How did *Measuring Change* help?

— Enabled projects to focus on outcomes and articulate the full range of outcomes they are trying to achieve

— Provided projects with data to identify how they are progressing and inform learning for future improvement

— Informed thinking about self-evaluation systems to generate better evidence

— Provided a common framework to show how diverse projects were contributing to the achievement of strategic programme outcomes

— Generated robust data which can be analysed across projects to indicate overall programme progress, and could help to inform future decision making

— Provided a relatively low cost solution to capturing outcomes across large scale funding programmes at a time when resources are becoming increasingly tight

"The development of Measuring Change as a new approach to identifying and measuring outcomes has provided projects with data that enables them to chart progress and demonstrate the difference they are making. Supporting this work contributes to the wider debate around evaluation and the value of approaches which help funders and projects work together to capture change".

Norrie Breslin, Head of Policy and Learning, The Big Lottery Fund

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measuring change

Big Lottery Fund:
Supporting funded projects to baseline and measure change

This case study illustrates how *Measuring Change* was used to develop a common outcomes framework for projects funded under the Big Lottery Fund's 'Live and Learn' and 'Safe and Well' programmes. Projects were supported to baseline and gauge their progress against these outcomes. Standardised data gathered from projects can also be analysed to indicate programme impact.

Since 2009, the Big Lottery Fund in Northern Ireland has been delivering two strategic funding programmes - 'Live and Learn' and 'Safe and Well'. Grants have been allocated to 36 projects, each of which has been funded up to £1 million over a five-year period. The projects involve partnerships between statutory and voluntary and community organisations and focus on the themes of learning and well-being and safety and well-being.

In rolling out the programmes, the Big Lottery Fund had supported grantees through a developmental phase, to assist them to develop and refine their project plans. BIG was interested in providing additional support to enhance projects' evaluation capacity and enable them to 'evidence their own impact'.

How was *Measuring Change* used?

1 Defining change

Broad strategic outcomes had been established for 'Live and Learn' and 'Safe and Well' and each funded project had identified an associated, but diverse, range of SMART outcomes. Given this diversity, there was a need to identify a standard set of outcomes which would have relevance to all of the projects and provide a common reference point against which to baseline and measure change.

This involved trawling through internal documentation including planning documents and funding applications to draw up an initial outcomes framework which was then further refined through consultation with the Big Lottery Fund staff team.

The framework comprised 24 outcomes, setting out the kinds of changes which the programmes were trying to achieve. These were structured across four themes - **People**, **Community**, **Organisation** and **Relationships**. The themes reflected the projects' primary focus on enhancing the well-being, learning and safety of individuals, but also captured their potential impact on improving the communities in which people lived. As new partnership projects, organisational outcomes were also important, while the theme of relationships was an overarching one to reflect the way in which the projects were developing social capital at different levels. The framework included illustrative indicators describing the kinds of evidence which would show that the outcome was being achieved.

Theme	Outcome
People-based change	1. Enhanced Individual Capacity
	2. Improved Personal independence
	3. Educational Development
	4. Employability
	5. Improved Healthy lifestyle Choices
	6. Positive Mental Health
	7. Improved Physical Health
	8. Improved Family Cohesion
	9. Personal Safety
	10. Engage Hard to Reach Groups
	11. More Involved in Community
	12. Enhanced Volunteering
Community-based change	13. Enhanced Community Development
	14. Improved Access to Services
	15. Access to Community Facilities
	16. Improved Physical Environment
	17. Better Community Safety
	18. Improved Home Safety
Organisation-based change	19. Partnership Working
	20. Strategic Influence
	21. Practice Development
Relationship-based change	22. Bonding
	23. Bridging
	24. Linking

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2 Capturing change

Having developed the framework, the next step was to help projects to baseline and measure their progress against the 24 outcomes in a consistent way. 'Stakeholder panels' were set up within the projects, bringing together partners, managers, staff, volunteers, users and representatives from other organisations and agencies. During 2011, 27 funded projects participated in this exercise - 10 from 'Live and Learn' and 17 from 'Safe and Well' - involving almost 270 stakeholders representing a considerable body of expert knowledge.

CENI facilitated each of the panels to come to a collective agreement and allocate scores of 0-10 against each of outcomes in relation to:

— **Priority** - the importance of each outcome for the project

— **Changeability** - the difficulty of achieving each outcome

— **Baseline** - the project's position at the start of the funding

— **Estimated change** - progress since the start of the funding

3 Showing Change

This exercise was undertaken at an interim stage (2 years into a 5 year programme). The process helped individual projects to focus and reflect on their achievements to date. It also helped show how projects overall were contributing to the achievement of strategic programme outcomes.

Individual projects

The operation of the panels created 'time out' for projects, enabling them to focus on outcomes rather than operational issues. This facilitated thinking about outcomes beyond those set out in their funding contract, including outcomes which may not have been previously articulated, such as organisational change and relationship-building.

The baseline and change data generated enabled individual projects to track their progress over time, providing them with an interim review against outcomes. This highlighted those outcomes where they were progressing well or not so well, identified challenges and helped inform priorities for future action.

'Helped us in terms of re-energising some of the thinking and debate around how and why we do what we are doing in the project'

'More funding opportunities are coming along which are outcome focused.

The session and the framework helped in thinking about other applications we're making'

This in turn informed thinking about self-evaluation and what could be done to generate appropriate evidence to indicate performance against outcomes.

Projects also recognised how the outcomes approach could be transferable to other areas of their work, as funding applications increasingly require evidence of outcomes.

Overall programme progress

As the projects' data was generated in a standardised format it was possible to analyse the quantitative information from individual projects and produce an aggregate indication of how they were progressing against the outcomes.

Example: In this graph, the data has been used to summarise baseline and change against the outcome - 'improved partnership working' – for 10 of the projects which participated in the exercise.

Projects' Baseline and Change Position on 'Improved Partnership Working'

Project	Baseline	Change
A	3	7
B	4	7
C	1	6
D	6	8
E	1	6
F	2	6
G	5	8
H	4	6
I	7	8
J	5	7
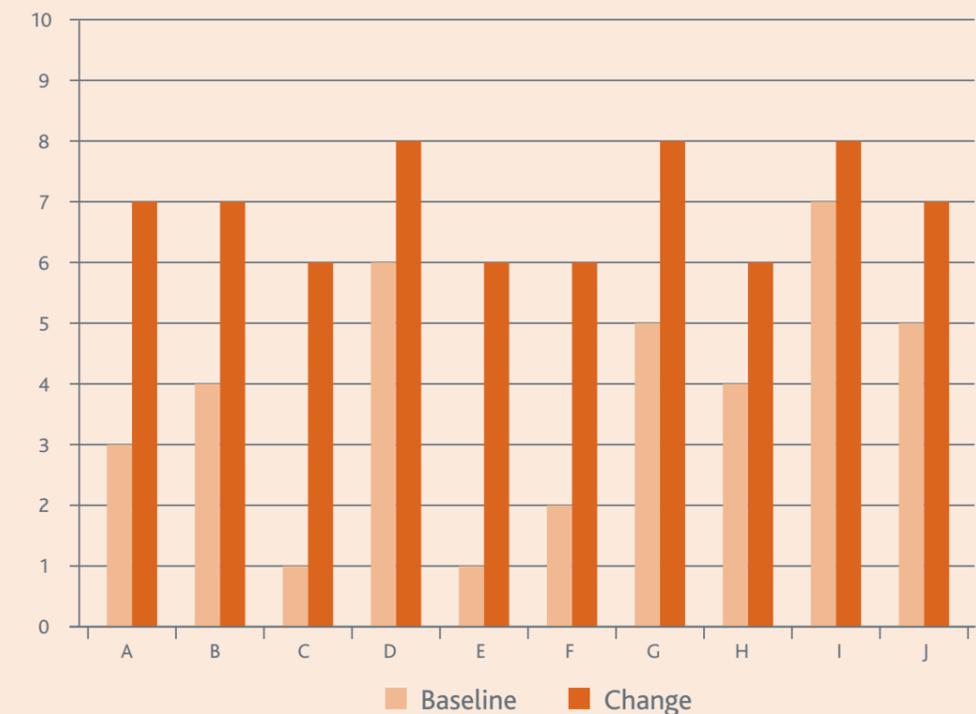
Baseline ■ Change ■

The lighter shade shows each project's baseline position on the 0-10 scale and the darker shade shows the change position two years later. This gives a simple 'bird's eye' view of progress across projects over time on this one outcome. For instance, project 'C' started from a low baseline for partnership working and has made significant progress. On the other hand, project 'I' had a relatively high baseline and shows a smaller degree of change. The narrative data can help explain the differentials between projects and to identify learning emerging from the programme overall – for example, in relation to some of the challenges involved in establishing structures and processes for partnership working.

'Very useful for reminding us about some of the priorities, beyond the day to day running of the project... it certainly reminds me of what my priorities are and potentially which ones you can lose sight of '