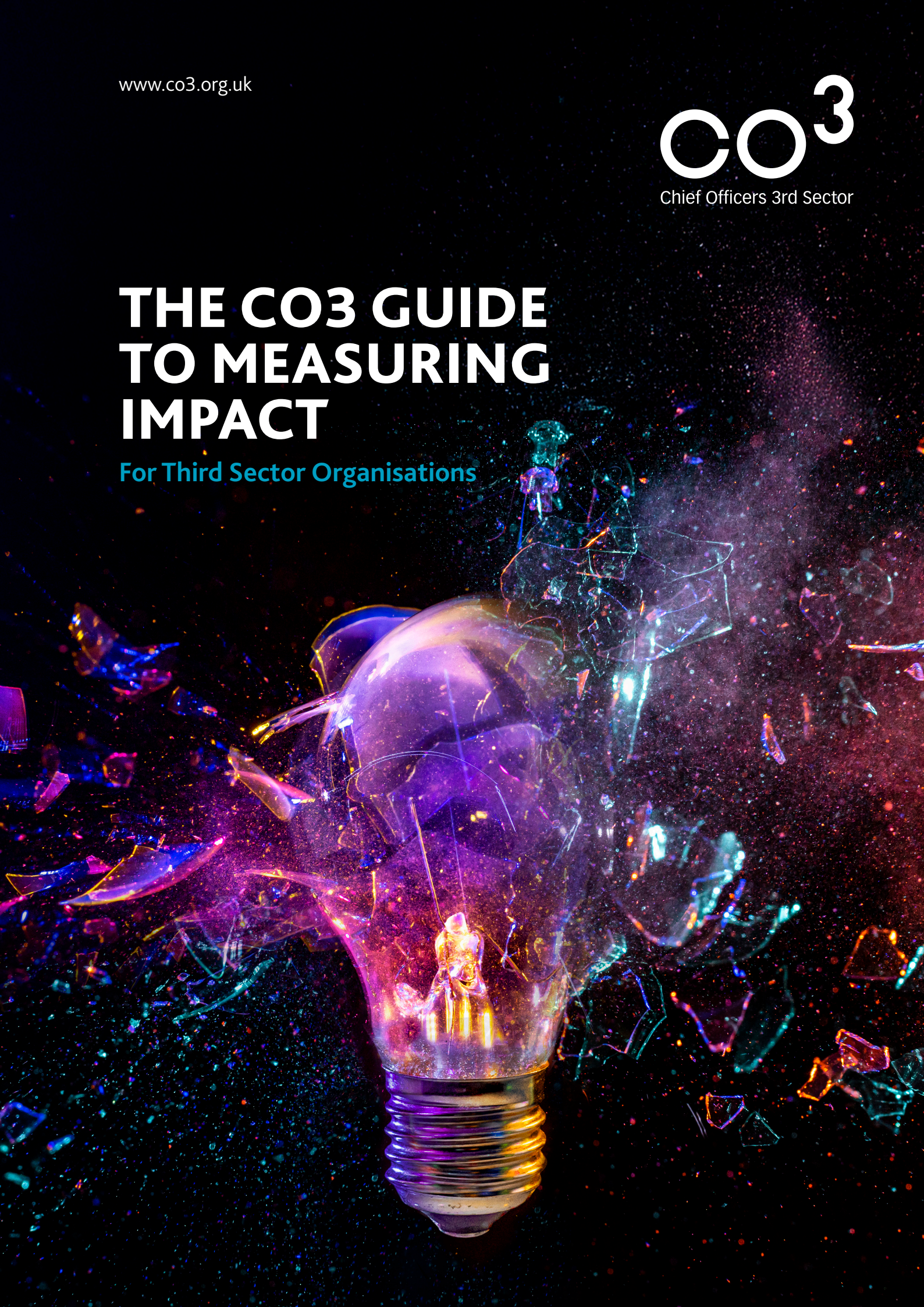


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CO3
Chief Officers 3rd Sector

THE CO3 GUIDE TO MEASURING IMPACT

For Third Sector Organisations



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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ROGER COURTNEY

Roger Courtney was founder and first Director of what became Crescent Arts Centre, co-founder of the NI Council for the Homeless (now Homeless Connect), and Chief Executive of the Simon Community NI for 17 years. On behalf of CO3, he trains a wide range of third sector organisations in strategy, governance, and impact measurement, as well as training a pool of Interim Executives who can fill leadership vacancies in third sector organisations and has been an Interim executive in six third sector organisations.

He has been a freelance advisor, facilitator and trainer to a wide range of third sector organisations for the past 25 years. He is the author of a dozen books on third sector strategy, governance, leadership and income generation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to the various organisations who have contributed to the development of this guide, including:

- Those who kindly gave permission for the use of examples from their own organisations, including Belfast Book Festival (CAC), Crescent Arts Centre, The University of Atypical (formerly the Arts and Disability Forum), Rural Community Network, Annagh Social farm, Resurgam, Unboxed, Courtney Consulting, Volunteer Now, The NOW Group, the Welcome Organisation, Simon Community NI, and Housing Rights.
- Those who commented on previous drafts, or draft sections, including Majella McCloskey CES, Richard Spratt Cancer Focus, Suzanne Courtney CO3, Jimmy McAleese, Nicola McCrudden Homeless Connect, Helen Todd and Claire King WOMEN'S TEC, Jeannie McCann, Strategic Investment Board and Stephen McGarry WorkWest.
- Leeanne Kelly NICVA for her advice.
- Suzanne Courtney and Valerie McConville CO3 for planning and organising the design and publication of the report.

1. INTRODUCTION



The leaders of third sector organisations of all kinds (charities, social enterprises, community organisations, etc.) are under pressure to demonstrate the impact of their work. Of course, those leading third sector organisations, believe, or may even feel they know, that the work their organisation does changes people's lives substantially for the better. The question is, however, in a competitive environment, how can we measure the extent and nature of that change and convincingly demonstrate the impact of the work to others who may be more sceptical. Third sector leaders also want to learn from the work they are doing and the stories and data gathered to create an overall picture of organisational effectiveness and how it can be improved. Continuous learning and evaluation should be imbedded in all third sector organisations regardless of external expectations or requirements.

There are a range of tools and frameworks available to help organisations measure their impact, but it may not be clear which, if any, of these are appropriate for which organisation, and how they relate to each other. Sometimes particular frameworks are imposed by a funder or commissioner of the programme(s).

Like improving quality, impact measurement is a journey. It usually takes place in stages. Smaller organisations are likely to begin with more basic approaches and as they expand and develop, start to use more sophisticated and robust tools

and frameworks. Too often the journey is episodic, and the organisation may only have the resources to commission a one-off piece of impact measurement, so there is no continuous process embedded in the organisation. This Guide is designed to help make the journey a continuous one, with the building of the relevant skills and systems on the way.

Inspiring Impact was a UK-wide programme which ran from 2011 to early 2022 to support good impact practice in the charity sector. It was launched in Northern Ireland in 2014, providing peer learning networks, expert consultancy support, online resources and grant funding to help the sector understand and articulate the difference they make. CDHN took over as lead partner in NI in March 2020 when Community Evaluation Northern Ireland (CENI) closed. As the programme ended, CDHN conducted research into impact practice and the Inspiring Impact programme in NI. The findings were presented at a joint event with NICVA "Impact Practice - Next Steps for VCSE Sector" on 09 June 2022. The key findings of the research were:

- **Impact practice knowledge and understanding has increased over the last 10 years, however more support is still needed for the VCSE sector in the planning, implementation and evaluation of impact practice.**
- **There are varying levels of understanding of impact practice, even within the same organisations.**
- **The key barriers to impact practice are lack of staff, time and resources.**
- **The different tools and approaches Government and funders use can be confusing and unhelpful to VCSE organisations.**

- **There is a need to promote impact practice as a way of recognising the difference made, the learning from work and its role in strategic planning and not just for meeting funder requirements.**

NICVA have established an Impact Network to help share Impact Measurement practice and challenges, to learn from each other.

This guide is designed to contribute to the improvement in third sector leaders' understanding of Impact Measurement practice and the various tools and frameworks available.

Most publications on measuring impact in the third sector are 'one right way' guides. The purpose of this publication is not to tell organisations how they should be measuring their impact, but to provide an overview of the field and explain the different approaches and how they relate to each other.

This Guide starts with the more basic approaches and builds towards the most complex and robust tools and frameworks. Regardless of where your organisation is on its impact measurement journey, hopefully, the guide should help identify what the next stages of the journey might be.

The primary target readership of this publication are leaders (senior staff and trustees/non-executive directors) of third sector organisations (e.g. charities, social enterprises and other non-profit organisations), but other readers may find it of value, including statutory and philanthropic funders of third sector organisations; statutory commissioners of contracts; social lenders/investors; social entrepreneurs planning/running social projects; private companies with social missions; and Individuals who give money and/or time to social causes

A detailed glossary is contained in Appendix 1.

2. WHY MEASURE IMPACT



Most third sector organisations are very busy delivering vital services to their beneficiaries. It is therefore a legitimate question as to why they should use their precious time and resources measuring their impact.

Third sector organisations exist in highly competitive environments. They are constantly competing for grant funding, tenders, corporate support, donations from individuals, and in the recruitment staff and volunteers. How, then, do they convince government departments, arms-length statutory bodies, trusts & foundations, companies, individuals, etc. to give their support to their organisation? Even without these external drivers, it is vitally important that third sector leaders learn from the work of their organisation; understand how effective, or otherwise, their programmes are in changing people's lives for the better; and improve their effectiveness. This learning and evaluation needs to be embedded within the organisation at all levels, from the board down, so it is a continuous, not just a one-off, process.

What most people who support third sector organisations want to know is, what the impact their money, or other support, will have on the organisation's beneficiaries. They want to feel confident that it is effective in improving people's lives.

Robustly measuring the impact that the organisation has on its service-users or beneficiaries can be invaluable in different ways for different stakeholders, highlighted below:

BENEFICIARIES/SERVICE-USERS

It can help improve the beneficiaries/ service-users lives and outcomes by:

- improving the quality and appropriateness of services that beneficiaries/ service-users receive;
- helping beneficiaries/service-users monitor the progress they are making;
- ensuring beneficiaries' voices are heard; and
- helping the organisation stop doing things in relation to service-users that do not have an impact or even do harm to the beneficiaries.

SERVICE PROVIDERS

It can be invaluable for service providers, by:

- helping the organisation demonstrate how it is achieving its mission and charitable public benefit;
- helping the organisation, which is delivering the services, to understand what works in achieving particular outcomes and what doesn't, and so can adjust the services accordingly to have a greater, or different, outcome(s) for beneficiaries;
- helping clarify the desired outcomes that the service(s)/programmes are designed to achieve;
- helping the organisation monitor the progress service-users are making;
- helping improve the effectiveness of the service(s) and deliver greater impact;
- helping improve efficiency by allocating resources to programmes and activities that deliver the desired outcomes;
- helping demonstrate the impact of the service to internal and external stakeholders;
- improving decision-making, by providing robust data on what works and what doesn't;
- improving quality assurance, by focusing on robust implementation of a programme which has demonstrated its impact;
- enhancing the accountability of the organisation to its stakeholders; and
- increasing the case for funding, having demonstrated what impact that funding is likely to achieve.

THIRD SECTOR LEADERS

It can be invaluable for boards and senior staff of third sector organisations, in addition to those for service providers and service-users, highlighted above, by:

- ensuring the service(s) or programme(s) they have overall responsibility for is/are having the impact intended;
- ensuring the organisation is appropriately gathering and analysing

2. WHY MEASURE IMPACT

- the evidence that shows whether the programme(s) or service(s) are working effectively;
- learning more about the delivery of the strategic plan;
- gathering the evidence to know whether the organisation is on track or needs to pivot;
- understanding how the range of programmes and services delivered come together to improve the lives of beneficiaries;
- helping staff understand the difference they are making (and increasing their motivation and job satisfaction);
- ensuring the organisation responds to funder/commissioner requests for impact evidence; and
- ensuring the organisation provides the appropriate resources (money and staff time) and impact measurement expertise to effectively measure impact and continually improve its evaluation processes.

ALTRUISTS AND PHILANTHROPISTS

It can help philanthropic and personal donors¹, by:

- giving them clarity about the potential impact that their support would have;
- helping them choose the most effective third sector organisations and programmes to support;
- helping them choose the most effective third sector organisations and programmes to work for or volunteer in;
- provide them with the information to evaluate the impact of the organisation they support; and
- help them decide whether to continue providing support.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS & AGENCIES

It can be positive for government departments and agencies, by:

- clarifying what third sector organisations and programmes contribute to achieving government

aims and outcomes;

- Providing information on the programmes to invest in that provide the biggest income;
- helping them understand what change/outcomes their funding/contact is creating;
- helping them improve policy and funding decision-making; and
- improve efficiency and effectiveness, by enabling them to invest in organisations and programmes that have the biggest impact.

BARRIERS TO MEASURING IMPACT

If there are so many reasons why it is of value to measure impact, why do most non-profit organisations do very little in the way of measuring their impact? There are various barriers to measuring impact that often need to be overcome, including the following:

- key external stakeholders, such as funders or contractors, may not seek impact measurement, or only pay lip-service to it, while requiring only output information;
- there are so many different, apparently competing models, it is difficult to prioritise which framework(s) or model(s) to follow;
- the organisation may not have the expertise, understanding, or skills needed (at board or senior staff or programme staff levels) to plan or carry out impact measurement, or where to look for this expertise;
- the organisation may not know what the next stages in its impact journey might be;
- key players in the organisation may not believe that the impact of their work, such as changes in wellbeing, can be measured;
- there is a lack of financial resources put into impact measurement and key players in the organisation may feel that if there are surplus financial resources available it should be spent on increased coalface service-delivery than on impact measurement;
- funding for projects is often short-term

and with short lead-in times, giving little time to plan effectively;

- funding for impact measurement is often short-term, or are located with one particular staff member, so the measurement processes are not embedded in the organisation;
- there is a lack of staff time at all levels, including administrative, to collect and process data;
- Staff may want to maintain the status quo because they are afraid of change and want to protect their service from scrutiny; and/or
- it may be difficult to be clear about the extent that the organisation was responsible for the impact that took place, such as changes in legislation or the policy or practices of statutory bodies, when other organisations are also trying to influence the same things.

With these barriers, it is important that the impact measurement journey is actively supported by the board (which ensures there are the appropriate skills and expertise in impact measurement, inc. relevant academic(s) and senior staff. It is also invaluable to have the active support of funders/commissioners.

RESOURCES

Understanding Impact NPC

chromeextension://
efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/
[https://npproduction.
wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/
uploads/2020/02/Understanding-
Impact-.pdf](https://npproduction.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Understanding-Impact-.pdf)

Impact Evaluation

[https://www.betterevaluation.org/
methods-approaches/themes/impact-
evaluation](https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/themes/impact-evaluation)

PART ONE BASIC METHODS



3.

BASIC WAYS OF DEMONSTRATING ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Third sector organisations at the early stages of their impact measurement journey have a range of options to consider in trying to demonstrate how well the organisation is performing. The most common basic methods are organisational, i.e. they are focused on the organisation rather than specifically on the beneficiaries. These ways of demonstrating organisational performance can be very valuable, although, like all approaches, have their limitations. The basic options in demonstrating organisational performance are highlighted below.



3.1. ACHIEVEMENT OF AGREED OBJECTIVES

Organisations that adopt operational plans or business plans with SMART² objectives or KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) can demonstrate, at the end of the planning period, the extent that they have achieved the objectives or KPIs that were agreed at the beginning of the planning period.

EXAMPLE

A HOUSING ASSOCIATION

A housing association might agree key objectives or KPIs which could include something like the following:

- To receive at least an 80% 'Good' or 'Very Good' rating in its tenant satisfaction survey
- To receive at least an 80% 'Good' or 'Very Good' rating for its repairs service in its tenant satisfaction survey
- To maintain rent arrears at less than 6%
- To maintain bad debts at less than 3%
- To maintain a vacancy rate of less than 7%
- To respond to 95% of emergency repairs within 24 hours
- To deal with 95% of urgent repairs within 5 working days

It might also have other non-numerical objectives such as the following:

- To develop a Tenants Rights charter, in consultation with tenants, by a specified date
- To conduct a tenants satisfaction survey, by a specified date
- To negotiate a free money advice service for tenants, by a specified date
- To develop X number of general housing units, for completion by a specified date

At the end of the year, the housing association can monitor which KPIs and objectives have been achieved and publish the extent that they have been achieved, as a percentage.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of this kind of approach include the following:

STRENGTHS:

- It indicates that the organisation is goal-focused and well run, with good planning.
- It provides evidence of actually achieving results against agreed plans.
- It provides an opportunity to highlight particularly valuable achievements (see below).

WEAKNESSES:

- The SMART objectives or KPIs set may have been easy to achieve with little effort.
- The SMART objectives or KPIs set may not be ones that have a positive impact on the beneficiaries, or the right impact.
- There is no comparison with previous years.
- Highlighting a % of objectives that have been achieved, on its own, will not tell the reader what specific objectives and KPIs have been achieved, and which have not, and why.



3.2. HIGHLIGHTING PARTICULAR ACHIEVEMENTS

Organisations often point to specific achievements, in order to highlight the success of the organisation. Such achievements may or may not be easy to quantify. These may be evidence of organisational growth, capital developments, geographical expansion, the development of new services, works of art, a new beneficiary group receiving the organisation's services, advocacy success in influencing public policy or practice, or achieving a specific award, etc.

Following on from the example given above, the housing association may wish to highlight some its particular successes. These may be mainly objectives or KPIs that were set at the beginning of the year, and which were achieved, such as a new housing scheme, which can be highlighted with photographs, but they may also include achievements above and beyond those which were planned at the beginning of the year.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of this kind of approach include the following:

STRENGTHS:

- They can indicate that the organisation is progressing and apparently successful.
- They draw attention to the organisation's biggest successes.
- People like to invest in the new and innovative.

WEAKNESSES:

- It does not give a balanced view of the effectiveness of the organisation.
- They do not demonstrate whether the lives of beneficiaries are any better off than they were before.
- It does not indicate what was not achieved.

3.3. MEASURING OUTPUTS

The most common aspect of an organisation's work, apart from the money, to be measured are outputs. The outputs of an organisation are the things that are easy to count about the activities of the organisation or programme, e.g. the number of service-users, the number of sessions with service-users, the number of service-users who complete the programme, the number of training courses, the number of attendees, etc. There can also be process output indicators, such as the length of time waiting for an appointment.

Many third sector organisations publish various outputs in their impact reports. Many funders still require monitoring reports which are mostly about these outputs. More sophisticated impact measurement frameworks, like OBA (see below), make it clear that there is indeed a value in asking how much the organisation did.

Funders often set specific targets for organisations to achieve in terms of the number of participants, sessions, etc. which they need to report on. Organisations may also want to highlight specific outputs.



EXAMPLE

HOUSING RIGHTS

The Housing Rights 2021 Impact Report, amongst other findings, highlights particular outputs over the previous year, under the OBA (see below) heading of How much did we do? including the following:

- The Helpline provided advice to 8,095 clients.
- There was a 60% increase in demand for our email advice and live chat since the previous year.
- As well as providing one-off advice, Housing Rights clients with more complex cases are referred to the

casework and legal team. During the year, the casework and legal advisers dealt with 1,037 cases.

- In addition, 529 clients were provided with legal representation.
- In addition to the public helpline, Housing Rights advisers help housing practitioners from all over NI, by providing advice which helps them to assist their clients. During the year, Housing Rights advisers provided support to over 1,200 practitioners via the helpline.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of this kind of output approach include the following:

STRENGTHS:

- Outputs are quantifiable, i.e. they can be measured and compared over time.
- Funders can assess whether the organisation delivered the outputs they agreed to.
- Outputs provide an indication of the reach of the programme; i.e. how many people were engaged.
- The costs per person, or session, can easily be calculated.
- A funder can compare organisations or programmes in terms of the number of service-users, or the amount of time people engage in the programme.
- They provide an indication of the scale of the effort, work or programme, e.g. how many activities, how often, how long.

WEAKNESSES:

- Outputs, on their own, provide no help in indicating to what extent people's lives were changed by being involved in the programme.
- Outputs are often detached from desired outcomes for beneficiaries which the activities are designed to produce.
- Measuring outputs does not help an organisation decide how it can be more effective or efficient.
- Outputs do not help an organisation to decide whether it should continue with a programme or expand/contract it.



3.4. MEASURING QUALITY

It is not only important what an organisation does, and how much it does, but it is also crucial how well things are done. Well-run programmes are likely to have more impact than badly run ones. Ways of measuring or demonstrating the quality of an organisation's work can, therefore, be invaluable. Measuring quality can be as simple as carrying out a basic post-programme satisfaction survey of service-users. The statement to be rated (1-5 or 1-7) might be as simple as: "I am satisfied with the service I received from the organisation", or I was satisfied with the training course." Participants can be asked to what extent they agree with the statement. It may also include other subsidiary statements such as "I was satisfied with the content of the training course", "I was satisfied with how the training course was delivered", "the trainer was very knowledgeable about the topic", and/or "There was good opportunity for trainee engagement", etc.

EXAMPLE

ANYTOWN³ DOMICILIARY DAY CARE

Anytown Domiciliary Day Care (ADDC) is contracted by the Health & Social Care Trusts to provide support to vulnerable adults in their own homes. Each year they issue a Client Satisfaction Survey with 3 sections of satisfaction sections. Each question has a different rating, from yes/no; a 3-point scale (Always, Sometimes, Never); 4-point scale (Always, Most of the time, Sometimes, Not at all); to a 5-point scale (Excellent, Above Average, Average, below Average, and Poor) followed by a box (mostly headed 'tell us more!') for narrative explanations. The questions are as follows:

1. OVERALL SERVICE DELIVERY

1.1. How would you rate the service provided by ADDC to you?
☐ 1 Excellent ☐ 2 Above Average ☐ 3 Average ☐ 4 Below Average ☐ 5 Poor

1.2. Are the Care Attendants always polite and respectful?
☐ 1 Always ☐ 2 Most of the Time ☐ 3 Sometimes ☐ 4 Not at All

1.3. Are the Care Attendants flexible, doing everything in the care plan, but also willing to do things you want them to do (outside the care plan)
☐ Yes ☐ No

2. PUNCTUALITY AND ATTENDANCE

2.1. Do our Care Attendants usually arrive on time?
☐ 1 Always ☐ 2 Sometimes ☐ 3 Never

2.2. Do our care Attendants stay for the agreed time stated in the care plan?
☐ Yes ☐ No

2.3. Are the Care Attendants always in full ADDC uniform?
☐ Yes ☐ No

2.4. Do the Care Attendants always use their gloves, aprons and hand sanitiser whilst carrying out personal care duties?
☐ Yes ☐ No

2.5. During the last year how many times has a Care Attendant failed to turn up? (plus three subsidiary questions in relation to what happened next)

2.6. Have you ever had to make a complaint within the last year? Y/N (plus three subsidiary questions in relation to what happened next)
☐ Yes ☐ No

3. QUALITY OF SERVICE PROVISION

3.1. Do care staff wash their hands before and after care is provided to you?
☐ Yes ☐ No

3.2. Other than your regular Care Attendant(s), have you been contracted/visited by any other ADDC staff in the past year? (examples given)
☐ Yes ☐ No

3.3. Do you know how to contact ADDC – 9am – 5pm Y/N; and between 5pm and 9am (emergencies only)
☐ Yes ☐ No

3.4. If you have had cause to contact ADDC's office, were you satisfied with your experience?
☐ Yes ☐ No

3.5. Do you feel that ADDC Care Attendants give you the freedom of choice in the care tasks they perform (e.g. choice of food)
☐ 1 Always ☐ 2 Sometimes ☐ 3 Never

3.6. Do the care attendants explain what they are about to do before commencing their tasks?
☐ 1 Always ☐ 2 Sometimes ☐ 3 Never

3.7. ADDC is committed to the principle of equal opportunity regardless of race, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, ethnic origin, disability or religion in the provision of our services and employment practices – do you feel we achieve this?
☐ Yes ☐ No

3.8. Do you feel that ADDC respects your privacy and personal choice of lifestyle, customs, culture, values and spiritual beliefs you may have?
☐ Yes ☐ No

4. INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHARITY

5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION – 'ADDITIONAL SPACE FOR ANY COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE IN RELATION TO OUR SERVICES'

There are a variety of much more sophisticated quality tools to assess how excellent, or otherwise, an organisation is. Some of these are self-assessment tools, to help support continuous improvement; others include an external assessment and provide accreditation or awards for achieving a particular level or score. This enables the organisation to highlight the extent that the activities of the organisation can be considered to be of consistently high quality. The gold standard of quality assurance systems is ISO9001. Some quality tools and frameworks attempt to cover all aspects of the organisation, such as EFQM, others focus on more particular aspects, such as Customer Service Excellence; staff development and engagement in Investors in People; and how the organisation engages volunteers in Investing in Volunteering. Some of the frameworks are designed to be used by particular kinds of organisations, or in particular sectors. Increasingly public sector tenders ask organisations submitting tenders what quality assurance systems they have in place.

EXAMPLE

SIMON COMMUNITY NI

During the past 50 years, Simon Community NI has expanded its work across Northern Ireland whilst striving to ensure that people who experience homelessness have access to a quality service, consistently provided across the region.

Over time, the organisation has utilised several quality improvement frameworks to advance performance, service consistency and quality. These have included ISO 9001, the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM), and Investors in People (IIP).

Excellence has been externally recognised through the achievement of numerous awards which have related to Addiction Support, Inclusivity, Excellence in Communications, Event of the Year,

Workplace Health & Wellbeing, and most recently Excellence in Health & Wellbeing at the 2022 All Ireland Housing Awards.

Culturally, the organisation has adopted the model of psychologically informed environments (PIE) where services have been designed and delivered in a way that takes into account the emotional and psychological needs of the clients using them. This has included seeking and using client feedback through a number of channels, including surveys.

Independent external service evaluations have also been used to assess service-based outcomes – which has helped to improve service quality and secure further funding.

Most importantly, good governance, quality practice standards and oversight is ensured

through its use of a number of frameworks including those established by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) and the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC).

Simon's commitment to employee wellbeing has grown to produce an extensive program of activity designed to achieve important outcomes such as improved employee health, attendance, engagement, motivation and performance. Along with the use of regular staff engagement surveys. Simon has now engaged with The Great Place to Work framework to support and further develop its positive work culture and employee experience; especially important in the prevailing labour market which remains challenging within the sector.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of measuring service quality includes the following:

STRENGTHS:

- Satisfaction surveys are simple to administer.
- Employee survey platforms are relatively low cost to administer and produce speedy results and reports.
- Satisfaction surveys can potentially give service-users and employees a voice if they are done well and the organisation responds effectively and help organisations identify changes needed to improve quality/the employee experience.
- Quality awards or accreditation, given after formal expert external assessment, provides reassurance to those commissioning or funding services, and provides employee recognition to all involved in its achievement.
- Some government tenders include a question about how the organisation assures the quality of its activities, so adopting a quality framework can increase the success of third sector organisations bidding for services.
- Funders want reassurance about the quality of an organisation they fund or are considering funding.
- Quality frameworks and tools can be powerful self-improvement tools and can be embedded in the organisation over time to support continuous improvement.

WEAKNESSES:

- Some respondents do not complete satisfaction surveys honestly, because they are concerned about their anonymity and might be victimised, or because they are concerned that the service may be withdrawn altogether.
- Without additional information, a satisfaction rating may not provide any useful information on what was unsatisfactory and what needs to be improved.
- Some organisations enter formal quality processes cynically and only do the minimum required to achieve quality accreditation and kitemark and as a result there is considerable external cynicism about the robustness of claims about what quality awards demonstrate.
- A quality award may indicate the consistency of certain processes within an organisation, but they do not necessarily demonstrate that the programmes are the right ones, or that they have a significant positive impact on the beneficiaries.

RESOURCES

Centre for Competitiveness (Belfast & Dublin)- <https://www.cforc.org/>

EFQM (<https://efqm.org/>)– to download a free brochure about the EFQM model - <https://mailchi.mp/73aee6f4941d/6fmwnr14te>
Work Place Culture - www.greatplacetowork.co.uk

4.

QUALITATIVE EVALUATION

1. DURING/AFTER THE ACTIVITY/ PROGRAMME



Qualitative evaluation is a type of research that explores, and provides deeper insights into, real-world problems. Instead of collecting numerical data, qualitative evaluation helps provide rich information about the experience of participants. It can also help interpret quantitative data i.e. numerical information e.g. why did participants score survey questions in a particular way. Qualitative research gathers participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviour. It helps answer the 'hows' and 'whys' instead of 'how many' or 'how much'.

Once a service, programme or activity is underway, a classic way to evaluate the activity/programme is to observe the participants, or seek their views with some kind of interview, survey or focus group. Qualitative interviews, surveys or focus groups can then also be used once the programme is complete. To carry out qualitative evaluations well can be challenging and requires a high level of skill and experience. A range of qualitative methods can be used such as the following:

4.1. OBSERVATION

Observation is something we do naturally, and we use these observations to make judgements about what is going on. In evaluating impact, it can be particularly useful in situations where the service-users are unable to complete surveys or participate in a structured interview (e.g. young children, people with learning difficulties). A valuable way of gathering qualitative data on service-users is to have someone suitably skilled and experienced to observe service-users in their natural settings over time to help identify the impact of the programme the participants are engaged in and for evaluators to see service-users make choices and react

to situations in their natural setting, as opposed to structured settings like research labs or focus groups. Observations can be simple observations, or they can be observation with conversation, in which the observer can ask questions.

Observational research should be conducted when evaluators want to see how participants behave in a natural setting, see how real-world factors influence behaviour, and/or describe a particular phenomenon.

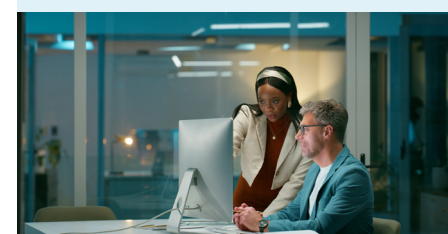
Such approaches have their own advantages and disadvantages (see below). They also raise the question as to the extent that having an observer present is, in itself, an intervention, which potentially changes behaviour and therefore the findings of the evaluation.

Before embarking on an observation methodology, the approach the observer is going to take needs to be agreed, ethical implications and approvals need to be addressed and how the observations are going to be recorded, e.g. observer notes, video, etc. needs to be agreed.

THERE ARE THREE MAIN KINDS OF OBSERVATIONAL RESEARCH:

Naturalistic observation

With naturalistic observation, the observation occurs directly in the environment where the phenomenon occurs. The observations are made as unobtrusively as possible with the researcher not directly interacting with the participants in any way.



Participant observation

With participant observation, researchers actively participate in the study itself. In addition to observing behaviours, a researcher might conduct interviews/ conversations, take notes, look at documents, and take photographs.



Structured observation

With structured observation, researchers do not observe in the natural setting, but instead in a lab or a simulated environment. A structured observation is meant to observe a specific, limited set of behaviours. This method is less natural but enables less variables to be at play.



⁴ See chrome extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/340022/1/Good%2520practice%2520guide%2520-%2520%2520Psychologically%2520informed%2520services%2520for%2520homeless%2520people%2520.pdf

OBSERVATION ANALYSIS APPROACHES

It is important to agree what tools, if any, will be used to analyse the observations afterwards. Two common qualitative data analysis approaches are:

- **Thematic Analysis**, a method that involves reading through a data set (such as observation notes, interview or focus group transcripts) and identifying patterns in meaning across the data to derive themes. Thematic analysis involves an active process of reflexivity, where a researcher's subjective experience plays a central role in meaning-making from data.
- **Grounded Theory**, unlike traditional research approaches where you come up with a hypothesis and then try to prove/disprove it, is a method that enables you to study a particular phenomenon or process, where there is no theory or hypothesis as a starting point, or any current theory is incomplete to explain a phenomenon. It enables the generation of new theories that are based on the collection and analysis of real-world data. The process of data collection, data analysis, and theory development happen in an iterative process i.e. a cyclical process of gradually reviewing and refining ideas. Iterative data collection and analysis continues until you reach theoretical saturation, the point at which additional data adds no additional insight into your new theory.

KEY STEPS IN OBSERVATIONAL RESEARCH

1. **Determine the research objective(s).**
Understand the objective and goals of your observational research, figure out what questions you're trying to answer and determine who you're trying to observe and why.
2. **Get consent and ensure the research meets ethical standards**
There are important ethical issues in carrying out research on people. They need to give their informed consent (or their parents/carers/guardians if they are children); they need to know that no-one else will be able to see or hear them during the research (privacy); they need to know how you will ensure that no-one will be able to identify them in the research report (anonymity and confidentiality, how the data will be store safely and securely; etc; and what is going to be done with the research findings and report.
3. **Determine questions and create a research guide**
From your research questions, create a research guide that outlines how you'll approach gathering answers to your questions using observational research.
4. **Establish your method of gathering data**
Determine whether you will take a naturalistic observation or an active participant approach. Decide if you'll record audio or video, take pictures, and/or take notes.

5. **Observe**
Having obtained all necessary permissions ahead of time, go into the field and do your observations using the agreed approach.
6. **Prepare your data**
After the observation, prepare the data for analysis. Get the audio and/or video recordings transcribed and organise the notes and papers.
7. **Code and analyse behaviours in the data**
Interrogate the data to make sense of it. Systematically, give each relevant kind of behaviour a code and use these codes to organise the data to find common themes and patterns.
8. **Produce a draft report and finalise**
Produce a draft report and seek alternative views and comments to test the assumptions of the research. Produce and disseminate a final report.

4.2. LEARNING LOG

Service-users are not the only stakeholders who have a legitimate perspective on what is happening in a programme, or as result of a programme. The staff and managers delivering the programme will also be observing/experiencing the reality of what is happening.

Staff observation of the changes they can see taking place in the programme, along with observation of the successes and challenges involved in implementing a programme, can inform a formative evaluation of a programme and help improve how it is implemented in future. In a final evaluation, it can contribute to a rich picture of what, in staff's eyes, worked well and what didn't, what changes in behaviour they observed and why these changes might have happened, or not happened. An example of a monthly learning log is shown below.

Staff may be asked to complete a regular, daily, weekly, or monthly pro forma learning log, which provides an appropriate structure for the staff's thoughts on what has been happening in the programme over the period.

EXAMPLE

AGREEMENT - MONTHLY LEARNING LOG

The Monthly Learning Log below was used in the evaluation of an Ulster University/Quarto project reflecting on the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland. The managers of the programme were asked to complete the Learning Log each month and send to the evaluators. All the boxes are expandable.

Date and Meeting Number:	Contributor/s:
Please provide a summary of the activities that have taken place on the project over the last month.	
Reflecting on the activity delivered, what has worked well?	
Reflecting on the activity delivered, what has been most challenging or difficult?	
What, if anything, has happened that you didn't anticipate or surprised you?	
What would you do differently with the benefit of hindsight and why?	
What, if anything, have you observed/ learnt since you last filled this log in in relation to the 4 overarching research questions?	
What is the role of the civilian/ community in creating lasting peace?	
What does it take to come to an accord between opposing opinions?	
What is the role of art in a polarised society?	
What does a heritage of peace-making as opposed to conflict look like?	

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of this kind of approach include the following:

- STRENGTHS:**

 - Service-users are usually observed in their natural setting. This allows the researcher to discover insights that they normally couldn't glean from other research methods like focus groups or surveys. The behaviours observed can be more natural and accurate than if you were to observe them in a controlled setting.
 - It can be used with service-users who are non-vocal, or unable to participate in interviews or focus groups.
 - Unstructured observation may identify unexpected changes.
 - Observations can help in the interpretation of other kinds of analysis e.g. quantitative data.
- WEAKNESSES:**

 - The approach is open to observer bias, where the observer views those things which tend to confirm their own views and prejudices. If the observers are staff members in the organisation, the likelihood of observer bias is likely to be higher.
 - The presence of an observer may have an impact on the behaviour of those who are being observed.
 - An observer may interpret actions differently from the participants.
 - It can be difficult to control variables since the observer does not usually have control over the environment.
 - It can be time intensive and expensive to conduct observational studies.
 - Observations can be hard to quantify to compare over time or with other programmes.
 - Only if repeated over time can observation indicate achievement of outcomes.



KEY INSIGHTS AND ACTIONS ARISING

Insight	Action Required	Person Responsible

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of a Staff Learning Log approach includes the following:

STRENGTHS:

- Service-users are observed by staff/managers in their natural setting. The learning log allows the researcher to discover insights that they normally couldn't glean from other research methods like focus groups or surveys. The behaviours observed can be more natural and accurate than if they were to observe in a controlled setting.
- Unstructured observation by staff/managers captured in the learning logs may identify difficulties in implementing the programme, or the need to make changes in the programme.
- Semi-structured observation by staff/managers captured in the learning logs may identify unexpected changes.

WEAKNESSES:

- The approach is open to observer bias, where the views of staff or managers captured in the learning log tend to confirm their own views and prejudices, or what they think the funders or senior managers want to hear.
- Staff and/or managers may interpret actions differently from the service-users/participants.
- It can be time intensive for staff/managers to complete a regular detailed learning log.
- Learning logs can be hard to analyse in any quantifiable way.

4.3. OPEN QUESTIONS IN A SURVEY

In the section above, the concept of administering a satisfaction survey which would provide an overall score, or rating was discussed. An alternative approach is to ask the participants open questions after the programme or activity in a written or online survey. Open questions are questions that can be answered in a variety of ways – they do not suggest what the right answer might be, and they are not scored or rated. For example, after a particular programme or activity, in addition to satisfaction questions, the participants might be asked:

"What skills or knowledge did you gain during the programme?"

"What will you do differently as a result of the programme?"

"What are the three things you most liked about the programme?"

"What are the three things you most disliked about the programme?"

"What three things would you change about the programme?"

The answers to these questions can then be coded and analysed, using some of the various programmes designed to help with this in order to, amongst other things, identify common themes and views. Common programmes to help with this include HubSpot, MAXQDA, Quirkos, Qualtrics and Raven's Eye (others are available). To be able to use any of these effectively requires significant training.

In practice, open questions are often combined with closed scored questions or statements in a survey. This combines a rating, or ratings, that can be compared over time or with other programmes or activities, with richer narrative information on the strengths and weaknesses of a programme and how it might be improved in future.

EXAMPLE

BELFAST BOOK FESTIVAL – EVALUATION FORM AFTER THE EVENT (ASKING OPEN QUESTIONS)

"Hello!"

What did you think of today?

Name of events/activities:

What could have been better?

What was your favourite part?

Would you come to a similar event again and, if so, what would you like to see?

Thank you for your feedback!"

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of an approach asking open questions in a survey includes the following:

STRENGTHS:

- It can provide rich narrative information on the strengths and weaknesses of a programme and how it might be improved in future.
- It gives participants the opportunity to express their own views in their own voice.
- Using a survey provides the opportunity to ask participants relevant details about themselves (age, gender, income, ethnicity, sexuality, postcode, etc.). It may then be possible to assess any differential impacts the programme has on different types of participants.
- It can provide useful quotes.
- Written open questions are less subject to interviewer bias.
- It can be combined with quantitative questions.
- It can help interpret quantitative data e.g. "why did a particular programme help make a particular change?" or "what particular aspect of the programme created the desired outcome?"

WEAKNESSES:

- Because they require more time and thought to complete than just ticking a box, the response rate to open questions is usually considerably lower.
- If few people complete open boxes, the results can be skewed towards the views of an unrepresentative group.
- If there is no quantitative questions or statements that are scored, there is no basis for comparison over time or with other programmes or activities.
- You can't ask follow-up questions for clarification in the way you can with an interview or focus group.
- With no baseline from before they participate in a programme, there is no way of assessing the distance travelled.
- Coding and analysing extensive data can be expensive and requires the appropriate software and expertise.



4.4. ONE-TO-ONE INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPANTS/BENEFICIARIES

As well as open survey questions, a common way of demonstrating the impact of an activity or programme is to interview the participants/beneficiaries one-to-one afterwards and capture their reactions in their own words, or in response to some prompting questions, such as 'What did you think of the programme?', 'What did you learn from the programme?', 'What was the best aspect of the programme?' and/or 'What would you change about the programme?'

Interviews are designed to collect a rich source of qualitative information from a small number of people about: attributes, behaviour, preferences, feelings, attitudes, opinions, and/or knowledge. They help explain, better understand, and explore research subjects' opinions, behaviour, experiences, phenomenon, etc. Interview questions are usually open-ended questions so that in-depth information will be collected.

There are several types of interviews, including: Phone, Face-to-Face, and/or online (e.g. Zoom/Teams/Googlemeet, etc). A research approach based on one-to-one interviews needs to address, in advance, potential ethical issues such as confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, security, safeguarding, etc.

Interviewers need to be appropriately trained in order to control the quality of the interview process. If more than one interviewer is involved in the study, particularly if there are peer interviewers, it is important to have every interviewer trained in the same way to understand the interviewing procedure and rehearse the interviewing process before beginning the formal study.

KEY STEPS IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH INTERVIEWS



Clarity of objectives

- Be very clear about the objectives of the research – what are you trying to get out of it?
- Is this the best way to obtain that information/data?



Consider the ethical issues involved in carrying out the research

- Think about the potential ethical issues that need to be considered before carrying out the research, such as approvals, participant consent, confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, security, safeguarding, etc.



Be clear about who you are interviewing

- All participants in a programme, or a sample How will the sample to chosen?)
- Only those who a keen to be interviewed (which may skew the results)
- Only those who completed a programme (what about those who dropped out?)



Design interview questions

- Think about who you will interview and what kind of information you want to obtain from the interviews.
- Think about why you want to pursue in-depth information around your research topic.



Develop an interview guide

- Introduce yourself and explain the aim of the interview.
- Devise the questions so interviewees can help answer your research question(s).
- Have a sequence to your questions and topics by grouping them in themes.
- Make sure the questions are clear and easy to understand.
- Do not ask leading questions.
- Allow for follow-up questions for clarity.



Plan and manage logistics

- Where will the interviews take place? Where is the setting with the most privacy and the least distraction?
- Does there need to be a notetaker?
- Do the interviews need to be recorded? If so, how?
- How will the interview recordings be transcribed⁵?
- How long will each interview take?
- How will you address terms of anonymity and confidentiality?

It is not necessary to choose between either a written survey or interviewing method. Most researchers use a mixed method - interviews can be useful as follow-up to certain respondents to surveys, e.g. to further investigate their responses.

EXAMPLE

CONSTELLATIONS OF NOISE (OUR PLACE IN SPACE SUB-PROGRAMME) COMPOSER INTERVIEW DISCUSSION GUIDE

In Constellations of Noise, a sub-programme of Our Place in Space, (part of UNBOXED) in which ten composers were each given the brief to work with people in the community to create a musical piece (many of them with visual art elements) reflecting the theme. All the composers were interviewed using an interview/discussion framework. The key questions which the interviewer used as a guide, allowing for follow-up questions, where as follows:

- How did you get involved in the Constellations of Noise project?
- What made you want to get involved in the project?
- Who are your partners in the community?
- What activities have you done with your partner?
- What has worked well?
- What was your standout moment?
- What has been most challenging or difficult?
- What has happened that you didn't anticipate?
- What is the nature of the final product of the project?
- How do you think you have personally and/or professionally benefitted from the project? Have you gained new skills and/or knowledge?
- What do you think were the benefits for the community group of being involved?
- Is there anything you would do differently in hindsight?
- Is there anything the organising bodies should have done differently in hindsight?

Additional questions assessing how much the project promoted the overall aims of Our Place in Space:

- How does the project and/or the product promote the concept and aims of Our Place in Space?
- To what extent has the project created engagement opportunities, brought people together and promoted social cohesion?
- To what extent has the project positively contributed to people's happiness and wellbeing?
- To what extent has the project increased participant's engagement in the arts?
- To what extent has the project increased the participants' engagement with innovative technology?
- To what extent has the project inspired people's creativity, or engagement with creative content, or appreciation of creativity as a force for positive change?
- To what extent has the project increased people's sense of place?
- Is there anything you would like to add that hasn't been covered already?

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of this post-intervention qualitative interview approach include the following:

STRENGTHS:

- Provides an immediate response or reaction to an activity.
- Captures the actual voices and language of the participants.
- It can provide useful quotes for a report.
- Respondents are not influenced by the views of other participants.
- Provides flexibility, allowing for follow-up questions for clarity.
- Can help assess the validity of the Logic Model or Theory of Change.
- Can help in the interpretation of quantitative data.

WEAKNESSES:

- It can be subject to interviewer bias, particularly if they are not independent of the programme/organisation.
- There is no scoring to be able to measure against other programmes or the same programme at a later stage.
- The participants can only describe in hindsight what they see as any change in themselves or others after the activity or programme.
- A methodology will need to be agreed in order to code and analyse the contributions from participants (data).
- Individual interviews are time and resource intensive.

4.5. DETAILED CASE STUDIES

Interviewing a small number of individual participants in more detail after an intervention provides the opportunity to create one or more case studies of the participants that can be used to highlight the impact of the programme in a way that makes it feel real to the reader.

A case study is a self-contained story about how a real service-user or beneficiary overcame their problems using an organisation's services. A good case study is a story with a protagonist (a service-user) who has a problem but who wins out in the end, because of the help the organisation provided.

By the end of a case study, the reader should either be able to visualize themselves as the hero of their own story, i.e. they should be able to relate to the problems of the featured service-user, and see themselves achieving their own goals by using the organisation's services, or, at least, empathise with the problems that were facing the service-user and want to support, financially or in some other way, the

services the organisation provides, which solve these problems,

Case studies are typically between 500 and 1500 words long, including a prominent snapshot summary section of 100 words or less. It should provide a brief sketch of the person and the problems they faced which enable the reader to empathise with them. The bulk of the word-count, however, should be taken up with how the organisation or programme benefited the individual and how their life has changed for the better. A case study should be both inspiring and succinct, not using more words than necessary. A striking photograph can make all the difference. The data, images, and service-user quotes should do the talking.

Case studies can be in the first person, with the service-user talking, or in the third person e.g. someone else talking about the service-user. The different approaches are highlighted in the example case studies below.

Increasingly, case studies are presented in the form of videos, so they can be presented on an organisation's website and/or social media.

It is important to:

- Choose the appropriate person/people to be the subject of the website, so that people can empathise with and demonstrate the impact that the organisation has had on their life(ves).
- Be clear about what you want to case study to say.
- Use an experienced interviewer, if possible.
- Start with an engaging sentence or two summarising the case study.
- Ensure there is an engaging visual, taken by an appropriately skilled and experienced photographer/videographer.

EXAMPLE – SHORT CASE STUDY
HOUSING RIGHTS



Housing Rights provides a range of advice and support services for people in Northern Ireland to help them resolve their housing problems. Below are two descriptive case studies they use to highlight the impact of their work, one very short and one longer:

Preventing Clare's home from being repossessed

"Clare contacted us when she was weeks away from repossession after falling into mortgage arrears on a home that was no longer affordable.

She had experienced tragedy in her life that had resulted in her being unable to work, and therefore unable to pay for her home.

We successfully helped her navigate the courts, we talked with her lender, and we advised her so that she did not lose her home."

EXAMPLE – LONGER CASE STUDY
WELCOME ORGANISATION

ANNE'S STORY
ANNE - "I APPROVE OF MYSELF"

"The first lesson I learnt in life was how to walk on eggshells. When I was growing up, that was just how it was. I was the carer; never the cared for. Sometimes I got it right and I was mummy's special girl. I loved those times...but mostly I got it wrong. I preferred being punched and kicked. It was better than the verbal abuse. I wouldn't repeat here the names I was called, but I hear them still, even now.

I left when I was still young. But I soon discovered that although you can move away physically, the abuse stays there, locked inside. You become your own abuser, recreating in your adult relationships all the abuse you experienced as a child. I never defended myself, because I hated myself more than those who abused me.

And so I finally gave in and returned to care for my mother. I became trapped and isolated, living continuously on the edge of homelessness.

Then I discovered The Welcome Organisation. I almost fell in the door, bursting with anxiety and loneliness, and full of drugs and alcohol.

The people I met there treated me like the person I actually am, not the abused victim I had become. It changed my life.

I grew in confidence and started to attend the photography course. Things really started to take off then. I discovered my skills, and it turned out that not only did I love photography, but I was really good at it! There was no stopping me then.

So today, as I sit here writing my story, I can honestly say I am a different person and that is the person I was always meant to be. I discovered that I wasn't dependent on substances, and I didn't need to be abused to exist. And what's more, I didn't need the approval of others. Why? Because I approve of myself. It's that simple.

The motto I now live by is "I am a strong and powerful person". But it took the Welcome Organisation to prove that to me and for that I am so thankful."



STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of a case study approach includes the following:

STRENGTHS:

- Makes the impact feel more real to the reader as it relates to a particular individual or individuals.
- It can capture the actual voices and language of the participants, if, unlike the Housing Rights case studies above, it is in the first person or uses quotes.
- It can provide powerful human visual images.
- It can provide useful quotes for a report.
- Respondents are not influenced by the views of other participants.

WEAKNESSES:

- Any particular case study may not be representative of the participants or only reflect one aspect of the impact of the programme.
- It can be subject to interviewer bias, particularly if they are not independent of the programme/organisation.
- There is no scoring to be able to measure against other programmes or the same programme at a later stage.
- The participants can only describe what they see as any change in hindsight after the activity or programme.
- They tend to only demonstrate the particular impact of the programme on one individual.
- There can be crucial issues of confidentiality, anonymity and consent that need to be addressed.

4.6. FOCUS GROUPS WITH PARTICIPANTS/BENEFICIARIES

Instead of interviewing participants/ beneficiaries individually, their views can be captured collectively in focus groups, asking similar prompting questions to above. This can lead to a rich discussion between the participants. Whether the focus group is in-person or online, it can be recorded to help in the transcription of the discussion.

Focus groups are primarily considered a confirmatory research technique. In other words, their discussion-heavy setting is most useful for confirming or refuting pre-existing beliefs. For this reason, they are great for conducting explanatory research, where you explore why something occurs when limited information is available.

A focus group may be a good choice if:

- You want to explore people's real lived experiences
- You're interested in real-time, unfiltered responses on a given topic or in the dynamics of a discussion between participants.
- You want to explore in more depth themes that have emerged from a survey.
- Your questions are rooted in feelings or perceptions and cannot easily be answered with 'yes' or 'no', or a rating scale.
- A relatively small number of responses will answer your question(s).
- You're seeking directional information that will help you uncover new questions or suggest ways of doing things better.

In designing a focus group, it is important to:

- Be clear about what you want to get out of the sessions.
- Write a brief for potential participants so they know what they would be signing up for and why.
- Agree the open questions you want to ask, and possible follow-ups.
- Ensure participants have a clear understanding of what they are coming to and have consented voluntarily.
- Decide whether it will be in-person or online, or both.
- If in-person, identify a suitable venue that will enable the participants to feel safe and comfortable.
- Decide whether you are going to provide refreshments/food or not
- Decide how long the session is going to be (typically 45-90 minutes)
- Agree who will facilitate.

- Agree how notes will be taken – record the session for later transcription, or have someone take notes during the session.
- Have therapeutic support available to participants if the subject matter may trigger trauma.

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

There are a few different kinds of questions and other tasks that can be used in a focus group:

- Engagement questions that make the participants feel comfortable and at ease early on, e.g. "how did you get involved?" "What did you enjoy most?"
- Engagement exercises such as getting participants to rank and/or rate items.
- Exploration questions that drill down to the focus of your evaluation, e.g. "In what ways did you benefit from the programme?", "What skills or knowledge did you gain from participating in the programme?", and/ or "How could the programme have been improved?"
- Exit questions that pick up on anything that may have been missed in the discussion, e.g. "Is there anything else that you want to say about the programme that hasn't been mentioned already?"

Common questions used in a focus group are:

- How did you get involved in the service/ programme?
- What were the most beneficial aspects of the service/programme?
- How has the service/programme benefitted you?
- What aspects of the service/programme could have been better?
- How would you improve the service/ programme?

When running a focus group, it is important to:

- Make sure people feel safe, comfortable and welcomed.
- Make sure people understand the nature of consent, confidentiality and anonymity.
- Give people the opportunity to introduce themselves.
- Encourage people to be honest.
- Have a clear introduction as to the purpose of the focus group.
- Allow conversation to flow, unless it is being dominated by one person, or just a small minority of the group.
- Encourage those who haven't said

- anything to speak.
- Be aware of the non-verbal dynamics in the room.
- Do not be afraid of short silences or pauses in conversation, as they can give the group time to think.
- Move the conversation on, when appropriate, to make sure you cover all the questions.
- At the end, ask if there are any issues that anybody feels they have not had the opportunity to say.
- Thank everyone for their participation.

After the focus group it is important to:

- Take time immediately after the session for a debrief between the facilitator and notetaker, if there is one.
- Thank the participants (e.g. by email) for their input.
- Evaluate the session, considering what worked well and what you would do differently next time.
- Analyse the notes of the focus group for key themes and opinions.
- Consider whether the notes need to be analysed using a more sophisticated analysis technique.
- If appropriate, correlate the qualitative focus group findings with relevant quantitative findings from surveys, etc.
- Highlight relevant quotes.
- Write up a detailed report of the focus group(s).
- Share the report with those who commissioned the focus group.



EXAMPLE UNBOXED

As part of the UK-wide Unboxed Festival there was a programme to promote key places of outstanding natural beauty in the four nations of the UK, called Green Spaces Dark Skies (GSDS). Volunteers (Lumenators) were invited to participate in a one day or half day programme in each of the areas, involving music and movement based on simple choreography, using innovative lanterns, at dusk. Some of the events also involved choirs learning a piece of music to sing at the event. All the events were videoed to provide materials as the basis of a short film of each event. The evaluation included inviting groups of Lumenators to participate in focus groups to share their experiences. The questions were based on the objectives of the GSDS event, which in turn were designed to contribute to the overall aims of Unboxed. Each of the focus groups were recorded and transcribed to provide relevant quotes as part of the evaluation report. The discussion guide for the focus groups is shown below:

GREEN SPACE DARK SKIES: LUMENATOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Intro	
• Explain we are independent researchers with no link to the project. • Explain the conversation is confidential, they will be listed as consulted within the final report, but any quotes used will be anonymous. • Explain conversation will be recorded so we can concentrate on the conversation rather than taking notes. It will be destroyed after – no one will hear the recording except us.	
Warm Up	• How did you first become aware of GSDS? • Thinking of your GSDS experience, what did you enjoy the most?
Connection, Health and Wellbeing	• What did your participation in GSDS as a Lumenator mean to you? Probe what they found the most value and why • If not mentioned above – Can you describe how you felt after taking part in GSDS? Probe specific emotions • How do you feel GSDS has helped you to feel connected to the green spaces on your doorstep? • How did you feel about the collective/ participatory nature of GSDS? <i>Probe if they met people they wouldn't normally have</i>
Creativity, arts engagement and inclusion	• Have you ever done anything like GSDS before? Probe what and why if so and why not if not before? • Having experienced a project like GSDS how likely do you think you'd be to take part in a similar creative activity in future? Why? • One of the aims of GSDS was to give people who don't normally access green spaces the chance to do so. In your experience how well do you feel this was achieved? <i>Probe why behind answers and who they think these people might be and what barriers to engagement exist</i>
'Rights, Responsibility and Relationship to land'	• How do you feel being a Lumenator has helped you understand the importance of access to green spaces? • How do you feel being a Lumenator has helped you think about protecting the natural environment? in what ways? • GSDS was planned and organised to limit the carbon footprint of the events, how important do you think that aim was? <i>Probe sustainable elements that stood out/impressed them and the extent to which they feel the project was successful at this</i>
STEAM Engagement & Innovative Tech	• What did you learn from your experience as a Lumenator? <i>Probe skills and knowledge and STEAM subject areas</i> • How will you, or do you hope to use the skills and knowledge that you have gained through this project in future? <i>Probe how & why</i> • GSDS combined creative arts activity with science and technology – how important, if at all, do you think this approach of integrating arts with science and technology is in helping people to learn more about these subjects? <i>Probe reasons for their answers</i> • Tell me your thoughts on the value and/ or importance of the lighting technology used in GSDS
Stand Out Moment	• Reflecting on your whole experience of GSDS, what was the highlight/ the thing you will never forget from this experience?
Anything else?	• Is there anything else you'd like to discuss or say about GSDS that you feel would help with the planning and delivery of future projects like this?
Thank & close	

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of a post-programme focus group approach includes the following:

STRENGTHS:

- The flexible structure means It can explore issues of importance to the focus group members in more detail.
- Questions for clarification can be asked.
- The views of particular individuals can be checked out against the views of others.
- It captures the actual voices and language of the participants.
- It can provide useful quotes for a report.
- It is a more efficient use of time than one-to-one interviews.

WEAKNESSES:

- It can be subject to facilitator bias.
- There is usually no scoring to be able to measure against other programmes or the same programme at a later stage.
- Those agreeing to participate in focus groups may not be representative.
- Focus groups can be dominated by the strongest voices, if not well facilitated.
- Focus groups can sometimes go down very narrow rabbit holes, if the facilitator is not careful.
- The participants can only describe what they see as any change in hindsight after the activity or programme.
- A methodology will need to be developed in order to code and analyse the contributions from participants (data).

RESOURCES

How to Run Focus Groups – Citizens Advice
<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/Equalities/How%20to%20run%20focus%20groups%20guide.pdf>
How to code and analyse qualitative data from interviews or focus groups
<https://dscout.com/people-nerds/how-to-code-and-tag-qualitative-data-for-research-insights>

5. QUALITATIVE AFTER THE PROGRAMME



If you are a social enterprise designed to generate a net surplus to transfer to the parent charity, you are likely to have a clear quantitative measure i.e. profitability. For most third sector organisations, however, it is necessary to develop other ways of measuring impact in a quantitative way i.e. in numbers. After the end of an activity or programme, for example, instead of, or as well as, asking a set of open questions, it can be really useful to use one or more quantitative methods, i.e. those that involve scoring or rating scales, therefore producing numerical results that can be compared between programmes or over time.

5.1. POST-ACTIVITY SATISFACTION SURVEY OF PARTICIPANTS

The simplest approach is seeking to assess the satisfaction of the participants with the programme using some kind of scoring system. This gives a clue to the quality of the programme, as touched on earlier. We are now very familiar with this approach as we all receive requests to rate our satisfaction with products or experiences we have bought online. We are even now frequently asked to express our satisfaction or otherwise on leaving airports or supermarkets.

Satisfaction assessment can be sought in the form of a question e.g. “were you satisfied with the quality of the programme?”. However, this only results in a yes/no answer, which is a very crude indicator. There are, in fact, likely to be a range of views within the participant group which are not captured by a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ question.

The main alternative approach is the rating of a statement (rather than a question), technically known as a Likert Scale. For example, the question about satisfaction could be assessed using a Likert Scale, as follows:

“Please rate the extent (from 1 for completely agree, to 7 for completely disagree) that you agree or disagree with the following statement. Please ring the relevant score:

I was satisfied with the XXX programme
Score: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7”

The number of scoring options may vary. A 5-point scale is common, sometimes articulated as follows:

- 1 = Completely agree
- 2 = Agree
- 3 = Neither agree, not disagree
- 4 = Disagree
- 5 = Completely disagree

Scales that are less than seven points, however, can be problematic, because people rarely give the rating at the top (which a participant may read as it couldn't have been better) or the bottom of the scale (which a participant may read as it couldn't have been worse). So, in practice it becomes a 3-point scale. A 7-point scale might be presented as follows:

- 1 = Completely agree
- 2 = Agree
- 3 = Somewhat agree
- 4 = Neither agree, not disagree
- 5 = Somewhat disagree
- 6 = Disagree
- 7 = Completely disagree

The statements to be rated can include more detailed aspects of satisfaction. For example, you might be asked to rate your agreement with the following after a training course:

- “The information about the course was very clear and accurate.”
- “The process for booking the course was very clear and straightforward.”
- “I was satisfied with the content of the course.”
- “I was satisfied with how the course content was delivered.”
- “The trainer was very knowledgeable.”
- “The course was good value for money.”

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of this post-intervention quantitative satisfaction survey approach include the following:

STRENGTHS:

- It provides a numerical score to assess satisfaction against other interventions, or future evaluations of the same programme delivered at another time or delivered elsewhere.
- Using a survey provides the opportunity to ask participants relevant details about themselves (age, gender, income, ethnicity, sexuality, postcode, etc.). It may then be possible to assess any differential impacts the programme has on different types of participants.
- It is simple and can be easily administered and analysed.
- It can provide valuable information to inform improvement in the programme.

WEAKNESSES:

- If the only question is about overall satisfaction, it tells you nothing about what they were satisfied or dissatisfied with, or how it should be improved.
- If there is no satisfaction baseline before the activity/ programme, it is difficult to measure the journey travelled.
- There is no indication of how people's lives have changed.

5.2. BESPOKE POST-ACTIVITY SURVEYS CAPTURING PERCEIVED CHANGES IN SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES OR BEHAVIOUR

Instead of, or in addition to, a simple satisfaction question after an activity or programme, it can be useful, from an evaluation point of view, to have the participants score statements in relation to changes in their skills, knowledge, attitudes or behaviour as a result of the programme. For a programme on alcohol addiction, for example, the following might be a few of the kind of statements that the level of agreement might be scored in a survey:

- "I understand the damage that substance abuse can do to me."
- "I understand the damage that substance abuse can do to other people in my life."
- "I understand what the recommended safe limits to my alcohol intake is in a week."
- "I have some strategies that I can use when I am out with my friends in the evening to reduce my alcohol intake."
- "I know who I can contact if I am facing a crisis"

The participants can be asked to rate these and other questions after the programme using a Likert Scale discussed above.

⁶ A theatre or hall to see drama, music or dance; An art exhibition like paintings, sculpture, craft; and/or Work by deaf or disabled artists or performers

EXAMPLE

BOUNCE! FESTIVAL

The annual Bounce! Festival provides opportunities for local, national and international disabled and Deaf artists to demonstrate their creative abilities by performing in theatres and other venues in Belfast. The organisation, The Arts & Disability Forum (now the University of Atypical) planning and delivering the annual festival wanted to measure the impact that the festival had on audiences. In order to identify a small number of appropriate survey questions, the questionnaire design drew on the very detailed 'Art Affects' framework for measuring impact in the arts, created by Brenda Kent for Belfast City Council. To make it simple for audience members to complete, the organisation chose only a small number of domains to assess and ask only one question in each domain.

The organisation recruited a team of volunteers to work on the Festival and to interview as many audience members leaving the event as possible, often capturing the majority of audience members. The post-event evaluation survey (below) was based on the following framework, which shows the domains taken from the Art Affects framework, the outcome to be achieved, the evidence required, and the statement to be rated from 1 to 5:

Domain	Outcome	Other evidence	Data collection statements to be rated (1 – 5)
Enjoy	People enjoy themselves and are happy	Photos Anecdotal Notes	<i>I enjoyed that</i> <i>I would come again</i>
Learn	More people know more about disability arts	Attendance Media	<i>I see work by deaf or disabled artists – frequency (never, occasionally, frequently)</i>
Affiliate	People know more people	Attendance Anecdotal Notes	<i>I met new people</i>
	People think again and think of disabled people positively		<i>I got a new understanding of disability</i>
Empower	Disabled people feel in control, confident and free from fear	Attendance	<i>It made me confident to go out and do things</i>
Goodwill	Polymakers and the media think arts and disability work is good	Anecdotal Notes. Media	<i>Polymakers and the media think arts and disability work is good</i>
Access	Disabled people will be more engaged in the arts	Number of accessible events. Attendance	<i>In the last year I have been to⁶.... art things</i>
	Access to the arts will improve		<i>I am confident access to the arts will improve</i>
Quality art	Artists develop their arts knowledge, skills and practice	Number of artists engaged	<i>I thought it professionally presented</i>
Social: pride	Disabled people feel proud to be part of the disabled community	Attendance. Number of disability celebration events	<i>It made me proud of the disabled community</i>
Satisfaction questions	Disabled people feel proud to be part of the disabled community	Attendance. Number of disability celebration events	<i>"What I think about this event is:" (open question)</i> <i>The place was accessible and easy to use.</i> <i>The staff were helpful.</i> <i>Anything that would improve access? (open question)</i> <i>Any other comment?</i>
	Demographics	Attendance	<i>Age (under 16, 16 to 25, 26 to 55, 55 to 65, over 65).</i> <i>Gender (Male, Female, other).</i> <i>Geography.</i> <i>Disabled/non.</i>
	Contact email		<i>To get back in touch</i>
	Postcode		<i>To analyse for patterns</i>

EXAMPLE

BOUNCE EVALUATION SURVEY FORM

"Your answers help us learn who is taking part and what we can do better. We do not share them. Please use the back of this page if you want to add any comments or ideas. Thank you"

Name of the event:					
Your Postcode					
What I think about this event is that:					
I enjoyed it	No! 😞	No 😞	Neutral 😐	Yes 😊	Yes! 😄
I would come to something like it again					
It was professionally done					
I learned something new or different					
I met new people					
I got a new understanding of disability					
I felt proud of the disabled community					
I got confidence to go out or do things					
The place was accessible and easy to use					
The staff were helpful					
Anything that would improve access?					
Any other comment?					

In a year I usually go to (please circle the right answer):

A theatre or hall to see drama, music or dance	0 times	1 (once)	2 times	3 or more
An art exhibition like paintings, sculpture, craft	0 times	1 (once)	2 times	3 or more
Work by deaf or disabled artists or performers	0 times	1 (once)	2 times	3 or more

I am	A disabled person		Not a disabled person			
Age:						
I was at Bounce! in	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	First time
I want ADF membership and event information	Yes	No	Already a member			
Email:	To send information /voucher if you win. (Phone or postal address if no email)					
Email contact:						

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of this approach include the following:

STRENGTHS:

- Can provide a wider range of information on how the participants feel they have changed in relation to particular skills, knowledge, attitudes or behaviour.
- Can be used to compare where participants feel they are at the end of different programmes, or for a different cohort of participants.
- Questions can be focused on the agreed desired outcomes.
- Using a survey provides the opportunity to ask participants relevant details about themselves (age, gender, income, ethnicity, sexuality, postcode, etc.). It may then be possible to assess any differential impacts the programme has on different types of participants.

WEAKNESSES:

- If there is no baseline before the activity/programme, it is difficult to measure the journey travelled.
- Without agreed outcomes, it is impossible to say whether the activity or programme is achieving what it is designed to achieve.
- It does not indicate how long any changes are likely to last.
- Without qualitative information from service-users, the findings may not be able to explain why a particular outcome came about, or why it didn't.

5.3. POST-ACTIVITY SURVEYS
CAPTURING THE EXTENT THAT
AGREED OUTCOMES ARE ACHIEVED

Increasingly, organisations are being encouraged to engage with their stakeholders to establish clear desired outcomes that a programme or activity is designed to achieve. These are often expressed as intermediate and final outcomes (sometimes initial, intermediate and final outcomes). These are explored in the section below on Logic Models and Theories of Change.)

For example, a homeless service might have a final outcome that, "everyone has a place they can call home". The intermediate outcomes might include something like:

"People who sleep on the streets find at least temporary accommodation within 24 hours."

"People who are homeless receive the appropriate welfare benefits."

"People who are homeless receive a holistic assessment of their needs."

"People who are homeless and have a drug or alcohol addiction access the appropriate treatment/support."

"People who are homeless and have mental health problems access the appropriate treatment/support."

Agreement with statements to be scored in the post-programme survey might then relate to these outcomes, so might include something like the following:

"When I was on the streets XXX organisation enabled me to find accommodation within 24 hours."

"XXX organisation helped me access the appropriate welfare benefits."

"XXX organisation carried out a holistic assessment of my needs."

"XXX organisation enabled me to access the appropriate treatment/support for drug and/or alcohol addiction."

"I am now doing less harm to myself with drink/drugs."

"I now have more contact with my family and friends."

"XXX organisation enabled me to access the appropriate treatment/support for my mental health problems."

A range of impact/outcome frameworks are shown in Appendix 10, which may help organisations identify outcomes relevant to their target beneficiary group(s).

EXAMPLE

VOLUNTEER IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

The Institute for Volunteering Research developed the Volunteer Impact Assessment Toolkit (VIAT) with input from the London School of Economics, the University of East London and Roehampton University. The toolkit is now a tried and tested, adaptable way of assessing the impact of volunteering on volunteers, organisations, service users and the wider community using a post-activity methodology. An assessment involves at least three groups of stakeholders: Volunteers, Service Users and Staff.

The Volunteer Impact Assessment Toolkit (VIAT) measures the impact of Volunteering, using both quantitative post-programme surveys with staff involved in the programme and the volunteers themselves, and qualitative focus groups with each group to gain a richer understanding of the impact of the volunteers. The toolkit assessment process examines how the various stakeholder's benefit from the volunteer programme in relation to five identified categories of 'capital, namely: Physical capital; Human capital; Economic capital; Social capital and Cultural capital.

Electronic surveys are sent to the various stakeholders via email and administered by Volunteer Now or Volunteering Ireland. The surveys involve multiple-choice statements and a 6-point Likert scale for respondents to complete i.e. strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree and not relevant; or increased greatly, increased, stayed the same, decreased, decreased greatly, and not relevant. A limited number of qualitative questions are also asked to get feedback. It uses both quantitative post-programme surveys with staff involved in the programmes and volunteers themselves, and qualitative focus groups with each group to gain a richer understanding of the impact of the Youth Advocates. The evaluation examined how the stakeholder's benefit from the volunteer programme with respect to the five identified toolkit categories namely: Physical capital; Human capital; Economic capital; Social capital and Cultural capital. Depending on the assessment, the various aspects are given a RAG rating (Red, Amber, Green) to help identify aspects that require improvement.

Volunteer Now and Volunteering Ireland have been supporting volunteer-involving organisations in Ireland to use the Volunteer Impact Assessment Toolkit.



EXAMPLE

HOUSING RIGHTS - HOUSING POSSESSION COURT
DUTY SCHEME (HPCDS)

Housing Rights have specialist legal advisors who can attend all High Court and County Court debt related possession hearings. They offer free emergency advice and assistance to homeowners and tenants facing repossession without legal representation and risk being made homeless because of housing debt. If appropriate, the legal advisors can represent the service user at the hearing. They have two surveys which assess the extent that the organisation achieves the outcomes it has set. Their framework for evaluating this service looks like the following:

Project objectives (from HR Business Plan)	Outcomes	Current evaluation method	Timing of current evaluation
- To prevent homelessness and help people in need to access and sustain a decent and affordable home - To help more people to find the best possible solution to their housing problems	- HPCDS clients have the information they need to make informed and appropriate housing decisions - HPCDS clients know where to go for help in the future - HPCDS clients are able to meet their housing costs - HPCDS clients are prevented from homelessness - HPCDS clients know how to access accommodation - HPCDS clients feel less stressed about their housing situation - HPCDS clients feel they have a better quality of life	Housing Rights' Customer Feedback Survey and Advice Soft Outcomes Survey	Customer Feedback Survey is sent by HPCDS adviser at case completion. Advice Soft Outcomes Survey is sent by admin three months after case completion.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of this kind of approach include the following:

STRENGTHS:

- It can provide a wide range of information on how the participants feel they are after the intervention to relation to agreed outcomes.
- It can help assess the effectiveness of the organisation's Logic Model or Theory of Change (see below).
- It can enable the post-activity findings to be compared between programmes, and/or over time.
- Using a survey provides the opportunity to ask participants relevant details about themselves (age, gender, income, ethnicity, sexuality, postcode, etc.). It may then be possible to assess any differential impacts the programme has on different types of participants.

WEAKNESSES:

- If there is no baseline before the activity/programme, it is impossible to measure the journey travelled towards the relevant outcome(s) and the effectiveness of the programme or activity.
- It only assesses the post-activity perspective of the participants in relation to the agreed outcomes. There may be other positive or negative impacts that are not assessed.
- Without qualitative information from service-users, the findings may not be able to explain why a particular outcome came about, or why it didn't.
- It will not provide any information on how long the impact might last.

RESOURCES

Volunteer Now Volunteer Impact Assessments-
<https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/organisations/involving-volunteers/impact-assessments/>

How to write a survey questionnaire for evaluation – a guide for beginners
<https://aifs.gov.au/resources/practice-guides/how-write-survey-questionnaire-evaluation-guide-beginners>

Questionnaire design -
<https://www.mrs.org.uk/pdf/2014-09-01%20Questionnaire%20Design%20Guidelines.pdf>

6.

QUALITATIVE

BEFORE AND AFTER THE PROGRAMME



Apart from the assessment of satisfaction, discussed above, all of the quantitative post-intervention approaches discussed above are also relevant to pre- and post- intervention approaches. The difference is that participants are surveyed before they take part in the programme or activity, as well as after the programme or activity. This enables the amount of change brought about over the period of the programme or activity to be measured. This is sometimes known as the 'distance travelled'.

6.1. BEFORE AND AFTER BESPOKE SURVEYS CAPTURING PERCEIVED CHANGES IN SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES OR BEHAVIOUR

The simplest approach is seeking to assess This approach involves identifying the desired changes in skills, knowledge, attitudes or behaviour that the programme is designed to improve and asking participants to score themselves on these particular skills, knowledge, attitudes or behaviour before even starting the programme and then repeating the survey after the intervention is over. The

survey may also be carried out during the programme to assess progress.

For a programme on homelessness, for example, the following might be a few of the kind of statements that the extent of agreement might be scored (1-5 or 1-7) in before and after surveys:

- "I have somewhere I can call home."
- "I have regular contact with my friends and family."
- "I look after my physical health."
- "I look after my mental health and being."
- "I do not have an addiction that is causing harm to myself or others."
- "I have a regular income."
- "I eat regular meals."
- "I am not involved in the criminal justice system."
- "I have goals for the future."

The participants can be asked to rate these and other questions both before and after the programme using a Likert Scale.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of this kind of approach include the following:

STRENGTHS:

- It can be used to assess the changes the programme has brought about in relation to particular skills, knowledge, attitudes or behaviour, i.e. the distance travelled.
- It can be used to assess the extent that agreed outcomes have been achieved.
- It can be used to compare the changes brought about by different programmes, or the same programme over time.
- Using a survey provides the opportunity to ask participants relevant details about themselves (age, gender, income, ethnicity, sexuality, postcode, etc.). It may then be possible to assess any differential impacts the programme has on different types of participants

WEAKNESSES:

- Without using robust survey instruments that have been validated in a range of evaluation studies (Like the Crescent example above), the results will have little external credibility.
- Without outcomes agreed beforehand it is impossible to say whether the activity or programme is achieving what it is designed to achieve.
- Without a control group, it is impossible to say for sure that it was the organisation which brought about the changes.
- Without qualitative information from service-users, the findings may not be able to explain why a particular outcome came about, or why it didn't.
- It does not indicate how long any changes are likely to last.

EXAMPLE

CRESCENT ARTS CENTRE

Crescent Arts Centre wanted to evaluate the impact of its 280 Creative Learning programmes in a wide range of arts activities, each that took place once a week over a 10-week term with an average of 12-15 participants each.

With the assistance of a volunteer who specialised in research and evaluation in a government agency, the Crescent conducted a survey, both at the beginning of, and at the end of, a term. A few additional statements were added into the post-programme survey (see below).

Evaluation statements for rating

The before and after evaluation statements, which participants scored their agreement with, were drawn from frequently used evaluation surveys:

Health & wellbeing:

I feel physically fit and healthy
I have a positive sense of mental wellbeing

Learning:

My creative skills and knowledge are increasing
I am confident in my creative abilities
I am enthusiastic to learn more

Affiliations (social capital):

I have the opportunity for good social interaction
I have made new friends recently
I feel supported
I feel part of a creative community

Empowerment:

I feel in control of my own learning and development

Expression:

I am able to express myself creatively

Additional port-programme statements:

Satisfaction:

I was very happy with the course

Excellence:

The tutor delivered the course really well
The tutor and Crescent staff were very welcoming and friendly

Access:

The course at the Crescent was very accessible.

All statements were scored on a 7-point scale.

6.2. BEFORE AND AFTER SURVEYS CAPTURING THE DISTANCE TRAVELLED IN ACHIEVING AGREED OUTCOMES

As discussed above, increasingly, organisations are being encouraged to engage with their stakeholders to establish clear outcomes that a programme or activity is designed to achieve. These are often expressed as final and intermediate outcomes. A before and after survey can establish where the participants are before they engage with the programme, during the programme, and after the programme, or just before and after. Assessing changes during a longer programme can help inform changes that need to be made to enable the participants to achieve the desired outcomes while the programme is going on.

EXAMPLE

A THIRD SECTOR GOVERNANCE TRAINING COURSE

For example, a third sector Governance training course might have an agreed final outcome that "All participants understand how to ensure the governance of their organisations complies with the requirements of the law and good practice". The intermediate outcomes might include something like:

- "Participants understand the requirements of the Charity Commission."
- "Participants understand the requirements of company law for a third sector organisation."
- "Participants understand how third sector organisations can effectively manage risk."
- "Participants understand how to effectively plan and oversee the finances of the organisation."
- "Participants understand how to ensure the organisation has appropriate strategic and operational plans which are regularly monitored"

Etc.

The kind of statements that might be used in the pre- and post- training programme evaluation survey would then relate to these outcomes, so might include something like the following:

- "I fully understand the requirements of the Charity Commission."
- "I fully understand the requirements of company law for a third sector organisation."
- "I fully understand how third sector organisations can effectively manage risk."
- "I fully understand how to effectively plan and oversee the finances of the organisation."
- "I fully understand how to ensure the organisation has appropriate strategic and operational plans which are regularly monitored."

A range of impact/outcome frameworks are shown in Appendix 10, which may help organisations identify outcomes relevant to their target beneficiary group(s).

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of this kind of before and after outcome survey approach include the following:

STRENGTHS:

- It can provide a wide range of information on the distance travelled by participants during the intervention (in this case, training)
- It can provide invaluable information on the extent that the intervention is achieving the agreed outcomes.
- It can enable the pre- and post- activity findings to be compared between programmes and over time.
- Using a survey provides the opportunity to ask participants relevant details about themselves (age, gender, income, ethnicity, sexuality, postcode, etc.). It may then be possible to assess any differential impacts the programme has on different types of participants.

WEAKNESSES:

- It only assesses the pre- and post-activity perspective of the participants in relation to the agreed outcomes. There may be other positive or negative impacts that are not assessed.
- Without a control group, it is impossible to say that it was the organisation which brought about the changes.
- Without qualitative information from service-users, the findings may not be able to explain why a particular outcome came about, or why it didn't.
- It does not indicate how long any changes are likely to last.

RESOURCES

Outcomes Matrix Good Finance
<https://www.goodfinance.org.uk/measuring-social-impact/outcomes-matrix>

Pre and Post Survey Insights
<https://university.sopact.com/article/pre-and-post-survey>

6.3. STANDARDISED BEFORE AND AFTER SURVEYS

It is a very skilled task to create a credible survey. Asking poorly formulated questions can damage the value of the impact measurement. For that reason, it makes sense to make use of standardised before and after instruments created by respected academics, used in a large number of different studies, and subject to rigorous scrutiny in professional journals.

There are a wide range of standard surveys that organisations can use that have a high level of validity because they have been used in many other studies. Interrogating the academic efficacy literature in your area of work will help identify robust surveys that have been used in other similar evaluations.

Good examples of surveys are available from the Impactasaurus catalogue of peer-reviewed and validated questionnaires taken from the scientific literature. Their questionnaires are also freely available to browse at softoutcomes.org. including questionnaires on Attitudes towards self; clinical outcomes in routine evaluations; general self-efficacy⁷ Scale; and Perceived Stress Scale.

Standardised surveys

In the mental health and wellbeing field, for example, the following are some of the

standardised surveys which have been used in a range of before and after evaluation studies:

- **CORE-OM** – This is a 34-item generic measure of psychological wellbeing and distress. The CORE-OM comprises 4 domains: wellbeing, symptoms, functioning and risk. There is a suite of shorter versions for more frequent use.
- **CORE Goal Attainment Form** – This allows for client-defined difficulties or goals to be identified at the outset, and on termination, to identify the degree to which therapy has helped with each. It further asks for a description of positive aspects of therapy, areas that remain unresolved, and the client's overall satisfaction.
- **GAD7 - GAD-7** is a brief clinical measure for the assessment of generalized anxiety disorder routinely used in IAPT services.
- **General Health Questionnaire** – A self-administered questionnaire to screen adolescents and adults in the population for minor psychiatric disorders. There are four questionnaires ranging from a quick and reliable two-minute assessment to a more in-depth 60-question form.
- **Happiness Pulse** - a simple online

survey. combines various academic measures of wellbeing into a simple five-minute survey which helps measure, understand and improve wellbeing with. It can quickly produce rigorous and authoritative data about the impact your organisation, programme on people's happiness.

- **HAT** - Helpful Aspects Therapy Feedback on the two most positive events that happened during therapy.
- **IES-R** - Impact of Events Scale revised. A 22 item self-report measure that assesses subjective distress caused by traumatic events (e.g. PTSD). It contains 7 additional items related to the hyperarousal symptoms of PTSD.
- **IQSS** - "Flourish" measure
- **ONS** - Life Satisfaction
- **ONS4** - Personal Well-being measures
- **PEQ** - Measures the quality of mental health care provided from the perspective of the user and looks for ways in which care may be improved.
- **PHQ9** - A 9-item mood module of the Patient Health Questionnaire routinely used in IAPT services.
- **PQ** - Personal Questionnaire grades

severity and duration of the problems the patient wishes to work on in therapy, described in their own words.

- **Parental Stress Scale** - Attempts to measure the levels of stress experienced by parents, taking into account both positive and negative aspects of parenting.
- **SPIN** - Social Phobia Inventory. SPIN has 17 items to indicate how bothered someone has been by each item during the past week.
- **Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire** - A brief screening questionnaire to assess emotional problems, conduct problems, hyperactivity/ inattention, peer relationships and prosocial behaviour. There are versions for children, young people and adults.

- **SWEMWBS** - Shorter version of Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale. SWEMWBS has 7 questions to assess positive mental wellbeing.
- **SWLS** - Satisfaction With Life Scale.
- **WEMWBS** – Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale. A 14-question scale for assessing positive mental wellbeing.
- **WHO-5** – World Health Organisation Five Well-being Index.
- **WSAS** - This Work and Social Adjustment Scale measures impairment in functioning.

In the health field, a commonly used measurement tool is QALY (Quality-Adjusted Year) in which the duration of survival is multiplied by a Utility score

which indicates the level of physical and mental ill-health (morbidity) of the relevant population being examined. Some of the measurement instruments which provide scores for people's health and wellbeing used in QALY assessments include: 15D; AQOL (7D & 8D); CAT-5D-QoL; Core-6D; EQ-5D-3L; HUI (2&3); Promis-29; QWB-SA; ReQoL-Ui; and SF-6Dv2. QALY scores enable an organisation in the health field to assess the impact of one programme against another (not treatment options for particular individuals). The Centre for Effective Services (CES) Children, Youth and Family Database provides access to over 100 standardised measurement tools used in Irish RCTs (Random Control Trials – see below) research and evaluation with children, young people and families.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of using a standardised pre- and post-activity survey include the following:

STRENGTHS:

- Can robustly demonstrate the distance travelled by participants in a programme or activity.
- Can provide a wide range of robust information on changes in relevant skills, knowledge, attitudes or behaviour (depending on the standardised instrument used).
- Provides confidence in the findings because respected standardised surveys are being used.
- Allows for comparisons with other evaluations that use the same standardised surveys, as well as the same programme over time.
- Using a survey provides the opportunity to ask participants relevant details about themselves (age, gender, income, ethnicity, sexuality, postcode, etc.). It may then be possible to assess any differential impacts the programme has on different types of participants.

WEAKNESSES:

- Without agreed outcomes, it is impossible to say whether the programme is achieving what it is designed to achieve.
- It does not indicate how long any changes are likely to last.
- It does not assess the economic return on investment of a programme.
- Without qualitative information from service-users, the findings may not be able to explain why a particular outcome came about, or why it didn't.

RESOURCES

Social Impact Navigator <https://www.social-impact-navigator.org/planning-impact/make-it-happen/>

Keeping it in proportion: Impact measurement for small charities NPC
<https://npproduction.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07>

Identify peer-reviewed questionnaires - <https://impactasaurus.org/>

What Works Wellbeing Bank of Measures <https://measure.whatworkswellbeing.org/measures-bank/>

What Works is an initiative of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in the Republic of Ireland, which aims to maximise the impact of prevention and early intervention in improving outcomes for children and young people living in Ireland. A wide range of resources are available from their website. www.whatworks.gov.ie

The CES Children, Youth and Family Database provide access to over 100 standardised measurement tools used in Irish RCT research and evaluation with children, young people and families. <https://effectiveservices.force.com/s/>

Jigsaw provides support to young people in Ireland with mental health difficulties. It is at the forefront of understanding the mental health needs and experiences of young people in Ireland. Its Research and Evaluation Strategy can be found on its website (www.jigsaw.ie), in addition to references to a wide range of previous research and evaluation studies in relation to Jigsaw's work.

COMPLEX MODELS AND FRAMEWORKS



7. OUTCOMES STAR



The concept of the Outcomes Star was created in 2003 as a practical tool for organisations working with people who are homeless, called The Homelessness Star, by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise, with St Mungo's as part of the London Housing Foundation Impact through Outcomes programme. The concept was then tested and further developed in a range of other services in London and Rochdale leading to the publication of the first edition of the Outcomes Star in 2006. Although it was specifically developed for homelessness services, the Outcomes Star is widely used as a generic tool for working with other service-users with complex needs as well.

The Homelessness Star initially covered six outcome areas, but, with continuous development, the current model covers ten key outcome areas:

1. Motivation and taking responsibility
2. Self-care and living skills
3. Managing money and personal administration
4. Social networks and relationships
5. Drug and alcohol misuse
6. Physical health
7. Emotional and mental health
8. Meaningful use of time
9. Managing tenancy and accommodation
10. Offending

Individual service-users and workers collaborate on the Outcomes Star to score how well the service-user is doing on each of these areas on a 5-point scale and set an action plan as to how they can make progress up each of the scales. The next time they meet, they can rescore each of these areas and see what progress has been made, if any, and review the action plan.

Outcomes Stars provide a quantitative tool to assess the journeys of individual service-users. They do not measure the severity of problems, but they measure someone's engagement with the problem and their perceived change. The organisation is likely to need other tools alongside the Star in relation to individual service-users – for example, risk assessments.

Outcome Stars are not designed to measure the effectiveness of a programme or activity, but to provide a guide to the self-reliance journey of individual service users. They can be presented visually as spokes emanating out from a central

point. A score of "1" will be close to the centre. A score of "5" will be at the edge of the 'star'. They may be scoring well on 'offending', but poorly on 'social networks and relationships'.

It is important to be clear about the extent that self-reliance is a realistic aim for services of the organisation, or if the service-users will always need a service. For most versions of the Star, the endpoint of the 'Journey of Change' is self-reliance where the person no longer needs a specialist service. However, a number of versions, including the Home Star, Independent Living Star, Life Star, Well-being Star and Carers Star, all have a relative endpoint of maximising independence, choice and well-being, but often with ongoing support.

If the work of an organisation, or a particular programme, is relatively light touch, organisations should choose a lighter-touch Star or the most accessible Star resources. Many Star versions have 6-8 outcome areas on a 1-5 scale. These include the Well-being Star, Carers Star, Tenancy Star and versions for children and young people.

Outcomes Stars are sector-wide, trademarked and evidence-informed tools. Each version is the result of research, development, testing and refinement by Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise, informed by the relevant sector. Organisations are discouraged by Triangle from attempting to tailor the Stars themselves as it can damage the integrity of the tool and is likely to be a breach of copyright and the trademark.

There are now almost 50 official Outcome Stars in the following sectors:

Addiction
Adult social care
Autistic spectrum
Carers
Children and Families
Community involvement/integration
Criminal justice
Domestic abuse
Employment
End of life
Families and children
Gambling related harm

Homelessness
Refugees and asylum seekers
Learning disabilities
Mental health
Natural disasters
Older people
Schools
Social prescribing
Substance misuse
Victims of crime
Visual impairment
Young people

In some of these sectors, there is a range of different stars addressing particular parts of the sector. Additional Outcome Stars are in the process of development. More information on these is available from https://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/OS-Briefing_Which-Star-Oct22.pdf

EXAMPLE

NOW GROUP FAMILY SERVICE (FS)

As well as helping people with learning difficulty and/or autism into employment, the NOW Group works with families with a member of the family with a learning difficulty and/or autism, providing practical support both pre- and post-natal for parents, children and grandparents. It supports families by building confidence and skills and developing peer support to connect to local communities.

Outputs

In 2021-22, the NOW Family Service supported 89 families across Northern Ireland with practical advice and support on a range of parenting skills. The Family Service team delivered 1953 one-to-one sessions with families, 73 parents were supported to engage with statutory Health & Social Care (HSC) services, while 13 parents completed 40 parenting programme sessions.

Many of the families supported may have safeguarding needs and, to mitigate this, in 2021-22, 314 preventative safeguarding induction sessions were facilitated totalling 105 hours of support. 61 group sessions for families were hosted with 415 attendances of parents/children.

Outcome Star Family Plus

The impact of the NOW Family Service is tracked through the Outcome Star Family Plus which captures progression in 10 the following outcome areas that assist towards positive and cohesive family life:

- 1. Physical Health
- 2. Well-being
- 3. Meeting Emotional Needs
- 4. Keeping Your Children Safe
- 5. Social Networks
- 6. Education & Learning
- 7. Boundaries & Behaviour
- 8. Family Routine
- 9. Home & Money
- 10. Progress to Work

Measuring progress

The NOW Group's analysis of the Outcome Star Family Plus data from a sample of 28 FS participants found that:

- 96% of participants are making progress in at least one outcome areas.
- 89% of participants are making progress in at least two outcome areas.
- 89% of participants are making progress in at least three outcome areas.
- 5.4 is the average number of Outcome Star areas in which someone is making progress.

Progression by 45% of the Outcome Star sample in 'home' and 'money' is noteworthy. Parents reported an increased 'understanding of parental rights and entitlements' citing improvements in managing housing issues, financial affairs, and benefit entitlements. This outcome is particularly valuable given the local context of the Northern Ireland welfare system in recent years with the migration to Universal Credit.

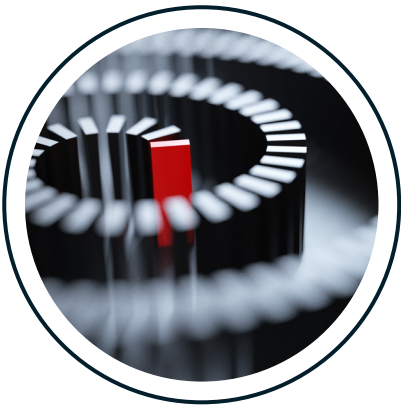
The cumulative benefit of progression in the 10 Family Star areas is best illustrated in the four children and their families supported by NOW Group who were de-registered from child protection services in 2021-22. This enhances family relationships and cohesion, keeping families together where possible and achieves a significant cost saving for the HSCT's through reduced foster and residential care costs.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weakness of an Outcomes Star approach are as follows:

- STRENGTHS:**
- The Star takes a person-centred approach and places importance on the service user's perspective and priorities. The service-user is seen as an active agent in their own life and a valuable source of expertise and knowledge rather than a passive sufferer of an affliction that the professional, with their expertise and knowledge, will cure.
 - The Star takes a strengths-based approach through which the holistic assessment offered by the Star focuses on aspects of life that are going well, as in a strengths-based approach, in addition to areas of difficulty.
 - The Outcomes Star is a practical keyword tool to use, before, during and after a programme with a particular client group.
 - The Star helps service-users and practitioners to make sense of the situation and to make the changes they need to make.
 - The Star is multidimensional and aims to measure the things that matter to service users.
 - There is increasing research evidence of how the Outcomes Star relates to other psychometric measures.
- The Star demonstrates change over time in a service ('responsiveness').
 - The Star can be used consistently across workers and over time.
 - The Outcomes Stars are available online and can be incorporated in a range of existing online systems
- WEAKNESSES:**
- As a licensed product, there is a fee involved in accessing the Outcome Star tools and support.
 - The Outcomes Star is a workplace tool designed to assess the subjective progress of individual service-users. It is not designed to objectively evaluate progress over time of a service or programme as a whole.
 - It is not designed to compare the effectiveness of one programme against a different programme.
 - The Outcomes Star has less academic credibility than some other standardised instruments.

8. THEORY OF CHANGE



Also known as the Production of Welfare Model or Logic Model, the Theory of Change Model demonstrates the logical sequence showing how investing in the inputs (e.g. money, programme model, staff, premises, consumables, etc) is required to undertake the relevant activities, which can be measured in outputs (e.g. number of participants, number of sessions, etc.), and which, hopefully, lead to the achievement of intermediate outcomes (e.g. new skills, knowledge, changed behaviour, etc), which, in turn, can lead to achieving the final outcome (e.g. being happy and healthy, achieving their potential, getting full-time employment, etc).

The Center for Theory of Change defines a Theory of Change as follows:

"Theory of Change is essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It is focused in particular on mapping out or "filling in" what has been described as the "missing middle" between what a program or change initiative does (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to desired goals being achieved. It does this by first identifying the desired long-term goals and then works back from these to identify all the conditions (outcomes) that must be in place (and how these related to one another causally) for the goals to occur. These are all mapped out in an Outcomes Framework."

Simple Theory of Change Model

Inputs	▶ Activities	▶ Outputs	▶ Early outcomes	▶ Intermediate Outcomes	▶ Final impact or Outcome
Insert Here	Insert Here	Insert Here	Insert Here	Insert Here	Insert Here

More complex Theory of Change Model

Assessment of need	▶ Inputs	▶ Activities	▶ Early outcomes	▶ Intermediate Outcomes	▶ Final impact or Outcome
Insert Here	Insert Here	Insert Here	Insert Here	Insert Here	Insert Here
Measurement of the extent of the need or issue to be addressed	Measurement of inputs: No. and monetary value of FTE staff and/or volunteers; Premises/ physical resources; energy; Consumables; Funding; etc.	Outputs – measurement of activities: (e.g. nos. of service-users, programme sessions, programme hours, etc.)	Indicators to measure early outcomes	Indicators to measure intermediate outcomes	Indicators to measure final impact/ outcomes
Insert Here	Insert Here	Insert Here	Insert Here	Insert Here	Insert Here

As a planning tool, however, apart from assessing the need to be addressed, the process works the other way round, beginning with deciding on the final desired outcome or desired impact and then working backwards to the intermediate outcomes that need to be achieved if the final outcome is to be achieved. The organisation then needs to decide what early outcomes need to be achieved in order to achieve the intermediate outcomes. Then the activities it needs to undertake to achieve these early outcomes (and how much of these activities i.e. the 'dose' is needed) need to be determined. Finally, identifying the resources (inputs) that are required to undertake the activities.

A Theory of Change is a rigorous yet, ideally, a participatory process whereby an organisation's or programme's stakeholders identify the conditions they believe need to be in place for their long-term goals to be met. These conditions are modelled as outcomes, arranged visually in a causal framework.

The Theory of Change process depends on defining all the necessary and sufficient conditions required to bring about a given long-term outcome. Theory of Change uses backwards mapping, requiring planners to think in backwards steps from the long-term goal to the intermediate and then early-term changes that would be required to cause the desired change. This process creates a set of connected outcomes known as a 'pathway of change', which visually represents the change process as it is understood by the initiative planners and is the skeleton around which the other elements of the theory are developed.

Like any good planning and evaluation method to achieve and measure social change, a Theory of Change requires participants to be clear on long-term goals, identify measurable indicators of success, and formulate actions to achieve goals. It:

- shows a causal pathway from where the group of service-users are now, to where they want to get to and have their goals achieved;
- requires an organisation to articulate underlying assumptions which can be tested and measured; and
- can help change an organisation's way of thinking about initiatives from what programmes are currently delivering to what they want to achieve.

In developing theories of change, organisations work with service-users and other stakeholders to articulate the assumptions used to explain the change process, which is then represented by the change framework. Assumptions are at

the basis of all the hypothesized causal connections between early, intermediate, and long-term final outcomes/impact.

Practitioners also make clear the assumptions about how and why proposed interventions will lead to the expected outcomes. Airing assumptions is one of the most valuable parts of Theory of Change as a participatory process, as stakeholders get to hear and challenge one another's understanding of the goals, the challenges, and what must hold true in the environment for the initiative to succeed. Assumptions should ideally be supported by research, which strengthens the plausibility of the theory and the likelihood that stated goals will be accomplished.

When a Theory of Change is completed, it should provide:

- A framework to check milestones and ensure it stays on course or is realigned in a planned way on the basis of evidence.
- A clear and testable hypothesis about how change will occur that not only creates accountability for results but also makes results more credible because they were predicted to occur in a certain way.
- A visual representation of the change an organisation wants to see in its community and how it expects it to come about.
- A transparent blueprint for implementation and evaluation with measurable indicators of success identified, so everyone knows what is happening and why.
- An agreement among stakeholders about what defines success and what it takes to get there.
- A powerful communication tool to capture the complexity of a programme, internally and externally, providing a basis for reports to funders, policymakers, and boards.

The Theory of Change approach to planning is designed to encourage very clearly defined outcomes at every step of the change process. Users are required to specify a number of details about the nature of the desired change — including specifics about the target population, the amount of change required to signal success, and the timeframe over which such change is expected to occur. This attention to detail often helps both funders and the organisation reassess the feasibility of reaching goals that may have initially been vaguely defined, and in the end, promotes the development of reasonable long-term outcome targets that are acceptable to all parties.

Developing a Theory of Change often consists of seven key steps:

1. Identifying long-term goals of the programme and the final desired outcome/ impact.
2. Backwards mapping and connecting outcomes (early, intermediate and final), so it is clear what early and intermediate outcomes will enable the achievement of the final long-term outcome.
3. Identifying the assumptions concerning why the activities will lead to the early outcomes, the early outcomes will lead to the achievement of the intermediate outcomes, and the intermediate outcomes will lead to the achievement of the final long-term outcome (and the evidence behind these assumptions.
4. Developing Indicators to robustly measure each of the outcomes.
5. Identifying the Interventions/activities/ programmes that will achieve the early, intermediate and final outcomes.
6. Identify the inputs needed e.g. money, programme model, needs analysis, staff, premises, consumables, etc.
7. Complete and consult on the Theory of Change framework (inputs, activities, outputs, early, intermediate outcomes and final outcome/impact).

EXAMPLE

SIMPLE THEORY OF CHANGE FOR A HOMELESS SERVICE

Inputs	▶ Activities	▶ Outputs	▶ Early outcomes	▶ Intermediate Outcomes	▶ Final impact or Outcome
Staff	Emergency hostels	75 homeless people served per year	Street homeless people moving into emergency accommodation	People resettled from emergency to intermediate accommodation.	Everyone has a home they can call their own
Volunteers	Assessment and planning service	10 emergency beds and 10 intermediate beds available	Homeless people participating in an assessment of their strengths & needs and agreeing an action plan	People resettled into permanent accommodation	
Money	Resettlement Service	7,000 bed-nights provided		People moving into employment/ training	
Premises	Specialist counselling services	50 People completing an addiction and/ or mental health programme		End of engagement with the criminal justice system	
		25 External support/ care assessments completed, and floating support packages agreed		Reduced harm from drugs/alcohol	
				Increased engagement with family/friends	
				People receiving the floating support they require	

Benefits Realisation Management

In recent years, a particular form of theory of change, Benefits Realisation Management, has been increasingly used by statutory bodies in the UK, including Northern Ireland. It is a project management methodology with a set of change processes used to manage the investment by organisations in procurement, projects, programmes and portfolios, and to increase project success by the identification, definition, planning, tracking, measuring and realising the desired benefits. It emphasises the importance of allocating particular roles to specific individuals to deliver each of the agreed actions and benefits. Like with other theories of change, in Benefits Realisation Management, the outcomes or benefits (and de-benefits) are first identified, and then working back, to what needs to be done to ensure the achievement if those benefits, and so on. More information is available at the resources highlighted below.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of using a Theory of Change approach include the following:

STRENGTHS:

- It provides an overarching framework that highlights the logical relationship between inputs and activities, and activities and outcomes.
- It provides a consistent organisational language and narrative in communicating what it is about and its desired impact, both internally and externally.
- It helps clarify the difference between outputs and outcomes.
- It highlights the importance of beginning with the outcomes that you want to achieve and working back from there.
- It can provide an invaluable framework for setting indicators to measure the achievement of agreed outcomes.

WEAKNESSES:

- In practice, robust evidence that provides assurance that one stage of the Logic Model inevitably leads to the next stage is often not provided.
- A Theory of Change requires the measurement of outcomes but does not provide particular advice on how best to do that in any particular context.
- A Logic Model does not demonstrate the economic value of an organisation or programme.
- Without a control group, it is impossible to be confident that the changes in people's lives were as a result of the organisation or programme being evaluated.
- A Theory of Change is focused on achieving the agreed positive outcomes. Measuring impact needs to include measuring unexpected and negative changes to people that are not predicted by the model.

RESOURCES

Theory of Change in Ten Steps NPC

<https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/ten-steps/>

Understanding Impact NPC

<https://npproduction.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Understanding-Impact-.pdf>

Managing Outcomes: a guide for homelessness organisations Sara Burns and Sally Cupitt:

www.ces-vol.org.uk/index.cfm?pg=171

Your Project and its Outcomes Sally Cupitt:

www.ces-vol.org.uk/index.cfm?pg=165

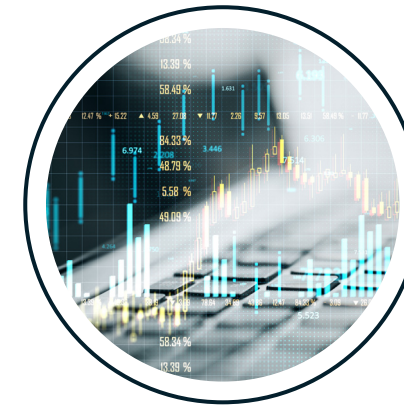
Benefits Realisation Management

<https://www.apm.org.uk/resources/what-is-project-management/what-is-benefits-management-and-project-success/>

Benefits Realisation Management Framework

www.pmi.org/-/media/pmi/documents/public/pdf/learning/thought-leadership/benefits-realization-management-framework.pdf

9. QUANTITATIVE - CONTROL TRIALS



In approving drugs for doctors to prescribe, we expect the drugs to be subject to gold standard research, such as large-scale double-blind random control trials (RCTs) in order to ensure that the drugs do no harm, produce the desired results, assess what the appropriate doses should be, and what any side-effects might be, and how likely they are to occur. There is no requirement, however, for social programmes to be subject to such double-blind random control trial evaluations. However, over the past two decades there has been a drive towards more robust evidence and various third sector organisations and public sector agencies have partnered with universities or research institutes and funders to organise such gold standard random control trial evaluations. These evaluations provide much more robust evidence of the effectiveness of the social programmes than using the other approaches described in this guide, although they build on many of the ideas already covered.

There have been a couple of other relevant recent developments: The growth in a 'core components' approach – isolating and utilising the implementation factors we know that work across many programmes (See the publication 291971925 in ResearchGate.net 'Key Components of Successful Implementation'); and the strengthening of practice with evidence from the grassroots up, focusing on services where parents, families, service-users are going and building practice and evidence in those natural settings.

In addition to establishing clear desired outcomes and administering academically credible before-and-after measures to assess changes in specific skills, knowledge, attitudes or behaviour before and after the intervention, discussed above, random control trials require a number of additional elements to be in place:

- The programme to be evaluated needs to be 'manualised', i.e. written up in sufficient detail to enable another site or organisation to replicate the programme precisely.
- The programme to be evaluated needs to be implemented consistently and with complete fidelity to the programme manual.
- There needs to be a sufficient number of participants (e.g. 200+) to enable statistically significant results to be analysed.
- Ethical approval for the research needs to be obtained.
- There is a similarly sized control group of people with similar characteristics to those who are receiving the intervention, who are not subject to

the intervention (there may be more than one similarly sized control group, e.g. one which receives a different intervention and one that receives no intervention), whose members also complete the same surveys. If it is not possible to create a randomised control group to participate in the evaluation, it may be possible to identify a control group which is as like the group receiving the service as possible.

- The research is written up in a peer-reviewed professional journal, so it can be critiqued.

The existence of International agreement on the criteria for an effective random control trial evaluation of a social programme and the creation of systematic reviews of the range of large-scale randomised longitudinal controlled trials of manualised programmes to tackle particular social problems, published in academic journals, means extensive information is already available on particularly effective programmes that can be considered evidence-based and, subject to license, can be replicated by an organisation wishing to have the biggest impact on a particular social problem.

EXAMPLE

ATLANTIC PHILANTHROPIES

From 2004-2016 international foundation Atlantic philanthropies decided, amongst other things, to invest in early intervention programmes to improve outcomes for children and young people in Ireland, north and south. However, they decided that they would only fund programmes that had already been subject to at least two random control trial evaluations, or which would be subject to a random control trial evaluation. The organisations delivering the programmes had to appoint evaluation/research experts on to a scientific/evaluation committee and partner with a suitably skilled academic institution. The results of all these trials were published by Atlantic Philanthropies and the learning brought together by the Centre for Effective Services (CES), with offices in Belfast and Dublin. CES has produced various very useful reports on the learning from these RCTs on social programme. (see 'On the Right Track' summary reports), as well as more detailed outcome reports and over 100 standardised measurement tools used in these research and evaluation studies with children, young people and families. The findings were sometimes not what the organisations delivering the programmes hoped for or expected. For example,

- Of the 12 child health programmes, only two produced statistically significant positive impact results (Preparing for Life delivered by Northside Partnership and Big Brother Big Sisters Ireland Peer Support delivered by Foróige).
- Of the 15 parenting programmes, just over half were able to show statistically significant results. One had a negative impact.
- Of the 15 programmes delivered to improve child behaviour only 5 demonstrated statistically significant positive improvements.
- Of the 17 programmes on child learning, nine significantly improved the learning environment, but only five showed significant improvements in learning outcomes.
- Of the five programmes delivered to improve inclusion and diversity, four showed statistically significant positive improvements.

However, regardless of the findings, each evaluation created important learning for the organisation and for the wider sector engaged in early intervention work with children and families, which is available from the detailed outcomes reports on

the CES website (www.effectiveservices.org/resources). CES has also produced a useful summary guide on how to ensure the effective implementation of early intervention programmes.

Systematic reviews can also provide lessons from the range of RCTs that can inform the creation of new programmes, or the development of existing programmes (these are often described as evidence-informed, rather than evidence-based).

There are organisations and websites that specialise in capturing the findings from RCT evaluations of social programmes around the world (with an emphasis on English language countries). Respected examples include:

- **Cochrane Library** (<https://www.cochranelibrary.com>)
- **Campbell Collaboration** (<https://www.campbellcollaboration.org>)
- **Blueprints for healthy youth development** (<https://www.blueprintsprograms.org>)
- **Social Programs That Work** (<https://evidencebasedprograms.org>)

RESOURCES

Better Evaluation Random Control Trials
<https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/approaches/randomised-controlled-trial>

The Centre for Effective Services (CES) has a very useful resource library including materials on the learning from the programme of RCTs funded by Atlantic Philanthropies between 2004 and 2016 on prevention and early intervention programmes with children, young people and families in Ireland and Northern Ireland:
<https://effectiveservices.notion.site/Prevention-and-Early-Intervention-in-Ireland-and-Northern-Ireland-cfc04c57125341c59939c627dfbc5af7>

Ten Years of Learning ://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://file.notion.so/f/s/6042daf8-9d38-44c3-b636-cba8caa97e45/PEII_10_Years_of_Learning_Report.pdf?id=05cacc5c-e4af-4e70-b95f-5694a6bdd2c7&table=block&spaceId=aa2d115a-20c6-4d51-a558-36dc44f7c821&expirationTimestamp=1684343797647&signature=kEUb-SxSfzs-zFC4B8sO2OlyT77lyEBcEiH2ITf3ljk&downloadName=PEII_10_Years_of_Learning_Report.pdf

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of using a random controlled trials approach include the following:

STRENGTHS:

- The results of such robust random control trials are considered to be the gold standard of impact measurement and give any programme evaluated in this way real credibility.
- The programme and the evaluation can be replicated in a different context.
- Using a survey approach provides the opportunity to ask participants relevant details about themselves (age, gender, income, ethnicity, sexuality, postcode, etc.). It may then be possible to assess any differential impacts the programme has on different types of participant.
- Organisations seeking to solve any particular social problem can identify manualised programmes that have already been shown to be effective in tackling the social problem, particularly if they have been the subject of more than one RCT and published in a respected academic journal and published as part of a meta-review of all similar RCT evaluations of programmes that are trying to tackle the relevant social problem.

WEAKNESSES:

- RCTs are very complex, time-consuming and expensive to conduct.
- RCTs usually require the involvement of an expert external research body, such as a university or research institute, with the relevant expertise in conducting RCTs.
- Establishing a random control group willing to participate in the RCT evaluation, although they are not receiving any service, can be challenging and can have ethical and human rights issues.
- The programme needs to be 'manualised' and delivered consistently with complete fidelity. It is not appropriate for situations which require a flexible response to needs, such as in disaster relief situations.
- It would not be feasible in country-wide programmes or advocacy campaigns where it is not possible to create a control group.
- Large numbers need to be receiving the service to create statistically significant results.
- There are ethical considerations to be addressed in researching service provision with vulnerable groups.

10.

OUTCOME-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY (OBA)



Mark Friedman from the U.S.A. has developed a simple model to help governments (at population level) and organisations (at service-user level) to measure impact, known as Outcome-Based Accountability (OBA), which builds on the Theory of Change Model above. The model can be presented as follows:

	Quantity	Quality
Effort	How much did we do? (outputs)	How well did we do it? (quality & satisfaction)
Effect	Is anyone better off?	
	Number who are better off (outcomes)	% who are better off (outcomes)

The model suggests organisations ask themselves three basic questions:

- How much did we do (outputs)?
- How well did we do it (quality & satisfaction)? How well were the programmes implemented (implementation fidelity⁸)?
- How were people's lives changed for the better (outcomes)?

Mark Friedman works primarily at the level of governments, helping them create an agreed OBA structure, agree the desired outcomes for the population, agree a set of indicators to measure and analyse the data in relation to those outcomes over a number of years and, using the research evidence, to identify ways to 'turn the curve' in relation to challenging social problems, such as smoking, obesity, etc. however, the approach can also be applied to individual organisations.

In Northern Ireland, the government adopted the OBA approach and developed its first Programme for Government, with clear outcomes, accompanied by a set of indicators by which to measure progress towards the outcomes. This provided an overarching framework to guide, not only the work of government departments, and arms-length agencies, but also third sector organisations funded by, or delivering contracts on behalf of, government.

For third sector organisations to answer the three key questions suggested by Mark Friedman above, requires the organisation

to address seven other more detailed questions:

- 1 Who are our service-users/beneficiaries?
- 2 How can we measure the extent that our service-users/beneficiaries are better off?
- 3 How can we measure if we are delivering the services well?
- 4 How are we doing on the most important of the outcome measures?
- 5 Who are the partners that have a role to play in doing better?
- 6 What works to do better, including no-cost and low-cost ideas?
- 7 What do we propose to do?

Measures for 'How much did we do?' could include the number of people participating in a particular programme or number of sessions delivered (outputs).

Measures for 'How well did we do it?' could include the percent of staff who received necessary training to deliver sessions, the satisfaction levels of participants, and/or evidence of quality assessments.

The last piece of the jigsaw is compiling measures to answer the crucial question as to what extent anyone is better off? Performance measures are indicators used to evaluate how well a project, programme or service is performing. Reporting on how well particular services or programmes perform is known as Performance Accountability: Each programme would typically have a set of

performance measures, which would relate to whether programme participants are any better off as a result of participating in the programme. For example, a youth job skills programme might measure how many young people get into full-time employment and are still in a job after 3 months, 6 months, etc. A school-based programme for young people might measure the number and percentage of young people with improved school attendance, improved test or exam results, improved sense of control over their own lives, or reduced alcohol, tobacco or drug consumption.

OBA emphasises the importance of having a data development strategy which will enable the organisation to continuously improve how it measures how lives are changed for the better.

William Macaskill (2015) suggests four other important questions in considering the impact of any social programme:

- How cost-effective is the programme i.e. what is the cost of achieving the programme outcomes per person?
- How robust is the evidence of the extent that the programme achieved the outcomes?
- How long will the impact of the programme last?
- Are there other programmes that are more effective?

EXAMPLE

NOW GROUP OBA CARD 2022

HOW MUCH DID WE DO?	HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?
• 1753 participants supported in training and employment • 89 families supported through 1953 one to one sessions • 202 participants supported across 13 social activity groups • 78 participants supported in community programmes • 63 participant placements in Loaf Catering • 34 Volunteers delivered 3594 hours • 71 participants supported in their employment • Participation in seven Council Labour Market Partnerships. • 40 participants engaging in Together Building United Communities (TBUC) • Over 100,00 JAM Cards in circulation • 43 Schools/Further Education Schools engaged	• 108 new Jobs secured • 91 jobs sustained for more than six months • 753 internal accreditations achieved • 1254 soft skills courses completed • 14% progression from community to employability programmes • 138 NOW participants completed Money Management Training. • 520 Family Support hours purchased by HSCT's • 90% of employment programme participants are making progress in one outcome area • 95% of parents would recommend NOW Group to others • 88% of employers feel that they are better equipped to support staff with a disability

WHAT DIFFERENCE DID WE MAKE?

- 777 participants reported life and career opportunities
- 911 participants reported improved health and wellbeing
- 1121 participants reported feeling more independent
- 1227 participants felt more socially included
- Over £1 million disposable income for the 108 participants in paid employment
- 1753 parents/carers had reduced anxiety and more respite for self-care
- 89 parents with a disability became more resilient to the pressures of parenting
- Staff in 2500 JAM Card Friendly businesses improved their workplace attitudes to employees with learning difficulties
- Health and Social Care Trusts saved £843,000 through reduced, day care, family support and crisis interventions
- £360,000 saved through reduced benefit payments
- For every £1 invested in NOW Group services, £20 was generated in social value
- 34% of the social value generated was for NOW Group participants with 30% for their families
- 21 outcomes across six stakeholder groups (NOW Group Participants, Families, JAM Card Users, Employers, Health & Social Care Trusts, and Department for Communities)

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of using an OBA approach include the following:

STRENGTHS:	WEAKNESSES:
• Provides a simple model that is easy to understand. • Focuses on a small number of key questions. • Can be adopted by governments to provide an overarching framework for the country, as well as individual organisations. • Emphasises the importance of assessing how people's lives are changed for the better. • Provides valuable insights on the need to 'Turn the curve' on key social problems. • Highlights the need for a data development strategy to improve how the organisation gathers and analyses the data it needs.	• The OBA framework was designed for use by governments. It is very difficult for individual organisations to demonstrate the impact they have on population level statistics. • OBA scorecards can be used as PR rather than an honest assessment of impact. • OBA does not analyse cost-effectiveness or demonstrate the economic value of an organisation or programme. • OBA does not necessarily enable programmes to be compared with each other. • Without a control group, it is impossible to be confident that the changes in people's lives were as a result of the organisation or programme being evaluated.

RESOURCES

Trying Hard is Not Good Enough (2015) Mark Friedman Evaluation research (Social action programs)
Turning Curves – an accountability companion (2015) Mark Friedman
<https://www.assemblyresearchmatters.org/2021/05/20/outcomes-based-accountability-a-refresher/>
A Practical Guide to Outcome Evaluation (Liz Hoggarth and Hilary Comfort) Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers ISBN 978-1-84905-037-1
Doing Good Better (2015) William Macaskill Guardian Books

MEASURING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Community development is a process whereby people come together in a community to take action on what is important to them. A 'community' is usually a geographical area such as a particular neighbourhood, village, town, or local government area. 'Community', in a community development sense, refers to the people who live in an area and does not usually refer to service providers or organisations, although these services and organisations often play a vital role in the development of local communities and in supporting the community development process. Control remains within the hands of the local community.

'Community', however, can also be defined in a way that emphasises shared interests, identity or characteristics (e.g. around a particular cultural and/or linguistic community, a shared interest or activity, or some shared characteristic such as the Deaf community, or the LGBTQIA+ community).

At its heart, community development is rooted in the belief that all people should have equitable access to health, wellbeing, wealth, education, justice and to opportunities such as employment. It recognises, however, that some people, some groups and some communities are particularly excluded and oppressed by the way society and its structures are organised. Community development seeks to challenge this and ensure fairness for all people in the area.

In practice, community development:

- supports communities, of place and identity, to use their own assets, skills, knowledge and energy to improve the quality of community life; and
- helps communities and public agencies to work together to improve services and the way in which decisions are made.

Community development is a process where community members, usually supported by statutory or voluntary sector agencies, identify and take collective action on issues which are important to them. Community development empowers community members and creates stronger and more connected communities.

Community development programmes are generally led by community members at every stage: from deciding on issues to selecting and implementing actions, and evaluation, but they are often supported by paid community development professionals.

Community Development Values

Community development is a holistic process based on the values of:

- **Self-determination** - people and communities have the right to make their own choices and decisions.
- **Empowerment** - people should be able to control their own lives and use their own assets and means to influence.
- **Collective action** - coming together

in groups or organisations strengthens peoples' voices to bring about change.

- **Working and learning together** - collaboration and sharing experiences is vital to good community activity.
- **Asset-based** - Everyone has strengths, skills, knowledge, ideas and aspirations that can be built on to contribute to personal and community development. Community members are experts in their own lives and communities: community development values community knowledge and wisdom.
- **Human rights** - everyone has universal rights which should be respected, promoted and protected.
- **Social justice** - everyone has the right to be treated fairly, regardless of their background or status. Community development has an explicit focus on the redistribution of power to address the causes of inequality and disadvantage.
- **Inclusion** - we live in a diverse society. Many people feel excluded and experience barriers to achieving their rights and potential for reasons beyond their control. Community development should seek to help remove these barriers.

Measuring the impact of community development

The reason that this is a separate section in the Guide is not that the other sections of this Guide are not relevant: far from it, they are very relevant. Indeed, measuring community development requires bringing together many of the tools and frameworks in the guide. However, community development often has a number of special features that need to be considered, which are above and beyond the evaluation of a single programme with a defined target group, including the following:

- By definition, the target beneficiaries of community development are the whole population of a defined geographical area (or community of interest), whether they identify with, or participate in, the community development work or not.
- As community development is designed to increase the ability of community members to make decisions over the improvement of their community, there is a need to

find ways to enable the community to have control over what is measured and how it is measured. Measurement tools are usually designed and administered by experts to provide objectivity and detachment, so a different team of experts would come up with similar results.

- Evaluation in a community development context should be a learning activity, not only to increase the knowledge and skills within the community and particular programmes, but also on how to measure impact.
- Community development is often 'messy' and developments are often strongly influenced by particular individuals, usually volunteer committee members. People and priorities may change.
- Community development work may be funded by a range of different funders with different evaluation expectations.
- The resource capacity of most community-based groups is low. It may be entirely volunteer run; the volunteers may have no experience of evaluation tools and frameworks; there may be little money to commission the necessary external evaluation support.
- The outcomes of community development can be both varied and contested. They can potentially be in any or all of the following areas:
 - At the population level within the area (Ward, Super Output Area, etc.), which are measured by government in Northern Ireland and collated by NISRA (and therefore are dependent on the data collection boundaries and timescales of the relevant government body). These outcomes may, for example, be in any, or all, of the following domains of deprivation i.e.
 - Income Deprivation
 - Employment Deprivation
 - Health Deprivation & Disability
 - Education, Skills & Training Deprivation
 - Access to Services
 - Living Environment
 - Crime & Disorder
 - The outcomes may also be in one or more of the more detailed sub-domains e.g. quality of housing, access to a GP, anti-social behaviour,

etc. The UK Government's National Sustainable Development Indicators provides an alternative framework for assessing headline sustainable development. It can be found at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/223992/0_SDIs_final__2_.pdf

- Improved outcomes for individual members of the community who participate in community development activities or programmes, often gathered by surveys. These individual human capital benefits may be in terms of things such as:
 - Employment
 - Volunteering
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Skills and/or qualifications
 - Empowerment/self-efficacy
 - Knowledge
 - Attitudes
- Improved outcomes for individual members of the community, regardless of whether they actively participate in community development activities/programmes or not. The individual human capital benefits may be in the same categories as the previous point.
- Enhanced social inclusion, trust and community connectedness (social capital), both within the community and with others outside the community are crucial outcomes of community development which need to be measured.

Choosing Indicators of the impact of community development

In choosing indicators to measure the desired outcomes, it is worth keeping in mind that they should be:

- **Proportionate** - the effort and cost should be proportionate to the value of the findings to the community.
- **Relevant** - It should actually measure, at least a key aspect of the desired outcome, at reasonable cost.
- **Important** - it should be measuring something that is important to the members of the community.
- **Measurable** - It should be relatively easy to measure, or someone else is

already measuring it.

- **Action-focused** - the purpose of measuring impact is to inform future action, so it should be clear how the results might potentially result in changed actions.
- **Simple** - It should not be complicated. It should be easy to understand and explain.
- **Culturally appropriate** - religious, linguistic and national cultures are likely to vary within an area, so it is important to develop indicators that are appropriate regardless of the cultures within the area.

LEAP

There are a range of planning/evaluation frameworks (with support materials) to help community groups design their own impact measurement processes. One developed by the Scottish Community Development Centre is called LEAP, which stands for Learning, Evaluation And Planning. It is a framework that supports community organisations/groups to plan more effectively; identify and evidence the changes that they hope to make; learn from their experiences and work in partnership with one another. LEAP is an approach to planning and evaluation that is outcome-focused, participatory and learning-based. It is a tool to aid more effective practice. By enabling clear analysis of needs, planning, implementation and review of action, it assists partners and participants to achieve the changes that they seek.

Principles underpinning LEAP

LEAP planning and evaluation framework is based on the principles and values that underpin a community learning and development approach to change. These emphasise: empowerment, participation, inclusion, self-determination and partnership. From this basis, the LEAP framework adopts an explicit set of principles that support good planning and evaluation practice:

- Planning should be a needs-led process - it should set out to respond to the experiences, ambitions and concerns of communities and target issues of inequality and social justice.
- Planning should seek to build on the capacity, and develop the assets, of individuals, groups and communities.

- Planning and evaluation should be change or outcome focused – it should aim to achieve real and measurable change in the quality of personal and community life.
- Planning and evaluation should be participatory – it should involve all those with an interest in the desired change, particularly communities and service users that are intended to benefit.
- Planning and evaluation should be concerned with building partnerships – it should build and develop relationships between agencies and with community stakeholders.
- Planning and evaluation should be concerned with learning and continuous improvement – it should promote understanding of change by capturing and reflecting on as much of the process as possible and using the lessons learned to guide future action. It should highlight the learning that results.

LEAP 5 Steps

LEAP assists community organisations/ groups to address the following questions, which will be very familiar to those who have read the rest of this Guide, or are familiar with theories of change of Logic Models:

- What is the need?
- What difference do we want to make?
- How will we know we made a difference?
- How will we go about making the difference?
- What resources will we use?
- What methods will we use?
- In what ways will we use them?
- How are we making sure it is happening?
- Have we made a difference?
- What are the lessons we have learned?
- What will we need to do now?

This logical sequence of questions, and how to get answers to them, is at the heart of LEAP. In the LEAP process, it is

presented as a series of steps that respond to an identified need and develop into a continuous cycle of problem identification, planning, action, reflection, evaluation and learning. The straightforward questions that LEAP poses should be a normal part of everyday practice.

The five-step cycle below is straightforward. Complexity lies not in the model but in the work that needs to be applied to it. In other words, answering the trigger questions that LEAP poses requires thoughtful reflection on the needs, circumstances, resources and methods of action that are open to you.

The cycle of learning steps recognises that the approach can only be helpful if there is clarity about the focus of attention. 'What is the need?' is a question that has to be answered first. The answer has to be one that the participants recognise and want to address and one that is consistent with the purposes and principles of community development. Having defined and agreed what it is that is causing concern and having checked its compatibility with the principles and priorities, the five-step LEAP cycle can be applied.



STEP 1: What difference do we want to make?

To do something about the identified need we must have a clear view of the difference that we want to make.

LEAP invites community organisations/ groups to imagine or envision a different and better state of affairs. It should be something that lots of people share in common, so they should all share in defining the vision of change in order to be satisfied by the results that are sought.



STEP 2: How will we know we made a difference?

Defining the need and knowing what difference it is intended to make is a key stage of the planning process, but another vital step is often missed out. The question 'how will we know we made a difference?' is an essential one. As a community organisation/group takes action, it will need to collect evidence about what change is happening. The evidence collected needs to enable the organisation/group to later answer the question: 'are we making a difference?' To make sure that they collect relevant evidence they need to have thought about what the criteria for success will be. Defining this at the start enables them to focus on collecting evidence that matters.



STEP 3: How will we go about making the difference?

The community organisation/group is now ready to plan its actions. To do that they need to know what resources are available to do so. These will be people, equipment, budgets, ideas, energy, motivation, partners and many other things. The resources include the strengths that those in the community and those they work with in communities bring to problem-solving. To make use of resources they need to have skills and methods of practice that they can use well, such as training, group work, negotiation, communication, research or guidance. They will need to make choices about what methods are likely to be most effective. But no method is effective if they lack the funding and other resources to put it into practice. The balance of methods and resources determines what they can actually do. So to answer the question 'how will we go about making the difference?' there are three related questions that have to be answered – what resources will we use? what methods will we use? and in what ways will we use them?



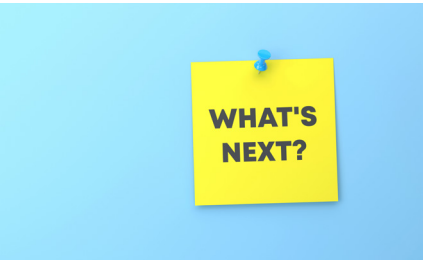
STEP 4: How are we making sure it is happening?:

Action can now be taken, but the best laid plans can be undermined by poor implementation. An action plan needs to be clear about who will do what and when, and it needs to be monitored to see that everyone meets their commitments to do what they said they would do, when they said that they would do it.



STEP 5: Have we made a difference and what are the lessons we have learned?

If, by monitoring the action plan, an organisation/group knows that the plan has been effectively implemented, they can then ask the question: 'have we made a difference?'. The differences that they will be looking for are the ones that everyone who has an interest agreed on at the beginning. But they will only know if the differences have been made if they have some evidence. This is when having asked the question at step 2: 'how will we know we have made a difference?' becomes so valuable. By collecting evidence through the process of delivering their actions they are now able to use it to make a judgement and decide what the lessons are that have been learned. It is rare for everything that is set out to do is actually achieved because there will be many obstacles to change. So, looking at the action and its results the organisation/group is likely to be asking themselves what worked and why, what would they do again, and what would they do differently? More details on using surveys can be found in section?? above and in Appendix 5 below.



Having completed step 5, a community organisation will need to go back from step 5 to step 1 again – renewing the cycle:

What will we need to do now?
In Step 5 an organisation/group will also be asking themselves another set of questions. In the light of the difference that they consider they have made, is the need now met, and no further action required, are there aspects of the need that still need to be addressed, and/or have they identified new needs that they were not previously aware of? All of which enable them to answer the question: what do we need to do now? When they come to answer the question and begin to plan a new cycle of activity, they are better equipped because they are more knowledgeable about what works and what does not. Where they have been successful, they can be more confident about their skills and abilities; where they have not been successful, they will know that they need to do things differently and will be better able to prepare themselves for future action.

More details on the LEAP model are available from: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5943c23a440243c1fa28585f/t/5e4bade347efbd6a69b346b4/1582018020760/Leap+Manual.pdf>

Some additional thoughts on measuring the impact of community development in Northern Ireland

LEAP was designed in Scotland and as a framework can be used in Northern Ireland. There are a few particular issues to be taken into account in Northern Ireland:

- The Government of Northern Ireland is committed to OBA, discussed in the section above. LEAP is perfectly consistent with OBA, but funders may want explicit answers to the 3 key OBA questions: How much did we do (outputs)? how well did we do it (satisfaction, quality)? and how were people's lives changed for the better (outcomes, impact)?
- The Government of Northern Ireland has considered the issue of wellbeing and has produced quantitative population estimates for the following:

Loneliness, self-efficacy, locus of control, life satisfaction, worthwhile, happiness, and anxiety. Using a similar approach to NISRA, a community organisation/group could assess how their area compares with the NI average. More details of how these are defined are contained in Appendix 12 below. In 2025, government in Northern Ireland produced a draft detailed Wellbeing Framework, with wellbeing indicators. When the final framework is agreed, this may provide a useful tool for many community, and other, organisations.

- The Northern Ireland Executive says it is committed to delivering its Programme for Government (PfG) 2024-27, including a set of headline priorities to aim to achieve and a wellbeing framework with a set of indicators as to how changes will be measured. Community-based

organisations that can demonstrate how they make a contribution towards the government's outcomes and indicators, through their own impact measurement processes, are likely to receive more support from government than those that don't.

- Due to the fact that contested identity, community/good relations and attitudes to the 'other' are important issues in Northern Ireland, these are issues which may need to be assessed in measuring the impact of community work.
- They are specific Northern Ireland surveys that measure, on a NI-wide basis, relevant issues, many of which may be useful at a local community level. These surveys can be useful in identifying needs the community group might want to address, provide a comparison for a local survey, and

provide the wording for questions/statements that could be replicated in local surveys. For example, the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (last conducted in 2021), surveyed 1,397 adults aged 18 years or over and asked a series of very detailed questions, using well-established questions, under the following headings:

- Respect
- Attitudes to Minority Ethnic People
- Good Relations
- Mental Health

- COVID-19
- Income and Poverty
- Criminal Justice System
- Political Attitudes
- Community Safety
- Background information on the respondents

Community organisations working with young people might also consider whether any questions from the Young Persons Behaviour and Attitude Survey might inform their desired outcomes and indicators, as well as the precise wording of survey questions. The 2019 report is available at: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/>

young-persons-behaviour-and-attitude-survey-2019

Other place-based approaches

Sport England have been working with National Evaluation & Learning Partnership (NELP) to develop place-based and whole system approaches to evaluation and learning. These are explored in 'Public Narrative – Rationale for whole systems approaches and what it means for evaluation and learning' National Evaluation & Learning Partnership (NELP) with Sport England. Available at www.evaluatingcomplexity.org

EXAMPLE

RESURGAM – THE BEST FOR EVERY CHILD



In 2013, Resurgam, a community development organisation based in the unionist/loyalist Old Warren housing estate Lisburn were concerned about the poor outcomes of the children and young people in the estate and four other surrounding working-class communities. With funding from PHA, they commissioned Barnardos (supported by Courtney Consulting) to carry out detailed research in the area and make recommendations as to how these disadvantaged communities could be transformed.

The research had two main elements:

- Extensive focus group consultations in each of the communities and interviews with professionals providing services in the areas.
- Analysis of the most recent NISRA multiple deprivation statistics at Social Output Area compared to the NI average.

These two research processes together "identified very significant issues concerning the health, wellbeing, safety and security of the population in these areas, which have a very detrimental effect on the lives of many families.... What was more shocking was the very poor educational outcomes of the children and young people... three-quarters leave school without 5+ GCSEs inc. English & Maths and very few go on to university or college. There was significant evidence of educational achievement being replicated down the generations." Changes in the labour market which requires increasing qualification levels means that the life outcomes of these young people, in adulthood, are likely to be poor and get worse.

The research report ('The Best for Every Child' Resurgam Trust) recommended an approach that focused on prevention and early intervention, suggesting the following as outcomes, which could be measured regularly as Resurgam and its partners implement an agreed action plan, developed by the multi-agency Early Intervention Lisburn Consortium with a common outcomes framework, as part of a recommended Theory of Change, focused around achieving the following outcomes:

- Reduced number of teenage pregnancies
- Reduced level of smoking during pregnancies
- Improved parenting skills and confidence

- Improved parent-child attachment for 0–2-year-olds
- Improved school readiness amongst 3 & 4 year olds
- Improved literacy and numeracy in children aged 4–11-year-olds
- Improved school attendance
- Improved educational aspirations and attainment on leaving school
- Reduced behaviour/conduct problems
- Reduced smoking, alcohol and drug consumption amongst young people
- Reduced crime and anti-social behaviour amongst young people

The research recommended delivering proven prevention and early intervention programmes (each recommended programme is highlighted in the research report) in the areas of:

- Intensive home visiting
- Parenting training
- Pre-school early years child development
- Additional literacy support in the primary years
- Social and emotional development
- Mentoring support

The research report recommended a particular operational model and implementation plan. In 2023, Resurgam, celebrated the 10th year of the Early Intervention initiative.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of using the kind of LEAP approach to measuring the impact of community development include the following:

STRENGTHS:

- It is a simple 5-step approach.
- It provides an overarching framework that highlights the logical relationship between planning a programme of community activities and the evaluation.
- It highlights the importance of beginning with the needs and desired outcomes that you want to achieve and to work back from there.
- It highlights the importance of community participation.
- It is consistent with other approaches in this Guide.

WEAKNESSES:

- LEAP does not provide much guidance on robustly evaluating impact and which approaches might be most robust or appropriate in a community context.
- LEAP does not provide suggestions for outcomes or indicators.
- LEAP does not demonstrate the economic value of an organisation or programme.
- Without a control group, it is impossible to be confident that the changes in people's lives were as a result of the organisation or programme being evaluated.

RESOURCES

More details on the LEAP model are available from:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5943c23a440243c1fa28585f/t/5e4bade347efbd6a69b346b4/1582018020760/Leap+Manual.pdf>

Prove it! Measuring the effect of neighbourhood renewal on local people nef

The Best for Every Child Resurgam and Barnardos

'Public Narrative – Rationale for whole systems approaches and what it means for evaluation and learning' National Evaluation & Learning Partnership (NELP) with Sport England. Available at www.evaluatingcomplexity.org

Valuing the Benefits of Regeneration Economics paper 7: Volume I - Final Report. Communities and Local Government. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6382/1795633.pdf#:~:text=It%20was%20commissioned%20to%20improve%20the%20evidence%20base,results%20of%20evaluations%20of%20regeneration%20schemes%20across%20government.

12.

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF CAMPAIGNING AND LOBBYING



Measuring the Impact of campaigning and lobbying work to change government policy or practice is important for various reasons:

- To justify the expenditure on campaigning and/or lobbying (which is difficult to get funding for), as opposed to providing services to victims/beneficiaries.
- To learn about what works, so it can be done better, and more efficiently, in future.

However, it is notoriously challenging.

The process of planning a campaigning or lobbying strategy can follow the same steps as outlined in the sections above on Theories of Change, with clear immediate, intermediate and final outcomes. The difference is in the final outcome i.e. a change in government policy or practice and the kind of activities that were required to help bring about the change.

Measuring the Impact of campaigning and lobbying work, however, presents various particular challenges, including the following:

- The demands of the campaign may be complex and varied.

- The desired change may not take place at all, or the change may only be partial
- Policymakers/decisionmakers may be unwilling to admit that any external influence was effective in making the change come about.
- There may be a wide range of internal stakeholders within public policy-making who may have played a part in bringing about the change.
- Various different external stakeholders may have been involved in trying to influence the desired change – how is the relative influence to be attributed?
- How do you quantify a change in policy or practice? (apart from an increase in a budget or funding which could be easily measured)

With these challenges, it is likely to be even more important to articulate well the immediate and intermediate outcomes for the whole system, as opposed to specific beneficiaries, in the Theory of Change that will need to be achieved, in order to achieve the final outcome. Depending on the campaigning or lobbying strategy, such intermediate outcomes might include the following:

Stakeholders	Initial outcomes	Intermediate outcomes
Policymakers – government ministers, select committee chairs and advisors	Number of meetings with government ministers, select committee chairs and advisors.	Changed policymaker knowledge. Changed policymaker attitudes. The extent that policymakers attribute the change to the organisation.
Policymakers – senior civil servants	Number of meetings with relevant civil servants.	Number of civil servants saying they support the change. The extent that civil servants attribute the change to the organisation.
Political Influencers	Number of meetings with political parties, MLAs. Number of email messages to MLAs on the issue which are opened.	Political support for the change (MLA poll). Active statement of support from political parties. Number of supportive mentions of the campaign issue in the NI Assembly.
The Public	Public awareness of the campaign (polled sample).	Support of the change from the public (polled sample).
Campaign partners and allies	The strength of the coalition. The number of coalition meetings (& no. attending). The extent that coalition partners and allies attribute the change to the organisation.	The no. of campaign partners and allies writing to decisionmakers and/or influencers to seek the change.

Stakeholders	Initial outcomes	Intermediate outcomes
Traditional Media	Agreed campaign communications action plan. Press releases issued. Communications with media.	Amount (& value) of coverage of the issue in the traditional media mentioning, or prompted by, the organisation.
Digital communications	Agreed campaign digital communications action plan. Social media posts. Web updates on the issue.	The extent that agreed campaign digital communications action plan objectives were achieved. The extent social media posts are read and shared. Supportive posts on the issue by other people. Website visit and usage statistics. Download of statistics or of policy-focused documents. Readership of relevant online blogs or newsletters.
Organisational capacity	Prepared a written case for the change. Agreed a campaign strategy/ action plan. Staff hours available to work on a campaign. Extent that campaign strategy/ action plan objectives were achieved.	Citations in policy documents or reports. Number of attendees or participants at campaign events or meetings. Invitations to speak at policy events.

The most useful methods of assessing the extent that intermediate outcomes have been achieved include:

- Track the changes made to a draft document as a result of the organisation’s consultation response
- Social media analytics
- Web analytics
- A Poll of a sample of the population
- Putting questions to a panel of politicians (for example, Stratagem⁹ have a panel of MLAs that are polled on particular issues)
- questionnaires
- interviews
- focus groups
- personal logs and reports of activity.
- Minutes of meetings

You may also want to think about what indicators can help you to evaluate the success of your public policy engagement or impact, such as:

⁹ Stratagem-NI.com

EXAMPLE

ANYTOWN HOMELESS ACTION¹⁰

Anytown Homeless Action provides street work, emergency accommodation and resettlement services for people who are homeless in the area. However, they recognised that the statutory protection for single people who were homeless was inadequate to ensure that they could obtain adequate permanent accommodation. Using a Theory of Change Whole Systems approach, they developed a campaign to get the relevant legislation changed.

The Logic Model they developed for the campaign looked like the following:

Anytown Homeless Action Theory of Change

Inputs	► Activities	► Outputs	► Early outcomes	► Intermediate Outcomes	► Final impact or Outcome
Staff time Campaign-ing budget (inc. commissioning polls)	Prepared a written case for the change. Agreed a campaign strategy/ action plan. Conduct a poll of MLAs. Emailing MLAs. Face-to-face meetings with key MLAs from all parties. Conduct a media campaign. Commission a before and after public attitude survey.	No. of Social media posts. No. of press releases. No. of Web updates on the issue. The no. of coalition meetings (& no. attending). No. of meetings with political parties and MLAs. No. of campaign emails to MLAs. No. of meetings with partners and allies. Number of attendees or participants at campaign events or meetings.	Number of emails to MLAs on the issue which are opened. Active statement of support from political parties. The no. of campaign partners and allies writing to decision-makers and/or influencers to seek the change. Amount of coverage in traditional media. Social media coverage and shares. Web visits on campaign issue (analytics)	Extent that campaign strategy/ action plan objectives were achieved. Change in attitudes of policymakers (minutes of meetings) Change in attitudes of MLAs (poll) Change in attitudes of the public (poll). Number of supportive mentions of the campaign issued in the NI Assembly and select committees (Hansard). The extent that decisionmakers and influencers attribute the change to the organisation (interviews and/or poll).	Change in housing legislation to include single people in the right to housing

The main tools for measuring the impact of the campaign were therefore as follows:

- A before and after poll of MLAs
- A before and after poll of the public
- Interviews with decisionmakers
- Minutes of debates in the NI Assembly and the relevant select committee(s)
- Estimated value of traditional media coverage
- Web and social media analytics
- Campaign action plan (with SMART objectives) and monitoring report
- Campaign coalition minutes

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of using a Theory of Change approach to measuring the impact of campaigning/lobbying include the following:

STRENGTHS:

- It provides an overarching framework that highlights the logical relationship between inputs and activities, and activities and outcomes.
- It helps clarify the difference between outputs and outcomes.
- It highlights the importance of beginning with the outcomes that you want to achieve and working back from there.

WEAKNESSES:

- It Is difficult to quantify outcomes, or the impact of campaigning and lobbying.
- In practice, the robust evidence that provides assurance that one stage of the Logic Model inevitably leads to the next stage is often not provided. In particular, in this area, assessing the extent that initial or intermediate outcomes are achieved does not necessarily demonstrate the likelihood that the final outcome will be achieved.
- It is difficult to be sure the extent that one organisation's influence over another.
- It is not possible to establish a control group, so it is impossible to be confident that the changes in policy or practice were as a result of the campaigning or lobbying programme.
- Measuring impact should include unexpected and negative changes to people that are not predicted by the model.

RESOURCES

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An Advocacy Evaluation Mini-Toolkit: Tips and Tools for Busy Organizations by LFA Group (2013). <https:// www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/ main/advocacy-evaluation-mini-toolkit.pdf>

Evaluating Public Policy Engagement and Impact UCL Public Policy. Available from <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/public-policy/support/resources/how-guides/evaluating-public-policy-engagement-and-impact>

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How to measure and evaluate your advocacy efforts Fiscal Note <https://fiscalnote.com/blog/how-to-measure-and-evaluate-your-advocacy-efforts>

NCP Measuring your campaigning impact – an introduction Available from <https://www.thinknpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Measuring-your-campaigning-impact-an-introduction.pdf>

No Royal Road: Finding and Following the Natural Pathways in Advocacy Evaluation by Jim Coe and Rhonda Schlangen (2019). <https:// www.evaluationinnovation.org/wp-content/ uploads/2019/03/No-Royal-Road.pdf>

Pathfinder: A Practical Guide to Advocacy Evaluation by Innovation Network for the Atlantic Philanthropies (2009). http://www.pointk.org/ resources/files/pathfinder_evaluator_web.pdf

Pathways for Change: 10 Theories to Inform Advocacy and Policy Change Efforts by ORS Impact (2013). <https://www.orsimpact.com/directory/ Pathways-for-Change-10.htm>

The Advocacy Strategy Framework: A Tool for Articulating an Advocacy Theory of Change by Julia Coffman and Tanya Beer at Center for Evaluation Innovation (2015). <https://www.evaluationinnovation. org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/AdocacyStrategy-Framework.pdf> Intermediate Level

When the Best Offense is a Good Defense: Understanding and Measuring Advocacy on the Defense by ORS Impact (2019). https://www. orsimpact.com/directory/Defensive_Advocacy.htm

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System Maturity Matrix. Evaluation Systems Change blog. Available at www.thinknpc.org/blog

13.

MEASURING SOCIAL VALUE - PROCUREMENT



Third sector organisations always try to have a positive impact on people's lives. It is why they exist. Social value is about measuring these impacts and using this understanding to make better decisions to further improve this impact on people's lives.

The concept of social value has been increasingly adopted in public sector tendering, so that any company, from either the private or non-profit sector, bidding for a public sector contract of a certain size is required to demonstrate the additional social value the company will deliver along with delivering the core aspects of the contract.

The NI Executive regularly reviews and updates PPN 01/21 Social Value in Procurement following comprehensive reviews. The current guidance (www.finance-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-12/PPN%2001%2021%20-%20Social%20Value%20in%20Procurement%20Word%20master.pdf) is effective from February 2025.

At present, under the NI Executive memorandum PPN 01/21, it is mandatory to score social value at 10% of the award criteria where the Public Contract Regulations apply on central government services over £500,000. Public sector procurement in Northern Ireland is required to take account of the Scoring Social Value Procurement model (contained in Note PPN 01/21. The key themes contractors are currently required to consider are as follows:

- Increasing secure employment and skills
- Building ethical and resilient supply chains
- Delivering Climate Action
- Promoting wellbeing

It is also required to promote equality & good relations and for major capital projects to plan for how the local community will be consulted.

Companies are expected to adopt fair work practices for all workers engaged in the delivery of the contract. Fair work is as per the Carnegie Trust definition and contains 7 measurements. They are

- (i) terms of employment,
- (ii) pay and benefits,
- (iii) job design and nature of work,
- (iv) social support and cohesion,
- (v) health, safety and psychosocial wellbeing,
- (vi) work/life balance and
- (vii) voice/representation

There are third sector organisations which already or are in a position to help companies in relation to some of these.

Note PPN 01/21 gives examples of the kinds of strategies that a company/organisation might take to promote these themes:

Increasing secure employment and skills

- Create employment, retraining and other return to work opportunities for those furthest from the labour market and/or from deprived areas.
- Create employment and training opportunities in industries with known skills shortages or in high growth sectors.
- Create employment and training opportunities that support a more resource efficient, greener and low carbon economy.
- Support in-work progression and educational attainment in the workforce, including training schemes that address skill gaps and result in recognised qualifications, to help people to move into higher paid work by developing new skills.
- Support in-work progression and training opportunities to help people gain new skills and recognised qualifications that are relevant to a more resource efficient, greener and low carbon economy.
- Increase the representation of disabled people in the contract workforce.
- Support disabled people to develop new skills and recognised qualifications.

Building ethical and resilient supply-chains

- Collaborate with the contract's supply chain to ensure fair work and workforce diversity throughout the supply chain.
- Commit to ethical supply chains and practices by identifying and managing risks of modern slavery and human rights abuses in the delivery of the contract, including in the supply chain.
- Create a diverse and innovative supply chain to deliver the contract including new businesses and entrepreneurs, start-ups, micro businesses and VCSEs.
- Support entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, including helping new and small organisations to grow.
- Maximise security of supply, for example by minimising proximity of supply chains to point of delivery.

Delivering Climate Action

- Deliver additional climate action benefits in the performance of the contract including working towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions and/or contributing to climate adaption measures.
- Initiatives that support climate adaptation and mitigation measures to minimise the effects of climate change.
- Demonstrate action to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems by considering environmental protection and improvement in the delivery of the contract, including the supply chain.
- Work toward net zero emissions by measuring the contract's carbon footprint and minimising scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions.
- Initiatives which contribute to improvements of air and water quality and promote nature-based solutions.
- Demonstrate action that supports the circular economy, by minimising waste and extracting the maximum value of resources in the delivery of the contract, including the supply chain.

- Assess and minimise the contract's embodied carbon emissions by minimising use of virgin materials, effective production techniques and effective recovery systems.
- Create Green Jobs and relevant training opportunities that contribute towards a just transition by supporting a more resource efficient, greener and low carbon economy.

Promote Wellbeing

- Build a culture that supports the wellbeing of staff working on the contract.
- Support the wellbeing of staff, suppliers, customers and communities in the delivery of the contract.
- Promote and develop arts and cultural related activities relevant to the contract.
- Support community cohesion and good relations in areas where the contract is delivered, for example, by ensuring people have a voice in decisions that impact them.
- Take action to improve equality, diversity and inclusion in the contract's

- workforce and throughout the supply chain.
- Support local initiatives to reduce poverty and inequality in the area where the contract is delivered.

These are themes that many third sector organisations are involved in, providing major opportunities for these organisations to partner with companies bidding for major government contracts.

Clear guidance is available from <https://socialvalueni.org>.

The website <https://socialvalueni.org/contractors/find-a-broker> tries to connect suppliers bidding for public sector contracts with social value clauses with third sector organisation who can deliver on these clauses.

Belfast City Council has developed its own social value policy which includes a social value procurement toolkit which can be found at <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/documents/social-value-procurement-policy#toolkit>

Belfast City Council Social Value initiative points-based¹¹ system

Category	Measure
Employment opportunities	52 employment weeks created for apprenticeships
	52 employment weeks created for priority groups
	52 employment weeks created for students
Initiatives to support employability	Employability or skills initiatives to support priority groups
	Initiatives to support employability of young people
Initiatives to support social opportunities	Use of a social enterprise or a co-operative in the supply chain (in relation to contract)
	Initiatives to support VCSE organisation
	Initiatives to improve good relations between people from different religious, political, racial and ethnic backgrounds
	Initiatives to prevent or reduce crime including hate crime and/or antisocial behaviour
	Initiatives to prevent or reduce health-related inequalities
	Initiatives to increase participation in sports-related activities
Environmental opportunities	Initiatives to increase participation in arts-related activities
	An action to reduce carbon emissions associated with energy supply
	An action to reduce carbon emissions associated with transportation
	An action to improve waste management including recycling, upcycling, supporting the circular economy
	An action to improve resource efficiency
	An action to enhance environmental natural resources and biodiversity

Some procurement tender documents structure the social value requirement under three ESG pillars:

- **Environmental** – How it interacts with, and impacts on, its surrounding environment (e.g. natural world, waste and recycling, emissions, and resource consumption. How well does the organisation promote sustainability?).
- **Social** – How it improves society (e.g. skills & innovation, diversity & inclusion, wellbeing, and fairness. How well does it deliver public benefit to employees, people and communities?).

- **Governance** – How it manages its governance (e.g. ethics, purpose, oversight and risks. For a charity bidding, how well, for example, does it comply with the charity Code of Good Governance?).
- Organisations are also encouraged to use some of the many available reporting standards such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, World Economic Forum, Sustainability Accountability Standards Board, Global Reporting Initiative and Climate Disclosure Standards Board, the charity Code of Good Governance, etc.

As government guidance on procurement is regularly reviewed and updated, third sector organisations should ensure they have the most recent guidance.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of using a Social Value approach to procurement include the following:

STRENGTHS:

- It provides a framework that third sector organisations can use to think about how it can think about its own social value impact as well as the social value of major contractors.
- Articulating and measuring a third sector organisation's social value can make it more successful in bidding for substantial tenders
- It provides third sector organisations with the opportunity to build mutually beneficial relationships with private sector companies who are tendering for substantial contracts and, therefore, need to demonstrate their own social value. Third sector organisations, by definition, are about providing social value.
- It may prompt thinking about issues that most third sector organisations rarely think about such as supply chain management, modern slavery, etc.
- It can link to various national and international standards and frameworks.

WEAKNESSES:

- Most third sector organisations have no experience, as contractors, of large-scale procurement and articulating social value in this way.
- The kinds of questions used in major public tenders are designed to suit large private contractors and so are usually less relevant third sector organisations than they might hope. Although additional aspects of social value can be added, even if they are not in the tender social value framework.
- Most public sector procurement does not require a social return on investment.

RESOURCES

Scoring Social Value Procurement model (contained in Note PPN 01/21
[chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/file:///C:/Users/roger/Documents/CO3/CO3%20Measuring%20Impact%20Training/PPN%200121%20Scoring%20Social%20Value%20\[pdf%20version%2006%20Oct%202022\].pdf](chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/file:///C:/Users/roger/Documents/CO3/CO3%20Measuring%20Impact%20Training/PPN%200121%20Scoring%20Social%20Value%20[pdf%20version%2006%20Oct%202022].pdf)

Sourcing and Construction Toolkits <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/sourcing-and-construction-toolkits-0>

Belfast City Council Social Value Procurement Policy
[Belfastcity.gov.uk/documents/social-value-procurement-policy](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/documents/social-value-procurement-policy)

Social Value Procurement Policy (belfastcity.gov.uk)

Understanding E.S.G. for Charities Charity Digital
<https://charitydigital.org.uk/topics/understanding-esg-for-charities-10661>

Social Value and Commissioning Toolkit A guide for charities on social value and commissioning produced for the Children's Partnership – 2015
chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://artswork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/crm/54f5bdf9956db_social-value-and-commissioning-toolkit-final-with-ncb-logos.pdf

Sustainability NI Social value Toolkit available at
<https://www.sustainableni.org/sites/default/files/SNI%20-%20Social%20Value%20Toolkit.pdf>

14. MEASURING IMPACT THROUGH SOCIAL VALUE



The concept of third sector social value is increasingly used in a wider sense than just tendering. Social value is a useful concept in the measurement of social impact. It tries to understand and record the wellbeing changes an organisation desires and help an organisation to better understand the impact of its choices. Changes in aspects of wellbeing require measuring, recording, analysing and reporting on rich social value data on how people's lives are changed by a particular programme or organisation, and using this information to inform decision-making to improve social value.

An account of social value is an organisational story about the changes experienced by people. It can include qualitative, quantitative and comparative information on how people's lives are affected by a particular programme or organisation.

International Principles of Social Value

The international Principles of Social Value provide basic building blocks for anyone who wants to make decisions that take this wider definition of social value into account, in order, for example, to increase equality, improve wellbeing and/or increase environmental sustainability. By applying the principles, it is possible to create a consistent and credible account for the value that is being created or destroyed. See Appendix 11.

Ten impact questions

Social ValueUK suggests asking the following questions to help measuring social impact:

- What problem(s) is the organisation trying to solve? What are the root causes of these problem(s)?
- What is the organisation's proposed solution(s) to the problem? Do some need to come before others?
- Where is the research evidence of what work best in relation to the problem?
- Who experiences changes in their lives as a result of what the organisation does?
- What changes are (or likely to be) experienced?
- How can the organisation measure these changes?
- Can the organisation put a monetary figure on the value of these changes?
- How much of each change has happened (or is likely to happen)?
- How much of each change is caused by the organisation's activities?
- How long do we need to measure the changes for?
- What is the relative importance of the different changes?
- Which changes matter and are important enough for the organisation to manage?

Monetarising social value

In considering the social value of a programme or set of programmes in quantitative terms, there needs to be a common unit of value or currency. For many years, companies and governmental bodies have used economic tools, such as Cost-Benefit Analysis and 'Green Book'

Economic Appraisal to inform decisions about major investments, particularly capital projects. Private sector initiatives are primarily assessed directly on the anticipated financial (£) costs and income of the planned project, usually against other options, including other sites. However, increasingly it is acknowledged that such assessments need to take account of wider social and environmental impacts that are harder to allocate a monetary value to and therefore require the use of what are known as financial proxies.

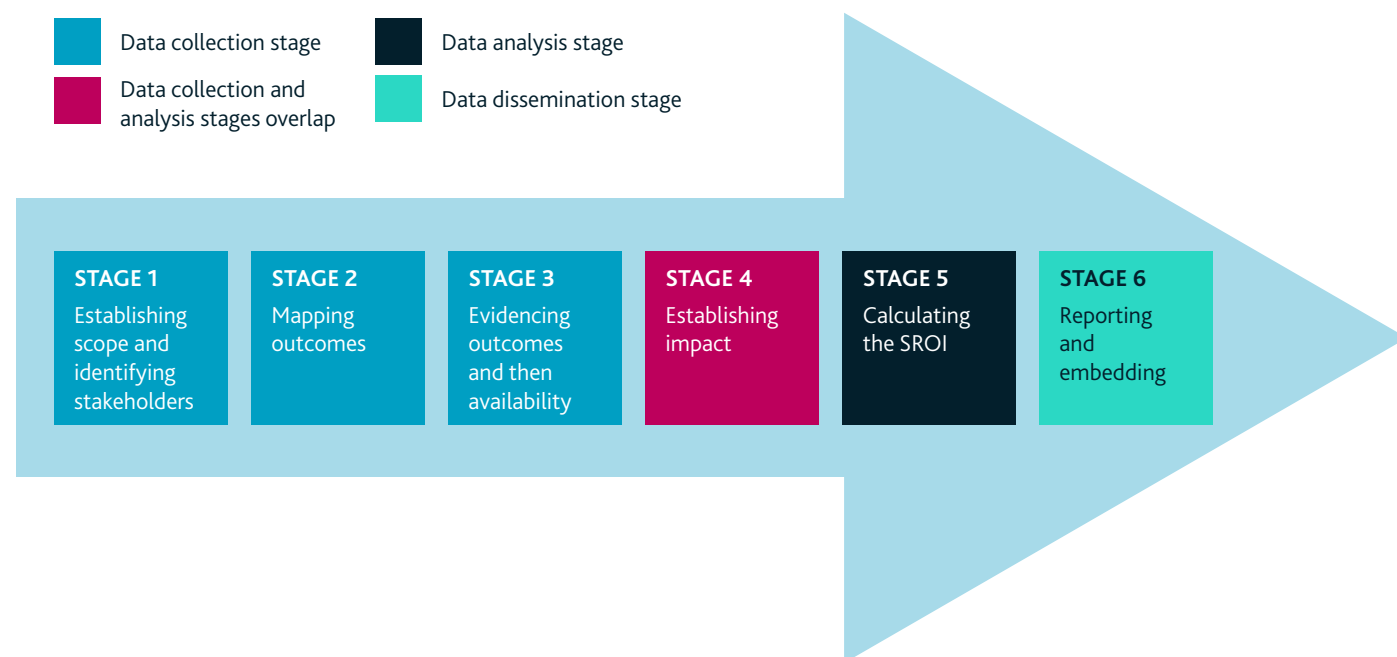
Social Return on Investment (SROI)

The core, and most challenging aspect, of measuring Social Value is establishing what is often called the Social Return on Investment (SROI). It is a framework for measuring and accounting for social value, incorporating social, environmental and economic costs and benefits using monetary values (often using financial proxies) to represent them. This enables a ratio of benefits to costs to be calculated. For example, a ratio of 1:3 indicates that an investment of £1 delivers £3 of social value. For government funded initiatives, it can also be described as a public investment of £1, which saves the public purse £3.

SROI is, actually, about value, however, rather than money. Money is simply a common unit of measurement and as such is a useful and is a widely accepted way of conveying value in society. There are two types of SROI: Evaluative, which is conducted retrospectively and based on actual outcomes that have already taken place; and Forecast, which predicts how much social value will be created if the activities meet their intended outcomes. They can help assess different options, show how investment can maximise impact and are also useful for identifying what should be measured once the project is up and running.

A lack of good outcomes data, however, is one of the main challenges when doing an SROI for the first time. To enable a SROI to be carried out, as with a Theory of Change and Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA), an organisation will need detailed data on outcomes.

There are various SROI frameworks which vary in their simplicity/complexity. Below is the simple commonly used 6-stage model:



STAGE 1 – Establishing scope and identifying stakeholders

Establishing the scope of the SROI process requires deciding whether it covers the outcomes of the work of the whole organisation and all its programmes and beneficiaries; one particular existing programme and its service-users; or a new initiative which is at the planning stage. The first SROI study might be carried out on a single programme as a pilot, or because it is required by the funder of the programme. Scope also requires identifying all the key stakeholders, i.e. all those who might materially affect or be affected by the activities within the scope, regardless of whether the change or the outcome for any of these stakeholders might be positive or negative, intentional or unintentional.

STAGE 2 – Mapping outcomes

As with most other impact measurement frameworks in this guide, SROI is an outcomes-based measurement tool, as measuring outcomes is the only way you can be sure that the desired changes for stakeholders are taking place. For example, if a training programme aims to get people into jobs then successful completion of the training itself is an output, not an outcome. Actually, getting the job, however, is an outcome. See the Theory of Change section, above, for more about outputs and outcomes. Talking to service-users can be invaluable in informing the development of appropriate outcomes, asking, for example, 'How would you describe how your life has changed?'; and 'What do you do differently now?'. Outcomes also need to be consistent with the aims and values of

the organisation. When a new outcome is identified by stakeholders or by assessment of other factors, the organisation will need to decide whether it is an entirely new outcome, or in fact part of an existing chain of outcomes.

Sometimes it takes years for outcomes to be achieved – for example, slowing the rate of climate change – but there may be observable changes along the way, which are sometimes described as milestones, distance travelled, or intermediate outcomes. It is important to establish what this chain of outcomes is, not least because the activity of the organisation may only bring about some changes in the chain.

STAGE 3 - Evidencing outcomes and then availability

This stage involves agreeing indicators to measure the extent that outcomes have been achieved and then actually measuring and analysing data to show the extent that outcomes have happened. It is important to check that they are not only measurable but that the organisation will be able to measure them within the scope and the resources they have. It is important to measure what matters, i.e. measures progress towards the desired outcome(s), rather than finding an indicator that is easy to measure, but which is a poor measure of that outcome. If the outcome is important the organisation will need to find a way to measure it. Look into what is already being done in this area, or is in the research literature, that could be used or adapted or develop new ways of measuring outcomes. Outcomes data may be collected against the indicators available from either existing

or new sources (internal or external) through case files, interviews, surveys, focus groups, etc. The organisation may need to have a suitable database to support the collection and analysis of the appropriate data.

STAGE 4 - Putting a monetary value on the outcomes

It is critical to SROI to agree appropriate financial (£) values for the outcomes, including appropriate financial proxies for non-monetary indicators. This process of valuation is often referred to as monetisation because monetary values are assigned to things that do not normally have a market price. In SROI, financial proxies are used to estimate the social value of non-traded goods, helping create an estimate of the total social value created by an intervention.

Sometimes monetarisation is relatively straight forward. For example, a service-user who is unemployed and gets a job will benefit from their wages or salary, less taxes, National Insurance Contributions and their loss of benefits. The state, in turn, will benefit from savings on unemployment and related benefits, but will gain from the taxes paid by those now in work. However, establishing some monetary values is more challenging. SROI needs to give values to things that are harder to value and are routinely left out of traditional economic appraisal. There are several techniques available:

- In 'Stated Preference and Contingent Valuation', stakeholders are asked directly how they value things, either

relative to other things or in terms of how much they would pay to have, or avoid, something. This approach assesses people's willingness to pay, or accept compensation, for something. For example, you may ask people to value a decrease in aircraft noise in their town i.e. their willingness to pay for it.

- 'Revealed Preference' techniques infer valuations from the prices of related market-traded goods. A common technique for inferring preference is to look at the way in which people spend money. Many governments produce data on average household spending, which includes categories like 'leisure', 'health' or 'home improvement'. Although flawed in some ways, not least because it excludes the value of free public services, it can also be useful.
- Another form of 'Revealed Preference' is 'Hedonic Pricing', which builds up a value from the market values of constituent parts of the service or good being considered. This method could be used to value environmental amenities that affect the price of residential properties. For example, it can help us value clean air by estimating the premium placed on house prices in areas with clean air.
- Another approach recognises that people are generally willing to travel some distance, or give up some time, to access goods and services on which they place a value. This inconvenience can be translated into money to derive an estimate of the benefits of those goods/services. This is called the travel cost/time value method.

Examples of potential proxies for various kinds of programmes are given in Appendix 6.

In choosing credible financial proxies, it is important to recognise that some proxies are more credible than others for different stakeholders. The most credible proxies have been used before (by third party sources with existing credibility), or are, at least, based on robust research, which can be referenced. Other proxies are market comparisons (what it would cost to achieve the same outcome), or those based on working assumptions that will need to be related to proposed future improvements but are usually less credible. A sensitivity analysis can test the overall impact that the proxies have on the SROI analysis.

STAGE 4 – establishing impact

It is important to collect evidence on outcomes, monetise them and identify those aspects of change that would have happened anyway, or are a result of other factors or organisations, and/or displaced benefits for other people, so these factors can be eliminated from consideration. In carrying out an SROI exercise, it is important to avoid some errors which can result in overstating the impact ratio and damaging the credibility of the findings. These include unit v. marginal costing; double-counting; deadweight; displacement; attribution; drop-off; payback period; and who saves the money. These 'sensitivity factors' are central to the SROI Stages and Principles of Social Value by forcing organisations to consider the counterfactual and recognise the role that others play in achieving the stated social value. These are discussed in appendix 14 below, as well as in the two examples below. To assess the impact of an incorrect assumptions in relation to any of these, it can be useful to carry out a sensitivity analysis using different individual assumptions to assess the impact of the SROI ratio.

Where an organisation believes that change has taken place, then it will often also continue to generate value. The timescale used is generally the number of years you expect the benefit to endure after the intervention. This is known as the duration of the outcome or the benefit period. Ideally, the duration would be determined by asking people how long an intervention lasted for them. However, if this information is not available, other research for a similar group may need to be used to predict the benefit period, such as the likelihood that ex-offenders will begin offending again, or that people in employment will lose their jobs.

STAGE 5 - Calculating the SROI

This stage involves adding up all the benefits, in monetarised terms, subtracting any negatives (also in monetarised terms) and comparing the result to the investment (inputs £). This is also where the sensitivity of the results can be tested, and stakeholders consulted on the results.

Assurance is the process by which the information in your report is verified. There should be appropriate independent assurance of your report's claims. There are two levels of assurance: Compliance with the principles of good practice in social value/SROI; and assurance of the accuracy of the data. Social Auditing/accounting can be a useful tool for this (see <https://www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk/>). For more information on the assurance processes

and sources of support, refer to www.thesroinetwork.org.

STAGE 6 – Reporting and embedding

This vital step involves disseminating the findings, embedding good outcomes processes in the organisation, making recommended changes to the programme(s) to increase impact, and agree an action plan for future measurement of SROI. Having completed an SROI analysis, the final, important stage is designing a clear, attractive report, reporting to your internal and external stakeholders, communicating the results, and embedding the SROI process in the organisation.

Unless you take action as a result of carrying out your SROI analysis there was not much point in undertaking it in the first place. To be useful, the SROI analysis needs to result in change. Such change might be in how those that invest in your activities understand and fund the work, or how those that commission the services describe, specify and manage the contract. However, there will also be implications for the organisation and/or programme(s). It may result in changes in the organisation, responding to findings and thinking through implications for strategic planning, organisational objectives, governance, systems and working practices to maximise social value in future. It may result in a review of planned programmes in order to try and maximise the social value. Its findings may also result in a review of planned systems for gathering information on the Theory of Change, outcome indicators, deadweight, attribution and displacement (see below) to improve the next SROI results.

Too many social value/SROI exercises are one-off studies. It is important to secure commitment to embed further social value/SROI analyses in the organisation, including:

- A process for regular data collection, particularly for outcome indicators.
- A process for training staff to ensure knowledge and expertise is retained in the organisation even if there is turnover.
- A clear timeline for the next SROI analysis.
- A description of the resources that will be required for ongoing monitoring of SROI.
- How data security will be ensured.

EXAMPLE

NOW GROUP

NOW Group has pioneered the use of SROI in Northern Ireland over the past two decades. Its social economy business, Gauge, facilitates SROI processes for other organisations through its accredited associates. Its own SROI reports provide very useful examples of such reports, highlighting in detail its methodology and findings in a very clear way. The most recent report is available at

NOW Group 2022 SROI Study - chrome-extension://efaidnbmnmnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.nowgroup.org/_files/d/46f321_8a379af69238492cbf3becef66cf9b00.pdf?index=true

The Summary of the SROI 2023/24 Results section of the report highlights some of the findings and learning from the SROI process:

“We have found that NOW Group services returned 21 times the initial investment through the outcomes that it delivered for its stakeholders in 2023-24.

This SROI study was enhanced by the work of the NOW Group staff led by the Head of Quality & Impact in the preparation and implementation of the project plan.

Recommendations from the 2022-23 study were actioned resulting in the highest sample size to date (30% n=489) of participants contributing to the process in addition to tailored consultations with employers, volunteers and teachers. Through consultation, we were able to evidence that 41% of the social value created accrued to this cohort.

256 participants gained employment with 236 sustaining it for more than six months resulting in more individual income and addressing the persistent systematic inequalities in employment between those with and without disabilities. At a macro level, this helps to reduce the pressure on government support and welfare systems and contributes to what is a record low unemployment rate in Northern Ireland10. This demonstrates that NOW Group has a pivotal role in continuing to shape future employability support for those furthest from the labour market. This combined with NOW Group's province wide reach and priorities around the environment strongly aligns with DfE's four priorities of: Good Jobs, Regional Balance, Productivity and Carbon Emissions.

Participants gained 1540 accreditations to improve their life and career options.

Outcomes in relation to improved, health and wellbeing, motivation, independence, safety and security, communication and social interaction were evidenced and valued in the SROI calculations.

Families (inclusive of parents, carers, siblings, and those families supported by the FS) account for 24% of the social value generated. This can be attributed to the outcomes that were evident from the data analysis. (Increased parental capacity, reduced stress and anxiety, stronger family unit, increased respite, improved health and wellbeing and a greater sense of independence).

As of August 2024 34 NOW GROUP SROI 2023-24 JAM Card users accounted for 18% while employers account for 8%

of the social value. Data collated from a sample of employers confirmed that the primary outcome accrued is increased disability awareness which has facilitated a more inclusive culture for staff with learning difficulties. Employees are taking this back into their own communities thus contributing to a greater societal awareness and inclusivity.

Health & Social Care Trusts have benefitted through savings resulting from the deregistration of children in families where a parent has a learning difficulty and the 18,104 hours of support to NOW CONNECTS participants negating the need for them to attend alternative HSCT day care provision.”

The detailed NOW Group SROI Reports are available from the NOW Group website.

Social Value Engine

Another SROI tool being used in Northern Ireland is the Social Value Engine, jointly developed by Rose Regeneration and East Riding of Yorkshire Council in response to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, which requires public bodies to think about how they can secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. The engine works alongside and has incorporated Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology and the seven Social Value UK principles. It has a database of more than a thousand peer-reviewed financial proxies derived from reliable sources, which are regularly updated. It is currently being actively promoted by the Rose Regeneration (http://roseregeneration.co.uk) and Rural Community Network in Northern Ireland (https://www.ruralcommunitynetwork.org).

EXAMPLE

ANNAGH SOCIAL FARM

Annagh Social Farm engages people with disabilities in meaningful and enjoyable horticulture, conservation, and animal husbandry activities in a supportive natural environment. The farm is not a specialized treatment farm; rather the farm remains a typical working farm where people in need of support benefit from participation in the family's daily life and farm activities in a non-clinical environment.

Through engaging in a range of activities, participants not only develop farming skills, but also social skills, confidence, and the ability to work as a team in the workplace and out in the community. A summary of their Social Value Engine report can be found at

https://www.ruralsupport.org.uk/social_farming/annagh-care-farm/

The COVID pandemic has been particularly difficult for the organisation. Normally, the farm would have taken up to 40 participants in any one year along with hosting numerous learning days with local schools. However, because of lockdown restrictions, the

farm was only able to take one cohort of 5 participants in early autumn 2020.

Outcomes chosen by Annagh Social Farm for this analysis included the following: -

- Participants engaging in arts/crafts activities.
- Participants experiencing work and life on the farm.
- Key Volunteers working on the farm.
- Participants working as a group.
- Participants learning new skills.
- Therapeutic effect on participants.
- Respite for carers and parents of participants while on the farm.
- Regular Volunteers assisting with activities and craft work.
- Participants receiving support while on the farm.

They used the Social Value Engine to identify a financial proxy for each of these outputs. Each proxy is linked to an example of activities of similar worth where peer-reviewed research enables us to identify how

much that example costs. Each output area has then been adjusted to take account of:

- **Leakage:** what proportion people from outside the local area attended the farm?
- **Deadweight:** what proportion of the outcomes would have happened anyway if the individual did not attend the farm on a regular basis?
- **Attribution:** what proportion might other organisations assisting the participants/users have contributed to these outcomes?
- **Drop off:** what proportion of the outcomes for the person will deteriorate over time?
- **Displacement:** how much does participants attending the farm displace other projects in the local vicinity?

To answer these questions, the participant families and carers were asked to complete a survey, and a discussion was had with the Social Farm volunteers. As a result of these, the following table shows the amount (as a %) that we have deflated each output area:

Output	Financial proxy	Unit	Quantity	Duration	Benefits per unit
Improved well-being through cultural, recreational and sports activities	Value of engagement in crafts	Per Person	5	1 year	£95.67
Improved social capital, community ties and strengthened civic engagement through greater use of community space	Value of increased happiness through living near green space	Per Person	5	1 year	£348
Increased volunteering and potential for greater community participation and development	Value that frequent volunteers place on volunteering	Per Person	1	1 year	£16,118.00
Improved trust, relationship building and group participation	Annual value attributed to change to seeing friends and relatives most days from once or twice a week	Per Person	5	1 year	£21,054.00
Improved life satisfaction	Adult learning course that made someone more satisfied with their life overall	Per Person	5	1 year	£947.00
Growing having a therapeutic impact	Cost of therapy	Per Hour	255	1 year	£79.57
Improved health and wellbeing for carers/parents	Average cost of a carer	Per Hour	306	1 year	£18.93
Improved health and wellbeing	per participant Day care support for those with learning disabilities	Per participant per day session	255	1 year	£71
Regular Volunteer Contribution by students	Value placed by a local authority on volunteering	Per Hour	300	1 year	£16.12

The organisation then had to ask themselves the following questions (see appendix 14):

- **Leakage:** what proportion people from outside the local area attended the farm?
- **Deadweight:** what proportion of the outcomes would have happened anyway if the individual did not attend the farm on a regular basis?
- **Attribution:** what proportion might other organisations assisting the participants/users have contributed to these outcomes?
- **Drop-off:** what proportion of the outcomes for the person will deteriorate over time?
- **Displacement:** how much does

participants attending the farm displace other projects in the local vicinity?

To answer these questions, the participant families and carers were asked to complete a survey, and a discussion was had with the Social Farm volunteers and came up with percentages for leakage, deadweight, attribution, displacement, and drop-off in relation to each outcome.

The Social Value for the project was then calculated by dividing each of these output areas by the input cost (what we have called 'expenditure') and applying the deflator figures as above. The costs for the project was £23,859 (£1300 from DAERA) and £3000 volunteer costs (In Kind).

Dividing the net social value return (after leakage, deadweight, attribution, displacement, and drop-off) by the input costs, Annagh Social Farm delivered a social value of £3.13 for every £1 spent in project activity. It should be noted that this was based on 5 participants availing of the services provided, during Covid 19, as opposed to the regular 40 or so attendees that the farm would host every year.

Dividing the net social value return (after leakage, deadweight, attribution, displacement, and drop-off) by the input costs, Annagh Social Farm is delivering a social value of £3.13 for every £1 spent in project activity.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The strengths and weaknesses of using an SROI approach to Social Value include the following:

STRENGTHS:

- Provides a common monetarised social value, so enables organisations and programmes to be compared.
- Assesses the extent that agreed outcomes are achieved.
- Takes account of deadweight, attribution, displacement, and drop-off.
- Takes account of how long the impact is likely to last.
- It results in the creation of a simple ratio of investment to the social value the organisation or programme provides, encouraging government bodies and others to invest in such organisations and programmes.

WEAKNESSES:

- Difficulties establishing the monetarising of social value with the use of financial proxies can cast doubt on the validity of the SROI ratio.
- Estimates of leakage, deadweight, attribution, displacement, and drop-off can lack credibility.
- Along with all other impact measurement processes except RCTs, without a control group, it is difficult to be sure the changes in the beneficiaries were created by the organisation or the specific programme.
- Without qualitative information from service-users, an SROI may not be able to explain why a particular outcome came about, or why it didn't.

RESOURCES

There are a number of online tools that are available to help you with Social Value and SROI. These include:

The SROI network website: www.thesroinetwork.org/publications

nef has pioneered the use SROI in public policy. See: www.neweconomics.org

nef and the London Borough of Camden jointly developed an outcomes-focused commissioning model based on SROI principles. The Sustainable Commissioning Model can be found on the Sustainable Procurement website: www.procurementcupboard.org

Maximise Your Impact report Social Value UK - file:///C:/Users/Roger%20Courtney/Downloads/MaximiseYourImpact.24.10.17-4%20(1).pdf

Guide to Social Return on Investment Cabinet Office. Available at <https://socialvalueuk.org/resources/a-guide-to-social-return-on-investment-2012/>

Valuing the Benefits of Regeneration Economics paper 7: Volume I - Final Report. Communities and Local Government. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6382/1795633.pdf#:~:text=It%20was%20commissioned%20to%20improve%20the%20evidence%20base,results%20of%20evaluations%20of%20regeneration%20schemes%20across%20government.

Social Value self-assessment - https://socialvalueselfassessmenttool.org/login/?redirect_to=https%3A%2F%2Fsocialvalueselfassessmenttool.org%2F&reauth=1

There are a number of Social Value tools, including on full cost recovery, at: www.thinknpc.org

Guidance on economic assessment of spending and investment, see: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/data_greenbook_index.htm

Guidance on Social accounting and social audit, see the SAN Social Accounting and Audit Workbook, Social Audit Network: www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk

Really Telling Accounts!, by John Pearce and Alan Kay, can be found at: www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk Materiality

AccountAbility's work on stakeholder involvement and materiality can be found at: www.accountability.org/

Mapping outcomes Cost analysis A Guide and a toolkit on cost allocation are available from ACEVO at: www.acevo.org.uk/index.cfm/display_page/FCR_3rdsec_tools Valuing inputs Further information on valuing inputs is available at these three websites: www.esf.gov.uk/_docs/July2006Rules_regs_-_Match_funding_trac.doc

Indicator Databank - A crowd-sourced online database of values, outcomes and indicators for stakeholders run by the SROI Network: www.globalvaluexchange.org

The catalogue of generally accepted performance metrics that leading impact investors use to measure social, environmental, and financial success, managed by the Global Impact Investing Network (GIIN): <https://iris.thegiin.org/>

Valuation HM Treasury (2003) Green Book: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/data_greenbook_index.htm

Valuing social goods: Measuring the Value of Culture, Snowball J, Springer Verlag, Heidelberg DE, 2008

A Primer on Nonmarket Valuation, Champ, Boyle and Brown, Kluwer, Dordrecht NL, 2003.

Using Surveys to Value Public Goods; the Contingent Valuation Method, Carson and Mitchell, Washington, USA, 1989. The Department for Work and Pensions

Social Cost-Benefit Analysis Framework (working paper no.86), Daniel Fujiwara, 2010.

Establishing Impact Deadweight A guide to Additionality 2008 by English Partnerships. Available through the website of its successor body, the Homes and Communities Agency, at: <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/ourwork/best-practice-and-guidance> <http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20100911035042/englishpartnerships.co.uk/communitiespublications.htm>

Calculating SROI case studies on the SROI Network website www.thesroinetwork.org

Co-ownership Social Impact Report 2019 <https://www.co-ownership.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Social-Impact-Report-2019-with-SROI-calculation-V5.pdf>

NOW Group 2023/24 SROI Study: www.nowgroup.org/_files/ugd/46f321_08f559148add4d32a9b619e3ca19795d.pdf?index=true

NOW 2024 Impact Card www.nowgroup.org/_files/ugd/46f321_8eef54c7222481bbdc1be718d88b496.pdf?index=true

IMPACT MEASUREMENT SUMMARY & QUESTIONS



To summarise the key elements of this guide, having explored why third sector leaders should ensure that their organisation measures its effectiveness in improving people's lives, the following have been explored, beginning with the simpler approaches and building to the more complex frameworks.

Part 1 includes:

- Simple ways of demonstrating performance that many organisations use, including highlighting achievement of agreed objectives, identifying particular achievements, measuring quantitative outputs and measuring the quality of its activities.
- Simple approaches to after-the-activity/programme qualitative evaluation, including one-to-one Interviews with participants/beneficiaries; detailed case studies; and focus Groups with participants/beneficiaries.
- Simple approaches to after the activity/programme quantitative evaluation, including satisfaction surveys of participants; bespoke surveys capturing perceived changes in skills, knowledge, attitudes or behaviour; and surveys capturing the extent that agreed outcomes are achieved.

Part 2 includes the following more complex Models and Frameworks, including

- Outcome Stars
- Quantitative Controlled Trials
- Theory of Change
- Outcome-Based Accountability (OBA)
- Measuring Community Development
- Measuring the impact of campaigning and lobbying
- Social Value – Social Return on Investment.

Bringing all the learning together from the previous chapters, the following are some of the key questions any third sector leader embarking on its impact measurement journey need to ask themselves:

Beneficiaries/service-users

- Who are our target beneficiaries/ service-users?
- How many beneficiaries/service-users are there?
- What do we know about our target beneficiaries (age, gender, location, ethnicity, political/religious tradition, socio-economic status, etc)?

Beneficiary/service-user Needs

- What are the unmet needs of the

beneficiaries/service-users that prevent them achieving their potential? What are the most important needs that need addressed?

- What are the strengths, views and aspirations of the beneficiaries/service-users that can be built on?
- How robust is the research into the unmet needs of the beneficiaries/ service-users that prevent them achieving their potential?

Stakeholder Expectations

- What are the expectations/aspirations of our stakeholders, esp. funders/ contractors in relation to the measurement of our impact? Have we asked them?
- How are we going to involve our stakeholders in the impact measurement process?

Theory of Change

- What are the outputs to measure, and are there others we need to measure?
- What is/are the final desired outcomes (preferred state) for our beneficiaries/ service-users?
- What are the intermediate desired outcomes (preferred state) for our beneficiaries/ service-users, that need to be achieved in order to make progress towards the final outcomes?
- What are the short-term desired outcomes for our beneficiaries/service-users that need to be achieved in order to make progress towards the intermediate outcomes?
- What are the indicators we can use to measure progress towards achieving the agreed outcomes?
- Have we written up a detailed Theory of Change?
- Have we consulted the key stakeholders on the outcomes and theory of change?

Current services/programmes

- What services/programmes are we currently delivering?
- Is there significant demand for the service we provide?
- Is the demand sustained—do people come back for more?
- How well are the services/programmes

we deliver written up (manualised), which would enable another organisation to replicate the service/ programme with fidelity?

- What evaluations have the services/ programme(s) we are delivering been subject to before (in our organisation or other organisations)? How robust were these evaluations?
- What robust evaluation studies have been conducted on similar services to ours that have been written up in the academic literature? What methods did they use?
- What services/programmes are we planning to deliver? What evidence is there about the outcomes these services/programmes will deliver?

Inputs and Outputs

- How well are our programme budgets broken down into cost centres, with detailed allocated overhead costs?
- How much do we do – number of sessions, length, number of beneficiaries/service-users, etc. (outputs)?
- How many, how often, and how much have service-users engaged with our services (outputs)?
- What is the cost per output?

Service quality

- What systems do we have to assure/ measure the quality of our services/ programmes?
- What processes are in place to ask the beneficiaries/service-users how well we are delivering our services/ programmes?

Case studies

- Do we have clear inspiring case studies that tell the story of a typical beneficiary/ service-user and demonstrate the value of the service/ programme in changing people's lives for the better?
- Do we have strong visual images representing our beneficiaries/service-users that are used ethically?
- Do we have appropriate video-clips of service-users/beneficiaries telling their stories that are used ethically?

Post-programme measurement

- Do we have a system to assess the progress of our individual beneficiaries/ service-users, after a programme?
- Do we have a system for gathering the views of beneficiaries/service-users on how they have changed after the service/programme?
- Do we have a system to assess how participants feel their skills/knowledge/ attitudes/behaviours have changed as a result of the service/programme?
- Do we have the necessary high level of expertise in research, evaluation and/ or impact measurement available to the organisation (internal or external)? Can we access any lack of expertise in these areas?
- What does the international research evidence say about what works in bringing about effective change in relation to the identified needs of our target beneficiary group and achieving the desired outcomes?
- What measurement tools are used in the relevant international academic literature on 'what works' in our field of work?
- What is the robust international academic evidence on what are the most effective programmes in responding to the needs of the beneficiary/service-user group we are concerned about? Can we, or should we be, delivering one of these programmes? What can we learn from these programmes?

Assessing changes in service-users/ beneficiaries - Before-and-after measurement

- Do we have a system to track the progress of our individual beneficiaries/ service-users and take corrective action of necessary?
- Do we have a system for gathering the views of beneficiaries/service-users on how they have changed during/after the service/programme?
- Do we have a system to assess the skills/knowledge/attitudes/behaviours of beneficiaries/service-users both before and after the service/ programme to assess the distance travelled?
- Are there a sufficient number of beneficiaries/ service-users

participating in the evaluation to produce statistically significant results?

- Are we using relevant, robust surveys, or survey questions, that have been used in a range of other studies and discussed in the academic literature?
- Do we have a robust before and after system to measure service-users progress from before joining the programme towards achieving agreed outcomes?
- How robust is the evidence of the extent that our service/programme achieved the outcomes?

Population level impacts

- Might our programme(s) have any impact on the population of the area (e.g. ward or social output area) that is measured by government agencies (e.g. unemployment, people on benefits, etc.)

Unintended impacts

- Have we considered if there might be unintended impacts, positive or negative?

Deadweight and Displacement

- Do we have a system to assess what would have happened to our beneficiaries/ service-users if they had not received our service/programme?
- Does success for our clients mean someone else loses out?

Control groups

- Do we have a control group of people who are similar to our beneficiaries but are not receiving our service (e.g. people on a waiting list) who can be evaluated in parallel with the service-user group?
- Can the intervention group and control group be selected randomly?

Attribution

- Did other organisations or people contribute to the achievement of the outcomes by our beneficiaries/service-users? To what extent?

Cost-effectiveness

- How cost-effective are the services/ programmes i.e. what is the cost of achieving the programme outcomes per participant and per outcome

- attained?
- Could the same outcomes be achieved more cheaply?

Economic impact

- Do we have a robust way of measuring the economic impact (or the impact on the public purse) of our service/ programme, against the costs, in order to assess the Social Return on Investment?

Duration of Impact

- How long will the impact of the programme last? Does the impact fall away over time? What is the long-term impact?

Effectiveness

- Are there other programmes that are more effective or cost-effective -what does the literature say?
- How could our programme become more effective?

Assurance

- Do we have an external mechanism to assure the process and findings of the impact measurement processes (e.g. a social auditor or evaluation reference group)?

Plans for improving impact evaluation

- Have we documented the lessons learnt about evaluation and measuring our impact? Do we have an agreed written plan for how we are going to improve how we measure impact?

Impact Report

- Have we disseminated a detailed Impact report that explains our methodology and findings?

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