InterAct

Evaluating participatory, deliberative and co-operative ways of working

InterAct

InterAct is an alliance of experienced practitioners, researchers, writers and policy makers committed to putting participatory, deliberative and co-operative approaches at the heart of debate, decision-making and action across the UK.

InterAct believes that the shift to a focus on collaborative processes is key to democratic renewal, social inclusion, sustainable development and a vibrant civil society.

Partners

Andrew Acland *Dialogue by Design Ltd*
(andacl@aol.com)

Jeff Bishop *BDOR Limited*
(jeff.bishop@cwcom.net)

Lindsey Colbourne *Projects in Partnership*
(lindsey@pship.demon.co.uk)

Alison Crowther *The Environment Council*
(alisonc@envcouncil.org.uk)

Jonathan Dudding *Institute of Cultural Affairs*
(jdudding@gn.apc.org)

Richard Harris *RJH Associates*
(rjh@kbnet.co.uk)

Pippa Hyam *Dialogue by Design Ltd*
(pippa@facilitation.demon.co.uk)

Alison Pilling *CAG Consultants* (ap@cagconsult.co.uk)

Ben Tuxworth *Forum for the Future*
(B.Tuxworth@forumforthefuture.org.uk)

Perry Walker *New Economics Foundation*
(Perry.Walker@neweconomics.org)

Diane Warburton *Writer and researcher*
(diane@sharedpractice.org.uk)

Lynn Wetenhall *Projects in Partnership*
(Lynn@pship.demon.co.uk)

Lesley Williams *Lesley Williams Associates*
(Lawilliamsassoc@aol.com)

Peter Woodward *Quest Associates Ltd*
(peterwoodward@questnet.co.uk)

Associates

Professor Jacqui Burgess *University College London*

Ian Christie *Local Futures Group; writer/researcher*

Rebecca Gwynn Jones *Independent facilitator*

Tony Hams *Sustainability First*

Gary Kass *Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology*

Professor John Stewart *University of Birmingham*

Ken Webster *WWF*

David Wilcox *Partnerships Online*

The development of evaluation

This document is designed to provide a framework for evaluating participatory, deliberative and co-operative processes, based on the experience of practitioners.

InterAct will review and update this framework, and aims to produce supplementary guidance, with more practical examples, over the coming months.

Further examples and feedback on this paper would be very welcome.

Please send to

InterAct Evaluation group

Diane Warburton
Jonathan Dudding
Florian Sommer
Perry Walker

June 2001

Introduction

InterAct recognises the importance of finding appropriate and meaningful ways of assessing participatory, deliberative and co-operative ways of working. An early priority has therefore been to examine evaluation.

In this document, evaluation is taken to mean *a process of assessment which identifies and analyses the nature and impact of processes and programmes*. Evaluation is deeper and more analytical than monitoring, focuses on results and impacts as well as describing activities, and is long term - ideally starting as the project or programme begins (or before) and continuing throughout the project's life (and after).

This is an initial working paper by InterAct. We hope that these ideas can be further developed over time, including the addition of further examples from experience in the field, and further development of criteria and indicators for good practice.

This paper covers:

1 Why evaluation matters

2 What evaluation can achieve

3 A framework for evaluation

4 Evaluating participatory projects (what to look for)

5 Evaluation processes (how to do it)

Annex A. Examples of indicators and criteria
Annex B. Further reading

1

Why evaluation matters to participation

The principles of increasing the participation of people in the decisions which affect them are now widely accepted in much national and local policy. Indeed, various national government policies and programmes (especially in regeneration, planning, modernising government and extending democracy) make public and/or community participation a statutory requirement.

However, while participation is often accepted in principle, most projects and programmes - by public and voluntary bodies as well as private sector - proceed with little or no public participation. Although the moral/ethical arguments have been won at the policy level, it seems that the practical arguments for participation still need to be made and supported by convincing evidence from effective evaluation.

The practical benefits of participation are becoming well known, and include:

- financial costs saved or avoided in the long term by establishing appropriate solutions at an early stage
- increased user satisfaction
- reduced conflict
- improved relationships between stakeholders
- improved public image, and greater public acceptance of projects and programmes
- improved communications saving staff time
- reduced vandalism
- reduced repair and maintenance costs
- stronger communities
- less demand on control services (eg police)
- and others.

But there remains insufficient hard evidence on these benefits for them to be widely acknowledged.

This lack of evidence may be the result of the indicators normally used to assess project success having been designed to focus primarily on the 'products' of the initiative (eg various measures of regeneration), rather than the 'process' elements (how the initiative was designed and implemented).

In addition, much assessment has tended to be based on quantitative methods designed to generate relatively easily collectable statistics, rather than assessing 'quality': 'Quality relates to the manner in which the [task is done] and the

judgement of it by specific individuals with unique characteristics, needs and aspirations' (Voluntary Activity Unit, 1996). Assessing the types of qualitative outcomes which change as a result of participation requires different methods and different analytical tools.

Although product-focused and quantitative evaluation methods are now being increasingly supplemented by more process-focused and qualitative approaches, there remains considerable scope for further development - through more evaluation of participatory working, in more appropriate ways, geared to showing practical results, and with the findings disseminated more widely.

2

What evaluation can achieve

Effective evaluation of participatory projects and programmes can offer considerable benefits, as outlined below.

Improving practice in participatory and co-operative projects and programmes:

● **What works (or not).**
By describing, analysing and assessing what has happened, funders, practitioners and participants can learn what works, in what circumstances, and what the likely limitations and pitfalls are so these can be avoided in future.

● **Consolidating achievement.**
If the evaluation is part of the project throughout implementation, success can be identified, shared and celebrated at regular intervals, strengthening and consolidating the achievements of the project, and reinforcing the value of participatory working

● **Extending involvement.**
Evaluation processes provide another vehicle for involving users, beneficiaries and other stakeholders in the project itself. This can enhance other participatory methods used.

● **Reducing the isolation of those working in participatory ways.**
Many practitioners committed to participatory working are isolated, even when they are based within organisations. The adoption of widely supported evaluation mechanisms will enable them to provide evidence of the value of their own work, as well as creating evidence they can use of the efficacy of the approach more generally.

● **Sharing and consolidating learning.**
There are currently few opportunities to share good practice and other lessons from experience of participatory working. Evaluation provides methods through which material is gathered, analysed and assessed in a disciplined form, which can then be used by practitioners and others to increase reflection, understanding and learning and strengthen and improve practice.

Improving conventional projects and programmes:

Feedback from users and other stakeholders can be fed back into future planning for new projects, and maintaining and improving existing projects. In addition, participatory evaluation can be used to improve conventional programmes by providing an initial step towards involving stakeholders.

Building support for participatory and co-operative ways of working, and enabling mainstreaming:

There are two main ways in which evaluation can increase the credibility and status of participatory ways of working:

● **Evidence of how participation works.**
Evaluation provides a mechanism for systematically collecting data on the effectiveness and achievements of participation. This growing body of evidence can be used to increase the confidence of funders as well as practitioners, and help ensure that funding and support become more easily available for participatory ways of working.

● **Expanding the criteria for evaluating success.**
While success is still assessed primarily in quantitative terms, with a focus on statistics and physical change rather than social or human change, participatory ways of working will always be marginalised. New evaluation methods drawn from participatory practice can introduce new criteria into general assessments of success, which will allow participatory working to be assessed as being as valid as other issues.

InterAct aims for a future in which all public, private, voluntary and community initiatives which impact on others are developed in participatory and inclusive ways. There will always be exceptions but, in those cases, reasons for not using participatory methods should be made explicit.

Benefits for stakeholders

Different stakeholders may benefit from more effective evaluation of participatory working in different ways:

● **For funders, and those commissioning participatory projects, evaluation can:**
  ● Help ensure good use of funds (public and other)
  ● Highlight good practice worth replicating
  ● Help assess 'success'
  ● Identify gaps in provision
  ● Provide a basis for selecting among competing applicants
  ● Inform policy.

● For project organisers and practitioners, evaluation can:

- ● Improve practice by identifying and articulating lessons and successes
- ● Begin to develop a shared terminology of success
- ● Help promote the achievements of the project or programme
- ● Provide an analysis of strengths and weaknesses which can be used to develop future plans
- ● Ensure that resources are used efficiently in future
- ● Help to clarify aims and objectives
- ● Provide evidence on impacts
- ● Contribute to setting standards and implementing quality control
- ● Uncover unexpected consequences
- ● Help validate new approaches
- ● Contribute to staff development, such as providing feedback on performance, challenging assumptions, confirming impressions, suggesting areas to develop further, helping staff see their work in a wider context.

● For users, participants or beneficiaries, evaluation can:

- ● Provide evidence which can be used to demonstrate and strengthen the accountability, representativeness and legitimacy of certain stakeholder groups - by describing existing mechanisms fully, and by providing material for debate and feedback within different constituencies
- ● Legitimate and extend the feedback process, enabling views on the management of processes, projects and programmes to be heard so that future practice can be improved
- ● Provide information on projects and processes
- ● Represent an opportunity for further active participation.

It could be assumed from the above that evaluation of participation will always produce evidence that will be positive: that evaluation will prove that participation 'works'. Good evaluation should certainly show <u>what</u> works, but also what does not work. The broader arguments for participation remain those of principle and politics, and practical evidence from effective evaluation can only supplement those broader arguments, not replace them.

3

A framework for evaluation

There are two elements to any framework for evaluation of participation:

- ● Evaluation of participatory/inclusive processes, projects and programmes (focusing on <u>what</u> is being evaluated), and
- ● Participatory/inclusive evaluation processes (focusing on <u>how</u> to do evaluation in a participatory way).

The links between these two elements are complex:

- ● Participatory evaluation can be used on projects which have not themselves been participatory: for example, stakeholders can be involved in evaluating conventional programmes. In some cases, a participatory evaluation could be used as a first stage in developing wider participatory programmes.
- ● Participatory programmes can be evaluated using non-participatory mechanisms. For example, a funder may wish to evaluate a participatory project using entirely their own criteria, and not involving stakeholders at all.

The emphasis in this paper is on participatory evaluation of participatory programmes, but there remains a vital role for independent, broader-perspective evaluation as well.

Ideally, participatory programmes would be evaluated using participatory evaluation processes - providing continuing opportunities for people to engage in the decisions and processes which affect their lives.

However, while it would not be considered good practice if stakeholders were not involved in evaluating projects and programmes at all, the level and nature of that involvement may be different in different circumstances. Levels of involvement may vary from stakeholders being fully involved (eg identifying criteria for evaluation, debating views on impacts, agreeing findings and recommendations), to simply asking stakeholders for views (eg via a questionnaire) - and all levels in between.

The purpose of any evaluation framework is to construct the research questions in order to obtain the relevant information: in other words, it should ensure clarity about what the research is trying to find out, enable appropriate methods and processes to be identified, and simplify data collection and analysis.

The following sections suggest some ways of achieving this in evaluating participatory projects and programmes.

4

Evaluating
participatory projects
(what to look for)

The issues which need to be addressed in evaluating any participatory/ inclusive projects and programmes will be different in different circumstances, and will depend on the needs and priorities of all stakeholders. However, in all cases, both the *process itself* and the *impacts of that process* will need to be assessed. Some of the main issues to be considered are outlined below.

Objectives
- What were the stated objectives of the process or programme?
- Were the objectives:
  - practical (focused on project outcomes)
  - transformational (focused on personal and/or organisational change)
  - both?
- How clear were the objectives, and how were they communicated?
- How were they set? How much did various stakeholders participate in setting them?
- Have they changed over time? If so, how, and why?
- Is increasing participation/inclusion one of the objectives of the process?
- To what extent have the stated objectives been met\fulfilled?
  - of the process itself
  - of the programme it served, if wider?

Context
- Is the process or programme part of a larger strategy?
- How does it relate to that larger strategy, structurally and informally?
- What other factors have affected the process, both
  - within the boundaries set for the process (geographical, certain groups etc), or
  - outside those boundaries (eg budgets, national/international policies, professional expectations, limitations to technical expertise)?
- What impact have these factors had on the process?

Levels of involvement

It may be useful to assess where the process lies on Arnstein's ladder of participation (see below), or other agreed analysis of degrees of stakeholder involvement. There may be limits (including legal limits) to the extent to which participants can control the process, and this will vary according to circumstances. Equally, different aspects of a single project may require (and display) different levels of participation.

Evaluation processes should focus on identifying the appropriate level of participation for the particular project and circumstances, and assess whether that has happened. In principle, InterAct generally recommends that as much power as possible is passed to or shared with participating stakeholders, and for any limits to be clearly articulated and understood.

As with all management decisions about the design of participatory processes, who decides about the appropriate level, and the reasons for that choice, will need to be clear and explained to all stakeholders.

Arnstein's ladder		
Arnstein's ladder of participation, first published 1969, remains a useful analysis of power relations in participation (Arnstein 1969). It consists of eight levels:		
Level 1	Manipulation	These levels assume a passive audience which is given information which may be partial or constructed
Level 2	Education	
Level 3	Information	People are told what is going to happen, is happening or has happened
Level 4	Consultation	People are given a voice, but no power to ensure their views are heeded
Level 5	Involvement	People's views have some influence, but traditional power holders still make the decisions
Level 6	Partnership	People can begin to negotiate with traditional power holders, including agreeing roles, responsibilities and levels of control
Level 7	Delegated power	Some power is delegated
Level 8	Citizen control	Full delegation of all decision-making and action

<div style="border:1px solid #000; background:#eee;">

The LITMUS levels

The LITMUS project, in South London, devised its own version of Arnstein's ladder of participation, to guide their evaluation work. The levels of participation they used were:

Information.
Refers to informing or giving feedback to the public (e.g. via post, newsletter, exhibitions, radio, television; and informing via meetings or presentations). The public has a passive role as a recipient of information.

Consultation.
Refers to contacting and seeking the views of the public (e.g. surveys, feedback, public hearing, consultation sessions). The public has a passive role as a provider of opinions and ideas.

Participation.
Refers to planning and formulating options together (e.g. participatory planning sessions, advisory committee, structured workshop). The public has a more active role as provider of opinions and ideas, but without authority to make decisions.

Partnership.
Refers to acting as partners in a project or particular activity (e.g. when representatives of voluntary sector decide criteria for grant funding together with representatives of the local council). The public has an active role as provider of ideas and opinions, and has some authority to make decisions.

Delegation of authority.
Refers to delegating authority over a project or particular activity to an organisation or group of individuals (e.g. tenant management organisations, citizens planning commission). The public has a majority, or full authority to make decisions.

For more information, see *The LITMUS Project. Final Monitoring and Evaluation Report*, by Yvonne Rydin and Florian Sommer, June 2000.

</div>

What methods and techniques were used?

- What were the methods and techniques which were used during the process or programme (eg planning for real, citizens' jury, workshop, visioning exercise etc)
- How were those methods identified, assessed and agreed upon? How much did actual or potential stakeholders participate in identifying methods?
- How were methods used introduced to the participants (eg training, background information, publications etc)?
- How was each event, method or technique evaluated (eg feedback forms for immediate return), and how was the learning from this evaluation incorporated into the design of future events or the choice of future methods?
- Were internal staff or external facilitators used to run specific events or methods? How effective were they? What were the benefits or problems associated with the choice of staff or facilitators, and what were the implications for the design of future events or the choice of future methods?

What stage of the project/programme has been reached (where in overall timetable)?

Evaluation will need to assess the extent to which the right processes were used at the right time. Different processes will be appropriate at different stages eg different stakeholder groups with different interests may need to be involved at different stages.

How inclusive is the process? What steps have been taken to reach excluded groups?

InterAct recommends that participatory processes should aim for maximum inclusiveness as a basic principle. However, which individuals or groups or sectors of the community attend, and how many people, will depend on the specific circumstances. Limitations may include legal restrictions or the willingness or ability of certain organisations to respond.

However, in most cases, checks will need to be made to assess whether specific efforts have been made to reach groups which may not automatically be invited or feel themselves to be excluded from participatory events, such as people from black and minority ethnic communities, young people, older people, people with disabilities and others.

Indicators may include:
- numbers of people/groups involved
  - who was invited
  - who actually participated
- types of people/groups involved compared to demographic data (according to agreed categories and depending on specific circumstances)
- roles of those involved (eg representatives of certain groups; individuals with personal knowledge or experience)
- ways in which they have been involved
- feedback from these and other groups about the representativeness of the process.

What is the commitment to using the results from evaluation?

The evaluation will need to consider:
- The extent to which the evaluation itself, and the implementation of the results of the evaluation, form part of the overall project or programme design and development.
- The extent to which the results (quantitative and qualitative) of the evaluation will be *embedded* in future implementation.

Key questions may include:
- How the lessons from the evaluation will be articulated and shared
- Whether recommendations will be made, and
- How progress on recommendations will be monitored and assessed.

Inputs, outputs and outcomes

This is the element of the evaluation process which is most likely to identify specific costs and savings associated with participatory ways of working - in both the short and long term.

- **Inputs** may include:
  - Time.
    Example indicators: calendar time taken; time given by staff, external advisers and participants - paid and unpaid.

- Money.
  Example indicators: staff costs; practical costs (eg room hire, publicity, catering, exhibitions, reports); charges to participants (ie income).
- **Outputs** may include:
  - Newsletters, publicity for events,etc which increase information flow.
    Example indicators: quantities of materials produced; numbers of people who received materials; views on quality of materials; comments received as a result.
  - Events at which people give views (eg exhibitions or focus groups).
    Example indicators: numbers of event held; numbers attending; feedback on quality of event; numbers of people commenting.
  - Events at which people debate and/or decide issues.
    Example indicators: number of events held; numbers attending; feedback on quality of event and debate
  - Questionnaires completed and returned.
    Example indicators: numbers circulated; numbers of normally excluded groups targeted (different excluded groups and total numbers); feedback on quality of questionnaire; numbers completed and returned; quality of views provided.
  - Interviews completed.
    Example indicators: similar to previous
- **Outcomes**. Evaluating the outcomes will essentially focus on assessing what changes have been achieved as a result of the participatory work, including:
  - changes to individuals
  - changes to groups of people (formal and informal)
  - changes to institutions and organisations
  - immediate or long term change
  - small scale or major systemic change.

In particular, changes may be observed in the following ways:

- Increased information and understanding.
  Example indicators: amount and type of new information and understanding in circulation, based on statements by participants and observers.
- Increased level of trust among stakeholders.
  Example indicators: views from stakeholders; increased willingness to participate; increased levels of participation; new or different groups involved who were previously excluded.
- Increased level of ownership of the process.
  Example indicators: willingness to take responsibility; willingness to represent the process positively to outsiders.
- Increased level of 'capacity' among stakeholders.
  Example indicators: evidence of specific skills (eg speaking at meetings, chairing events, questioning); willingness to take on more responsibility; existing groups strengthened; new groups or projects started by those involved; groups or individuals going on to further activity.
- Level of understanding about the process and the specific project.
  Example indicators: feedback from participants; ability of participants to describe the project to others.

- Changes in values, priorities, aims and objectives.
  Example indicators: statements from participants, compared to baseline statements collected before the initiative (or statements assessing levels of change by participants themselves); explicit changes to the organisations represented; explicit changes to the organisation running the participatory project; changes to the aims and objectives of the project; structural changes to organisation/s since process started (from baseline data collected at start).
- New relationships between organisations (formal and informal).
  Example indicators: new or strengthened networks, partnerships, alliances, coalitions.
- Increased openness and transparency.
  Example indicators: statements from participants and from observers.
- Increased representativeness of participation.
  Example indicators: greater proportion of certain groups compared to baseline data; new or different groups involved who were previously excluded; comparison of groups involved over time with baseline demographic data.

In addition to these types of changes, there also some more practical changes on which data should be sought as they are likely to be present as a result of participatory programmes.

These might include:

- Reduced vandalism, compared to similar projects in similar places carried out without participation.
- Willingness and ability of participants to act to protect and maintain improvements.
- Lower projected future costs for maintenance, security, etc.
- Increased leverage achieved, such as access to additional funding; more help in kind; greater political support.
- Impacts on policy and/or on other local, regional, national and wider programmes.

There are also always likely to be some unexpected and/or unintended benefits, which may become apparent from statements from participants, users, beneficiaries and observers. Identifying these may help improve the design of future programmes.

In assessing many of these changes, finding ways of gathering the views and attitudes of those involved will be a crucial method. In evaluating participatory programmes, therefore, a mix of qualitative methods (assessing quality) and quantitative methods (collecting numbers) will always be required: with statistical evidence supported by statements from participants, and vice versa.

The way in which qualitative data is analysed is also different from statistical analysis: qualitative evaluation is about description and interpretation, whereas quantitative evaluation is about measurement and judgement (Oakley 1991). This means that the results and findings from qualitative evaluation will be different in kind from quantitative methods.

Detailed qualitative criteria usually need to be constructed according to the circumstances of the specific evaluation. Some examples are given in Annex A.

5

Evaluation processes
(how to do it)

Some of the issues which need to be taken into account in designing and undertaking evaluations of participatory and inclusive ways of working are outlined below.

Clear objectives

The purpose of the evaluation needs to be clear to evaluators and stakeholders.

The general objectives of evaluating participatory processes can be drawn from Section 2 above on What Evaluation Can Achieve.

In some cases, the objectives of the evaluation may match the objectives of the programme itself (see Site Savers example below).

Evaluation of Site Savers

The objectives of the evaluation of the Barclays Site Savers programme, run by Groundwork UK, matched the objectives of the programme, which were to:

● involve local people in the process, improving their sense of ownership and galvanising action

● explore and develop the potential contributions of participants, building skills and capacities

● develop wider local level strategic partnerships with other voluntary, public and private sector organisations

● enhance participants' understanding of how the physical transformation of land can result in greater social and economic regeneration

● develop the capacities of Groundwork staff as well as members of the community

● develop new ways of measuring the impact of the projects.

Clear principles

All the well-established principles guiding participatory working will apply to participatory evaluation and the evaluation of participation - such as openness, honesty (eg about limits), transparency, involvement of stakeholders. As usual, the extent to which these will be relevant will differ according to circumstances.

Evaluation projects may wish to develop their own specific list of principles, to guide their work, which can then be shared with all those involved (see LITMUS example below).

The LITMUS principles

The LITMUS project, in south London, identified the following points to be borne in mind in relation to encouraging effective community involvement in the context of developing local indicators:

● Be clear and transparent throughout the process in order to increase credibility.

● Design and promote the process on the basis of an appraisal of the level of understanding and trust within the community.

● Focus on partners with appropriate skills and a high level of acceptance in the community.

● Make use of existing local networks and knowledge to foster co-operation and co-ordination within the community.

● Foster the community's control over the process and benefits by delegating authority over the process, (including funding) to the community where an appropriate organisation exist and where this is compatible with accountability and efficiency.

● With indicator selection, focus on issues where benefits occur at the local level and are visible.

● In order to highlight the benefits of indicators, develop, formalise and advertise the link to action.

● Keep the costs of participation low (by payment of expenses, short meetings, effective communication) and consider payment for participation.

Designing for use

The commissioning and funding of evaluation are likely to affect the priorities of the evaluation, and the ways in which results are disseminated and used. Evaluation processes need to be designed to ensure that the lessons from the evaluation can be made easily accessible to those who need to understand and implement them. The potential for making the findings more widely available (eg to all stakeholders and to the wider policy community) should also always be considered.

Identifying the needs and capabilities of *target audiences* will therefore be a vital element in designing the evaluation, as well as developing an understanding of the *institutional frameworks* within which the results of the evaluation will be presented.

Stakeholder involvement

InterAct recommends maximum participation in evaluation processes as a matter of principle, but the extent of the involvement will depend on the circumstances: it may not be possible or desirable to have full stakeholder involvement in all cases.

However, a detailed stakeholder analysis will always be needed, to ensure it is clear who are:

- those responsible for what is being evaluated
- those expected to benefit, or be affected by, what is being evaluated
- those who may affect what is being evaluated
- those who may affect whether the outputs of the evaluation are implemented.

Where there are issues of power between the different stakeholders, or a history of conflict, it may be appropriate to work with each group in turn before bringing groups together to review the overall picture. In one project, for example, there was considerable tension between the 'beneficiaries' and the implementing agency staff. By initially separating the groups, and allowing each one to give their perspective, a more comprehensive picture of the project was obtained.

Stakeholder involvement in evaluation

The LITMUS project analysed some of the different roles for stakeholders in their evaluation:

	Top-down	Co-operative	Bottom-up
Approach	Predetermined	Adaptive	Adaptive
Role of stakeholders	Provide information only	Participate in development and design of process, development of evaluation criteria, data collection and analysis	Design the process, develop and decide evaluation criteria, collect and analyse data
Role of external evaluator	Plans, manages and decides what and how to evaluate	Acts as facilitator; demystifies and democratises evaluation process; keeps authority over evaluation process	Acts as a facilitator; demystifies and democratises evaluation process
How is success defined?	Externally-defined; mainly experts or senior managers	Through stakeholder participation - mainly facilitated by evaluator	Defined by community or project staff or other stakeholders

Indicators

The specific issues to be addressed by the specific evaluation will obviously be central to the development of indicators or criteria for assessing achievement, but consideration will also need to be given to the following general issues:

● What is the purpose of developing/setting indicators ie are they needed and what will they be used for

● Which indicators are appropriate

● The balance between quantitative and qualitative indicators

● Whether absolute or directional indicators are used (eg target numbers or ways of assessing progress in the right direction)

● The extent to which stakeholders have contributed to the development of indicators or criteria, and to the monitoring of progress according to those criteria.

The most important factor in identifying the appropriate indicators or criteria for any evaluation is that the indicators/criteria are practical and understandable - so they can be used effectively to collect and communicate data

There is always the potential for the indicators or criteria chosen to actually influence the outcomes of programmes. For example, focusing on rigid targets identified at the outset can limit the ability of the project or programme to respond to new opportunities or ideas. Also, data collected on the basis of meeting certain indicators can be misleading. For example, reductions in crime rates have been used an indicator of the effectiveness of urban regeneration in the UK. But crime rates rise and fall partly according to rates of reporting. In areas where trust in public authorities is very low, crime reporting rates may also be very low. As trust increases, reporting of certain crimes (especially crimes such as domestic violence and racial harassment) may also increase. As a result, increased crime reporting rates can actually indicate growing trust and a greater sense of safety and security, rather than the opposite - which could be the assumption if the figures are examined without understanding the wider context.

In practice, indicators are often no more than ways of structuring the collection of data (although they may sometimes be used for broader purposes). That data still needs to be interpreted so that it makes sense, and so that the context and other particular conditions are clarified.

Annex A has some specific examples of criteria and indicators that have been used for evaluations of participation.

Choosing effective indicators

The New Economics Foundation (NEF) has developed a simple method for choosing effective indicators - AIMS:

Action focused.
If there is no action that can be taken as a result of collecting data on a particular indicator, it probably is not worth using that indicator.

Important.
Indicators must be chosen to be meaningful and important to stakeholders as well as evaluators.

Measurable.
It must be possible to allocate data to the indicator.

Simple.
So that collecting the data is relatively easy, and so that whatever data is collected can be widely understood.

Methods

Appropriate evaluation methods will need to be identified, depending on:

● the purpose of the evaluation

● agreed principles

● the circumstances

● the project/programme being evaluated

● the nature of the process being evaluated (eg top down, co-operative, bottom up)

● the stage of the project/programme being evaluated

● the resources available for the evaluation

● the plans for embedding the results of the evaluation in future work (audiences, institutional context etc)

● the plans for disseminating the findings.

Evaluation methods may include:

● surveys (eg questionnaires by post, telephone or face to face)

● interviews (eg individual or group, face to face or telephone)

● facilitated events (one off, or a series)

● observation

● focus groups or other group discussion

● reports

● presentations of findings (eg drafts for consultation, final results and recommendations)

● reviews of the implementation of results.

Timing

Some project and programme impacts, and reflections on the process, may be very slow to emerge, and many of the benefits of participatory working will not be apparent during a participatory project or even at its end.

Reviews during the participatory process, at the end, soon afterwards and at appropriate time periods afterwards may be required. It may be effective to identify a selection of participants and then follow their progress and changing views over time, as WWF UK has done in evaluating its participatory Local Agenda 21 seminars.

Cause and effect

The impacts of participatory processes may be cumulative - over time or over a range of different involvements - which makes direct cause and effect difficult to attribute to specific initiatives or methods.

One approach, used by NEF in evaluating the Barclays Site Savers programme for Groundwork UK, is to evaluate a *cluster* of projects in one geographical or programme area. This has the advantage of spreading the costs of evaluation, and the accompanying capacity building, over several projects. While this may create timing problems (if projects start and finish at different times), indicators which refer to the whole programme or area could be combined with those that refer to a particular site or phase of a project.

Embedding the process

Evaluation needs to be fully embedded in project/programme management and development. This may require setting up new elements to overall management systems including:

● systems for reporting the results of the evaluation

● systems for ongoing review (eg by management, by stakeholders, separately or co-operatively)

● analysing and interpreting data at regular intervals.

Presenting the findings and using the results

The primary purposes of evaluation include:

● finding out what has worked, and identifying ways of strengthening or building on that (and/or sharing those lessons more widely)

● identifying those things that have not worked, and finding out ways of rectifying them - or ensuring that the same problems are avoided in future.

This means placing a major focus on using the results of the evaluation - and ensuring that those results are easily understood and accessible to those commissioning the evaluation, those responsible for the project/programme being evaluated and those affected by the project/programme being evaluated.

This could involve:

● Feeding results into ongoing development, if the evaluation is running alongside the project or programme

● Making recommendations in the evaluation report for how the findings of the evaluation can be implemented, and progress monitored

● Inviting evaluators to participate in planning future developments

● Making presentations to internal seminars (commissioning body and immediate stakeholders), to the public or to other external seminars and conferences

● Producing and distributing written reports, publications, articles and pamphlets.

Examples of indicators and criteria

Barclays Site Savers core indicators

The New Economics Foundation devised a set of indicators to test levels of trust in the Groundwork UK's programme of urban regeneration known as Barclays Site Savers. The idea was to identify some simple core indicators which could then be extended depending on local circumstances. The indicators included:

- 'I feel I could help change attitudes and improve things around here'.
- 'I have learned new skills on the project in the last 6 months'.
- Percentage of respondents saying: within the last 6 months I have enjoyed several conversations with a new person from a different age and/or background.
- Percentage of respondents saying: Neighbours around here look out for each other.
- Percentage of respondents saying: I think the project/facility will survive.
- How many new friends have people made through the project?
- Percentage of respondents saying: I know who to contact to help me change locally.
- Percentage of respondents saying: I have benefited from being involved with Groundwork.
- Number of people (previously unknown to Groundwork/the lead agency) involved in the project over the last 6 months.
- Number of agencies working with Groundwork (or working together) on the project.

For more information, see *Prove it! Measuring the effect of neighbourhood renewal on local people,* by Perry Walker, Julie Lewis, Sanjiv Lingayah and Florian Sommer. Published by Groundwork UK, Birmingham, and the New Economics Foundation, London, June 2000.

Evaluation of Rural Action for the Environment

The criteria devised for this evaluation of a national programme included the following:

- Total funding from the programme, compared to match funding from elsewhere, to show levels of leverage.
- Types and numbers of projects funded, to assess extent and breadth of work undertaken.
- Types of groups receiving support, to assess 'reach' and inclusiveness of the scheme, and the extent to which the scheme reached 'new audiences' for environmental work.
- Capacity building, assessed by examining:
  - the amount of training and advice provided, and learning achieved
  - the extent to which groups have developed from their initial projects
  - the number of new groups supported by the scheme
  - the extent of participation amongst groups supported, calculated by assessing:
    - number of groups involved in the scheme
    - types of groups involved in the scheme
    - numbers of people involved in those groups
    - voluntary action person days
    - extent and quality of participation for those involved
    - personal testimony from those involved.
- Extent of Rural Action influence on others, assessed by examining:
  - examples of how mechanisms pioneered by Rural Action were taken up by others
  - examples of how certain organisations and institutions had changed priorities over the time Rural Action had been running (eg parish councils), with statements
  - examples of how local authorities had changed practices over the time the scheme had been running
  - examples of change to individuals who had been involved.

For more information, see *The Achievements and Effectiveness of Rural Action: An Evaluation,* by Diane Warburton. For The Countryside Agency on behalf of the Rural Action Steering Group, July 1998.

LITMUS Project, south London

The following criteria were used for monitoring and evaluating impacts of the participatory process of the LITMUS project in Southwark, south London:

Evaluation of outcomes: qualitative criteria

- level of understanding about LITMUS
- level of trust / faith in LITMUS approach and consultation process
- involvement perceived as useful
- level of encouragement / facilitation
- level of ownership regarding LITMUS
- empowerment of the people / groups involved

Evaluation of outcomes: quantitative criteria

- number of individuals / organisations participating in LITMUS
- number of volunteers engaged
- number of volunteer hours/days spend
- continuity of involvement
- number of independent actions
- number of individuals / organisations acting as facilitators for LITMUS.

Comedia

A Comedia study provides a useful example of how to measure the impact of participatory processes on personal change. The following questions were asked, inviting a yes, no or don't know answer.

- Since becoming involved, I have ...
  - .. become interested in something new
  - .. learnt about other people's cultures
  - .. been to new places
  - .. tried things I haven't done before
  - .. become more confident about what I can do
  - .. decided to do some training or course
  - .. felt healthier or better
  - .. become keen to help in local projects
  - .. been happier
- Has taking part had any bad effects on you?
- Do you feel differently about the place where you live?
- Has taking part encouraged you to try anything else?
- Have you learnt any skills by being involved?
- Could you do it better than you could have before?
- Was doing something creative important to you?

For more information, see Comedia's *Use or Ornament: The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*.

Annex B

Further reading

Arnstein, Shelly (1971) 'A ladder of citizen participation in the USA', in *Journal of the Royal Town Planning Institute,* Vol 57, p176-182; originally published in Journal of American Institute of Planners, Vol 35 (1969), p216-224.

Ball, Mog (1988) *Evaluation in the voluntary sector.* Forbes Trust, London (Directory of Social Change, London - out of print).

Barnes, Marian (1993) 'Introducing new stakeholders - user and researcher interests in evaluative research. A discussion of methods used to evaluate the Birmingham Community Care Special Action Project' in *Policy and Politics,* Vol 21 No 1 (1993) pp 47-58.

Bell, J. (1991) *Discussion of Evaluation Issues.* Voluntary Services Unit, Home Office; Community Development Foundation, London

Comedia (1997) *Use or Ornament: The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts.* Comedia, London.

Community Development Foundation (2000) *Achieving Better Community Development Handbook. A framework for evaluating community development.* Also available, the *Trainers Resource Pack,* and *Working with ABCD. Experience, lessons and issues from practice.* Community Development Foundation, London.

Connor, Anne (1993) *Monitoring and Evaluation Made Easy. A Handbook for Voluntary Organisations.* HMSO (Scotland). ISBN 0 11 494229 3.

DETR (1999) *Local Evaluation for Regeneration Partnerships. Good Practice Guide.* Available on www.detr.gov.uk/regeneration/info/gp/lerp

Feek, Warren and Douglas I. Smith (1984) *Value Judgements - evaluating community based agencies.* Talk about Management series (no 7), National Youth Bureau, Leicester.

Fulbright-Anderson, Karen, Anne C. Kubisch and James P. Connell (1998) *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives. Vol 1: Concepts, Methods and Contexts; Vol 2: Theory, Measurement and Analysis.* Aspen Institute, Washington DC, USA. Copies available from Aspen Institute Publications Office, PO Box 222, 109 Houghton Lab Lane, Queenstown, MD 21658, USA.

Goss, Sue (ed) (1999) *Managing Working with the Public.* Office for Public Management and Local Government Association. Kogan Page, London.

Hedley, Rodney (1985) *Measuring Success. A guide to evaluation for voluntary and community groups.* Neighbourhood Care Action Programme, Advance, London.

Key, Michael, Peter Hudson and John Armstrong (1976) *Evaluation Theory and Community Work.* Community Projects Foundation (now Community Development Foundation), London.

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (1990) *Cause and effect.* NCVO, London.

New Economics Foundation (2000) *Communities Count. A step by step guide to community sustainability indicators.* Available from NEF's website: www.neweconomics.org

Oakley, Peter et al (1991) *Projects with People. The practice of participation in rural development.* International Labour Office (via Intermediate Technology Publishing, London).

Rydin, Yvonne and Florian Sommer (2000) *The LITMUS Project. Final Monitoring and Evaluation Report.* London School of Economics, Department of Geography and Environment, London.

6, Perri and Julien E. Forder (1996) 'Can Campaigning be Evaluated?' in *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly,* vol 25, no 2, June 1996, pp 225-247.

Taylor, Marilyn (1999) *Evaluating Community Projects for European Funding.* Wales Council for Voluntary Action. See their website www.wcva.org.uk.

Voluntary Activity Unit (1996) *Measuring Community Development in Northern Ireland.* Voluntary Activity Unit, Department of Health and Social Services, Belfast.

Voluntary Activity Unit (1996) *Monitoring and Evaluation of Community Development in Northern Ireland.* Voluntary Activity Unit, Department of Health and Social Services, Belfast.

Walker, Perry, Julie Lewis, Sanjiv Lingayah and Florian Sommer (2000) *Prove it! Measuring the effect of neighbourhood renewal on local people.* Published by Groundwork UK, Birmingham, and the New Economics Foundation, London. June 2000.

Warburton, Diane (1998) *The Achievements and Effectiveness of Rural Action: An Evaluation.* For The Countryside Agency on behalf of the Rural Action Steering Group, July 1998.

Wilcox, David *Guide to Effective Participation.* Available on www.partnerships.org.uk/guide

Yorkshire Forward Active Partners. *Benchmarking for Community Participation in Regeneration.* Available from Yorkshire Forward, 2 Victoria Place, Leeds LS11 5AE or website www.yorkshire-forward.com.

InterAct Working Paper

This InterAct working paper examines why and how to evaluate
participatory, deliberative and co-operative ways of working.

The paper covers:

- Why evaluation matters
- What evaluation can achieve
- A framework for evaluation
- Evaluating participatory projects (what to look for)
- Evaluation processes (how to do it)

Annexes provide some examples of indicators and criteria, and further reading.