

## **Some ideas about how to measure impact**

By measuring impact we find out what has changed as a result of the things that Big Local partnerships are doing. In this blog there are a number of ideas about how to measure impact. A longer version of this paper including examples from Big Local areas and sources of further information is available on the following link. [\[link here\]](#)

### **Top tips for good impact measurement:**

#### **Tip 1 Know what are you trying to measure**

You could be measuring the impact for individuals – showing what has changed for one person as a result of participating in an activity. You could then aggregate those individual changes to show the changes that have happened for the whole project. You could measure how much volunteering has happened as a result of the project taking place. You could measure the impact of the project on the people who live in the area, but you might need to use different ways of finding out the impacts for those different groups

#### **Tip 2 Know your starting point**

It is important to know the starting point – or baseline – to be able to understand how great the achievement is. This could take the form of the organisers observing how participants are when they first arrive, or by asking participants to score how they feel on a scale of 1 – 10 and asking them to do this again at the end of the project.

#### **Tip 3 Think about what will show you that change is happening**

To show that change is happening, you need to think about what signs you are looking for – these are known as **indicators**.

Knowing what these indicators of change are can help delivery organisations to show to others that their project is having an effect on participants and can help Big Local Partnerships to assess the contribution the project is making to its overall goals.

#### **Tip 4 Think about suitable ways to measure change**

It seems like a lot of extra work, people don't like asking other people questions, project organisers often worry that if they are seen as intrusive that it will put off the people they are trying to attract. But there are lots of ways of collecting information that can avoid any of these things happening.

#### **Tip 5 Ask people what changes for them**

Although we might be clear what we are trying to achieve by running a particular project, often what people get from it is something completely different that we hadn't thought of. It's important to capture this additional value and also it will help plan future projects.

### **Tip 6 Use existing information**

Often the easiest way to collect information is to start with what organisations have already got. You can also think about who else might have relevant information. There is a lot of information available to you before anyone has had to find out anything new.

### **Tip 7 Telling extraordinary stories – a word about case studies**

One really good way of telling the story of what difference your activities are making is to use case studies – to tell one person's experience. These stories can bring alive what your projects are achieving, and most people respond better to a personal story than to a set of figures. But these stories should be used carefully.

Low key stories about small but significant changes in people's lives are important and these make great (if less dramatic) case studies.

### **Tip 8 Knowing what you can and can't tell from your evidence**

Although there are lots of ways that you can measure the changes that have taken place as a result of your activities, you should always keep a sense of perspective – ask yourselves how much of the change was created by your project/activity – or could it have been affected by something else? Have you solved the problem or have you just moved it elsewhere?

### **Tip 9 Big projects – small impacts or small projects – big impacts?**

If 1000 people attend a summer festival, they will have a great day out; it will promote Big Local and help people feel part of the community. If the event costs £5000, it works out at £5 per head. That can be seen as pretty good value for money. But if you fund an apprenticeship for five young people that costs £30,000, that works out at £6,000 per head – and you have only supported 5 people.

However, the level of change that you can create in those two activities is completely different. Those 5 young people could have their lives completely changed by that apprenticeship, but it's unlikely that anyone's life will change by attending a summer festival. That's not to say you should do one thing rather than another – just that you can't compare them in terms of impact.

### **Tip 9 A one off project or on-going need?**

Is the activity you are supporting a one-off project that will achieve lasting change – or is it something that will need to continue in order for the change to be maintained? Both of these things are valuable

The way you measure the impact of these types of project may be different, but you need to be clear about what the expectations are before you consider what impacts they are likely to have and for how long.

**Tip 10 Use simple and appropriate ways of finding out what has changed**

Don't use complicated questionnaires if people have limited time, have literacy problems or may have a first language that isn't English.

Get people to do something active, like putting a ball in a bucket or a counter in a box (like they do with charity boxes at some supermarkets) or putting a sticker on a chart.

**Tip 11 Do something with the information you collect**

Once you have collected information about the impact of an event or activity, make sure you analyse it to find out what it is telling you. You might find out things that will help plan your next project.

**Tip 12 Help others to collect information for you**

If you need people in the projects you are funding to collect information for you, you can provide help for them in a number of different ways:

- Be clear about what information you will want.
- Provide ways that they can collect the information (forms, spread sheets, activities)
- Be prepared to help small community groups – help them to set up ways of collecting information that are simple and accessible or go to them and talk to them about what happened in their project.
- Offer to promote their achievements through your newsletters, websites etc. – but only when you've got the evidence.