How to…
Evaluate your engagement activities
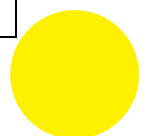
1. Planning for evaluation

Evaluation should be tailored to your project – depending on your aims and objectives and what you feel is important to measure. These examples will help you build a meaningful evaluation process for your engagement work.

A. Top tips

1. Build evaluation into your engagement plans from the beginning.

2. Think about what to measure before how to measure. Assess and measure what is important rather than what is easy to measure.

3. Evaluation should not just be about showcasing successes. The unexpected, unpredicted, and experiences of failure and confusion are all part of the evaluation process which will contribute to future learning.

4. Evaluation should lead to action – use your evaluation to enhance and improve how you work and share your findings with others, so they also receive the benefit of your learning.

5. Involve local people with lived experience and the communities you have worked with in the project to plan how you will evaluate your engagement work – and ask those who worked with you to feedback once the project is complete. Evaluation is a team effort.

B. What to measure

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LEARNING	• What worked well? • What would you do differently in the future? • How will you share this learning with colleagues?
AIMS	• Have you found out what you wanted to know? • Were your objectives for working with people and communities clear enough? • Were you clear with participants what could and couldn't be influenced?
REACH AND PROMOTION	• Did you work with people with lived experience? • Did you reach people from communities experiencing the worst health inequalities? • How effective were the channels used to promote opportunities to be involved?

	• Did the engagement work receive sufficient responses?
AUDIENCE	• Did you reach the people you were aiming to? • Were there any groups you needed to reach, but did not hear from? • Were there any groups that were initially missed in your engagement planning? • What would help identify and reach the right people if you did this again?
METHODS	• Were the engagement methods appropriate for reaching your target groups? • Was your approach flexible enough to suit those you were engaging with? • Did you have to adapt your methods during the programme to reach your target audience? • Would you choose different engagement methods to reach the same groups, if you did this again?
SUPPORTING PARTICIPATION	• What did the people involved in your project think about the process? • Was information made available in suitable formats? • Was support provided to enable participants to engage? • Have relations with the community / other agencies improved as a consequence of your activity?
TIMING	• Did those involved feel they had enough time to contribute? • Did you keep to your original timescale?
COST	• Did you budget enough for your engagement activity? • Were there any other costs that you hadn't initially budgeted for? • Was the process proportionate / value for money?
IMPACT AND FEEDBACK	• How has feedback been considered by decision-makers? • Will there be changes to policy or services following engagement? • Have you provided feedback in a way that is meaningful to the community? • Are you involving people in the on-going monitoring of any changes made as a result of the project/ programme?

C. How to measure

Once you've decided what you want to measure, it's important to think about how you might go about measuring those things. Here are some examples that might help you:

Qualitative methods
• Desktop research (e.g. reviewing all documentation produced by the programme)
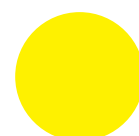
- Project team reflection sessions

- Verbal or written feedback from participants on the difference made by the exercise

- Decision makers having a discussion, that is minuted, about the feedback at key meetings

- Quotes from participants

Quantitative methods

- Setting targets for the numbers of responses you want to receive/ events you want to hold (both overall and from specific communities)

- Surveys before and after engagement work to understand if attitudes have changed towards the project

- Demographic analysis of participants

- Social media/ website/ distribution statistics around promotional activities

D. Evaluation phase

Once you are clear on what you are evaluating and how, you can begin your evaluation. Sometimes it can be helpful to start this process whilst you are still actively engaging. This can help you make adjustments to your approach – for example through reviewing demographic data, you might notice you are not reaching people from specific communities and can try different techniques to encourage participation.

Involve other team members and local people and communities in completing the evaluation – and share your findings with them. Consider how you will share what you have learned more widely and how it will influence future stages of your project.

References:
SWL Health and Care Partnership – Finishing properly checklist
One Bromley- Communications and engagement toolkit
Northamptonshire Health and Care Partnership - A staff guide to community engagement

Involve - Making a Difference: A guide to evaluating public participation in central government Making-a-Difference-.pdf (involve.org.uk)
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