

Community Food Forum – 24th April 2018

Handout on Impact Measurement

Monitoring and Evaluation for Community Projects

Impact research includes processes of monitoring and evaluation which helps organisations understand the effectiveness and quality of their projects and best understand how to improve them. Impact research also helps to develop project ownership on the part of both project staff and the beneficiary groups.

Monitoring refers to the ‘ongoing review and collection of data, which will help to determine whether anticipated outcomes are being met.’ Data collected through monitoring feeds into the more overarching process of evaluation.

Evaluation refers to the systematic collection of information conducted during or after a project in order to make judgments about effectiveness against anticipated outcomes and to help inform decisions about future interventions’ (UNESCO, 2009).

Consider the following questions:

1. **DEFINING IMPACT:** What does impact mean in relation to your project? In an ideal scenario – what would impact look like?
2. **MEASURING IMPACT:** Which methods seem appropriate for monitoring and evaluating your project / or community food projects more generally (quantitative or qualitative – e.g. surveys, interviews, focus groups, participant observation)? Think about logistics – how would you carry out the methods, how receptive would your participants / members be (response rate), and what are the ethical implications (data protection, consent, anonymity, sensitive topics)? Considering all these factors how can you get meaningful data that will enable you to understand the impact your project(s) are having?
3. **CREATING A STRATEGY / FRAMEWORK:** How can you map your outcomes against your methods while also allowing some space for monitoring unexpected outcomes? Think about how your strategy can be realistic, actionable and sustainable. How can you work with stakeholders in a participatory way to plan and construct your framework?
4. **INCORPORATING EVALUATION:** How will you integrate findings from the research into your project – how can you ensure your projects / initiatives are open to be adjusted and improved?



UNESCO (2009) 'On Target: A Guide for Monitoring and Evaluation of Community-Based Projects' <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48171/p0000166199>

TOP TIPS

- Monitoring and evaluation is not an exercise done after the completion of a program, but is rather an integral part of program work.
- Creating a proper monitoring and evaluation framework can help determine the goals and intent of any program, clearly defining roles and expected results.
- There is no single way to do impact research - project staff need to be innovative, to apply common sense and use their knowledge of the supporting population, the environment, the political and cultural context, to ensure that the right questions are asked in the right way. Community initiatives tend to be made up of complex multiple interventions, taking place at many different levels, often designed to bring about different outcomes. There is typically a mix of strategies, aimed at both individual and community level. Consider how you can monitor these different types of impact.
- Processes of monitoring and evaluation are most effective when they are participatory, so that all stakeholders are jointly monitoring progress towards agreed-upon indicators. How can you ensure the stakeholders are involved in the process of co-designing and co-monitoring the research and working towards commonly held goals and meaningful outcomes?
- There are ways of monitoring and evaluating projects both during project implementation (process evaluation) and at the stage of project completion (outcome/impact evaluation). Consider whether you might need to take different approaches at these different stages.
- Causation can be a challenge to measure – you may want to measure change in your participants / members. Longitudinal research deploying baseline and follow up surveys capturing snapshot data over time can be a good way to measure impact.
- Consider ethical implications specific to your project. Can all the participants in the project take part in the impact research (are there children or vulnerable adults involved)? How will you cover sensitive topics? Which methods are appropriate? How will you handle your data and ensure confidentiality?
- Sustainability of processes of reporting and evaluation are key. While planning your impact strategy examine how manageable it is and make sure to factor in time for data input and analysis. Try to ensure that M&E can be integrated into organisational practices.
- Remember that monitoring and evaluation is only useful in so far as it gives feedback that is incorporated into program redesign and from which initiatives are adjusted and improved.

Source: UNESCO, 2009. 'On Target: A guide for monitoring and evaluating Community-based projects', France: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.