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monitoring and evaluation on a shoestring

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Next steps series

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Monitoring and Evaluation on a Shoestring

monitoring and evaluation on a shoestring

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- Kidscape
- St Giles Trust.

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contents

introduction

See Ellis, J (2008) *Accountability and Learning: Developing Monitoring and Evaluation in the Third Sector*, Charities Evaluation Services, London.

While there is good evidence that much of the third sector is engaged in monitoring and evaluating its work, many organisations are better at describing what they do rather than the difference they make to people's lives. Now, more than ever, third sector organisations need to be able to provide robust evidence about their effectiveness.

This booklet offers a simple but systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating. It can be used by trustees, staff and volunteers of third sector organisations. It will be particularly useful for those who have responsibility for self-evaluation and for using the information both internally and for reporting to funders and investors.

Why monitor and evaluate?

Monitoring and evaluation can be helpful to your organisation for two main reasons:

It can help you make your work more effective, by helping you identify what works well and what you might change or improve. This will help you use your limited resources most efficiently to meet your service users' needs.

The information you collect will help you report to your stakeholders, including your funders, and to attract further funding. It will also help demonstrate that your organisation is one that learns from its experience in order to develop and improve – that it is a learning organisation.

There are other benefits of a focus on monitoring and evaluation:

1. **Role clarity and shared purpose.** A shared understanding of what you expect the project to achieve can contribute to a sense of team purpose.
2. **Motivation for staff, volunteers and users.** It can be motivating for staff and volunteers to see evidence of the outcomes of their work. It can also be encouraging for service users to see their own progress.
3. **Saving time.** Planning your work around what you know works could make it more effective and efficient in the long run. Also, focusing on the information you need to collect, rather than on what has always been collected, could reduce the time spent on monitoring.
4. **More useful information systems.** You may be able to use methods of monitoring as an integral part of your routine work. For example, if you already keep case records of individual progress, you may be able to adapt these so they are useful both for casework and monitoring.
5. **Helping quality assurance.** Many quality frameworks (for example, PQASSO) require you to collect monitoring information.

PQASSO is CES' leading quality standard for the third sector.

this booklet

CES' *First Steps in Monitoring and Evaluation* was written for small voluntary organisations and projects with little or no experience of monitoring and evaluation, introducing a step-by-step approach to setting up simple monitoring and evaluation systems. This booklet is for those organisations wishing to think further about developing the extent and quality of their monitoring and evaluation practice.

There are six chapters in this booklet:

Chapter 1 outlines some things for you to think about when **getting ready** to monitor and evaluate your work.

Chapter 2 explains some common **evaluation terms**.

Chapter 3 helps you to identify the **outputs and outcomes** of your work.

Chapter 4 explores how to identify **the data** you need to collect.

Chapter 5 provides **good practice** guidance in collecting data.

Chapter 6 describes some methods for **collecting** data.

Chapter 7 discusses how to **use** the data you collect.

Chapter 1

getting ready for monitoring and evaluation

Planning is vital when starting to monitor and evaluate. To help you get ready to monitor and evaluate your work, think about the following issues:

- what you want to find out
- the resources you will need
- how to bring your team with you
- how to time your monitoring and evaluation activities for maximum effect.

What do you want to find out?

First, you will need to decide on the scope of your work: your monitoring and evaluation activities should have an explicit focus. For example, you may wish to monitor and evaluate a specific project or across a programme of work.

With a greater focus for your monitoring and evaluation, you can define your evaluation questions. These are the questions you would like to answer through your monitoring and evaluation activities, and may include:

- Did we achieve all our planned outputs? If not, why not? What has worked well and not so well?
- Did we reach the users we hoped for? If not, why not? How could we reach them in future?
- What did users think of our services? How can we improve them?
- Did we bring about the outcomes we planned? If not, why not? Who benefited most, and why?

Your evaluation focus and questions will need to be guided by your own needs and your funders' requirements. However, avoid having two or more sets of monitoring data; make sure that one system gives you all the information that both you and your funders need.

Resources

You may need the following resources for monitoring and evaluation:

- time for staff and volunteer involvement
- money for ICT and other resources. Try to work monitoring and evaluation into your budgets and fundraising bids.
- staff skills, for example in client work or managing data
- a way of storing the data you collect – particularly sensitive data – safely and securely
- an IT system capable of managing the data. For more information on IT software and monitoring and evaluation, go to the CES website (see *Resources*, page 43). Many organisations collect data but don't use it effectively because they lack the systems to analyse it.

People issues

Your work on monitoring and evaluation will be much more effective if your team is on board. You should consider the following:

- Try to ensure that those who lead your organisation are actively involved – the director or chief executive, senior managers, trustees or management committee members.
- Identify one postholder to lead the process. Consider including evaluation in his or her job description.
- Many volunteers are part-time, so time spent on monitoring may have a greater impact on them. Find ways to minimise the effect on volunteers while continuing to involve them.
- People need to see monitoring and evaluation tasks as worthwhile and, if necessary, to change the way they do things to incorporate monitoring. Try and get staff and volunteers on board from the beginning, explaining why monitoring and evaluation are important.
- Monitoring systems should be as simple and user-friendly as possible.
- The organisation should develop a culture that welcomes evaluation findings and is ready to change and adapt practice if necessary.

Time and timing

Monitoring and evaluation is often started too late. Ideally, an organisation should think about evaluation from the beginning. Plan your monitoring with evaluation in mind; make sure that your regular monitoring activities collect data for your evaluation questions. To make best use of your monitoring and evaluation data, collect information so that it can be ready when you do your planning activities.

If you are putting new monitoring and evaluation procedures in place or developing your system, allow a realistic amount of time for this work. Remember:

- It takes time to involve people and get them on board.
- Some outcomes for users may take time to achieve, and your monitoring system needs to reflect that.
- Build in time to test and review your methods, changing them if necessary.
- Monitoring systems often need to change over time, so you should have a process of periodic review and development.

Time spent on planning monitoring and evaluation will be worthwhile. Part of this effort will involve agreeing the data that will have meaning. This will be helped if staff and volunteers have a common understanding of basic concepts and processes. These are discussed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2

understanding evaluation terms

Before you start work on monitoring and evaluation it can be helpful to understand some key evaluation terms.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are linked but separate processes.

Monitoring is about collecting data that will help you answer basic questions about your project. It is important that this data is collected in a planned, organised and routine way.

You can use the data you gather to report on your project. A monitoring report usually presents collated information with limited analysis or interpretation. However, in order to learn from your work and improve what you do, and to effectively demonstrate the value of your programmes and to share good practice, you will need to evaluate – rather than to simply monitor. Monitoring data can also be used to help you evaluate.

Evaluation is about using the data you collect to make judgements about your project, giving value to your work. Often an evaluation uses monitoring data, but may add more data to it, collected, for example, through interviews or surveys.

An evaluation report contains enough evidence to answer important evaluation questions. Evaluation is also about using the information to make changes and improvements to your work.

Describing your project

Before you can monitor your project, you need to be able to describe it in detail. To do this, it can be helpful to develop a theory of change. This can also be called a programme logic model or impact map. This is a way of describing the different aspects of a project, to help you evaluate all the parts. The most commonly used terms in a theory of change are ‘inputs’, ‘outputs’, ‘outcomes’ and ‘impact’.

A worked example, using the CES Planning Triangle, is shown in CES’ *First Steps in Monitoring and Evaluation*.

Inputs are all the resources you put into the project to enable you to deliver your outputs. Inputs may include time, money and premises.

Outputs are all the products and services you deliver as part of your work. Examples of outputs include:

- training courses
- mentoring, advice or support sessions
- publications
- referrals.

Outcomes are the changes, benefits, learning or other effects that happen as a result of your work. They can be wanted or unwanted, expected or unexpected. For example, the outcomes of work with unemployed people might be:

- improved self-esteem and self-confidence
- improved motivation to find work
- gaining skills or qualifications
- getting work.

Whereas an outcome is the change occurring as a direct result of project outputs, **impact** is the effect of a project at a higher or broader level, in the longer term, after a range of outcomes has been achieved. It often describes change in a wider user group than the original target, and many organisations may play a part in achieving impact. An example would be a reduction in offending in a community. It is much more difficult to assess this level of change within the lifetime and resources of a small, time-limited project.

The relationship between these terms can be represented as a theory of change like this:

Inputs → Outputs → Outcomes → Impact

The inputs to your project enable you to deliver outputs. These bring about outcomes, which may eventually lead to impact. This relationship can be seen in the hypothetical example on the next page.

From inputs to impact: The Women's Project

The Women's Project works with female sex workers and with local healthcare services.

Inputs

Staff salary costs   Staff travel costs   Office costs   Outing expenses

Outputs for healthcare providers

Training

Outputs for women

One-to-one support sessions

Groupwork

Outings

Outcomes for healthcare providers

Improved service delivery

Outcomes for women

Increased confidence

Increased awareness of alternative lifestyle options

Improved access to education and training opportunities

Increased ability to keep themselves safe and healthy

Impacts

Some women build new lives away from sex work

Improved local health care services for local sex workers

Outcomes in more detail

Outcomes can be more difficult to understand than outputs. This section gives more detail about outcomes.

Where do outcomes occur?

If you are a service delivery organisation, most of your outcomes for users are likely to be in individuals. However, depending on your project, outcomes can occur in many other places, including in individuals, families, communities, organisations or policy. A single project may identify outcomes in several places. For example, an environmental project involving local people may identify outcomes for individuals, communities and the environment.

The table below shows examples of outcomes occurring in other places.

Target group or area	**Examples of outcomes**
Individual	• Increased ability to manage money • More stable accommodation • Achievement of job-related qualification
Families	• Reduced isolation • Reduced levels of conflict • Improved relationships
Volunteers	• Improved confidence • Improved skills in their area of volunteering • Getting paid work as a result of their volunteering experience
Organisations	• More funding obtained • Better strategic planning • Better trained and supported volunteers
Communities	• Improved facilities for young people • Less fear of crime • Reduction in vandalism
The environment	• More green spaces created • More bird species sighted
Policy	• Better mechanisms for user involvement in planning services • Improved awareness in policy makers of gaps in services • New government policy on vacant properties introduced

This table is adapted from Cupitt, S (2004) *Measuring Up: Assessing Outcomes in the Voluntary Sector*, Association of London Government (now London Councils), London.

Outcomes that do not describe a change

Some outcomes do not describe a change – they may involve keeping a situation the same or preventing something from happening. These outcomes still describe an effect of the activities of your project. If your project had not taken place, something else would have happened. For example, an outcome of a resettlement project could be enabling ex-offenders to maintain their own tenancies.

Intermediate outcomes

Intermediate outcomes describe the step changes that happen before a desired outcome is reached. For example, users of a drugs project are likely to undergo various changes before they stop using drugs (the desired outcome). They need to **want** to give up, be **confident** that they can, and **know** how to do so. In this case, increased motivation, confidence and knowledge are all intermediate outcomes.

Service users, or the project itself, may not always reach a particular outcome within the project's lifetime, so it is important that you keep note of the intermediate outcomes that do occur, in order to do justice to your project's work. Intermediate outcomes are especially important in some prevention work. For example, increased individual confidence or skills may be important for preventing reoffending.

Intermediate outcomes: Kidscape

Kidscape is a UK-wide charity established to prevent bullying and child sexual abuse. One of their areas of work is a six-week learning programme for young people in school who exhibit more aggressive behaviour.

Here is an example of the intermediate outcomes a young person, John, may go through before the desired end outcome is reached.

John's knowledge of assertiveness and mediation strategies is improved

↓

John reflects on his own emotions and behaviour

↓

John uses the new techniques in workshop setting

↓

John becomes more confident in using the strategies

↓

John uses mediation strategies in every day life to resolve conflict non-violently

Evaluation can focus on many things, including inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact. It is increasingly important for organisations to provide information on their outcomes, but there is still a frequent confusion between outputs and outcomes. Chapter 3 makes the distinction between the two and provides some tips on identifying appropriate outcomes.

Chapter 3

identifying your outputs and outcomes

To help you decide what data you need to collect, it is important to be able to describe your work in detail. This chapter helps you clarify all the services you offer (outputs) and the changes you hope to achieve (outcomes).

Before you start

Before you start identifying outputs and outcomes, there are some good practice tips to consider.

Involve other people

It can be helpful to consult a range of people before deciding what to monitor. People with an interest in your project may include staff, volunteers, management committee members, service users and funders. These groups may think differently about what it is important to monitor. For example, your users may have a variety of views about what would make the project successful, and these may be different from management committee views.

By involving other people, you are also likely to increase their understanding of monitoring and evaluation and their commitment to giving you information or collecting data.

Consider the role of volunteers

Some projects may want to define and assess outputs and outcomes for volunteers as well as service users, seeing volunteers as another type of service user. This is likely to be the case if you:

- aim to bring about changes for your volunteers
- are funded to bring about changes for volunteers
- have volunteers who are also users or ex-users.

However, other projects may want volunteers, like their staff, to be involved, committed and rewarded, but their purpose and aims do not include change for volunteers.

Link to planning

You can find out more about setting aims and objectives in the CES publication *First Steps in Monitoring and Evaluation*.

Identifying your expected outputs and outcomes is part of good project planning. When you are doing this, it may be helpful to look at the existing aims and objectives of your project to help you define them. However, be careful; your current aims and objectives may not reflect the project's main priorities, or might be out of date. For these reasons it may be helpful to reconsider your aims and objectives as part of getting ready for evaluation.

Identifying your outputs

Identifying outputs is usually relatively straightforward. Many third sector organisations have some experience of monitoring their outputs.

List all the detailed activities, services and products your organisation actually does or provides. When identifying outputs, try to focus on what your organisation provides or delivers, such as training, support sessions or recycling points. There will be other things that you do behind the scenes, like recruit staff, set up an evaluation system, find premises. These are all important processes, but are only done to enable you to deliver your central activities or services, which will help you achieve your organisational and project aims.

Identifying your outcomes

Identifying outcomes can be more challenging than identifying outputs, in part because they are not always agreed or understood by all staff.

When identifying user outcomes, it may help to imagine a 'typical' service user when they first come to your project. What are they like? What needs do they have? Then imagine that person leaving the project. If your work with them has gone well, what are they like now? How might their circumstances or behaviour be different? The key changes you identify are the outcomes you expect to achieve. This same process can be applied if you are looking for outcomes for volunteers or other stakeholders.

Each outcome should represent a significant change or benefit for users or volunteers, even if the step does not seem very great. The change should also be at a level you would want to report on.

Think about whether there are any intermediate outcomes. What changes often happen before outcomes are reached? What other outcomes, apart from immediate user outcomes, might there be? Have you covered all the outcomes that are important to your project?

The table on page 12 showed the different places that outcomes can occur.

Choosing appropriate outcomes

When you are developing outcomes, follow the three points below to help you choose the most appropriate outcomes for your project.

1. **Relate outcomes to your activities.** Think about your outcomes in relation to your outputs. The changes you wish to make must be reasonable and likely to occur, given the activities of your project. A small project offering limited services is unlikely to have ambitious outcomes.

2. **Consider the timescale.** Think about what outcomes are achievable within the lifetime of the project. For some projects, longer-term outcomes may be hard to achieve within the funding period. Such projects may need to identify intermediate outcomes that are achievable.

3. **Include potential unwanted or negative outcomes.** The outcomes you are working for will describe benefits resulting from your work. However, there may also be outcomes you don't want. For example, a third sector organisation may set up a mental health advocacy scheme in a hospital with benefits for patients.

But the project may also result in extra work for hospital staff. Information on this can be obtained by monitoring the workload of hospital staff; with correct information it may be possible to minimise these unwanted effects.

Identifying your outputs and outcomes in this way when you start your project will help you set up a system for monitoring them as you go along. Chapter 4 gives suggestions about the data you might collect.

Chapter 4

identifying what data to collect

It is a common mistake when setting up a monitoring system to start with methods of data collection. This misses out a vital step of deciding what information you need first. Only when you have done this can you choose appropriate methods. If you think through your information needs systematically first, you are also more likely to limit your monitoring to the collection of useful data.

As a third sector organisation you are likely to need to collect data on a range of things. Four key areas you should consider are:

- the services you offer (your outputs)
- the people you work with (diversity)
- what stakeholders, particularly users, think of your work (user satisfaction)
- the changes you bring about (your outcomes).

Keep it in proportion

There may be many outputs and outcomes of your work, but it is usually wise to limit the number you collect data on, and the amount of data you collect about them. The level of monitoring should be in proportion to the size of your project, and be manageable within your resources. You should also monitor in proportion to the service offered. For example, a one-off event would probably be monitored with a lighter touch than an eight-week training programme.

Also, you are more likely to succeed by starting with a very simple system, and extending it later, if necessary. To keep your monitoring system simple, you will need to prioritise key outputs and outcomes – the ones that tell you most about your progress. Ensure also that you only collect information you need.

Information on outputs

Once you have identified your outputs and prioritised those you want to monitor, you will need to identify **output indicators**. You will collect data on these to help you assess the extent to which you have achieved your outputs.

Output indicators are usually quantitative; they count numbers of things that happen.

They are normally set for things like:

- **quantity**: the number of services you run or products you deliver
- **take-up**: the number of people who use your service or products
- **timescale**: when you will deliver your services.

For example, if you run a helpline, the output indicators might include:

- number of callers
- number of calls per caller
- length of calls
- what issues were raised by the callers.

See *Calculating Volunteer Value* on the Volunteering England website.

If you work with volunteers, you might also wish to monitor the amount of time your volunteers spend on your project – this is a resource input. Some third sector organisations have used this to work out a financial value for the work of their volunteers.

Data on diversity

What is diversity?

Diversity is about all the ways in which people differ. These can include:

- age
- ability
- gender
- race and ethnicity
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation.

Why monitor diversity?

Institute for Volunteering Research (2009) *Monitoring Volunteers: A Guide to Collecting and Using Data.*

It can be tempting to assume that you know who your users and volunteers are. However, monitoring diversity gives you good evidence as to who you work with, rather than working from your impressions. This is especially important if you need to monitor issues of diversity that may be less visible, like sexual orientation or religion.

Monitoring diversity may help you:

- meet the needs of your client group, and potential clients, as they change over time
- demonstrate that you are an open and inclusive organisation that takes diversity issues seriously
- apply for funding. For example, some funders need evidence of the geographical areas you serve and monitoring diversity will help you provide this information

- be representative of the communities you serve
- recruit a wide range of staff and volunteers, able to meet the needs of your client group.

Diversity information about individuals may also be important when analysing data.

See page 35, *Data analysis*.

How to monitor diversity

Diversity data is often collected using monitoring forms given to users or volunteers when they start working with an organisation. This means data can be collected anonymously, and kept separately from other information about the individual.

However, if you want to find out whether different groups of people are treated the same within your organisation, or what outcomes they achieve, you will need to collect diversity data so that it can be analysed by individual, alongside information on the services they have received and their outcomes. In this case, to keep the information as safe as possible, give each person a unique code, and record data against that code instead of their name. Keep the list of codes and names separate and locked away securely.

Many diversity categories are based on the last census (currently 2001) to facilitate comparisons, although the census does not collect data on all aspects of diversity. The Equality and Human Rights Commission gives advice on the monitoring of ethnic categories, **www.equalityhumanrights.com**

Data on user satisfaction

It is important to ask people what they thought of your service, to help you identify ways to improve it. However, do not confuse this with whether or not the service changed anything for them – that is about their outcomes.

You will almost certainly want to collect some simple data from service users about what they thought of the services they received from you. For example, a befriending project might want to find out:

- whether their users felt well matched to their befriender
- whether project staff kept users fully informed throughout the process
- whether users found weekly meetings with the befriender sufficient, too frequent or too infrequent.

You might also want to collect feedback from volunteers too. This will help ensure your recruitment and support of volunteers is as good as it can be. This will, in turn, help you recruit and retain good quality volunteers in future. For example, a scheme in which volunteers offer art classes to serving prisoners might want to find out:

- how their volunteers heard about their project
- whether volunteer induction training gave them all they needed to start their volunteering
- whether volunteers feel adequately supported by staff
- which aspects of the volunteering role were most rewarding.

Data on outcomes

You now need to identify what information will show whether or not your outcomes are achieved. For this you will need to set **outcome indicators**. These show that the outcome has actually happened, or that progress is being made towards it.

Outcome indicators can be quantitative or qualitative.

- **Quantitative** indicators count numbers of things that happen.
- **Qualitative** indicators assess people's perceptions and experiences.

You are likely to find many possible indicators for each outcome. As with outcomes themselves, identify and use only the most important ones.

Outcome indicators: Kent Councils for Voluntary Service

Councils for voluntary service are local infrastructure organisations providing support, advice and development to local voluntary and community organisations (VCOs). Five CVS in Kent developed the outcomes and indicators for their work. An extract from a more detailed framework is shown in the table below. The outcomes describe significant changes in the VCOs which were supported by the CVS.

Outcomes for VCOs	Example indicators
Improved governance practices	Level of Board members' knowledge of their roles and responsibilities Numerical strength of Boards Board member turnover Whether Board members have appropriate range of skills
Improved organisational planning	Level of skill in business and strategic planning Level of skill in financial planning Level of understanding of external environment Development of business plans by organisations
More able to access funding	Number of VCOs accessing fundraising databases Diversity of funding sources Level of fundraising knowledge reported by VCOs Amount of funds raised by VCOs
More partnership working	Level of information sharing Number of collaborations or partnerships
Raised profile and influence through representation	Extent to which VCOs are appropriately involved in local policy processes Extent to which local policy and plans reflect VCO concerns Extent of VCOs representation in strategic partnerships

By going through the process of identifying exactly what information you need, you will have identified a number of indicators and questions you want to collect data on. Once collected, this data will help you demonstrate:

- what services you deliver, and to whom
- how different stakeholders experience and view your services
- the benefits to those receiving your service.

The next step, described in Chapter 5, is to decide how to collect that data.

Chapter 5

good practice in collecting data

Before you start collecting data, there are some good practice issues to be aware of. These concern:

- when to collect data
- keeping it manageable
- ethical issues
- getting a good response
- getting better evidence.

When to collect data

Regular monitoring

Regular monitoring will help you to check your progress against your plans, and give you information for evaluation.

For much project activity, data on expected outcomes should be collected more than once. The first data you collect will be the baseline against which you compare subsequent change. In order to make those comparisons, you need to ask the same questions each time you collect data and in the same way.

It is important to collect baseline data before the project starts or before you begin work with the user. If this is not possible, do it as soon as you can. The last collection will be at the end of the project or the work with the user. This can also be a good time to ask additional questions about people's experience of your work and their satisfaction with it.

You may need to collect data more than twice, particularly if there is a long time between the first and last data collection. It is useful to collect outcome data at regular points throughout the project's lifetime. However, think carefully about how often you should interview users, volunteers or other stakeholders, or have them fill in questionnaires.

One-off data collection

Many organisations also collect one-off data, usually at the end of a project. This data can supplement monitoring data, especially if you are carrying out an evaluation.

If you only collect data at the end of the project, you will rely on people's memories of their experiences and how things have changed. This may not be as reliable as data collected periodically during the project.

Tracking users after they have left

You may also consider contacting users again some time after they have left the project, to see what has happened after a longer period. This can be important to find out whether changes immediately after the project are sustained in the longer term. For example, collecting data on the outcomes of a training course may mean you have to carry out some follow-up, say six months later, to find out whether the training actually made a difference.

If you intend to collect data from people in the future, make sure you have their consent to contact them, and that you have mechanisms for recording contact details and tracking them. Planning for this can be particularly important with people who move a lot and are hard to track. Mobile phones and texting can make tracking easier, but keeping up-to-date records on contact telephone numbers can be a challenge.

Remember that over a period of time changes are likely to be affected by a number of other contexts and interventions, both positive and negative, and it may be difficult to determine exactly how your project has influenced longer-term outcomes.

Keeping it manageable

You may not be able to collect data on all of your users. You could collect data on a smaller number of people – a sample. The most common form of sampling for surveys is random sampling, and you may use this also for selecting people for interview. Random selection means that everyone has an equal chance of being chosen. Make a list of all your users, perhaps alphabetically, or by the date they started with you, and then choose, for example, every tenth name on the list. This would be a 10% sample.

Remember that random sampling may mean that some very small groups have very little chance of being selected. For example, if you have few users from ethnic minorities, a random sample may miss these people out, just by chance. If this is a concern to you, organise your users into the important groups, and then sample randomly within those groups, so you can be sure of getting some from each group.

For more targeted questionnaires, or in face-to-face methods, such as interviews and focus groups, you may want to select a purposive sample, that is, you will deliberately choose who to put into your sample in order to provide a range of views and experiences, or to provide specific information. This allows you to make the most of information you get from a smaller sample.

There are circumstances when it may be difficult to collect data on individuals over time, for example in services used anonymously such as a helpline. In this case, consider carrying out a snapshot exercise, for example, surveying all your users over two weeks of every year.

Ethical issues

There are a number of important ethical issues to consider when collecting data from people. These issues fall into three main areas: informed consent, confidentiality and data protection.

Informed consent

Tell respondents what you are doing, and how the information will be used, so they can make an informed choice about their involvement. Reassure them that you will keep the data secure and that they will not be identified in any report. Make sure people know that they can participate or withdraw without personal consequences. It is good practice to put this information in writing when getting consent and contact details.

Confidentiality

Tell people before you start what will happen if they disclose issues that you need to share with the authorities, for example about child abuse. Be prepared to deal with sensitive information that could be disclosed, for example about complaints. If you are collecting data in a group setting, participants need to be aware of the need to keep shared information confidential.

Reassure participants that when personal information is presented to others it will nearly always be collated and presented for the whole project or programme, not as information about individual people. The exception is when information is used in illustrative case examples, or in case study material. When data is used in this way, it is usually anonymous, with all indentifying information removed, unless permission has been given otherwise.

Data protection

All data that can be linked to a named individual should be stored securely during the data collection stages and destroyed after it has been used for analysis purposes and the evaluation completed.

If you are recording information about people you will need to comply with the Data Protection Act. The *Guide to Data Protection* gives practical advice and looks at the principles of the Data Protection Act. It is available on the Information Commissioner's website,
www.ico.gov.uk/for_organisations/data_protection_guide.aspx

Getting a good response

To provide robust, credible data, you will need to think of ways to get a good response rate. If you are working with a small number of people, it is particularly important to get a high level of response in order to provide convincing evidence. This may need a number of different approaches.

Encouraging involvement in monitoring and evaluation

Consider different ways of encouraging participation:

- Explain why you are evaluating your work, and what you will do with the information.
- Ask what methods users and others would find most appropriate and attractive.

- Find out about the literacy of the user group. If literacy is low, face-to-face methods may be most appropriate. Consider whether questionnaires need translating into other languages.
- Make venues as accessible as possible when doing face-to-face work.
- Consider incentivising people's involvement, for example by paying expenses or offering a fee. It might include offering them something in return, for example an opportunity to meet other people or a talk on something of interest to them.
- Let people know in advance when you will be contacting them. Participation and response rates can also be considerably improved by personal reminders.
- Take care when designing data collection methods. If your monitoring and evaluation approaches and tools feel simple enough, relevant and appropriate, this will help get a good response.

Getting third party data

It can be hard for third sector organisations to get data from third parties, for example schools or prisons. These third parties may be under no pressure to share data, and there may be data protection issues. Maintaining healthy relationships with those third parties can help make them more inclined to share data. It is important also to keep working at these relationships – especially where there is high staff turnover. These are other suggestions for getting data from third parties include:

- Explain clearly why you are collecting data and how it will be used.
- Ask only for what you are certain you can use.
- Give third parties a limited timescale during which you want them to collect data; telling them they need to do it indefinitely may be off-putting.
- When interviewing third parties, keep it short and send the questions in advance.
- Show how you have used the data so they see it as worthwhile.
- Where possible, try and make the information useful to them. Feed back relevant information promptly so they can take action quickly where needed.

Unexpected outcomes

Most projects have some idea of their intended outcomes. This is because projects are set up to meet identified need and make changes. However, it is not always possible to know what all your outcomes will be, especially for new or pilot projects. Some things will happen that you did not plan.

Make sure your monitoring tools allow you to record any significant unexpected outcomes as they occur and your monitoring systems are flexible enough to record them. If they are outcomes you want, you may be able to repeat them. If they are outcomes you don't want, you may be able to reduce or stop them.

Getting better evidence

'Proof'

Even when you have convincing signs of change, it could be that the change would have happened anyway. It can also be hard to provide 'proof' that the change was the result of your project – other organisations or factors may have caused the change.

There is more about before and after comparisons on page 22, *Regular monitoring*.

'Scientific' approaches such as comparison studies using a control group[1] can be helpful in providing convincing evidence about the causes of change, but they are often not appropriate for self-evaluation in the third sector. In most project-based activities you should instead look to evidence your effectiveness by comparing the 'before' and 'after' situation using indicators that really measure what they intend to measure.

To build up the best case possible, find out about other potential influences and acknowledge them, as your work will usually be part of a bigger picture of intervention and support. You might show how you have worked together with other agencies to obtain outcomes. It can be helpful to ask users and other people how important they perceived your project work to be in the change.

In this way, you should aim to have sufficient indication of change, and to be able to make a plausible connection between the change or benefits and your intervention, rather than to 'prove' cause and effect.

Strengthening findings using multiple methods

If possible, you might strengthen your findings by collecting data in more than one way. Quantitative data that is backed by illustrative narrative, for example, will be more convincing. This is particularly helpful for evidencing outcomes. Projects often keep records and notes relating to outcomes, and also collect further data on the same outcome, for example through interviews or self-assessments.

These good practice points will provide a foundation for collecting and managing your data. They should be kept in mind when you are developing monitoring and evaluation methods and tools – the subject of the Chapter 6.

[1] In a randomised controlled trial individuals from a single defined group are randomly assigned to either receive a service or not receive it (as in a drug trial).

Chapter 6

how to collect data

Once you have identified what data to collect, you can decide how to collect it and when.

Using existing sources and tools

Before you start working on new ways to collect data, look at what data, systems and tools are already available.

Existing monitoring systems

In an existing project it is likely that you will already have some monitoring systems and tools. If you are already collecting a lot of the data, try to use or adapt your existing monitoring systems, reviewing and revising your collection methods and tools as necessary. You can also use this opportunity to identify any data you collect but don't use.

Look at the indicators and questions you have chosen, and identify:

- those for which you are already collecting data
- those for which you can collect data simply by adapting your current system
- what data you will need to get in new ways.

Existing evidence

For most evaluations there will be existing documentary sources of evidence. Some come from within the project, for example case notes, meeting minutes or annual reports. Some come from outside the project, and may include monitoring data collected by other organisations, or national statistics.

Remember not to ask users or other stakeholders for factual data that could be obtained from existing sources.

Choosing methods

When choosing new methods, think about:

- the depth of information you need
- whether you need to use the method repeatedly with different people in different situations
- the method most likely to get accurate data
- the methods most appropriate to your service
- how easy it will be for you to collect, store and analyse the data. Qualitative data in particular can be time-consuming to analyse.

You may need to be flexible in your methods. If one thing does not work and is not giving you the information you need, you may need to try something else.

Here are some common methods for collecting data:

- questionnaires
- interviews
- case examples and case studies
- observation
- keeping records and notes
- creative tools.

Using off-the-shelf tools

The CES resource guide is a free online guide to over 100 evaluation tools.

You may need to tailor tools specifically for your organisation. However, framing questions for questionnaires and designing other tools can be surprisingly difficult and time-consuming. So it may be helpful to look at data collection tools that are already available.

The advantage of using a recognised scale is that there is likely to be evidence that it works well and measures what you want it to measure. For example, the Outcomes Star is a tool used widely within the third sector to collect outcome data for different work areas; it is also used as a casework tool. It uses a range of scales represented visually in a star shape. Each scale has 10 points on it, and represents an outcome area, like ‘offending’ or ‘social networks’. For more information see **www.outcomesstar.org.uk**

Developing your own tools

Existing tools may not be appropriate for your specific area of work. Even if you are adapting off-the-shelf tools, you will need to design them carefully to make sure they fit well with your work and information needs.

When designing tools, remember to link the questions to your indicators. When you have clarified your outcomes indicators, these should always be the starting point for your questions, regardless of which tool you use.

Make sure that your questions have a logical flow, whether in an interview or a questionnaire, thinking carefully about where to place the most sensitive ones. The general rule is to allow the respondent to feel comfortable to start with, asking easy questions first. For example, starting with questions about the project can relax the interviewee before you ask them outcomes-related questions, and can provide you with useful information. Make sure you also end with easier questions, and don’t finish with the more challenging issues.

When you develop new tools, remember to allow time to pilot test them in advance. Include in your pilot a test analysis too, to see if the data collected can be analysed and used as needed.

More about data collection methods

Questionnaires

Questionnaires are a good way of getting responses from a large number of people relatively quickly and easily. They have an advantage that you can combine questions about whether users liked the project, what worked well and not so well, and data about outcomes in a single exercise. Some outcome data can be provided with simple yes or no answers.

	Yes	No
Are you currently in paid employment?		

Then you could follow with a matrix of possible answers. For example:

If yes, how long have you been in continuous paid employment? Please tick.

	Full-time	Part-time
Up to 4 weeks		
5-12 weeks		
13-26 weeks		
27 weeks plus		

Self-assessment tools are a common form of questionnaire, in which the user or volunteer answers a series of questions about themselves, often giving themselves a 'score' on a range of criteria. For example, they may rate how confident they feel, or how much they know about something.

Using a scale can help you to measure change. You can use scales to assess someone's ability, attitude and satisfaction levels. You can also ask how good or bad something is, or how often someone does something, for example, giving them the following options:

Often **Quite often** **Seldom** **Never**

When using scales, give enough scale points so that you can record a change as people move along the scale over time. A four-point scale is usually the minimum, with 10 points the maximum. It is helpful to define the scale points where possible. This makes it easier for people to fill in, and easier for you to analyse and present the information later.

Part of a self-assessment questionnaire, with a four-point scale, might look like this:

How good am I at:	**Very good**	**Good**	**Not very good**	**I really need to work on this**
• Budgeting?	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Cooking?	☐	☐	☐	☐
• Paying my bills?	☐	☐	☐	☐

There is more about questionnaires in *Assessing Change: Developing and Using Outcomes Monitoring Tools*

It is increasingly common to use online tools, such as SurveyMonkey (**www.surveymonkey.com**) to help develop surveys and collect data. One important advantage of such tools is that the data is inputted for you automatically, and the tool makes analysis easier. However, even with these tools it is still vital to construct your questionnaire, and the individual questions, with care.

Remember that even simple tick-box questionnaires require literacy skills, and project staff should be on hand to make sure that they are completed and to help people give their feedback. This will have time and resource implications, and can be a sensitive issue. Organisations have learnt to use simple and clear language, but some continue to find difficulty with getting good quality responses.

Interviews

Interviews involve going through a series of questions or topics with someone. People often enjoy discussing their experiences, and interviews can be useful with people who are not able or do not want to write things down. They can also be a good way of exploring difficult issues, and they allow you to collect and respond to unexpected data. Interviews can be formal or informal, and may include the use of visual tools, such as pictures, to help communication and encourage people to take part.

Think about who you want to interview. Time restrictions may mean you cannot interview a big enough sample to be representative of your whole user group. Factors such as age group, ethnicity, gender and uptake of your services may all affect people's experiences of your service and how they benefit from them; you may want to include the range of different perspectives in your sample by making sure these factors are included through your sampling.

The ideal way to capture an interview is to take comprehensive notes and tape record the interview as well, but bear in mind that transcribing recordings is very time-consuming. Type up your notes as soon as possible after the interview. Recordings, whether you type them up or not, can be used to check gaps in your notes, get more detail on specific elements of the interview and obtain accurate quotes.

Case examples and case studies

Case examples can help illustrate your other evidence and make findings real, through describing the experiences of individual people or cases.

Case study evaluation is a rigorous evaluation approach that is different from brief case examples and may involve collecting data from different sources. Case studies can:

See Evaluation Support Guide 3.2, *Writing Case Studies* on the Evaluation Support Scotland website

- describe individual stories, or focus on a particular event or location
- emphasise the complexity of particular situations rather than trying to generalise across the user group
- allow you to describe specific successes and difficulties, and to show how individual circumstances, life experiences and other interventions can influence change or hold it back
- help you understand the circumstances in which you get negative results as well as positive ones
- allow you to demonstrate the links between specific ways of working and subsequent results – useful both to demonstrate effectiveness and to illustrate good practice.

Each case study should stand alone, so the data for case studies needs to be as complete as possible. At the same time, if there are a number of case studies or stories to tell, it will be possible to compare and contrast them and to pull out any common themes. This is likely to make the findings more compelling.

If you use case examples or case studies, you will usually need to keep the cases anonymous.

See page 24, *Ethical issues*.

Observation

Staff can watch and make notes about how people behave. Sometimes this can be more accurate than recording how people think they behave. There are some drawbacks with observation; for example, the observer may affect what happens, simply by being there. Observation also runs a greater risk of subjectivity than some other methods. You should provide clear guidance on carrying out the observation, even if this is being done as part of project activities, and give instructions on how to record it.

This was based on an existing tool, the Doncaster Community Arts Engagement Matrix, see Adams, B (undated) *The Art of Engagement: A Handbook for Using the Arts in Pupil Referral Units*, Doncaster Community Arts.

Using observation: Helix Arts observation tool

Helix Arts has developed its own observation tool. The tool is completed by artist facilitators and partner agency staff to record observations on individual participants over a number of sessions. Observations are recorded through a series of tick boxes across five core areas: disengagement and disaffection; curiosity; involvement; positive engagement; success. There are also spaces for explanatory observations to be recorded.

This is an extract from the tool allowing for change to be recorded around positive engagement, as completed by artists and partners agency staff:

4. Positive engagement	**Partner agency**	**Artist**
Completed tasks		
Accepted feedback		
Met new challenges		
Offered advice to others		
Initiated ideas and tasks		
Received comments from peers		
Demonstrated new skills		
Suggested improvements		
Enjoyed activities		
Positively contributed to group dynamic		

Observation can be quite a formal process, often involving scales against an indicator. For example, staff might watch a young person's communication skills when he or she is involved in groupwork. However, even unstructured observation will be led by basic questions about what is happening, and how things change and why.

Keeping records and notes

Many projects record changes and effects as they happen. This is a flexible and user-friendly way of collecting data. For example, you may keep notes on:

- the time users spend with your project
- the level of welfare benefits users have received
- the progress of individual users.

Some projects have an actions and outcome sheet for each user or record key working notes. Often many people are involved in record keeping, and they may not all keep records to the same quality. It helps to have a standardised monitoring sheet, as this will help you summarise the data later. For example, part of a very simple outcome-monitoring sheet could look like this:

Outcome: Improved finances				
Date	Name of user	Outcome indicator	Evidence	Staff member
Outcome: Getting employment				
Date	Name of user	Outcome indicator	Evidence	Staff member

Creative methods

Some third sector organisations use creative methods to collect data. For example, photographs, drawings or videos can be used to provide evidence of change, allowing a vivid impression of people's views and experiences, particularly for people who might not respond so well to traditional data collection methods.

You will need to interpret the visual images or other creative and participatory feedback and include the analysis in your findings. You may need to explore further with participants what it shows or what it means; for this reason creative methods are often most effectively used within an interview setting. This step of interpretation is often missed out when using creative methods for evaluation.

Diary records can give insight into an individual's development or emotions over a period of time. A video or audio format might work better than a written one for many participants. Diaries can be useful for staff as well as users. For example, the musicians working in prisons for Music in Prisons keep daily diaries. Extracts from the diaries are used in project reports given to each prison but also serve as a record of processes, what worked well, any challenges and how these were overcome, so the team can learn tips for future projects.[2]

You are likely to get a better result when using diaries if you give clear and precise information to participants about how the data will be used and provide prompts or questions relating to your indicators to focus their stories. Before you commit to

[2] TiPP: (2006) *What's the Point: Using Drama to Engage Young People at Risk*, Arts Council England

asking for diary data, think about whether you will have sufficient skills and resources to extract information from them and to use it effectively.

Further information on collecting information can be found in the CES publications *Practical Monitoring and Evaluation* and *Assessing Change: Developing and Using Outcomes Monitoring Tools*. (See *Further reading*, page 44.)

Many organisations collect a lot of data but don't use it. This can be an ineffective use of resources, be discouraging to those involved in monitoring and evaluation, and also represent a lost opportunity. The next chapter discusses using the data you collect to demonstrate the value of your work and to improve it.

Chapter 7
using your data

Monitoring data can be used simply for reporting or for marketing and promotion purposes. However, once you start to analyse the data and attach some meaning to it, you are beginning to evaluate. It is this evaluation process and the findings that you report that will help answer your evaluation questions and provide insights into your work and give it value.

Data analysis

The quality of your evaluation will depend to a large extent on the quality of your data analysis.

Types of data analysis

Quantitative analysis
Data collected using quantitative methods can be analysed statistically for patterns, for example percentages, averages or the frequency of responses. Most quantitative data can be easily analysed using common spreadsheet software. For example, you can organise data in Excel in columns according to the question asked and the respondent. Excel can then calculate averages and percentages and can be used to produce graphs and tables.

Remember to make the response rate to each monitoring and evaluation exercise (or to any given question) clear in your analysis. If you get a low response to some questions, this should be indicated, as it may not give you a significant finding. It is also good practice when presenting quantitative data to show the actual numbers (the frequencies) as well as the percentages, as percentages can sometimes be misleading.

Try to look at your data critically. For example, if you always report on averages, you may miss important findings; simple calculations of average improvements or change may hide important differences in progress.

Qualitative analysis
You may find analysing qualitative data more difficult, and this can result in important data remaining unprocessed and unreported. However, developing skills and allowing time to carry out this analysis can help you build compelling evidence.

Use a simple coding (using numbers or a few key words) to categorise your notes into recurring topics or themes that seem relevant to your evaluation questions. You can decide these codes in advance, or allow themes to emerge from your data. Cut and paste sections of your notes to bring together data that relates to particular themes.

Once the themes or patterns have been established and the data categorised accordingly, it is possible to show the number or proportion giving each type of response, and to illustrate the themes or particular responses by providing more detail and quotations as illustration. In this way simple qualitative data can be quantified.

Making sense of your findings

After your first analysis of the data, you can start to interpret it. This involves thinking about what lies behind the data, asking what the results mean in relation to your evaluation questions, and looking for patterns and themes through your analysis. Remember to make clear in your report the difference between facts, respondents' views and your interpretation.

You might examine who benefited or did not receive benefits. In order to do this analysis you will need to have included questions that will collect data on things like users' age, gender or ethnicity.

You might also examine in what circumstances people benefited and did not benefit – and what can be learned from that. Try to identify the factors that influenced or prevented change, whether there were unexpected outcomes, and whether planned benefits were those most valued by your users. You might also wish to bring in information on the context affecting your work. For example, there might have been external events that influenced your ability to achieve your outcomes.

It is not always easy to get a sense of the significance of different findings when you first look at the data – you may lose the most important point in studying and presenting the detail, or overemphasise minor findings. So try to stand back from your findings and look at the broader picture before finalising your report.

Remember to acknowledge in your report the possibility of other interpretations. When you look at longer-term benefits, you may be looking at finding an association between users' outcomes and the project rather than a direct cause and effect. For example, changed attitudes and behaviours might be a stepping stone to choices about further education and subsequent lifestyle.

Calculating your social value

You might wish to use your monitoring data to help you calculate your social value. Some third sector organisations are beginning to demonstrate their social value in economic terms, estimating how investment in them now will result in social benefits and savings in the future. As funding becomes increasingly scarce, third sector organisations may increasingly need to look at suitable methodologies to present an economic case for funds.

In a cost-benefit analysis, you measure costs and outcomes in monetary terms. If you divide the project costs by project benefits, this will give you the cost-benefit ratio. Costs are the various inputs, both direct and indirect, needed to set up and run a project or programme.

Social Return on Investment

The social return on investment methodology (SROI) was developed from traditional cost-benefit analysis and from social accounting. The methodology puts a monetary value on the social and environmental benefits of an organisation relative to a given amount of investment. The process involves an analysis of inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts leading to the calculation of a monetary value for those impacts, and finally to an SROI ratio or rating. For example, an organisation might have a ratio of £4 of social value created for every £1 spent on its activities.

There can be variations in the way that people carry out these studies, so it is important to document and to be transparent in the assumptions and judgements that are made at various points in calculating the ratio.

Carrying out an SROI can be quite complex and time-consuming. You will need:

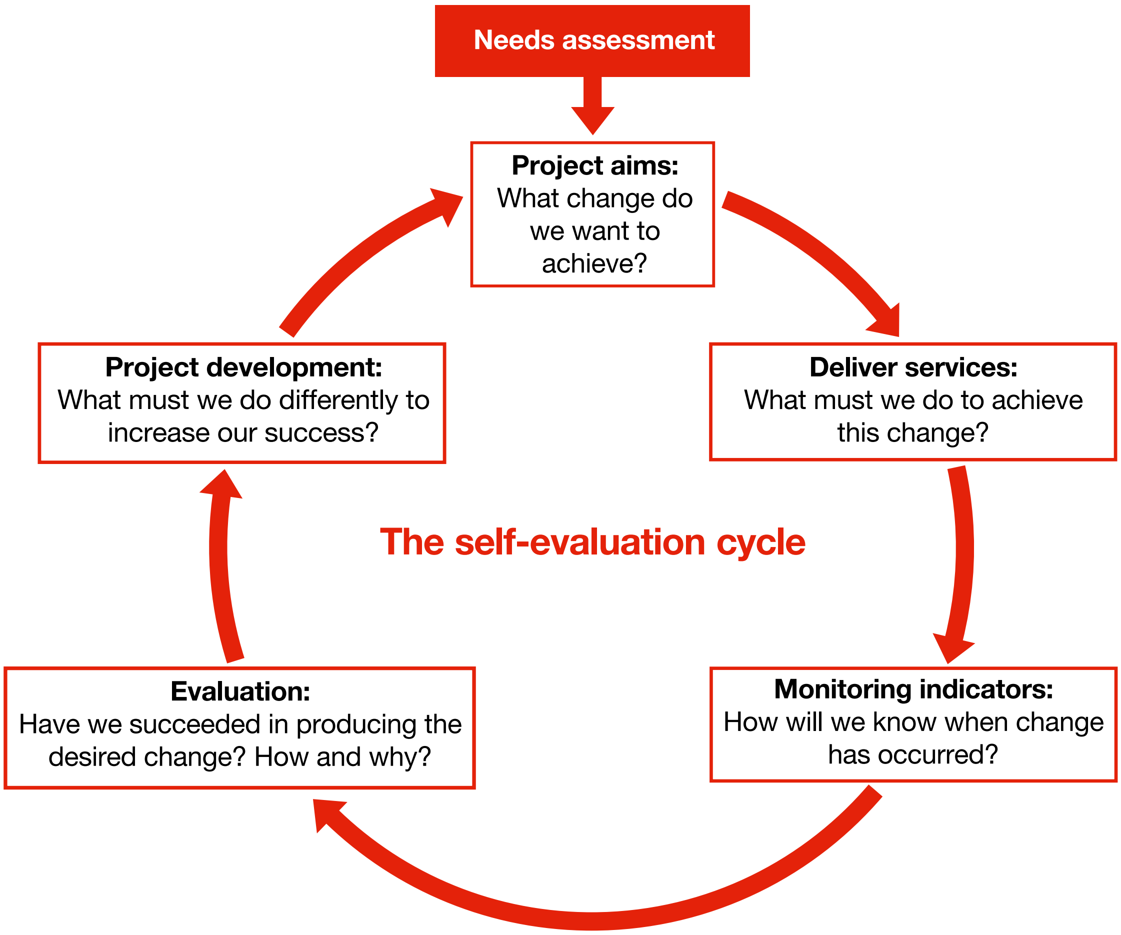
- a good foundation of outcomes information
- available skills in evaluation and accountancy
- access to external support.

You can find out more about SROI from www.thesroinetwork.org

Using your findings

Using findings to plan and improve services

It can be helpful to remember that monitoring and evaluation are part of a cycle, a continuous process. Monitoring data is usually collected continuously. You can report on it regularly, both internally and externally, and at regular intervals (often yearly) you can use it to evaluate. This involves bringing together your monitoring data, perhaps with other information, to make a judgement as to how well you are doing. The self-evaluation cycle below shows how monitoring and evaluation can be used to refine delivery and sometimes reformulate aims.



The data you collect can also be used when you are developing strategy and can help you assess progress in achieving your strategic and operational plans. Your findings can help you make your work more effective, by helping you identify what works well and what you might change or improve. For example, if you don't achieve the outcomes you expected, you may need to:

- think about providing different services, or the same services in different ways, to achieve better outcomes
- reconsider what your project outcomes should be, or the extent to which your project has the power to achieve them
- reconsider the way in which you select your users – they may not have needed the service or be in a position to benefit from it
- seek further funding to enable you to deliver services better.

In this way, your findings will give you evidence to help you plan. This will help you develop services based on what you **know** works to meet your users' needs, rather than on what you **think** works.

The data you collect is most likely to be used effectively if it is made available regularly at times when decisions are being made about the project.

Other uses for your findings

You might also use your findings to:

- report to funders and other stakeholders
- motivate staff and volunteers in their work, and encourage users about their progress
- provide information for quality assurance systems
- market your service
- apply for funding.

Remember also to learn about how your monitoring and evaluation systems worked. Think about how you might do it differently next time, if necessary.

Reporting and using evaluation findings: St Giles Trust

St Giles Trust (SGT) is a charity based in South London. It has about 125 staff, and aims to reduce crime and social exclusion. One of their projects is the Peer Advice Project (PAP), working in 20 prisons across the country.

PAP trains serving prisoners to NVQ level 3 in information, advice and guidance. The prisoners then act as peer advisers to other prisoners, working alongside paid SGT caseworkers. Hundreds of prisoners have so far been trained. The peer advisers work approximately full-time, and see on average about 100 cases per month.

The peer advisors are closely monitored and supervised during their NVQ training. After they qualify, they have regular supervision with a SGT caseworker and attend group team meetings. The project manager also does regular spot checks of the work of all case workers, paid or unpaid. All PAP caseworkers have a range of forms they need to complete as part of their work on a case, including forms for initial enquiries, client contact, assessment, action taken and outcomes.

This information is then recorded on the project database and reported in three main ways:

1. The projects report to the host prison on a range of key performance indicators, including how many prisoners were released with accommodation to go to.
2. SGT produces an internal monthly performance report on all their projects that includes a comprehensive range of outcomes.
3. SGT is having the project externally evaluated and passes information as required to the evaluators.

The information is used in a wide range of ways beyond just reporting. The evidence is used in staff development and funding applications. It is also used to develop services. For example, SGT monitors where prisoners move to on release. Finding that many went to one borough, they developed a relationship with the local Homeless Person's Unit to help them get clients accommodated as quickly as possible.

SGT explains that evaluation is fundamental to its work, both for making services high quality but also for justifying their funding: '*We take public money… you can't take it unless you prove you're delivering or you won't get that money again*'.

Sharing your findings

After collecting your information, you may wish to share it with other people. Remember to give feedback to the users, volunteers, staff and third parties who gave you information and to the people who collected the monitoring data. This will show you value their time and input, and may encourage them to be involved in monitoring and evaluation in future.

How to present your findings

Consider the needs of the audience
Think about the needs of the people you are reporting to, telling them what they need to know, and keeping it simple and brief. Summarise where possible and make it easy for people reading it.

You may want to present the information in different ways to different audiences. For example, you may choose to focus on quantitative information and statistics for commissioners and qualitative information, such as case studies, for local press. Some people may like a formal report; others may prefer a verbal presentation or even something visual like a poster. You might also report in a newsletter.

Written reports
How you present the report will have an important bearing on your credibility, so consider what your evaluation report will look like before you put together your findings. The style of reporting and level of detail will vary according to your audience. Will your audience prefer evidence in the form of tables, charts and graphs, or case examples?

If you are writing a full self-evaluation report, you will normally include the following:

- an introduction, which may include the project's aims and objectives
- the aims and objectives of the evaluation, including the main evaluation questions
- how the evaluation was carried out
- findings
- conclusions and recommendations.

Put together a framework for your findings section based on your evaluation questions and other themes that emerge, rather than presenting findings from different data collection methods. Remember that it is seldom helpful to present raw data; it should be analysed and summarised to turn it into useful information.

A written report should look easy to read, with clear headings and subheadings. Consider using lists and bullet points, boxes and shaded areas to highlight or separate content, and footnotes for extra information. Make your numbering system as simple as possible.

Quote what people have said in their interviews, or on questionnaires or feedback sheets to illustrate your findings. Don't use too many quotations or simply list them, and be careful that you do not use quotations instead of interpreting your data.

Making recommendations

An evaluation need not always lead to recommendations but, if they are being made, there are some points to remember. They should:

- be based on sound evidence
- be realistic and made in a way that will increase the chances of action being followed through
- be clear about which recommendations are most important and those less significant
- give a timescale and plan for implementation wherever possible.

Remember to carry staff and volunteers with you when you follow the different stages of monitoring and evaluation in this booklet. The system you set up should then provide a simple but effective way of being accountable for the work you do, and most importantly, for learning from it and improving its quality and outcomes.

resources

Charities Evaluation Services (CES)

CES offers training and consultancy, and publishes a wide range of information on monitoring, evaluation and quality systems. The CES website has a wide range of resources on monitoring and evaluation. This includes an online monitoring and evaluation resource guide – a guide to over 100 online and published books, tools, discussion papers and factsheets on all aspects of evaluation. This can be found at: **www.ces-vol.org.uk/resourceguide**

Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS)

ESS works with voluntary organisations and funders so they can measure the impact of their work. It produces a range of support guides on evaluation.
www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)

NCVO's Strategy and Impact Team have put together a list of tools to enable organisations to demonstrate the impact of their work. This can be found at: **www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/strategy-impact/learn/tools-and-techniques/tools-for-demonstrating-impact**

new economics foundation (nef)

As part of the National Performance Programme, nef published *Tools for You*, a guide to 20 commonly used quality and social impact frameworks. This includes tools and systems which use indicator models. It provides a useful summary and introduction, and signposts to further information. It can be found at: **www.neweconomics.org/publications/tools-you**

further reading

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glossary

Analysis
The process of questioning the information you have collected to find out what it reveals about progress towards your outcomes. Analysis can be done manually or electronically using software packages such as SPSS.

Baseline
Facts about the characteristics of a target group or population and its context, ideally gathered before the start of a project.

Data
Facts, statistics and other raw material gathered for a specific purpose. Data needs to be interpreted to give it meaning.

Evaluation
Using monitoring and other data you collect to make judgements about your project.

Impact
Broader or longer-term effects of a project's activities, outputs and outcomes.

Inputs
Resources put into a project to carry out an activity. Inputs may be human, material or financial, or can be expressed as time.

Intermediate outcomes
Steps along the way to end outcomes. They are often smaller changes that need to happen before the final, desired outcome can be reached.

Monitoring
The routine, systematic collection and recording of data about a project, mainly for the purpose of checking its progress against its plans.

Outcomes
The changes, benefits, learning or other effects that happen as a result of your work.

Outcome indicators
Things you can measure to show whether your desired outcomes have happened. They can be qualitative or quantitative.

Outputs
All the detailed activities, services and products you do or provide.

Output indicators
Things you can measure to show whether, and to what extent, your planned outputs have happened.

Pilot test
A way of testing out the effectiveness of a new system by applying it to a small group and getting feedback on the process.

Process
The method, or step-by-step description, of how a task or activity is to be done.

Qualitative data
Data that is primarily descriptive, for example, of events, experiences or views.

Quantitative data
Data that is counted or expressed numerically.

Response rate
The proportion of people asked to take part in evaluation activities who actually participate. Non-response is when individuals in a sample do not participate at all, or do not answer some questions.

Sampling
The process by which you reduce the total number of possible participants for an evaluation activity to a number which is practically feasible and theoretically acceptable (the sample).

Self-evaluation
When an organisation uses its internal expertise to carry out its own evaluation; evaluation is integrated into project management.

Stakeholders
The people or groups who are affected by or who can affect the activities of an organisation. This can include staff, volunteers, users, customers, suppliers, trustees, funders, commissioners, donors, purchasers, investors, supporters and members.

User
A beneficiary of an organisation or project.

User involvement
Where users become active participants in the design and delivery of your activities.

Acronyms

CES	Charities Evaluation Services
CVS	Council for Voluntary Service
nef	new economics foundation
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
SROI	Social Return on Investment
VCO	Voluntary and Community Organisation

about Charities Evaluation Services

Charities Evaluation Services (CES) is an independent charity with unrivalled expertise in monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance systems in the voluntary sector.

CES produces a range of publications, including PQASSO, the leading set of quality standards for third sector organisations of all sizes.

How will CES work with you?

Phone us on 020 7713 5722 for free advice.

Our consultants will talk to you about your organisation's particular needs and offer you practical advice about monitoring, evaluation, self-evaluation and quality systems.

What services does CES offer?

In-house training
CES offers training in monitoring, evaluation, demonstrating outcomes, PQASSO and other performance related topics. Training courses can be run in-house and tailored specifically to the needs of your organisation.

Open training
We also run a programme of training courses covering monitoring and evaluation, demonstrating outcomes and PQASSO from our accessible central London venue.

Contact us for more information on 020 7713 5722, or via our website **www.ces-vol.org.uk** or email enquiries@ces-vol.org.uk

Consultancy
Our consultancy service is flexible and provides support for organisations that want to understand and implement monitoring and evaluation, and PQASSO.

External evaluations
CES has carried out evaluations of a large number of organisations over the last 20 years, as well as working with funders to evaluate their programmes and funding strategies.

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