

Workshop Twenty-One: Standards for Evaluating Community Project

1 Activity - Quality Standards for Community Engagement

- What lessons can we take from the community media 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?
- How do we ensure a continuity and standard of operation and activity?
- Read through the following discussion points and note the issues that are suggested as the founding principles for standards for engagement in community media projects.
- 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 The 10 National Standards for Community Engagement

The Scottish National Standards for Community Engagement provide a very useful reference point for ensuring a quality and effective engagement process. They were published in 2005 by the then Minister for Communities and identify good practice for engagement between communities and public agencies. The Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) developed the standards drawing on the experience of over 500 community and agency representatives. The SCDC website contains a detailed description of the standards and other useful resources. <http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards/10-national-standards/>

1.2 The 10 Standards are

1. **The Involvement Standard:** We will identify and involve the people and organisations with an interest in the focus of the engagement.
2. **The Support Standard:** We will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement.
3. **The Planning Standard:** We will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken.
4. **The Methods Standard:** We will agree the use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose.
5. **The Working Together Standard:** We will agree and use clear procedures to enable the participants to work with one another efficiently and effectively.
6. **The Sharing Information Standard:** We will ensure necessary information is communicated between the participants.
7. **The Working With Others Standard:** We will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement.
8. **The Improvement Standard:** We will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants.
9. **The Feedback Standard:** We will feedback the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected.
10. **The Monitoring and Evaluation Standard:** We will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement meets its purposes and the national standards for community engagement. <http://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/sites/default/files/Engagement.pdf>

1.3 Standards Evaluation

- Can you identify in what way you might evaluate a community media project according to these issues?

Type of Activity	Who is Involved?	What are the Obstacles?	What Successes?
Involvement			
Support			
Methods			
Working Together			
Shared Information			
Working with Others			
Improvements			
Feedback			
Monitoring & Evaluation			

2 Discussion - A step by step guide to Monitoring and Evaluation

- Read through the following points and note any issues that you think are relevant to gaining a clear picture that is practical and useful in learning from your project.
- Make a note of any issues and then share them in the form of a mind-map.

2.1 What is Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)?

- **Monitoring:** is the collection and analysis of information about a project or programme, undertaken while the project/programme is ongoing.
- **Evaluation:** is the periodic, retrospective assessment of an organisation, project or programme that might be conducted internally or by external independent evaluators.

2.2 Why do M&E?

The first step is to be clear about why you want to do M&E and the benefits it can offer. Community volunteers and activists often want to make the world a better place, making them action-orientated and often under-resourced. Monitoring and evaluation can sometimes seem like an unaffordable luxury, an administrative burden, or an unwelcome instrument of external oversight. But if used well, M&E can become a powerful tool for social and political change.

2.3 M&E Feedback

Doing M&E can help you assess what difference you are making and can provide vital intelligence, for example to help you:

- Assess and demonstrate your effectiveness in achieving your objectives and/or impacts on people's lives;
- Improve internal learning and decision making about project design, how the group operates, and implementation i.e. about success factors, barriers, which approaches work/don't work etc;
- Empower and motivate volunteers and supporters;
- Ensure accountability to key stakeholders (e.g. your community, your members/supporters, the wider movement, funders, supporters);
- Influence government policy;
- Share learning with other communities and the wider movement;
- Contribute to the evidence base about effectiveness and limits of community action.

2.4 Deciding the key issues and questions you will want to investigate

The next key step is to identify the issues and questions you wish to learn about, and hence monitor.

2.5 Issues and questions internal to your group

Organisational capacity/group processes – how well are you working together in relation to the following?:

- needed resources (human, financial, technical)
- leadership and vision
- management (e.g. clarity about aims, objectives, roles & responsibility; adaptability)
- cost effectiveness
- sustainability (e.g. finance and/or volunteer burn out)

2.6 Joint working – how well are you working with others

- in relation to partnerships, the wider movement, alliances, coalitions
- disseminating or sharing good practice and techniques

2.7 Issues and questions external to your group

- Relevance/acceptability - how relevant are your projects to different demographic sections of the community?
- Effectiveness - are you achieving your objectives (e.g. in relation to attitudes & values; behaviours; public support; community capacity/local resilience; the wider movement; improved policies & increased democratic space)? What internal or external factors are facilitating/constraining progress?
- Impact - what is your impact on people's lives (e.g. in relation to the ultimate changes in people's lives or environment as a result of our initiatives)?
- Contribution/attribution - what contribution have you made to outcomes and impacts (in relation to other factors/actors)?
- You will need to decide whether or not to monitor or evaluate all of these questions or just some.
- This is likely to require balancing information needs with available resources.

3 Discussion - Pathway to change

- Read through the following points and note any issues that you think are relevant to gaining a clear how change is anticipated and understood in your project.
- Make a note of any issues and then share them in the form of a mind-map.

3.1 Change Strategies

Although change can be complex it can be helpful to present your programme and strategy in the form of a change pathway, or an impact chain. This describes how your project activities will contribute to your desired outcomes (your objectives); which will in turn contribute to final impacts (your aims).

A simplified impact chain looks like this:

Inputs → Activities → Outputs → Outcome → Impacts

In practice your impact chain is unlikely to be linear: there may be multiple outcomes and impacts and there may be interactions and feedback loops between different parts of the pathway.

3.2 Change Assumptions

A change pathway/ impact chain can be useful because it reveals the interrelationships between activities, outcomes and impacts and therefore also your change assumptions or theory about how you think change will be achieved. These assumptions are often implicit rather than explicit so you may not even be aware of them. If you haven't already done so it's worth taking time in your group to discuss them to see whether you are all in agreement, whether they seem plausible, and/or whether you might need to investigate them more. You could test them against existing theories of change, evidence and/or your practical experience or the experience of other groups. The more well-founded your change assumptions at the start the greater your impact is likely to be.

3.3 Impact Chain

The box below provides a simple example of the impact chain and change assumptions underpinning a community awareness raising project:

Project Design	Desired Changes	Change Assumptions
Aims: To enhance our individual & community's contribution to civic discussion.	Desired Impacts: Greater levels of discussion and debate in local, community media.	
Objectives: To change people's behaviours	Desired Outcomes: More sustainable behaviours among residents	How outcomes will lead to impacts: Our project design assumes that if people change their energy (related) behaviours.
Planned Activities: Providing residents with information via leaflets, media and community events.	Desired Interim Outcomes: Increased 'residents awareness' about Civic responsibility issues.	How activities will lead to desired outcomes: Our project design assumes that: a) if people understand community development they will change their behaviours; and b) the community group is a 'trusted' messenger that people will listen to

<http://www.geog.ox.ac.uk/research/technologies/projects/mesc/guide-to-monitoring-and-evaluation-v1-march2014.pdf>

3.4 Examples of Indicator Themes

Note: these are example of possible indicator themes, rather than precise indicators, and are by no means a complete list. **[From a climate change model]**

Key issues/questions	Indicators: changes in (+ or -):
Issues/question internal to group(s)	
Organisational capacity/group processes	Access to resources (human, financial, technical); leadership, vision and understanding of change; management (e.g. clarity about aims, objectives, roles & responsibility; working principles; adaptability); cost effectiveness; sustainability (e.g. finance, and/or supportive framework for volunteers).
Cost effectiveness/ efficiency	Ratio of cost (including volunteers' time) to outcomes (e.g. amount of energy efficiency measures installed/energy reduction achieved).
Joint or partnership working	Perceptions of value added from working together; early wins; shared vision, objectives, strategy & working principles; clear roles & responsibilities; trust; recognition of value of different contributions.
Issues/questions about outputs, outcomes and impacts	
Relevance	Numbers, percentage and demographic mix of project participants; perceptions of participants and wider community about relevance of projects to their lives and needs.
Effectiveness (interim outcomes and impacts)	
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Effectiveness (interim outcomes and impacts)	
Hearts & minds	Individual and community attitudes/beliefs/values e.g. that climate change is/is not caused by human activity; or that increasing resilience/reducing CO2 is/is not the right thing to do.
Individual agency/ empowerment	People's beliefs that they can take meaningful action and that change is possible (e.g. might include motivation, knowledge & skills, intention /commitment, capacity).
Behaviours/practices	More sustainable behaviours (e.g. closing windows, turning off lights when not in use, drying laundry naturally rather than tumble drying, using public transport rather than the car).
Community capacity/resilience	Community resources (human, technical, and financial); networks/partnerships/ collaborations; residents access to and consumption of locally grown food, clean energy, water and other resources; use of local currency or exchange schemes; number of local businesses/social enterprises/jobs (see Annex three for further examples).
Social capital	Increased interaction between individuals, groups and sectors in community, trust, pro-social & environmental norms.
Support base/ participation in activities/public support	Numbers of members/supporter's participation in initiatives; motivations for participation/non-participation; trust in community organisation/movement.
Participation in and/or influence over local and national decision making and policies	Involvement in public decision making (including access to info, meaningful consultation, responsiveness of decision makers to local people); involvement in petition/lobbying/campaigning of national government; changes in relevant policies (e.g. the terms of debate; getting issue on policy agenda; policy commitments to change).

<http://www.geog.ox.ac.uk/research/technologies/projects/mesc/guide-to-monitoring-and-evaluation-v1-march2014.pdf>

4 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?

5 References