TECH2503-18 Community Media Production

Workshop Fourteen – Evaluating a Community Project

1   Activity - Community Tool Box - Evaluating the Initiative

Visit the Community Media Toolbox site and read through the evaluation toolkit.

http://ctb.ku.edu/en/evaluating-initiative

This toolkit aids in developing an evaluation of a community program or initiative.

- Identify key stakeholders and what they care about (i.e., people or organizations that have something to gain or lose from the evaluation).
- Describe the program or initiative's framework or logic model (e.g., what the program or effort is trying to accomplish and how it is doing so).
- Focus the evaluation design - what the evaluation aims to accomplish, how it will do so, and how the findings will be used.
- Gather credible evidence- decide what evidence is, and what features affect credibility of the evaluation.
- Outline and implement an evaluation plan.
- Make sense of the data and justify conclusions. Indicate how each aspect of the evaluation will be met.
- Use the information to celebrate, make adjustments, and communicate lessons learned.

2   Evaluating Community Projects - A Practical Guide

What is evaluation? Put simply, evaluation by members of a project or organisation will help people to learn from their day-to-day work. It can be used by a group of people, or by individuals working alone. It assesses the effectiveness of a piece of work, a project or a programme. It can also highlight whether your project is moving steadily and successfully towards achieving what it set out to do, or whether it is moving in a different direction. You can then celebrate and build on successes as well as learn from what has not worked so well.

Why evaluate? Although evaluation may seem like an unnecessary additional task if you are already short of time and resources, it can save you both time and resources by keeping participants focused on, and working towards, the ultimate goal of the project. If necessary, it can refocus activity away from unproductive or unnecessary work.

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.

3   How to Evaluate: A Step-by-Step Approach

3.1   Step 1: Review the situation

Evaluating a project is like taking a journey. First you need to plan your journey – you need to decide where you want to get to; then work out how you are going to get there, and what you need to equip yourself with for the journey; you will also need to look out for the signposts and milestones that will tell you whether you are on the right road and whether you are likely to get there on time.

3.2   Step 2: Gather evidence for the evaluation

This is a key part of the evaluation process. You need to find evidence to show whether or not you have reached the goals you set yourself.

3.3   Step 3: 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.

3.4   Step 4: 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.

3.5   Step 5: Share your findings with others:

Sharing your findings with others is important because it can help other people in the project, or associated with it, to recognise any problems or issues that are preventing the project from making progress. It can help everyone to learn from any mistakes that have been made, or pick up on any successful ideas that have been put into action. Remember that sharing findings can provide an opportunity to celebrate success as much as to learn from difficulties.
https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/1859354157.pdf

4   Monitoring and Evaluation: a Guide for Community Projects

Successful monitoring and evaluation is incorporated into a project during the early planning stages. It focuses on outcomes relevant to the aims and objectives of the project and examines them efficiently and without bias. It is used to inform the development of the project and influences its methods and objectives as it is taken forward. Successful monitoring and evaluation will be used to improve the project, highlight your successes and achievements and raise the profile of the project in the local community.

4.1   Key Principles of Evaluation

Evaluation is most effective when:

- it is a continuous (not just one-off) process informing planning and delivery as the project develops;
- it involves all those with an interest in the project in defining the questions they want answered;
- it uses imaginative and creative approaches, which engage those involved;
- it helps projects to be more accountable to the wider community;
- it is used to challenge discriminatory and oppressive policies and practice, and to overcome inequality and disadvantage;
- it highlights and celebrates successes and achievements;

- it encourages an honest appraisal of progress, so that you can learn from what hasn't worked as well as what has.

http://www.cph.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Monitoring-and-evaluation-a-guide-for-community-projects.pdf

5 The Community Development Challenge

Evaluation Establishing an outcomes and evidence base

Empowerment, under one name or another, has been an objective of social policy for several decades, but it has never had such a specific and high profile commitment in policy agendas as now. It is being promoted as a key concept in the way forward to a more healthy, inclusive and fully-functioning society, and is being included in policy developments applied to the whole population.

How can a major increase in empowerment be achieved? What practical action has to be taken, locality by locality, to bring it about? No single discipline will be enough to achieve the major increase which government is seeking. But it is essential that strategies to accomplish this objective take particular account of the one discipline which has community empowerment as its foremost aim – community development.

This new policy focus on empowerment is an unprecedented opportunity for community development, a discipline with the skills, analysis, methods and experience to engender community empowerment at its very core. Yet for community development to lead the way in this move towards social change, it will itself need major development in order to help address the scale of current policy expectations.

http://socialwelfare.bl.uk/subject-areas/services-activity/community-development/communitydevelopmentfoundation/142847Community-Development-Challenge-Evaluation.pdf

6 On Target - A Guide for Monitoring and Evaluating Community-Based Projects

Evaluating Project - Process

The reality of the complex mix of social, political and economic factors which come into play at community level means that projects rarely go exactly as planned. For this reason, it is important that projects are able to adapt and be flexible. Process evaluation helps to monitor exactly what occurs in planning and implementing the programme. If you have developed a robust framework for evaluating the implementation process you will be able to:

- Explore programme origins and the chronological sequence of events in programme planning and implementation. This should include modifications and changes to the programme.
- Involve project participants in their own analysis of what has changed as a result of the intervention and ways in which it could be developed/improved.
- Look at the programme structure, components and delivery system.
- Look at contextual factors relevant to the programme operation.
- Analyse the reasons why change was necessary.
- Look at participation rates and participant characteristics.
- Assess perceptions of programme participants.
- Assess levels of community awareness.
- List resources used for programme operation.
- Inform future developments and programmes in similar areas.

7   Evaluating Outcomes and Impact

You will not be able to evaluate all project outcomes. Instead, you will need to prioritise on the basis of what is most important to project success, and also in relation to what is actually measurable within the timeframe of the project. In the current climate, where funding from agencies is often pledged on an annual or bi-annual basis, it is likely that many of the project's long-term goals will not yet have been achieved, as not enough time has elapsed. Make sure that both project staff and funders are aware of this from project inception to avoid the danger of setting yourself up to fail.

Once you have identified key outcomes to monitor you need to choose suitable ways to gather data. Again be realistic about time, research skills within the team, financial and human resources. Always remember that your key resource is the people who are involved in the project. Remember to consult them fully and include them in your research. Research techniques you arrive at may include a choice of quantitative and qualitative methods outlined below. The choice of methods will be influenced by the size and type of project and budget, and by the information you wish to collect. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001862/186231e.pdf

8   Prove It!

The Prove it! (2000) handbook describes the process of involving communities in agreeing on the most important issues, deciding on indicators and collecting data. It also provides the rationale for this type of participative evaluation and community engagement. The complementary version of Prove it! represented by the elements of the Prove it! Toolkit (2004) described below, brings together much of this into a series of documents describing activities and illustrating templates and spreadsheets which simplify the most important stages for those who may not have the time and resources to undertake the more in-depth approach.

The Prove it! Toolkit incorporates three main tools:

- A Storyboard exercise for understanding how a project's intended activities will lead to change.
- A Survey Questionnaire to be used at the start and end of the project.
- A Poster Evaluation exercise in order to reflect at the end of a project on its impacts and the lessons that have been learnt.

In addition there are notes, guidance and templates provided to assist project managers in planning the evaluation process and presenting findings.

The Prove It! handbook describes the process of involving communities in agreeing on the most important issues, deciding on indicators and collecting data. It also provides the rationale for this type of participative evaluation and community engagement. The kit described below condenses much of this into a series of documents describing activities and illustrating templates, including spreadsheets, which simplify the important steps for those who may not have the time and resources to undertake the more in-depth version.

The Storyboard provides a focus for talking to local people before the project has taken place. This can inform the organisation's thinking on the whole project. A group of people involved with the project or affected by it are invited to discuss eight questions that together describe the hypothesis, or 'story' about how they think the project will make a difference. Once the hypothesis has been established people involved (or potentially benefiting from the project) are better able to choose the indicators that will demonstrate whether or not the project has made a difference. When the storyboard is used during and/or after the project it provides a way for local people to be involved in the evaluation as well as the delivery of an initiative, project, or activity.

The Prove It! toolkit provides a Survey Questionnaire that focuses on capturing the impacts of the project on people and their communities. This contains an MS Excel file of ready-made questions for the survey that can be adapted for use by any project. There is some flexibility in the survey if

desired, with the option for organisations to add some questions. The toolkit also gives guidance as to whom to survey and on issues involved in conducting interviews with local people. Once the first round of surveys has been completed (ideally before the project has been implemented), the toolkit provides a series of ready made data-entry sheets directly linked to the Questionnaire, which automatically convert the responses into graphs that can be cut and pasted into other documents for analysis and presentation.

The Poster Evaluation exercise is a ready-made workshop that offers people who have been involved or affected by the project, the opportunity to look back over the project, describe the impacts it has had, and to highlight the lessons learnt. It is based on using a large, interactive poster with a timeline upon which participants attach self-adhesive notes identifying the high points and low points of the project's history. The exercise is designed to acknowledge unexpected consequences of the project as well as intended outcomes. A facilitator uses a set of instructions to guide people through a series of stages, each focusing on different aspects of the project's outputs and outcomes. This part of the toolkit is based on another evaluation tool developed by nef in partnership with the Shell Better Britain Campaign, which is known as Look Back Move Forward or LBMF.
http://www.proveandimprove.org/tools/proveit.php

9   Activity - Blogging
- Start a new blog post that can be shared on DIY-DMU.
- Based on the evaluation and discussion that you have undertaken in this session, can you identify the skills, knowledge and experience that you would like to develop in order to enhance your project evaluation activities?
- Can you list the things that you are good at, and what evidence you have for this?
- Can you suggest areas of improvement and how you might develop your skills in this area?
- Is it useful to share and discuss your evaluation goals with other people?