Analysing Outcomes 3

This workbook was created by Evaluation Support Scotland to help organisations plan and evaluate their work and it has been adapted by Youth Scotland for use by youth groups and organisations. Some people find that they can use the workbook on its own without coming to workshops so it has been made available as a standalone resource. However, if you have any questions or would like help to make sense of things please contact either Youth Scotland or Evaluation Support Scotland.

Further copies of these workbooks and copies of blank templates and forms can be found at
www.youthworkessentials.org

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Analysing Outcomes

Evaluation can help you to

- Reflect on what works
- Plan what to do next
- Tell others about what you've achieved

But sometimes it's hard to make sense of what the 'evidence' tells you.

People often think that 'evaluation' is just a matter of analysing information to see what it tells you. This means they don't think about where the information will come from, or even what they want it to tell them about. In fact, analysis and reporting are part of a cycle.

In workbooks 1 and 2 we looked at setting and measuring your outcomes (the changes or differences you make). **If you have not already worked through workbooks 1 and 2 in this series, you might find it helpful to do so now.**

Remember, it's also important to collect information as you go along, not just at the end of a project. By then it's too late.

How to use this workbook

In this workbook we'll start to think about how to make sense of the information you have collected. We will introduce some simple tips on analysis, and you will have the chance to think about analysing evaluation information.

In our experience, the two most important things to learn are:

Analysis: Set aside time and involve other people if you possibly can. Do this before you think about...

Reporting: Think about who is going to read the report. What you say and how you say it will depend on this. (We look at this in workbook 4 in this series.)

Give it a go!

Throughout the workbook you'll have the chance to work on examples from your own project or organisation. Look out for the **'give it a go'** sections. Feel free to write in the workbook, or to use a separate piece of paper if you prefer.

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Analysis... a bit like playing detective

Just like a TV detective, if we want to make sense of information by analysing it we need to:

Identify the evidence
What information do you have?
Where will you find it?

Piece it together
What do the different pieces of information tell you?
Does a story emerge?

Draw conclusions
What did you find out?
How sure are you about your findings?

It also helps to set aside some time to do it properly and involve other people. Everyone needs a 'Watson' to talk things through with!

It's very important to take these steps before you start to look at analysis or reporting. Without taking them you will not have the information you need to show that you're making a difference.

Think about the outcomes you need to evaluate. Where is the information you will need? How can you make sure you can get it when you need it?

Give it a go!

Outcome	Where is the information stored? (e.g. spreadsheet, a colleague's head)	How will you get it?

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Analysing information

When you analyse information, you do not just read it or look at it, you need to critically review what it tells you. To do this you need to be clear what you are looking for. You need to sort and assess the information you have collected to check:

- what difference you made (your outcomes)
- whether these were planned or unintended outcomes
- what you did to deliver your outcomes
- which activities or processes were most effective or important
- whether things worked in the way you expected

When analysing information you can make notes, cut and paste electronically, colour code information or physically write relevant information against each outcome on big bits of paper.

The example below is one way of doing things but you should use a method that suits you and the material.

Example:

Two youth workers and a management committee member from the Big Noise Youth Music Project spend time analysing outcomes from the previous six months. They find the list of outcomes they had agreed at the start of the six months and write it on flipchart paper. Then they gather their information. This includes session recording sheets completed by youth workers, feedback questionnaires from parents, notes from a discussion with young people, photographs from an event, video diary material and attendance records. They go through the material and mark which outcome the material relates to and write up the key evidence on the flipchart.

They soon realise they have lots of evidence for some outcomes but very little for others. They will need to make some changes to their project and their information collection systems in future. They also discover excellent information about an unexpected outcome that might help them get more funding for a new band project.

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Analysing information

Big Noise Youth Music Project asked young people to write down the best thing about the project they had been taking part in. This would help staff find out about what had worked and what the project could learn.

Give it a go!

Analyse the information and try to make sense of what it is telling you.

- Learned lots of new chords
- Liked the ceilidh
- Made new friends
- Tutors were ace!
- More workshops please
- It was okay
- Learned lots of new songs
- Ceilidh was great fun
- The drumming workshop was the best
- Made loads of new friends
- Concert was scary but loved it!
- I want to start a band with my friends now!
- Know loads more songs now
- Concert was brilliant
- Have lots of new friends now

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Tips for analysing information

How did you go about making sense of the information?

Did you spot any groups of ideas or themes? Did you count to see if anything stood out? Maybe you did some of these without thinking?

Some tips on how to analyse information:

1.Count (e.g. the number of times something gets mentioned.)

What are the themes that emerge? What are the most common responses? Is there anything to learn from the less common answers (there usually is!)?

Example: Big Noise Youth Music Project

‘Learning new songs and chords’ is a clear theme. ‘Making new friends’ could be another.

Only one person said they wanted to start a band, but sometimes unusual answers are the most important, if you can learn from them.

2. Compare and contrast

It can be worth comparing responses over time, or contrasting different answers.

Example: Big Noise Youth Music Project

Some people were interested in the music they learned, some enjoyed making new friends. Two people enjoyed the ceilidh and two people mentioned the concert.

3. Look for relationships to other factors

Are the results related to anything else? E.g. do young people of different ages or from different areas answer differently?

Example: Big Noise Youth Music Project

Big Noise Youth Music Project looked back at answers from previous programmes. They noticed that the younger age group mentioned the ceilidhs more and the older age group enjoyed the concerts.

These tips are especially useful for making sense of qualitative information. Unlike quantitative data, qualitative data is less about numbers and tells more of a story about how and why things happen. Both sorts of data are needed if you want to understand the whole story. For example, quantitative data might tell you how many young people took part in the workshops, and even if outcomes were achieved. But without the qualitative data, we would not know why some young people came and others didn't, how it affected them and so on.

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Mind the gap!

Some people find it useful to use a grid like this one, to help put the information in order. It is also useful to look back at your outcomes (the difference you want to make) so you can see if they have been achieved.

Outcome	Indicator (examples)	What we found out	Unexpected outcome	Learning and action
Young people can play more music	Can take part in concerts and ceilidhs	3 learned new songs and chords 3 Made new friends 2 liked the concerts 2 liked the ceilidhs	One young person wants to start their own band	Provide more opportunities for young people to use what they learn in the workshops in their community and with friends

Some information may fit against more than one outcome. You may also notice gaps. If this happens, ask yourself whether this is because:

- you have set the wrong outcome

- you need to do more work to achieve the outcome (for example by changing your practice or working with another organisation)

- you probably are achieving the outcome but you haven't collected any information about it

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Analysing your information

Give it a go!

Why not try using a grid like this to make sense of your own data? Set aside some time, have your outcomes and evidence to hand and give it a go! **If it helps you can download a blank report template for your use from: www.youthworkessentials.org**

Outcome	Indicator (examples)	What we found out	Unexpected outcome	Learning and action

Now you have analysed your data and worked out what you can learn from it, you are ready to write first class reports! See workbook 4 in this series for more information.

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Notes

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Notes