

Demonstrating the Value of your Volunteering Programme

1. Why monitoring is important
2. What types of information to collect; what you are collecting already
3. The best ways to promote the benefits of your organisation's volunteering programme to colleagues, senior managers, potential volunteers and funders
4. Tools to provide evidence of how your volunteering programme impacts on service users and the wider community.

www.rebeccatully.co.uk

Research and Evaluations: Glossary of terms

Capital	A 'stock' of something that is useful and which can be created or built up over time
Cultural capital	Sense of one's own identity and understanding of others' identities. Feelings of belonging to a particular community,
Human capital	Knowledge, skills and health of people
Physical capital	Goods and services received
Social capital	Cooperative relationships between people
Economic capital	Benefits or costs with a financial value
Evaluation	the systematic acquisition and assessment of information to provide useful feedback.
Focus groups	Group discussions involving around 8-10 people guided by a facilitator and structured around a number of questions
Impact	The longer term, higher level changes caused by an activity
Input	The resources that are put into an activity
Monitoring	collecting information (or data) about and from your volunteers
One-to-one interviews	Structured conversations with one person around certain themes
Outcome	The changes, benefits, learning and other effects that happen as a result of an activity
Outputs	The products and services that an activity leads to
Qualitative data	Information which cannot be quantified and is in the form of text or images
Quantitative data	Numerical information which can be statistically analysed
Questionnaire surveys	Small number of questions sent to a large number of people
Sampling	Selecting a proportion of a population that you are interested in that are in some way representative of all of them
Transcript	Written record of an interview or focus group

What information we're collecting... and where it's going

Tools we use to collect and monitor information

Enquiries log (numbers of enquirers, applicants, starters)
Application forms
Volunteer interview
Equalities and diversity monitoring
Timesheet
Volunteer plans; activity logs
Supervision forms
Expenses reimbursement forms
Suggestions and complaints forms
Exit Interviews

Evaluation

The bit in the middle... how we take what we have, make sense of it and work out how to share it with others

People we are talking to about our volunteers

Partner organisations
Senior Managers
Trustees
Clients
Current and future funders
Volunteer Centre
Other Staff
Policy makers
Other Volunteer involving organisations
Volunteer Co-ordinator
Current and Potential volunteers

Social capital – what makes a society 'tick'

“Social networks have value. Just as a screwdriver (physical capital) or a university education (human capital) can increase productivity (both individual and collective), so do social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups”.

David Putnam

Bonding Social Capital

Connections between like-minded people. Strong ties, enables people to 'get by' but can exclude others: “sociological superglue”

Bridging Social capital

Connections between groups/ people that are different. Likely to be more fragile, but more likely also to foster social inclusion: “sociological WD40”

More information on these concepts can be found in David Putnam's book **Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community**

More information about how these concepts relate to UK volunteering can be found at the Institute for Volunteering Research Evidence Bank:
<http://www.ivr.org.uk/ivr-evidence-bank>

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Researching your Area: using external information

Depending on your organisation, your 'area' will differ. You may wish to look solely geographically, or consider other communities based on characteristics, interest or equality strands.

Use your Borough's information

This is an example from Barking and Dagenham Council's website:

About the borough: 2001 Census profile

- *Lone parent households with dependent children make up 10.4% of households*
- *The white British population makes up 80.9% of the boroughs population*
- *The largest minority ethnic group is black African representing 4.4% of the population*
- *19.9% of the boroughs population has a limiting long-term illness*
- *39.5% of the population aged 16 to 74 has no qualifications*

<http://www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk/features/profile/profile-main.cfm>

Look at National Statistics of your area.

Census information and other surveys cover the Health, Religion, Age, Economic status/Income for boroughs, wards and postcode areas among others. The office of National Statistics has also published a review of equality data, and has focused information on most of the equality strands.

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk>

Use information about other types of voluntary organisations in your area

Clues to the kinds of people local to your organisation will be in the kinds of support organisations that already exist. The local CVS and Volunteer Centre will be able to provide this information and there may be a searchable database.

Listen to those already involved.

Users, staff, volunteers, partner organisations will have vitally useful opinions and perspectives about who you should be reaching. You can use formal surveys, or record conversations and encounters that happen more anecdotally.

Use research from other specialist organisations that know their field

- Organisations that work with specific groups will have more knowledge to share about where people are based and current trends.
- You can find other reports with similar findings to those you are looking for, for example:
 - NHS Reports from your local area;
 - Other research about the benefits of volunteering. (For example **City and Guilds Roots to Work: Developing Employability through Community Food Growing**

http://www.skillsdevelopment.org/research_projects/urban_agriculture.aspx)

Volunteering Impact Evaluation Tools

As well as tools organisations use day-to-day to gather and analyse data, there are tools available to perform more one-off evaluations of your volunteering programme.

Specific Volunteer Tools

The **Greater London Volunteering Toolkit Experts in Evaluation** has simple templates to guide your everyday collection of information and lead you to use it widely. <https://expertsinvolunteering.org.uk/resources/good-practice>

The **Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit** from NCVO is now in its third edition and is an easy-to-follow guide with downloadable resources. It has been used by both experienced researchers, and by volunteer managers with very little evaluation experience.

Positives: It enables organisation to get lots of information in a well ordered way.
However: it is geared towards a well-staffed organisation with time set aside for an evaluation project. While it's possible to adapt and edit questionnaires, it's less easy to evaluate small parts of a volunteering programme.

The questionnaires measure impact in terms of five different types of capital: human, social, economic, physical and cultural. This is a useful concept to use, organisations could find this useful in devising evaluations for themselves. <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/volunteering-management/1-publications/P78-volunteering-impact-assessment-toolkit>

Better Impact have produced an online calculator for measuring economic value of volunteers. It allows you to compare a volunteer-involving picture from quarter to quarter, or compare how financially beneficial each of your roles are, for example.

<http://www.betterimpact.co.uk/roi2/>

Related Tools

The **Mentoring and Befriending Foundation** have produced a toolkit for evaluating a mentoring programme, many of which involve volunteers. Cost is £60. <http://www.mandbf.org/guidance-and-support/resources>

Indicators from quality standards such as **Investing in Volunteers** can be used, and evidence collected towards these standards, to create tools or present evidence to a third party.

<http://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk/about/the-nine-indicators>

“Brag About it” – the importance of physical internal communication about the great things you do.

Jayne Cravens – Trainer and Researcher in volunteer involvement – writing about how important a physical location is within your organisation or group to share the benefits of your volunteering programme.

“...That brag board was internal marketing. And it's why I had a great summer as publicity director - because everyone knew what I did, and they valued it.

For a few years after that, I forgot that important lesson about internal marketing: I assumed the head of the organization, the heads of other departments, the receptionist, and others knew what I was doing because it was so clearly presented online. It's all there, on the Internet - everyone sees that, right? It took a woman I admired tremendously, who always made me feel valued at her organization, to take me aside one day and remind me of the importance of internally marketing *yourself*. It's of vital importance that you communicate to everyone at your organization about your role, what you do, and what the results of your work are - otherwise, you will find your budget being reduced, your department staff getting cut - and maybe even see your job get eliminated.

Having your work so prominent online, or among your professional associations, is NOT enough to ensure your role is valued at the organization that employs you.

Create a brag board. Put up copies of newspaper articles, blog posts, emails, a compilation of tweet mentions - anything that shows your organization is getting noticed or lauded. Print out and post photos on it that your volunteers are taking while volunteering and posting online. Put the board in a break room or hallway - a high traffic area where employees, consultants, volunteers and visitors will see it - or, if that doesn't get approved, in your office. Keep it neat, well-organized, and frequently updated!

Keep forwarding links and emails to all staff - *hey, look at this!* - but don't ever let that be a substitute for a big visual representation of the work you are doing.”

<http://coyoteblog.posterous.com/brag-about-it>
<http://www.coyotecomunications.com>

If you don't have a physical location, there's always an old fashioned photo folder or binder to have around – your solution will be unique to your group or organization. Just don't forget to brag on behalf of yourself and your volunteers!

Using Digital Technology to Make Better use of Anecdotal Evaluation

“There's been a lot of interest in storytelling evaluation over the past few years, but it has faced the consistent challenge of being resource intensive. Rather than maximising the rich source of information available to them, organisations are resigned to creating a few individualised case studies.

Digital storytelling: As well as writing a story or sharing an experience online, people articulate what their story is about within a set framework related to the programme. For example, individuals involved with projects funded by our Digital Edge investment programme write about an experience, but then mark on a scale whether this story is more to do with their health, relationships, or work. This is important because it's not a researcher interpreting the story... it ensures the meaning is coming from the participant. Ideally, this collection is done online, but it could also be done on paper and entered into a web page later if needed.

Benefits: On the communication side, it allows you to gather openly people's experiences on a programme and draw out different themes to communicate impact to different audiences. You can also go from a big-picture analysis and drill directly down into the individual stories that form that picture.

A further benefit is that you can capture information much more frequently than with a traditional survey. Asking people to record something that's happened each week is infinitely easier than convincing them to fill out another questionnaire.

The advantage of using technology here is that it allows rich stories of change to be stored, analysed and aggregated much more easily, cheaply and quickly than ever before, joining what happens on the ground to big-picture trends that can share the impact of work with a variety of audiences.”

Kieron Kirkland, Nominet Trust. More info at

<http://www.nominettrust.org.uk/knowledge-centre/blogs/evaluation-3rd-way-3rd-sector-0>

Example of Digital Storytelling: The Global Giving Storytelling project...
“Turning anecdotes into useful data”

“In 2010 and 2011, teams of over 1,000 local Kenyan and Ugandan scribes have collected 48,194 stories from over 5,000 community members by asking a simple question: “tell us about a time when a person or an organization tried to change something in your community. These stories have covered a wide range of topics, problems, and solutions. With this community-based beneficiary feedback we're identifying community-focused organizations, good listeners, potential innovators, and we're breaking through the self-report bias that often prevents international development from having a larger impact.”

<http://www.globalgiving.co.uk/stories/>