Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council

Your local county voluntary council

2. Running your organisation

2.6 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are a means of ensuring a group or organisation is accountable for its work. It is also a way of making sure it is achieving what it set out to achieve and provides an opportunity to review procedures and make improvements. Monitoring and evaluation are different but need to be considered alongside each other when planning how they are going to be done.

Monitoring

Pretty much anything can be monitored, which can make it all too easy to spend large amounts of time collecting data and statistics which at the end of the day are of little use to anyone. Therefore, before starting any monitoring it's worth asking the following questions:

- What information is needed and why?
- What outputs and outcomes do you anticipate?
- What measures will you use to show you are achieving the anticipated outputs and outcomes?
- Who is the information for?
- How often do they want it?
- How can the information be gathered and by whom?
- How should it be collated and reported?
- Who should see the report?

Who does the monitoring?

Monitoring can be both internal and external. Internal monitoring is generally cheaper and good for collection of routine data. External sources could be used for specific tasks or where an independent view is needed.

What to collect

Statistics - are often the easiest to collect, which can sometimes lead to an overload in data collection. Therefore, carefully consider what is really needed and useful
Factual information - simple information can be collected such as; what activities have been held or level of advice given
Work plans and diaries - these can be used to monitor activity of workers or the use of a service; what's being done and when.

Observation - good for assessing some of the 'soft' outputs such as growth in confidence. However, it will reflect a subjective opinion, which may need to be considered when interpreting findings.
Interviews - can be used to gain a variety of information. Careful planning is needed to ensure the questions asked give the information wanted.
Evaluation forms – a good way of getting immediate or follow-up feedback from an event or a training session. Once again, give some thought to its content to ensure you get all the information you need

NB: *For all types of data collection it is important that all involved know what is being collected and how it should be recorded, to make sure data is consistent.*

When to monitor

This will depend upon what is being collected. Some information may be recorded daily, such as number of enquiries or numbers who use your project. Evaluation forms are used after each event and/or at the end of a period of service delivery.

Evaluation

Is the process of looking at the information gathered and making an assessment of the quality of work. For it to be effective, evaluation requires:

- Clear objectives as to what is being evaluated and how.
- Sufficient information including feedback from service users.
- Willingness to accept criticism about the organisation, its management or activities, by all participants.
- A willingness to make changes if that is what is needed.

Why is it important?

A good evaluation will:

- show you are accountable
- identify how you are doing - your strengths and weaknesses
- check progress of projects
- assist with future planning – would you repeat the project or one like it?

When should we evaluate our project?

Evaluation is often only done at the end of a project as a final process, when it is too late to correct any errors.

It is therefore important that evaluation is an ongoing process to allow changes to be made during the life of a project to improve it and bring greater benefit.

What information should the evaluation include?

The evaluation should include information such as:

- How the evaluation was undertaken and by whom.
- How service users were involved.
- Background information to the project including its inputs.
- Project aims and objectives; anticipated outputs and outcomes.
- What information was collected and how.
- How information was analysed and what it shows.
- What else was achieved – any unexpected outputs and outcomes.
- Baseline data to compare results against
- Any lessons learned.

The evaluation should be well planned, carried out in a way that is repeatable and it should be efficient and relevant - answering the questions you want to know the answers to!
Finally it should be enjoyable for those participating. The evaluation should not be an end in itself but a valuable opportunity to discuss the project in depth and a practical way of taking the project / group forward.

Are there any standard methods?

There are a number of widely used evaluation methods. For example:

PQASSO - a system developed to help small organisations measure their quality of service
www.ces-vol.org.uk

Evaluating Community Development - a helpful publication produced by Community Development Cymru
www.cdcymru.org

Disclaimer
The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.

For further information contact

Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council
Naylor Leyland Centre, Well Street, Ruthin, Denbighshire, LL15 1AF
Registered Charity *1054322*

Tel: 01824 702441 office@dvsc.co.uk
Fax: 01824 705412 www.dvsc.co.uk

Produced by WCVA, County Voluntary Councils and Volunteer Centres.
Last Updated:07/06/2012

Cyngor Gweithredu Gwirfoddol Cymru
wcva
Wales Council for Voluntary Action

Tel: 0800 2888 329
www.wcva.org.uk