TECH2503 Introduction to Community Media

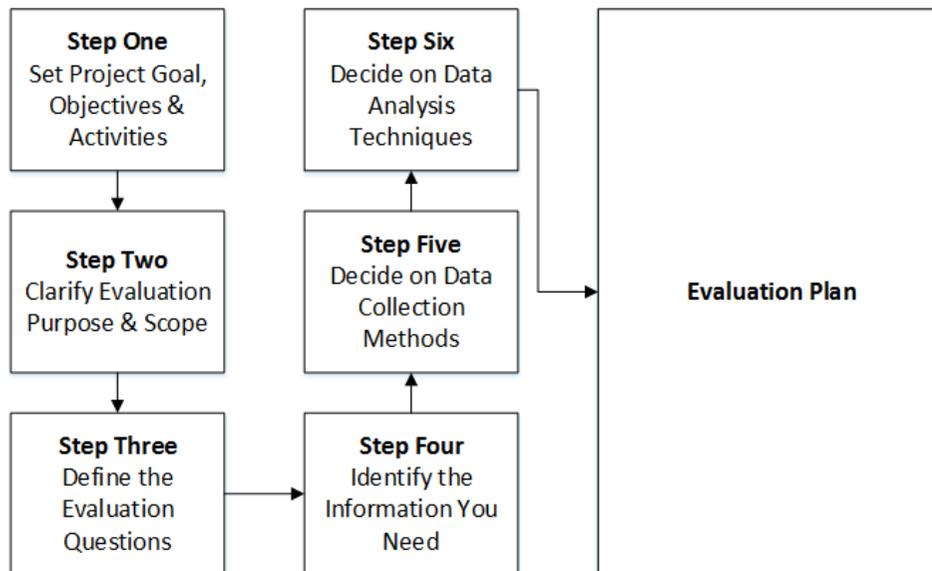**Workshop Twenty – Evaluating Community Media Projects**

1. Evaluation Planning Process

Planning an evaluation can be broken down into a step-by-step process to ensure you think about all the necessary aspects. This planning process should ideally be undertaken by a team, consisting of project officers, community representatives, project participants and other stakeholders. You need to think through all 7 steps at the beginning of the project. This section of the manual gives you detailed information and guidelines for your evaluation design. Using the 7-step evaluation planning checklist for quick reference, you should think through the entire evaluation – ideally before you've even begun the project. http://www.startts.org.au/media/Services-Community-Development-Evaluation-Manual.pdf

Ways of gathering additional information: a menu

1. **A questionnaire survey:** A questionnaire survey can be used to find out more about the views and experiences of users, the wider community, agencies, etc. Use tick-boxes or questions that can be answered with a yes or no if you want to survey a lot of people, or ask a lot of questions. Questions that allow people to say more than just yes or no will give you more detailed information, but they take longer to fill in, a lot more time to analyse, and fewer people will fill them in. Responses to questionnaires are often low so think about offering a prize.

2. **In-depth interviews:** It is usually best to limit the number of in-depth interviews to those people whose involvement with the project gives them particular insights or valuable experience – but try to talk to a range of people who are likely to have different perspectives and views on your project.

3. **Feedback forms:** You can find out whether people have found your training and other events useful by asking them to fill in a short form. Ask them, for example, what they found most and least useful; what they might do differently as a result; what could be improved.

4. **Focus groups and round tables:** A 'focus group' gathers together about half a dozen people who are broadly similar (for example, they are all single parents with young children) to discuss themes or questions you want to address in the evaluation. A 'round table' discussion is a similar idea, which brings together people with different perspectives (for example, teenage parents, teachers, health visitors).

5. **Diaries:** Ask key people to keep diaries of their involvement with the project.

6. **Press reports:** Gather and review press reports on the area (for example, you could see whether positive reports about the area are increasing).

7. **Observation:** Take photographs of your area over time, to see if you can observe any changes. Observe who contributes to meetings or comes to your centre, and see whether this changes over time. This will give you an idea of which types of people you are reaching (men, women, younger, older) and which of these types of people are playing a more confident role in the project.

8. **Case studies:** In order to make the evaluation manageable, you might want to pick a few pieces of work (case studies) to explore in detail, rather than trying to explore everything. Pick pieces of work that illustrate your main objectives.

9. **Evaluation workshops and review meetings:** Hold special workshops/review meetings of people who are involved in your project and use pictures, photographs or models, as well as the spoken word, to get feedback from participants

https://www.knightfoundation.org/media/uploads/publication_pdfs/Impact-a-guide-to-Evaluating_Community_Info_Projects.pdf

2. Evaluating Community Media Projects

The universe of community information projects includes a wide range of activities, but many focus on one or a few of the following:

- **News:** Strengthening credible professional news sources.
- **Voice:** Providing places where residents (e.g., youth, educators, the community at large) can share news and information with their communities.
- **Capacity:** Building the capacity of individuals and/or organizations to address information needs and use digital tools.
- **Awareness**: Creating awareness campaigns about community issues.
- **Action:** Providing platforms for civic engagement and action.

A logic model typically includes information on each of the following topics:

- **Resources** – What resources do we have to work with?
- **Activities** – What is the project doing with its resources?
- **Outputs** – What are the tangible products of our activities?
- **Short-term outcomes** – What changes do we expect to occur within the short term?
- **Mid-term** (or intermediate) outcomes – What changes do we want to see?
- **Long-term** outcomes – What changes do we hope to see over time?

3. Participatory Evaluation

A good community development evaluation will involve the meaningful participation and empowerment of the project participants and community members in the same way that a good community development project should. This means that you not only ask for their feedback about the project but also involve participants in the evaluation planning and if possible in carrying out the research as well. Explain why you want to do evaluation, why it's valuable, and ask for their input.

Some good questions to ask project participants at the start of evaluation planning are:

- What do they want the project to achieve?
- Why are they interested in being a part of the project?
- What are their feelings about evaluation?
- Do they have any concerns or suspicions about it?
- What do they want the evaluation to find out?
- How would the evaluation be most valuable for them?

- What suggestions do they have about how the data should be collected?
- Are there types of data collection that work best in their community?
- Are there types of data collection that they don't like?
- Would they be interested in helping to collect data and conduct the evaluation?

Keep in mind that refugee community members may have very little free time, little or no experience with evaluation research, and/or disempowering or even traumatic past experiences with researchers - so don't be surprised if people aren't necessarily enthusiastic at first! The challenge is to make sure that project participants feel respected and understand that their input is valued and will be used to shape the evaluation so that it is most beneficial for them, rather than feeling like they are the passive subjects of research that they don't see any benefit from.

4. Participatory Evaluation Checklist

To maximise opportunities for meaningful participation make sure you:

- Plan the evaluation at the start – when you are planning the project!
- Seek participants' thoughts on the evaluation at the start, including input into evaluation questions and methodology and any concerns they have.
- Continue to offer opportunities for involvement and input throughout the evaluation process eg. asking for their feedback on project objectives, evaluation plan, etc; involving them in collecting data such as surveys, photos or stories from the community

http://www.startts.org.au/media/Services-Community-Development-Evaluation-Manual.pdf

5. Analyse the evidence

You will now have gathered together quite a lot of information. Working out what it is telling you is the next stage. Does the information you have gathered show that you have reached your goals? Does it highlight any achievements? Does it show up any problem issues that need to be tackled? Be alert to unexpected outcomes, both desirable and undesirable.

For example, evidence of good community cohesion might be that events have been organised which draw together people from across the community or groups who were previously in conflict. Other evidence of community cohesion might be recording stories of how conflicts have been resolved, or the views of formerly distant groups now working as partners. The views of different people involved in, or affected by, the project (including those taking part and service users) can often be as important as numbers in providing evidence of change.

Don't collect too much information or you will be overwhelmed when you come to pull it together and write up your notes. Allow plenty of time to pull the information together. Even if only one or two people initially do the work, it is worth feeding the initial findings back to a wider group of stakeholders to add their insights

6. Make use of What you have Found Out

If there are goals or objectives you have not met, or if you haven't got as far as you had hoped, you need to think about why, and what you can learn from that. There could be a variety of explanations. Here are a few ideas to consider:

Problems with external circumstances:

- The environment in which you are working has changed or worked against you (for example, local or national policies have changed, or a major employer has closed down).

Problems with carrying out your plans:

- You have departed from your original aims.
- You didn't allow enough time or resources.
- Changes in your organisation have meant that you have not been able to do what you said you would do (for example, a key worker left).
- The quality of performance of your organisation has been lower than expected (for example, workers or members have not completed tasks they said they would do).
- Problems with the ideas behind what you want to achieve
- The plans you came up with initially to make things happen have not been successful.
- Your original aims were inappropriate (perhaps they turned out to be not what people wanted).
- Different people involved in the project were working against each other and towards different goals.

Evaluation can help you to:

- Learn from your experience;
- Record what you have learnt, and share it with other stakeholders;
- Check your progress;
- Check whether what you are doing is still what local people want or need;
- Identify strengths and weaknesses in your project;
- Create a basis for future planning;
- Demonstrate whether you have used your resources – time and money – effectively;
- Explain to funders, and others involved in your work, what you have achieved and how successful it is.

Devise a table and identify three characteristics about your project:

Resources	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term

Reviewing the Situation:

What Problems Are You Trying to Solve?	What Would Make Change Happen?	How Do You Plan to Make Change Happen?	What Results Do You Want to See?
Analysis			
Engagement			
Capacity			
Cohesion			

https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/1859354157.pdf

What Information Do You Need to Gather?:

Indicators	What Information Do You Already Have?	What Additional Information Will You Need?	What Methods Will You Use to Gather the Additional Information?	When do You Need to do it by?