Measuring Change
An Approach to Outcomes for the Voluntary & Community Sector

measuring change

The current climate of austerity, coupled with increasing social need, places an even greater imperative on public funders to show the impact of their investments and for funded projects to evidence the outcomes of their activities. Over recent years, CENI has been developing an approach called *Measuring Change* which helps organisations and funders to plan for and capture outcomes.

Measuring Change - An Approach to Outcomes for the Voluntary and Community Sector sets out why the approach has been developed, what it does and how it works. We have also produced a series of case studies to demonstrate how *Measuring Change* has been used in different settings to **define** change outcomes, **capture** baseline data and **show** change over time.

What is *Measuring Change*?

A practical, low-cost yet rigorous approach to capture the 'hard to measure' qualitative difference that voluntary and community activity makes to people, organisations and communities. It enables funders and projects to specify the differences they want to make in advance and then gather data to estimate progress over time.

How does it work?

Measuring Change has three components.

1 Define Change

What is the difference you want to make? **Outcomes**

2 Capture Change

Facilitate stakeholder groups, drawing on their 'collective knowledge' to produce agreed 'estimates' of:

Where are they starting from? **Baseline**

What difference has been made? **Change**

3 Show Change

Analysing these estimates to enable:

Projects   to demonstrate progress made from their baseline
Programme to add project data together and indicate overall impact

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'There is a niche that Measuring Change fills - we are now into a new era of social impact measurement.

The current debate is couched largely in economic terms - measuring the 'value' of services delivered.

But we also need to be thinking about measuring the 'change' produced by community development activity - by defining change outcomes in advance, establishing baselines, and capturing progress over time'.

CENI Director

How has it been used?

Some examples...

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

Measuring Change was used to identify common outcomes for BIG's 'Live and Learn' and 'Safe and Well' programmes. Projects were supported to baseline and gauge their progress against these outcomes. Projects' data can also be analysed to indicate programme impact.

DARD: Capturing the impact of the Rural Community Development Support Service

This involved developing an outcomes framework for DARD's Rural Community Development Support Service and testing a method to baseline community development infrastructure in rural areas.

Neighbourhood Renewal Programme: Baselining community renewal outcomes

The approach was used to develop an indicator framework for the 'community renewal' pillar of the programme and test a method to baseline local areas. This illustrated its potential to generate baseline data, design localised interventions and inform future evaluation.

Irish Football Association: Developing outcomes for community relations

Measuring Change was used to define community relations outcomes for the IFA 'Football for All' programme and support a sample of Irish League clubs to baseline their current position with respect to community relations.

Belfast City Council: Planning outcomes for the Capacity Building Grant programme

Measuring Change helped inform an outcomes-focused approach to future funding. This included developing an outcomes framework for a revised Capacity Building Grant Programme and assessing 'change readiness' amongst a sample of projects.

Co-operation and Working Together: Capturing outcomes in a community health setting

The approach supported CAWT to identify, capture and report on some of the 'hard to measure' qualitative outcomes from its work with older people.

Measuring Change: key benefits

- Provides a relatively **robust** and **low cost** approach to outcome measurement at a time of financial austerity
- Facilitates **collaboration** between funders and projects to identify and capture outcomes
- Provides a **strategic focus**, enabling projects to align diverse activities against common programme outcomes
- Supports critical peer review resulting in more realistic and honest evaluation which **informs learning** and improvement
- Generates useful data to **inform decision-making** at project and programme level
- Another *'tool in the box'* to **complement other methods** and sources of data
- Helps to shift focus of evaluation from **counting activities to 'measuring change'**

Copies of *Measuring Change - An Approach to Outcomes for the Voluntary and Community Sector* and **Case Studies** illustrating how the approach has been used are available from CENI.