

EVALUATING YOUR PARTICIPATION

You should evaluate your participation activities to understand what you achieved, what went well and what could be done differently in the future. This will help you improve:

1. the quality of your participation activities,
2. the experiences participants have, and
3. how the participation outputs are incorporated into the outputs and decisions of your project or service.

Benefits of evaluation include:

Assistance with planning:

Evaluation helps you focus on what you want to achieve, how you will achieve it and how you will know if you have been successful



Evidence of impact:

It can help measure the value and benefits of your activity and provides a record of your achievements (e.g. for you and your team, decision makers, or funders)



Critical reflection:

Evaluation provides a tool for critical reflection for you and the people you collaborate with, and helps improve a project



Accountability:

Evaluating can help to demonstrate whether your project is delivering what it set out to do and provides value for money



Learning:

Evaluation generates learning that can be shared with others, inform future activities, and help you improve your processes and practice

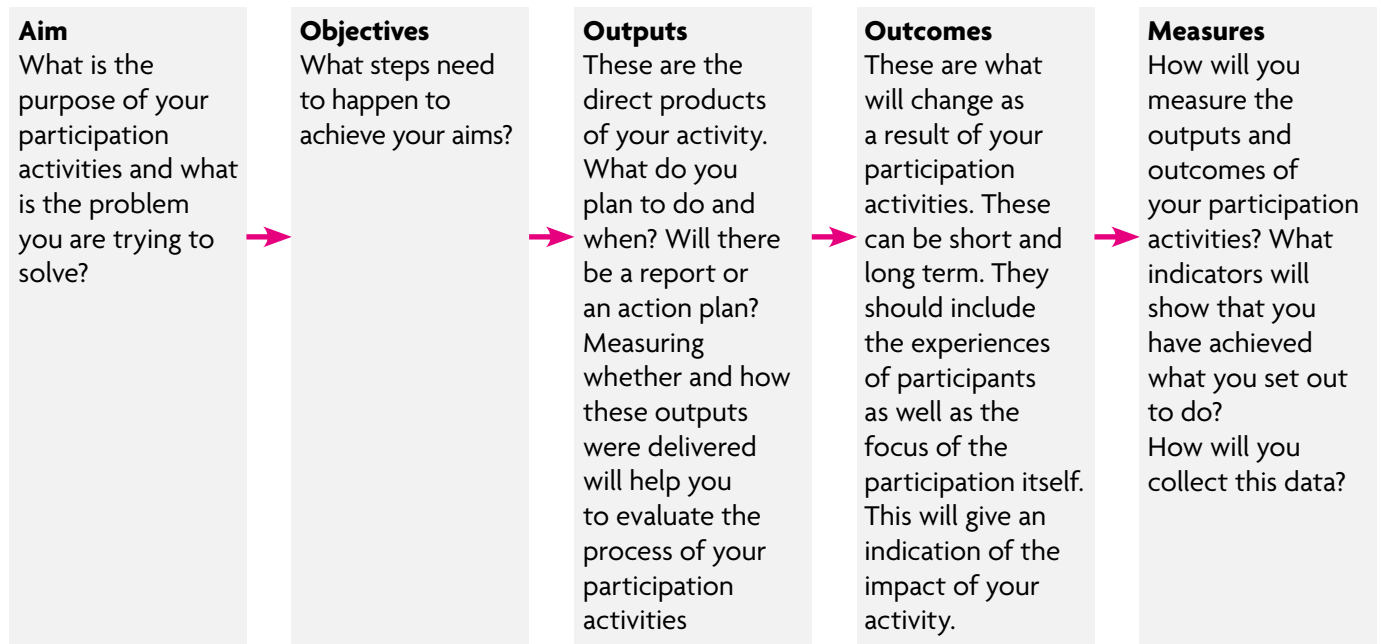


PLANNING THE EVALUATION OF PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES

It is important to think about evaluation during the planning stages of your project. Identifying this information at the start of your project will give you a clearer idea of what you are trying to evaluate and the kind of information you will need to collect. This will help you to define what you hope to achieve through your participation and how you will collect the data you need during your project to evaluate this.

Where possible, involve participants in this planning stage.

Things to consider when planning your activities and your evaluation:



Theory of change template available from Nesta, a leading innovation agency:
<https://www.nesta.org.uk/toolkit/theory-change/>

DATA COLLECTION

You will need to collect some information from your participants, your team and any collaborators, and on the outputs of your activity. How you do this will depend on the scale of your activity and the measures you are using for your evaluation.

The methods you choose may be limited by practical constraints – for example, time, budget, space, physical environment or digital access – but planning in advance will help you to make the most of any opportunities to collect information you need.

See the Questionnaire Design module for more information about collecting demographic information and a set of standard demographic questions



Can you see it? Sometimes you can collect data simply through observation. How many people took part? Was everyone able to contribute?



Can you find out indirectly? The information you're looking for may already exist, depending on what you are measuring e.g. improved feedback, increased engagement in a service



Can you ask it? If you can't measure it robustly through observation, you may need to ask it and there are various ways to do so, see next slide.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

There isn't one perfect collection method. You will probably need to use a mixture of methods to capture data for all your measures. It is good to think about how you want to analyse your data before you collect it, to make sure you collect what you need.

Quantitative data

can tell us what is happening, such as administrative data. It also can give an indication of positive or negative changes and how big a change is if you collect the same data from the same people at more than one point in time (e.g. before and after an activity)

Quantitative data

can tell us why it's happening. This can be a short response in a questionnaire or in-depth insight gained through interviews and focus groups. Very useful and often essential, but subjective.

Self-reported measures

can provide very specific quantitative measures, but may be subject to bias in who responds and how. This is sometimes a pragmatic solution.

Observation

can be limited in scope and any need for interpretation by an observer can introduce bias

Measuring short-term outcomes

can require collecting data from participants during a participation activity

Follow up measurement

some time after an activity can show longer-term outcomes, but participants to respond take part

See the Reward and Recognition module for the Council's policy on rewarding participation

Examples of collection methods:

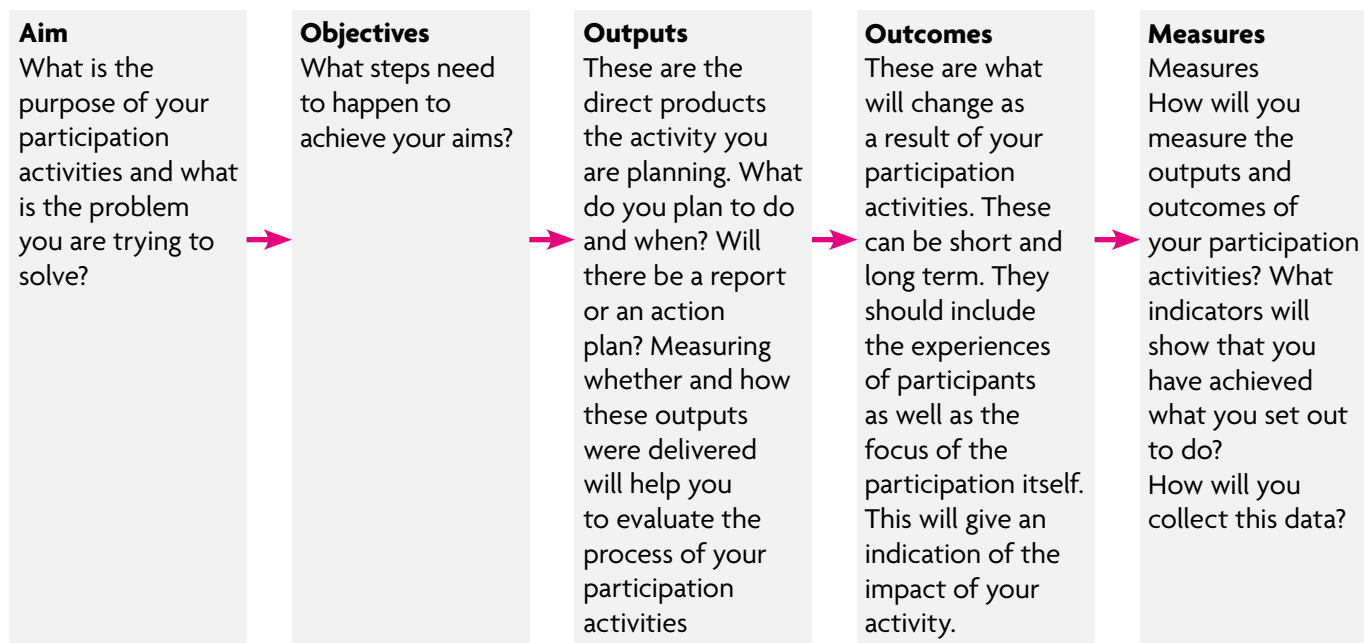
Comment cards / postcards
Questionnaires
Interviews
Focus groups
Graffiti wall

Idea mapping wall
Videos or photographs
Observations
Letters or emails
Artwork
Case studies or vignettes

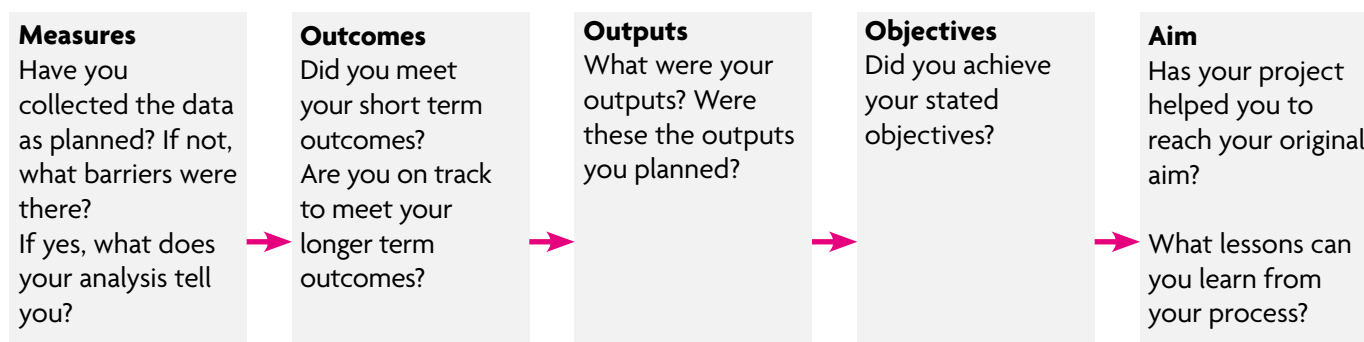
You should also think about the best way to present and share your evaluation. For example, this could be a traditional written report, a slide pack, a video or as a case study. Your results will be useful for your team, decision makers and people involved in the activity, and help colleagues undertaking similar work.

EVALUATING YOUR PROJECT

Look back at what you planned -



Did you meet your expected aims?



MEASURING WELLBEING

Improving wellbeing is at the centre of the council's strategic framework. As well as evaluating our residents happiness & wellbeing through our Residents Survey, we can do it through the interactions we have with residents.

Participating can have a positive impact on wellbeing, as residents may feel more empowered and have more social interactions with others in their community.

When evaluating your participation activity, you can measure changes in wellbeing by asking participants at the start and end of the project:

- **Personal wellbeing:** Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays? (on a rating of 0-10)
- **Community wellbeing:** To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement that "generally I borrow things and exchange favours with my neighbours"?

You can find other measures of wellbeing you could use in the Newham Outcomes Framework.

