

TECH2503-18 Community Media Production

Workshop Twenty – Evaluating Community Media Projects

1 Activity – What’s the Point of Evaluating?

- What lessons can we take from the activities that we are engaged in?
- How can we use our experience of what works well and what goes wrong?
- How can we share our insight about what is good practice in our activities?
- Read through the following discussion points and note the issues that are suggested as the founding principles for community development.
- Are you able to evaluate your community media activities in relation to these points?
- What tips or ideas can you recommend that you think might be useful when learning from your community media projects?

1.1 Media Advocacy

“In effective media advocacy, health and community advocates not only reframe news stories to show the influence that politics, economics, health policy and stereotyping have on health and community issues, but also work with media representatives to help them understand those issues more clearly and present them more straightforwardly. Their job is to show the media – and, through them, the public and decision makers – that health and community development problems can only be solved by community effort” (Pittaway & Swan, 2012) <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/media-advocacy/change-media-perspective/main>

1.2 Key principles of community development

(Adapted from Ife & Tesoriero, 2006)

1.3 Holism

Understanding that everything is interrelated and taking a broad, systemic approach to thinking about issues and what you do in practice. All community development projects will have a ‘ripple effect’, as everything we do has an impact on the world, often in unseen ways.

1.4 Sustainability

Developing the structures and processes of community development initiatives to ensure that change continues into the future after a project is completed or your support is phased out.

1.5 Diversity

Understanding that diversity exists between communities and within them. Every community has unique characteristics depending on the social, political, economic and cultural context. What works well in one community may not in another, and what benefits one part of a community may not benefit another group. Such diversity also means that communities can learn from each other.

1.6 Organic Development

Letting structures and processes develop organically from the community itself. Waiting until you’re invited to offer suggestions by the community and being flexible about changes to the project.

1.7 Balanced Development

Understanding that social, economic, political, cultural, environmental and personal/spiritual development are all essential aspects of community life.

1.8 Addressing Structural Inequalities

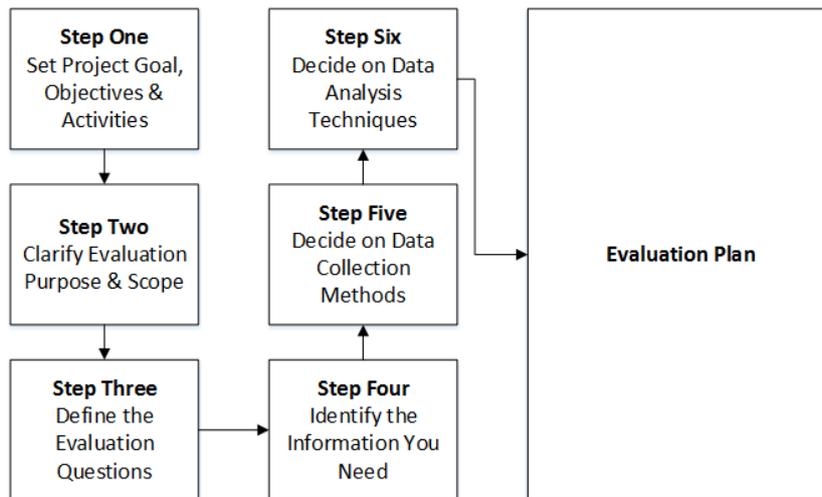
The world in which we live has deep structural inequalities in relation to class, gender, race/ethnicity, disability and age. Community development must work towards a fairer world and should seek to counter these inequalities in appropriate ways.

2 Evaluation Planning Process

“Evaluation is integral to good community development. When properly done, it enables an ongoing process of learning among all involved in community development projects. It also enables the continual development

of projects and programs to be more effective and successful. In the field of community development, it can be hard to know how deeply your project is impacting on participants and the community. Sustainable change is linked to the wider impacts of a project on a community, and these can only be seen in the long-term. Outcomes of community development projects are often hard to measure, because they deal with social relationships and the complex functioning of groups and communities, rather than things that are easily quantified. A clear, simple evaluation plan designed at the start of a project can help you to assess whether you're achieving what you want to achieve, and what you can do to improve your community development work" (Pittaway & Swan, 2012, p. 20).

2.1 Evaluation Steps



- 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>

2.2 Step One: Project Goal & Objectives

- Setting the project goal and objectives is one of the most important steps in project evaluation, because it helps to make sure the project is logical and realistic and also helps to shape the questions that the evaluation will ask.
- The goal and objectives should be set at the beginning of the project. It is easy to forget this step and begin planning the project activities before you're clear about what objectives you are trying to achieve.
- This makes project management and evaluation much harder than it should be!
- Usually your project will have one overarching goal.
- This is the ultimate aim that your project contributes to, although it will be too big for your project alone to achieve it.
- It may be your organisation's overarching goal, or something else specific to your team or work-plan.
- Under the goal are several project-specific objectives.
- These are what you want the project to actually achieve, what you expect the outcomes of the project to be. They should be measurable and achievable by the end of the project.

2.3 Step Two: Clarify Evaluation Purpose & Scope

- Once you're clear about the project objectives, it's important to be clear about why you are conducting an evaluation.
- Clearly defining the purpose of the evaluation at the start will save you a lot of time later on, because it will save you from collecting unnecessary and irrelevant data.
- There are many reasons for conducting an evaluation. Some of these can include:
 - Making a decision about whether to continue, expand or scale back a service
 - Learning lessons to improve the project
 - Refocussing a project, i.e. changing the nature of the project to better meet community needs
 - Improving stakeholder participation in the project
 - Assessing project effectiveness and whether its achieving its objectives
 - Finding out what impact the work is having on stakeholders
 - Assessing the longer-term implications and sustainability of a project
 - Developing models of best practice
 - Enhancing public relations
 - Accountability to managers and funding agencies
 - Attracting additional funding
- Identifying who the evaluation is for (i.e. who will use the evaluation?) can help you to define its purpose.
- It is also important to identify all the stakeholders in the evaluation - project participants, project staff, management, funding bodies, and partner organisations – and decide how they should be involved.
- Don't just think about how you will capture data from them, but how can you involve them in the evaluation planning and the research process?

2.4 Step Three: Define the Evaluation Questions

- Now that you've thought through the purpose and scope of your evaluation and have identified who needs to be involved in the planning, you're ready to start thinking about the evaluation questions:
 - **what do you want the evaluation to find out or answer?**
 - It's really important that project participants, community members and other stakeholders are as actively involved as possible at this stage, to ensure that they see the value in and feel ownership of the evaluation.
 - What type of evaluation have you decided on? Are you interested in measuring the success of project objectives, or activities, or both?
 - Looking at your project objectives and activities will help you to identify the evaluation questions that you want answered.
 - Keep it simple – make sure you're not trying to answer too many questions at once.
 - Some examples of key questions are:
 - Are we doing the right things?
 - Is what we're doing good, quality work?
 - Is the project achieving its intended objectives?
 - What are the unintended outcomes of the project?
 - What could be changed to better meet the needs of participants?
 - Are the project objectives appropriate?

2.5 Step Four: Identify the Information You Need

- The next step is identifying the information needed to answer the key questions.
- Ask yourself:
- What sort of information is needed to reasonably answer the evaluation questions?

- What are the indicators of project success?
- How will I know if we've achieved our objectives? What evidence is adequate?
- Where will I find the data I need?
- When you know what information you are looking for, you can begin to start thinking about how and where you will get that information.
- Again, it is important to keep in mind the scale
- of the evaluation and who will be using the information, to make sure that the data you collect is relevant.
- There is no point collecting too much data, or data that is not useful for answering
- your evaluation questions!

Be careful not to overlook any of the project stakeholders in the process of identifying sources of information. Interviews with other staff members, project partners and your own project journal can be as useful sources of information as data collected from project participants. Indicators can be used to give you concrete, measurable definitions of what project success looks like. They can be used to measure project objectives or activities, and help you to be precise about what you are measuring and how you will measure it. However, you should always remain flexible and open to information and unexpected outcomes that may not fit neatly into the indicators you have developed!

Indicators should be **SMART**:

- **SPECIFIC** - Clearly defined and relating to a specific objective or activity.
- **MEASURABLE** - Something tangible that can be measured easily; where possible it should include a target number or percentage.
- **ACHIEVABLE** - A realistic target for the project to achieve.
- **RELEVANT** - Relevant to answering your evaluation questions.
- **TIMEBOUND** - Provides a timeframe: by when will you be able to say whether the indicator has been achieved?

2.6 Step Five: Decide on the Data Collection Methods

- Once you are clear about the information you need, you must then decide how you will collect the data.
- This section only provides a broad overview of data collection techniques, by no means comprehensive or detailed.
- For community development projects, quantitative data should always also be used in conjunction with qualitative data.
- Qualitative data is 'non-numeric data': data that is not based on numbers. It can be found in many different forms, for example:
 - Transcripts of interviews and focus group discussions
 - Your own observation journal or project notes
 - Open-ended questions from feedback forms or surveys
 - Photos
 - Videos
 - Artwork
 - Client files
 - Policy manuals
 - Historical records
 - Reports
 - Books
 - Newspapers

- Qualitative data has traditionally been regarded as less rigorous or 'objective' than quantitative data.
- However, the importance of qualitative analysis for a field like community development is now widely recognised.
- Qualitative data can yield rich explanations of what's going on in a community development project that allow you to capture the complexities and organic nature of community projects.
- Qualitative analysis can also enable deeper learning about best practice. It allows us to demonstrate the outcomes of community development projects through the telling of stories, such as case studies or images; and in the voices of participants, using quotes, role plays or artwork.
- These sometimes reflect the complexities and nuances of the community development process and principles more accurately than statistics can.

There are a range of data collection techniques you might use. Your choice depends upon the size and scale of your evaluation, what is logistically feasible, and what is appropriate for the project participants:

- Project evaluation journal - Your own notes about the project are an excellent source of qualitative data.
- Keep a document where you record your thoughts about the project intermittently.
- The kinds of notes that can be useful are:
 - Reflections on the process or outcome of a project activity
 - Thoughts about unanswered questions or challenges that have arisen
 - Observation of what happens in the project; people's behaviour
 - Recording decisions to change things about the project and the reason for the changes
 - Recording an interesting conversation you've had with someone involved in the project
 - Recording comments, stories or informal feedback told to you by participants
 - Keeping track of relevant research papers, contacts, website links, etc
 - Make sure you date your entries as this will be useful when it comes time to analyse your data!

2.7 Step Six: Decide on the Data Analysis Techniques

- Data analysis can range from straightforward to very complex, depending on the scale and depth of the research you are conducting.
- It's not feasible to cover the topic comprehensively here, so if you are working on a larger scale evaluation it is important to do further research.
- Qualitative data analysis is the process of organising and interpreting qualitative data to provide an explanation or understanding about the project.
- Qualitative analysis is a task that requires intellectual energy and creativity.
- There are many different methods, and for a larger evaluation you should do further research to identify which one is most suitable.
- However, to analyse data for a small evaluation such as evaluating a therapeutic group, you can use a simple coding technique.
- Coding involves raw data being 'coded' into categories of relevance to the evaluation questions you are seeking to answer.
- There are two approaches you can take: one is to pre-select a set of categories based on what you think are the relevant themes to be explored.
- Data is then coded to fit into these wherever possible. For example, you may have a category for each of the project objectives, and/or the evaluation questions.
- The second approach is to allow the categories to emerge as you analyse the data: this approach allows the data to dictate the decision about what are relevant themes.
- When you have finished coding all your qualitative data – including focus group and interview transcripts, your evaluation journal notes, comments from surveys and feedback forms, and any other relevant documents – you will have multiple sets of data arranged by category...
- The categorised data sets give you your qualitative findings: what your evaluation data tells you.
- For example, based on the coded data, you may find that one objective has been successfully achieved, while another has not.
- You may find that a project has had an unexpected outcome, benefit or challenge.

- You may find that the objectives have been achieved but that the project process was fraught with difficulties.
- You can discuss the consequences of your findings in your evaluation report.
- For example, if you find that the objectives weren't achieved, or there were unexpected outcomes of the project, you may discuss some likely reasons for those results.

2.8 Step Seven: Evaluation Plan

It may be necessary to write up the evaluation findings in a more comprehensive report. In this case it should be written in clear, simple language so that it can be understood by all involved in the project. A short report would usually include the following sections:

- **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** Key findings or recommendations
 - **BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** Project goal and objectives, timeframe, stakeholders and what the project did
 - **EVALUATION METHODOLOGY:** Evaluation questions, data collection method and description of the evaluation process
 - **FINDINGS:** Brief results of the data analysis, eg. statistics from feedback forms (perhaps using graphs), most common themes from qualitative analysis, illustrative quotes from your transcripts
 - **DISCUSSION:** Discussion of interesting findings, for example, the themes that emerged from coding your qualitative data; any issues or questions that the evaluation raised
 - **RECOMMENDATIONS:** For the project or future research
- The main outcome of an evaluation shouldn't be a report, it should be the lessons that all involved in the project take away with them and put into practice in their future community development work!
 - You must plan how the findings will be shared with project stakeholders. It is critical that everyone involved not only be informed of important lessons learned, but also have the opportunity to discuss the results.
 - Creative strategies for sharing the findings should be explored. First ask yourself:
 - Who would be interested in the results?
 - Who needs to be informed?

Strategies for sharing evaluation findings include:

- Giving different versions of the findings to different readers, e.g., the formal report for main stakeholders; a summary of the report for relevant staff; a "fact sheet" for wide distribution.
- Holding meetings with relevant stakeholders at the end of the evaluation to discuss the lessons learned and their possible application.
- Inviting project participants to a discussion of the evaluation findings and if appropriate, a celebration of the project.

3 Getting to know each other

The first essential first stage of the community development process is "getting to know each other". This means spending time with communities, meeting people and making new connections, attending community functions, and letting communities know who you are and what you do. Most of the time, foundations of trust need to be built in order to be invited by a community to contribute to their development process.

3.1 Clarifying roles and skills

Once you have established a relationship with the community and they have asked for your support in a project, the next stage of the process is thinking about what kind of assistance the community wants from you. You need to be clear about the roles you are being asked to take on for the project and what skills you will need to develop to fulfil them. The diagram below gives an example of the great range of roles and skills that are often required from a community development worker. The circular shape emphasises their interconnect- edness and the importance of taking a holistic approach to your work...

It is also important to be clear about who is doing what. Which roles are the community asking you to take on, and which roles will they fulfil themselves? Community development workers need to be mindful that their job is to be a guide, support or mentor to the community. Your tasks should always be carried out in partnership with the community, and where possible the role should be shared with a community member to ensure capacity building and community ownership of the outcomes. The aim is to transfer skills to the community so that next time they won't need your help.

4 Ways of gathering additional information

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

5 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?

5.1 Devise a table and identify three characteristics about your project:

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

5.2 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.

5.3 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>

6 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 reflection about your community media project?

- Can you list the things that you are good at in reflexive vlogging, 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 reflexive vlogging goals with other people?

7 References

Ife, J., & Tesoriero, F. (2006). *Community Development : Community-Based Alternatives in an Age of Globalisation* (3rd ed.). Frenchs Forest, N.S.W.: Pearson Education.

Pittaway, E., & Swan, G. (2012). Community Development Evaluation Manual. Retrieved from <http://www.startts.org.au/media/Services-Community-Development-Evaluation-Manual.pdf>