TECH2503-18 Community Media Production

Lab Sixteen: IMPACT - Evaluating Community Media Projects

1   IMPACT: A Practical Guide to Evaluating Community Information Projects

1.1   Purpose of This Guide:
This guide aims to help organizations collect useful information about the effectiveness and impact of their community information projects by highlighting aspects of the evaluation process that are unique, challenging or critical in a community information context. It also describes and includes relevant and meaningful tools that can be used to assess community information projects. The guide is not meant to be a comprehensive how-to guide on evaluation; many books and resources on evaluation practice already exist elsewhere. For any of the community information activities described above, this guide is designed to help you chart your progress and achievements toward those goals.
http://cmsimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/IMPACT-A-Practical-Guide-to-Evaluating-Community-Information-Projects-Resources-case-study.pdf

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

1.2   How to Use This Guide
This guide will take you through the essential steps for designing an evaluation of your community information project. These steps explain what to do and consider at different stages of the evaluation process:
1. Describe your project and identify your target audience.
2. Identify the evaluation's purpose and key questions.
3. Design the evaluation using effective methods.
4. Communicate and report the evaluation findings to make decisions and take action.

2   What changes in your community are you hoping to achieve?
Understanding what your project is and what it hopes to achieve can be facilitated by articulating a **Theory of Change** (TOC). A TOC is a graphic representation of your assumptions and beliefs about how your project will effect the changes that you hope to see.

There are three major elements of a TOC:
- Assumptions/Need – answers the questions, What is the issue?
- Who is affected by it? Why are you taking action?
- Activities – answers the question,
- What are you doing to address the issue?
- Outcomes – answers the question,

If your project is successful, what change, among which members of the community, do you hope to see?

2.1   Identify the Evaluation's Purpose and Key Questions
Focusing the evaluation requires identifying what the evaluation is going to be used for (i.e., the purpose of the evaluative inquiry) and what the key evaluation questions will be. An evaluation of community information projects may prioritize questions that are important for project design, implementation or future strategy, or for external stakeholders, such as funders.

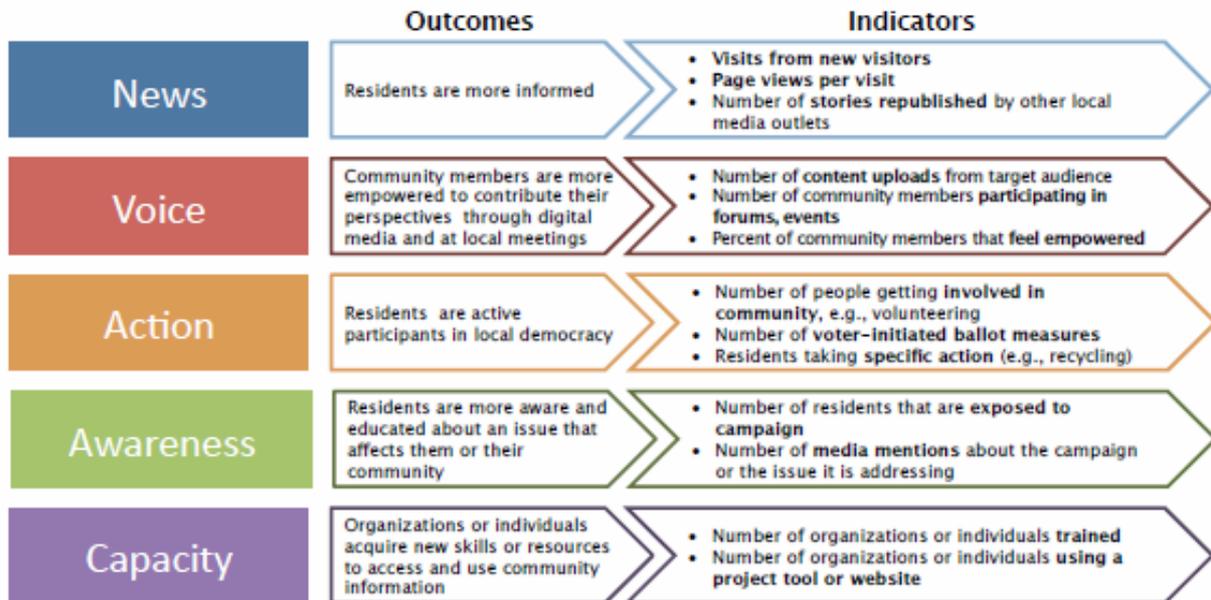## 2.2   What is the purpose of your evaluation?
An evaluation may be used to advance strategic learning, to refine project design and/ or implementation, or for accountability. Examples of purpose statements from community information evaluations include:

- To improve the quality and usefulness of information and media content produced.
- To determine the composition and diversity of contributors and readers.

- To identify the strengths and weaknesses of a new outreach or engagement strategy in order to modify and refine the strategy.
- To assess the progress a project has made toward achieving its goals and intended outcomes.

Figure 4. Example Outcomes and Indicators by Project Type

	Outcomes	Indicators
News	Residents are more informed	• Visits from new visitors • Page views per visit • Number of **stories republished** by other local media outlets
Voice	Community members are more empowered to contribute their perspectives through digital media and at local meetings	• Number of **content uploads** from target audience • Number of community members **participating in forums, events** • Percent of community members that **feel empowered**
Action	Residents are active participants in local democracy	• Number of people getting **involved in community**, e.g., volunteering • Number of **voter-initiated ballot measures** • Residents taking **specific action** (e.g., recycling)
Awareness	Residents are more aware and educated about an issue that affects them or their community	• Number of residents that are **exposed to campaign** • Number of **media mentions** about the campaign or the issue it is addressing
Capacity	Organizations or individuals acquire new skills or resources to access and use community information	• Number of organizations or individuals **trained** • Number of organizations or individuals **using a project tool or website**

A successful community information project will likely have an effect on individuals, organizations and institutions beyond the project's intended goals. These emergent outcomes are important to consider and document when evaluating your information project as well. A few examples are show in the box below.

3 Activity - IMPACT Evaluation Questions
- Can you identify and note what evidence you have for being able to account for each of these questions?
- What is the best way to write this information so that it can be shared and exchanged collaboratively?
- What are the useful and practical points that you need to know in order to inform future projects?

3.1 What are your resources?
What resources do you have to work with?

3.2 What activities have you been using?
What is the project doing with its resources?

3.3 What are the outputs?
What are the tangible products of your activities?

3.4 What are the short-term outcomes?
What changes do you expect to occur within the short-term?

3.5 What are the long-term outcomes?
What changes do you hope to see over time?

3.6 What is your news?
What are your readers/users better informed about?

3.7   What is the voice?
What are your readers/users more empowered about?

3.8   What kinds of action have become possible?
Are your readers/users more likely to be civically active?

3.9   What issues are readers/users more aware of?
What have your readers/users become more aware of or learnt about?

3.10   Is there an improvement in capacity?
What new skills and resources have been gained by your readers/users?

4   Activity – Community Media Cafe Planning

- Open the DMU Commons Wiki DIY-DMU Community Media Cafe page.
- https://wiki.our.dmu.ac.uk/w/index.php/Community_Media_Cafe
- Can you list the issues that you are tackling for the community media cafe project?
- What form do these issues take and how can you describe them?
- What are the main challenges and topics that are covered in these issues?
- Who is working in your group?
- How are the different tasks and roles allocated in your group?
- How do you keep in contact and where do you share ideas about your café projects?
- Can you list this information on this wiki page so that a visitor who knows nothing about this project can make sense of what you are working on?

5   Activity – Community Media Cafe Discussion

- Open Talk on the DMU Commons https://talk.our.dmu.ac.uk
- Use the topic 'Community Media Cafe' to share ideas about collaborative activities for the project.
- Use the Community Media Cafe category if you want to start other threads that are related.
- Can you share any of your blogs on DMU Talk that demonstrate the type of activities that you are working on?

6   Activity Blogging
- Can you write any key points from this session into a blog?
- How will you use links and embedded media in your blog post to enhance the discussion and information that you present?
- Do you think you can write in a way that prompts other people to respond and engage with what you have written?
- To what extent does your blogging demonstrate any of the evaluative skills outlined above?

7   References