings and events, focus groups, participatory evaluation methods

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USEFUL TEMPLATES

1. Measuring Achievement Template

Name of project _____

Organisation _____

Name of contact _____

Tel _____ E-mail _____

| Project service | Baseline activity | Projected activity | Actual activity achieved | Difference between what was projected and what was achieved |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

2. Case Study Template

| Project title | | Things to note |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Describe the project (100 words max) | | |
| Name of organisation | | |
| Type of organisation | | |
| Key objectives | | Why was the project started? |
| Actions taken | | Tell the story Describe your planning and implementation of the project |
| Partnership | | Who are the partners involved? |
| Funding | | Describe the funding package used to support the project |
| Evidence of success | | Describe the benefits of the project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did it meet its objectives? • Impact on users • Impact on the community • Performance indicators |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| What worked | | Describe the aspects of the project that worked well and why |
| What didn't work so well | | What were the barriers and challenges faced? |
| Next Steps | | Is the project being developed or continued? What changes are you planning? |
| Any other information | | Are there other aspects to this project the reader needs to know about? |
| Does the case study need to be revisited? | | Develop a longitudinal view of the project by revisiting the case study on an annual basis |
| Contact name | | |
| Project role | | |
| Contact details | | |

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WRITING AN EVALUATION REPORT

The headings below offer a standardised format for your written report.

1. Executive summary

The executive summary extracts the key findings of the evaluation. The format should follow that of the main body of the report, so this section is the last to be written up.

2. Introduction

- The background to the project
- Why you wanted to undertake the project
- What you hoped to achieve and why
- Project aims and objectives
- Evaluation aims and objectives
- Introduction to the structure of the rest of the evaluation report

3. Project description

4. Objective 1

Introduce the primary objective and data relating to its achievement. Discuss the actual outcome and why this occurred.

5. Objective 2, 3 and so on

As above.

6. Unexpected outcomes

Describe any unexpected outcomes. Were these good or bad? Include any case studies/personal stories that help to illustrate the project.

7. Conclusions

Sum up the main achievements of the project and examine its strengths and weaknesses.

8. Lessons learnt

What would you do differently next time? What are the key learning points? How can you increase the project's success? How can you avoid or minimise any negative outcomes?

9. Annexes

Include:

- A full description of the evaluation methodology
- How the sample was selected
- Copies of questionnaires and topic guides
- Some information on data analysis
- Copy of questionnaire(s), script for interviews, press release

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EVALUATION AND MONITORING TECHNIQUES

Introduction

The following techniques were all developed and used in a 15 month process of evaluation for People in Action, Leeds, working with people with learning disabilities and learning difficulties. The techniques all had to be accessible to members with a range of abilities, volunteers, carers, parents and staff.

1. Snakes and Ladders

This is a very simple way of recording answers based on people's likes and dislikes, what they want more of or less of. Use a bed sheet and sew on old ties to represent snakes and ladders cut out of scrap material. All the materials are available in charity shops or you may have them lying around at home. You could also draw snakes and ladders on flipchart or a board.

The group you are working with is asked to think and talk about the activities they do and to record in writing or imagery, using coloured paper, 'what they like doing / want to do more of' and 'what they don't like doing / want to do less of'.

The 'likes' are placed on the ladders, the 'don't likes' on the snakes.

This works well where there are a range of abilities within a group as responses can be one word or much more, while everyone gets to stick their paper on the sheet and to occupy a similar amount of space on the final collection of responses.

Some people may need more support remembering group activities, or having their views written for them. It is fine for people to draw their responses too, and place these on the snakes or ladders. Take a photo of the final result with everyone involved – while the responses on the paper may not be visible in a photo, having a photo next to a written (transcribed) record will look more interesting.

2. Sankofa bird mural

'The Sankofa Bird is a mythical bird in West African tradition, which has its feet firmly planted forwards while its head is looking behind it. The Sankofa Bird shows us that you cannot move forward until you've looked back and absorbed where you've been.'

You will need to draw an outline of a Sankofa bird onto a wall using a projector or OHP. It needs to be at least one metre high. Write a title, such as 'Evaluating Eveready Community Centre'.

Cut out feather shapes, or draw feather shapes and photocopy them, each about hand sized. Ask the group an evaluatory question and invite them to write or draw their responses on feathers and stick them on the Sankofa bird outline with blu-tak.



Example questions:

'What makes this group special?'

'What have been the group's achievements over the last year?'

Take photos during and at the end of the exercise.

This method can be used as an activity at a specific time, explaining the technique to everyone at once, or as an interactive display with written instructions next to the Sankofa bird that people respond to over time, such as at an Annual General Meeting or a day-long event.

Use different colour paper for the feathers for a colourful plumage! Have enough pens, feathers and blu-tak and have the outline low enough for everyone to reach. Encourage some feathers early as a blank outline makes for a slow start. You could provide scissors and paper for people to create their own feathers and a more distinct and creative final sankofa bird.

www.imagesgoogle.co.uk – enter any word into this search engine to get visual responses that you can cut and paste. There are several Sankofa birds available online and different descriptions and histories around the mythology of the Sankofa bird.

3. Treasure Trail (interactive questionnaire)

This is basically a questionnaire made as interactive as time and space allows. Start by writing your questions. We used 20, half were evaluatory questions - 'Do you do anything at the group that you don't do anywhere else?'. Half were fun or easy - 'How did you get here today?', or relating to the space used - 'Name three animals on the mural on the front of the building'.

Prepare a sheet with instructions for participants and a grid of boxes, numbered 1-20. Explain in the instructions what you want people to do and why you are doing this (that is, a basic description of what evaluation is and what is happening to the results). We also had a unique number in marker pen on each sheet to use for a raffle at the end, making sure responses were eagerly handed in!

Cut out a flag for each question from brightly coloured card. Write the relevant number on the coloured side and the question on the white side. For easy reading you may want to print out and glue on a typed version of the questions. Place the cards around the space being used – make the most of features available to you. As far as possible place a relevant image or images next to each flag question. This is especially useful for evaluatory questions to help people understand what you are asking.

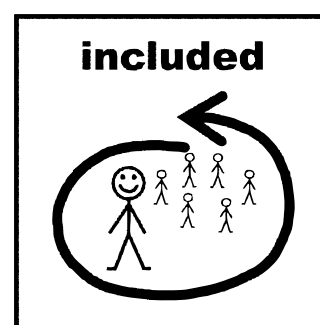
For example 'In what ways do you think the group works to include and involve new people?'

This takes time to set up and do. Get into the venue being used well before the scheduled start time. Take into account participants' support needs, such as helping people understand the questions and giving reminders about activities the group has done.

Encourage drawn responses if people want to do this, but you may want to check what these mean and take notes at the time to aid your interpretation

of results later. Have other activities going on or ready to use to keep people occupied who finish earlier, or ask them to support people still looking for flags and completing their responses.

www.imagesgoogle.co.uk is a good source of images to go next to the flag questions. A great source of images of concepts is www.through-the-maze.org.uk a symbol dictionary available online.



4. Cake and Chat (focus group)

Mention 'focus group' and most people will roll their eyes at you. We opted for a friendlier, but no less focused, invite to 'cake and chat' to bring together small groups of people involved in and affected by a

project's activities, to dig deeper around issues of interest and importance that we had begun to identify as part of an ongoing piece of evaluation work.

Who to invite will be clear once you have decided the aims of the cake and chat. It may be issues you want to explore, with a cross section of interested people (for example, transport and safety, inviting members, carers and staff), or you may want a group of people whose views on a range of issues you haven't heard enough of (for example, the concerns and hopes of parents and carers).

Arrange a time and space that is comfortable for everyone, well lit and with a central table you can all sit around.

Prepare structured notes or activities that meet your aims and get you enough primary information to analyse, but not more than you can handle.

Two facilitators are best: one to keep notes and take photos – these notes should be the participants own words (see: Snakes and Ladders, Before and After, Sankofa Bird Mural) or if they are your observations mark them as such; the other facilitator keeps the contributions flowing, ensuring everyone has an equal voice and can express themselves - work out open questions and prompts that encourage reflection, not just one word answers. It can be good to have some group discussion around an issue and then an activity for individuals to record their own views of the issue.

Bring suitable refreshments. Consider special diets as well as the effects of a sugar rush if it is all treacle tart and no water or fruit!

Remember:

- To thank people for their time.
- Consider confidentiality issues and if unsure check what you can or can't include as direct quotes.
- Prepare for people arriving late or leaving early.
- Check permission for taking and using photos. Photos can record drawings and collective exercises like murals.

Cake and Chat can work well at a start of a piece of evaluation work to raise the issues you need to be considering. It can also work well near the end to check nothing is missed. We use one cake and chat with members and volunteers to look in detail at some questions that needed looking at in more detail. We also had a specific cake and chat with parents and carers as we hadn't heard enough from them. We used our draft report as a focus for this cake and chat.

5. Before and After

This technique can be used to evaluate the impact on individuals of their involvement in a group or project. It can also be used to assess how learners have developed during a training course.

You will need to blu-tak several sheets of flipchart to a wall to make a space six feet high by six-eight feet wide. Explain that you want to start by looking at what people were like before they joined the group or started the piece of learning.

Ask a volunteer to stand against one half of the flipchart wall and draw an outline around their whole body.

Now ask what people were like before they got involved – 'how did you feel, act, look, dress, what did you do, talk about?'

Two facilitators are needed as one person will be recording in words, pictures, drawing on facial expressions and body language. The recorder should keep checking with the group – ‘do you want the eyes looking like this?’ or inviting people up to draw for themselves. Also write and draw clearly and neatly for the photo record.

Repeat this process for ‘after’, including connections and overlap between ‘before’ and ‘after’. Take several photos, with and without flash.

We used this as part of a cake and chat evening. Drawing the outlines can lead to much hilarity, but beware of people’s comfort around close contact. Not everyone has to agree on every contribution – the idea is to record the feelings and experiences of everyone in the group. How the outline figures interact can be expressive, such as holding hands or listening to each other.

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Written up from evaluation work done by Dhara Thompson and Sharyn Lock,

SOFT OUTCOMES – WHAT THEY ARE AND HOW TO COLLECT THEM

Introduction

We can all describe situations where we can plainly see that people are different as a result of the engagement they have had with our projects, but it is difficult to say one thing that has changed significantly for an individual as changes are subtle and may be very small. These changes are often referred to as soft outcomes; they are often intangible and specific to the individual's own circumstances and development needs. Soft outcomes will be steps towards achieving change rather than absolute change; they will also contribute over time to the achievement of hard outcomes e.g. gaining employment, returning to learning/ staying in learning, gaining qualifications.

Soft outcomes can be demonstrated by identifying the soft indicators (signs of change) that show us altered behaviour, skill levels and changed attitudes. Soft indicators are used to refer to achievements that may indicate progress towards a hard or soft outcome e.g. developing confidence and communication skills that support them achieving employment.

One methodology of recording soft outcomes and distance travelled by our service users is described in Using Video for Monitoring and Evaluation later in this section.

Soft Outcome Identification Process

1. Establish the starting point with individuals and groups

If you don't know where you started from you cannot prove how far you have travelled. Even if you are several months or even years into your work with a group and have never recorded outcomes before, if you gather information about where your group or an individual member's development is now, you have your starting point data to record any progression.

2. Designing questions

Identify some simple questions or observation points that will help you identify where people are starting from regarding the four skill areas below.

Questions should relate to your organisations aims and objectives as well as any outcome targets. Check the questions or observation points you will use with others to see if they give the answers you expect, order your questions so they logically follow on and avoid over complex questions.

The questions identified should be used over time so that changes in attitude, behaviour and learning are evident and can be identified by yourself and the participant. A useful and simple measure of change is to allow the respondent to expand their answers – this will demonstrate their increased awareness and confidence within the project

| Soft Outcome areas of personal development | Soft Indicators | Example Question or Observation |
|---|--|---|
| Attitude / behaviour / aspirations | Increased confidence and self esteem, and how this is demonstrated (body language, appearance, contributions to group), Greater recognition of own skills, Improved motivation, Finishing tasks and activities, Improved aspirations for self or group | Is the individual willing to sit with the group unprompted? Is the individual willing to speak up in meetings? Can the person describe realistically their contributions to group tasks? Has there been an increase in successful completion of tasks and activities on behalf of the group? |
| Practical skills | Understanding of rights and responsibilities of themselves within a group Management of themselves, Management of money and resources | Can the person identify their roles and responsibilities to the group? Does the person conduct themselves appropriately within meetings/ group? |
| Personal | Improved attendance and timekeeping, Increased awareness of self and others, Better health and hygiene, | How often do they turn up when they say they will? Can they identify how they relate to others within the group? Is the individual able to change their communication style to recognise others needs within the meeting/ group? |
| Key Skills Communication, application of numbers, working with others, IT) | Improved communication with others in group improved language skills Improved numeracy Improved involvement in a group activity | How many times in the group does the person contribute unprompted to discussions? Observation - Individual shows increased willingness to take notes at meetings, arrange venues or make calls on behalf of the group. |

3. How to record outcomes

Recording of the starting point data and the distance travelled can be undertaken in many ways including video interviews, questionnaires, or observation and recording of a persons behaviour and key comments while involved in activities and group tasks.

Measurement of distance travelled should be continuous, however it can be helpful to allocate time periodically to review where the group or individual member started and where they are now from your perspective and from theirs.

You might want to give people the questions in advance of interviews to allow them time to reflect on their opinions and changes as often we forget important points when we are put on the spot.

4. Who should provide feedback?

Record feedback about observed change from co-workers, peer group members, the individual and the group.

5. What to do with the data collected

Use it! Analysis of change provides valuable evidence of the impact your work has on individuals and groups. It also provides tangible proof of the distance travelled by groups and their members with feedback provided by self-reporting, observation and peer evaluations.

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USING VIDEO FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Introduction

Most community projects will have access to basic video camera equipment, all too often sitting in the cupboard gathering dust. How often have you heard 'wouldn't it have been great to have had that on camera', but the camera still rests in its box. It is time to liberate your group's monitoring and evaluation by getting everyone recording the project's work and the feedback of participants using video.

Monitoring and evaluation is a requirement for most everyone working with communities, yet this is often seen as a chore rather than as exciting confirmation of the impact and change achieved. Good monitoring and evaluation depends on projects thinking imaginatively about their approaches to gathering the evidence of soft outcomes¹ and impact provided by their work. In every aspect of their work staff need to consider 'How will I know our work has made a difference?'

Collecting evidence by video provides an accessible and inclusive approach to recording views and opinions, feedback and first hand information from participants about the impact made by the project.

Equipment needed

- **Basic Video Camera** which can record to tape or DVD – this will allow you to collect feedback over a long period without the risk of erasing information.
- **External microphone** - if possible to avoid background noise.
- **Tripod** – to ensure stable images. Fast moving and unsteady images are difficult to watch and quickly lose the viewers interest.
- **Basic video editing package for computer** – most computers come with a very simple editing package already installed now, if not, a simple package can be purchased for £20.

Benefits of video monitoring and evaluation

- There is the potential for participants and workers to be central to all aspects of monitoring and evaluation process. Most people will be able to pick up the basics of video recording within a few minutes, but they may need some support to overcome their inhibitions to use the equipment.
- Video provides a transparent way of communicating the work of a project and the impact this has on participants.
- Video provides an accessible tool for providing and recording feedback, opinions, immediate reactions and long-term impact of a project.
- Video monitoring and evaluation can reduce the burden of paperwork.
- Using video with the same group over time can provide excellent examples of soft outcomes and distance travelled by individuals.
- Video can provide a visual representation of your group to decision makers wherever they are, this cannot be replicated with the same impact through written reports.
- A growing number of websites are now providing a platform to showcase the work of groups.

Disadvantages

- Some individuals are reluctant to be seen on camera, always check you have permission first. Some people are happy for you to record audio but not video. You can use the same equipment just keep lens cap on or point camera in opposite direction to re-assure the participant.

¹ See the previous article in this section

- Editing takes time as much time as writing a report.

Tips

- Find the camera from the back of the cupboard, or if you don't have one find out if there are others available in the community that can be borrowed.
- Look at working with other projects in the area to share the cost of buying a camera.
- Train participants and staff in the use of the video camera, so it does not always come down to one person to record the footage.
- Involve participants in all aspects of monitoring and evaluation work, using video to create a fun and emotive reflection of the outcomes experienced by participants in projects.
- Record project activities with dates and times and keep them in a safe place.
- Plan the recordings and keep them short, for every hour of footage, you can expect 2 hours editing time.
- Get participants feedback on camera – have a bank of open questions ready so you can be consistent in your interviews, but don't be afraid to ask supplementary questions.
- Think about how you want to use the video material. Consider your audience as this will help you to shape the types of questions you ask people.
- Consider the confidentiality of feedback, ensure you have consent to use any recorded materials in a video.
- Keep your videos simple, the more effects you use the more computer memory is used.
- Using video to evaluate is fun and helps everyone remember what happened and the benefits of being involved.
- Use the materials collected, don't just store them away in a box!

Websites

www.viewfindermedia.org.uk provides training for staff and community groups around camera skills and video editing. They also provide direct video monitoring and evaluation with youth and community groups.

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STORIES AND INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDIES AS AN EVALUATION TOOL

Introduction

Evaluation is central to the community development process but is often not prioritised. It may be seen as time consuming or boring, something to be done at the end of a project for the benefit of others rather than a participative activity, which enables learning and development and is a positive experience for all involved. Traditional approaches to monitoring and evaluation rarely capture the most powerful evidence of the impact of a community development approach such as increased confidence, self-esteem and ambitions for the future, which are considered hard to measure soft outcomes. Stories and case studies are a simple way of addressing this.

Stories as an evaluation tool

Listening to people's experiences and enabling them to see how much they have achieved and the impact they are having on those around them is a natural part of the working day for most community development workers. It is rare, however, for these stories to be recorded and used as evidence of the impact that a project or group is having within the community. This is a missed opportunity as they can literally record the distance travelled by individuals and groups and provide learning and inspiration for others.

A planned approach to collecting stories

Planning for any evaluation is important and considering the following questions will help you prepare and avoid some of the most common issues that can arise.

| Things to consider | Hints and comments |
|--|--|
| 1. Who will write the stories and what support is available? | Some people are happy to write their own stories, others tell their story to someone they trust who writes it down for them, talk into a tape recorder or are videoed. It can be hard to start the process of sharing a story. It is useful to have some ideas available to help the process such as diagrams, photos, mementos, life lines, etc. This can be an emotional process. Be prepared to spend time supporting participants if required to work through issues and write their story down. How the story is recorded and who records it will influence the end product so take this into account when deciding how stories will be used/ presented. |
| 2. What is the timescale you are working to? | Set deadlines and plan carefully. Leave time for agreeing the stories and reproduction. These elements of the work always take longer than anticipated. |
| 3. How will stories be used and selected? | Once a story has been shared, not using it or heavy editing can be difficult. Be sure you are clear with contributors what the selection criteria are (length, content for example) and consider how quotes or extracts can be used if whole stories are not included. Providing a template to guide the process can be valuable to all involved. |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>4. How will the stories help to evaluate the impact of my work?</p> | <p>A great story will be a valuable addition to any project report, newsletter or display but to use it to evaluate your work you need to analyse what it tells you by asking questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the story tell you about the impact your work / engagement in the community is having? • What have you learned? • What worked and what didn't and why? • What should you do more or less of? • What should be done differently and why? • What can others learn from this story? • What are the common themes that the stories highlight? <p>Make sure that this evidence is reported to funders and that the relevance to them is highlighted (a story can be a powerful promotional tool to highlight the impact a funders resources are making).</p> <p>Ensure that the soft outcomes¹ of your work are not overlooked as they are what makes a community development approach so valuable.</p> |
| <p>5. How will I gain consent and respect the wishes of the contributor?</p> | <p>Those who share their story have a right to know how it will be used and what it will include.</p> <p>Check how they feel about use of their name and photograph and when and where the story is used. Be sure that they are clear that even an anonymous story may be recognised by someone that knows them. If a story appears and has not been agreed this devalues the individual involved and can lead to lack of trust towards your project/ group within the community, limiting willingness to contribute in the future.</p> <p>Develop or amend an existing consent form and use this with all who share their stories. Have a system in place to check this throughout the process to ensure ownership of the end product.</p> |
| <p>6. How will I prepare myself for collecting stories?</p> | <p>Write your own story first. This helps understand the difficulties, value of the process and means you are better prepared to support others.</p> |

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¹ Soft outcomes primarily relate to the personal development of group members, those skills and attitudes which enable them to contribute more within a group and in their interactions with others. More information can be found in the previous articles in this section

STORIES AND INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDIES AS AN EVALUATION TOOL DESIGNING A TEMPLATE FOR COLLECTING STORIES

Introduction

The evaluation evidence captured through a story or case study will vary depending on how those that are sharing their experiences are supported to record their journey. A template, which offers guidance on the format and content will aid the evaluation process:

- those who wish to share their story
- those who have offered to support them
- the project wishing to use the stories as an evaluation tool

The following questions / prompts were used to support the collection of stories for the Derwent Community Stories Initiative as part of an Evaluation Capacity Building Package delivered in the area by the University of Derby Community Regeneration Centre.

This initiative collected evidence of the distance travelled by local residents involved in projects funded through the Derwent New Deal for Communities Programme, capturing the impact their involvement had on:

- themselves
- their families
- the wider community

This template provides an example of how people can be encouraged to think about their personal journey. It is not essential for all the questions to be answered as they are prompts to help participants share areas of their experience they may otherwise overlook.

An example of how this template has been used as an evaluation tool to capture the true impact of community development work follows this article. It highlights a story written by Sally, a resident from the Derwent New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme area in Derby who went on to support other community members in sharing their own experiences.

Sally's story captures hard evidence of the impact her engagement in a community development process, such as participation in training courses, gaining qualifications, volunteering and progression into higher education and employment as well as evidence of soft outcomes, such as increased confidence and optimism about the future, which are often overlooked in evaluation processes. This story shows how evaluation evidence can be captured in a way that is a valuable and positive experience for all involved and how that evidence can be presented in a way that is interesting and inspirational to funders and community members alike.

1 Background and setting the scene

- What encouraged you to start getting involved in the community/ project / organisation / campaign? (You may want to share what was going on for you before or what gave you the incentive to get involved)
- How did you get involved?

2 Involvement in the community

- What have you been doing? (Projects, groups, activities or campaigns. What you have been doing, when and how)
- Has what you do changed from when you first got involved? How?
- What did you hope to get out of your involvement?

3 Impact on you, your family and the community

- What do you feel you have gained by your involvement?
- What do you feel you have offered to the community?
- Was there anything you would have liked to have gained or achieved which has not happened?
- What do you feel has changed for you, your family, the local community?
- What has been learnt along the way?

4 The future

- What about the future?
- What are your hopes for you, your family and/or the community? (A reflection about what is going to happen next)

5 Anything else you would like to be included?

- Is there anything about your experience, the projects you are involved in or the community you would like included that you have not already shared?
- Do you have any message for others who may want to get involved in the community?

Further Information:

For more information about the work of the University of Derby Community Regeneration Centre contact Gersh Subhra on 01332 592156 or email v.subhra@derby.ac.uk

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STORIES AND INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDIES AS AN EVALUATION TOOL: SALLY'S STORY

Background

My name is Sally Hendley and I am married with two teenage children. I have lived in the Breadsall and Derwent areas of Derby for 46 years. On January 1st 2004 I realised I had completely lost my identity. I am not sure what prompted this feeling but it made me question my life. Over the next few days I considered my future, should I carry on and accept this, or was it time to find myself again?

A flyer from Revive Healthy Living Centre Project dropped through my letter box a few days later and gave some information on courses in the area. One involved exercise, (definitely not for me) and another on Community Health and Development. After much hesitation I rang. I started the course in April and it was fantastic. Once a week I shared my thoughts, feelings and learning with a room full of people who respected my views. Receiving an Open College Network qualification to me was irrelevant at the time; the adult interaction was the qualification for me. This course built up my confidence, it reminded me I was intelligent and could be a positive role model, not only to my family but also to others in the community. As a result I made some very good friends, gained a qualification and became Sally again. At the end of the course I signed up for another two.

Involvement in the Community

A year later I became a volunteer for Revive. I supported participants on the Healthy Life Project, a GP referral programme. As a Health Networker I provided one to one support sessions for residents and I also embarked on training to become a Resident Director. I supported and then co-facilitated the Community Health and Development Course not only in Derwent but around the city as well. I have also completed a variety of other courses and worked on initiatives gaining experience and qualifications along the way.

“When I reflect on what I have achieved I also have to recognise that my involvement with the community is an important part of the changes I have experienced. I am involved in many initiatives in Derwent seeing directly the positive changes that are happening to the area and its residents. I now think that I could be an inspiration to others, nothing is impossible, the opportunities are out there - having the confidence to take the first step is the difficult thing”

Future

I am really looking forward to the future. I am not saying everyone is happy with the changes I have made and some would have preferred that I had thrown the Revive flyer in the bin, but I am happy and that is the most important thing. I am even considering going to Derby University to continue my studies on the Foundation Degree in Community Regeneration and Development. I hope in the future to be able to secure a career in Community Development, so all the time and commitment I have dedicated over the past two years will not be wasted. When I look back to January 2004 I no longer recognise that Sally. With the help of training, encouragement and even criticism I have developed both personally and professionally. I have become someone I am proud of and now nobody can take that away from me and this is an incredible feeling.

Further Information

This story and others are included in a community stories publication compiled as part of an Evaluation Capacity Building Package led by the University of Derby Community Regeneration Centre.

If you would like to learn more about the publication or the work of the Community Regeneration Centre please contact Gersh Subhra at The Centre for Community Regeneration, University of Derby on 01332 592156 or email v.subhra@derby.ac.uk

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