

# **Introduction to Evaluation**

**Guide for small charities and  
community groups**

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## What is Evaluation?

Your organisation or group is doing many great things that improve the lives of clients, volunteers and members of community, but you might struggle to evidence the impact of this to commissioners and funding bodies. Evaluation is an activity that helps you to assess your project and its achievements. Evaluation can provide evidence about what works or doesn't work, what impact activities have on participants and the reasons why. It can also help to highlight future improvement needs and determine if the project is worth delivering again, or if it is transferable to other areas.

This guide introduces you to the basic concepts of evaluation, and helps you to start to think how to approach the evaluation of your project.

## Who Evaluates?

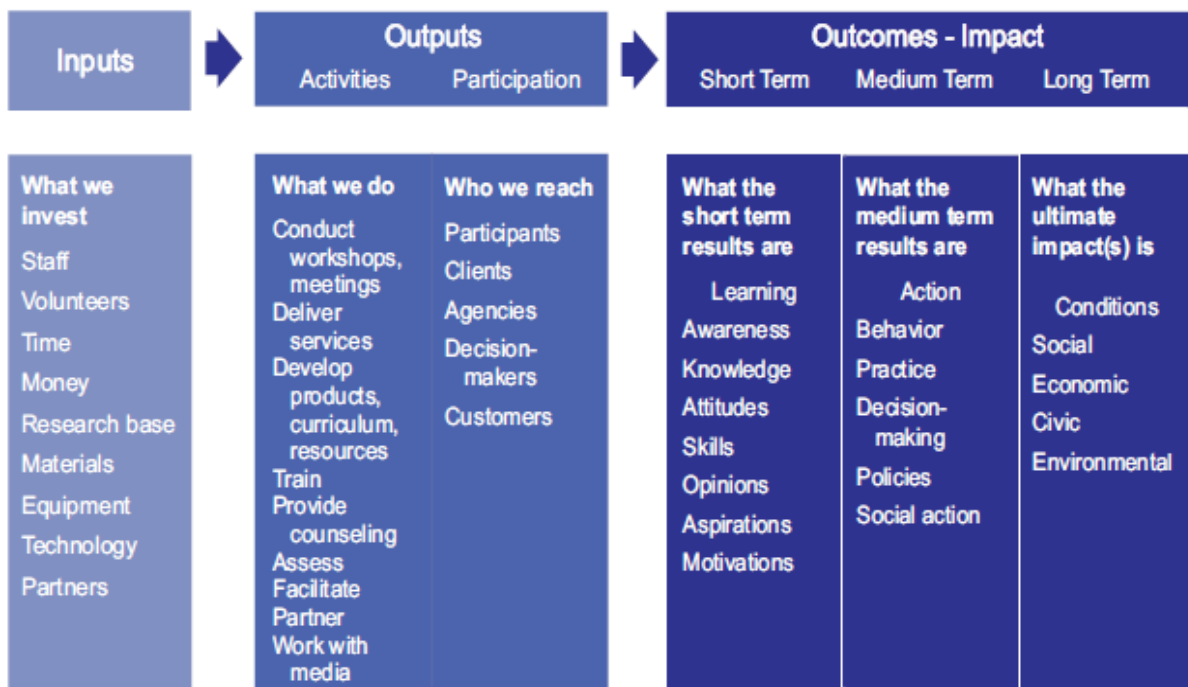
You or anyone who is involved or has an interest in the project delivery can conduct the evaluation. This is called 'self-evaluation', and in general is quite cost effective.

You can also involve an external evaluator if you would prefer a more in depth and/or objective assessment of the project.

## What to Evaluate?

The table below gives you an idea of what areas could be assessed as part of your evaluation.





Source: University of Wisconsin Program Development and Evaluation 2002

## How to evaluate?

### Develop an evaluation plan

Evaluation includes four key stages: planning, gathering evidence, reporting and sharing findings. It is important to schedule enough time for evaluation activities, and to ensure that the right resources are in place for the data collection activities.

Develop an evaluation plan which clarifies what aspects of the activity to evaluate and the questions to ask. Decide on the questions based on what you or your audience want to know, and what resources you have available for the evaluation.

Select the people who are going to contribute to your evaluation. These could be members/participants, volunteers, delivery partners, members of community and/or individuals taking part in the activity. Also, decide who collects the data, how often, when and where.



## Choose your data collection methods

The data collection methods should be determined based on how appropriate they are for answering your evaluation questions and how they suit your participants. There are a range of methods that can be used to gather evidence on which an evaluation can be based:

- Interviews – these can be done face to face or over the phone. You can choose to interview individual members of the group or organise a group interview or a chat.
- Document analysis – you can review existing documents about the activity or anything related to it and summarise the key messages to support your evaluation.
- Questionnaires / surveys - these can be paper based or online.
- You can also ask for verbal or written quotes, comments or testimonials from group members.

## Collate findings into a report and share with all interested parties

Once you have collected all the necessary evidence, collate them into a report and share it with:

- All interested parties and those who contributed to the evaluation, and
- Your social media following.
- Also, inform funding sources about your accomplishments, and
- Use the evaluation findings to support future funding applications.
- Continue to use evaluation to improve your activities and to monitor outcomes.



# Evaluation Check List

Before to start any evaluation activities, these are issues for you to consider.

	Yes	No
Has the evaluation plan been completed?		
Have the right resources (mainly time and people) been allocated to the evaluation?		
Does the evaluation process have a clear timetable?		
Have all participants been informed of the evaluation?		

## Need more help with evaluation?

### Social Research Partners

You are most welcome to contact us for advice on any evaluation related matters. Evaluation is a relatively straightforward activity, even though it often can feel quite daunting so please don't struggle alone. We also provide various evaluation services, and are always excited to hear more about your ideas and plans for fundraising, research and evaluation, and to discuss how we can support you to make these happen.

### Other sources of support and information

Better Evaluation: [www.betterevaluation.org](http://www.betterevaluation.org) is an excellent and very comprehensive online resource for anyone thinking about an evaluation.

Also, if you are planning to use online surveys for your evaluation Survey Monkey: [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com), is a free, easy to use tool for this purpose.



## Key word definitions

**Aim:** The ultimate goal(s) of the project. Answers the questions: “What is the project going to achieve?”

**Anonymity:** The participant should not be identifiable from any published materials. Participant’s personal details, including name, should not be shared with a third party.

**Data Collection Tools / Research Methods:** The tools that allow you carry out your research and to examine your evaluation topic, for example questionnaires, interviews, etc.

**Hard Outcomes** refer to the quantitative outcomes the initiatives aim to achieve. Hard outcomes often appear as numbers, statistics and percentages.

**Objectives** are the ways to achieve your aim(s), the activities needed to carry out to complete the task. Answers the questions: “How are you going to achieve the aim?”

**Qualitative Data:** Non-numerical, in depth data, that investigates the why and how questions. Typically collected through interviews.

**Quantitative Data:** Numerical data or data that can be converted into numbers, and is measured as how many, how long how much, etc. Typically collected through surveys.

**Soft Outcomes:** are qualitative in nature, and difficult to quantify. Soft outcomes are often expressed in words and refer to non-tangible issues such as behaviour, awareness and attitudes.



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