



Big Lottery Fund Measuring Change Project

CENI has just completed a four-year programme of work with the Big Lottery Fund, using Measuring Change to support projects funded under the Live and Learn and Safe and Well programmes to measure the impact of their work. This has been an innovative and pioneering exercise, and the experience and learning has significantly contributed to the further development of Measuring Change as an approach to impact practice / shared measurement for both the voluntary and community sector and its funders.

Background

Since 2009, the Big Lottery Fund 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 Big Lottery Fund was interested in providing support to enhance the evaluation capacity of the funded projects and enable them to '*evidence their own impact*'.

In May 2010, CENI was commissioned to undertake this work. CENI's *Measuring Change* approach was seen as providing a practical solution to 'shared measurement', enabling multiple and diverse projects from across the two programmes to produce robust evidence and review their progress.

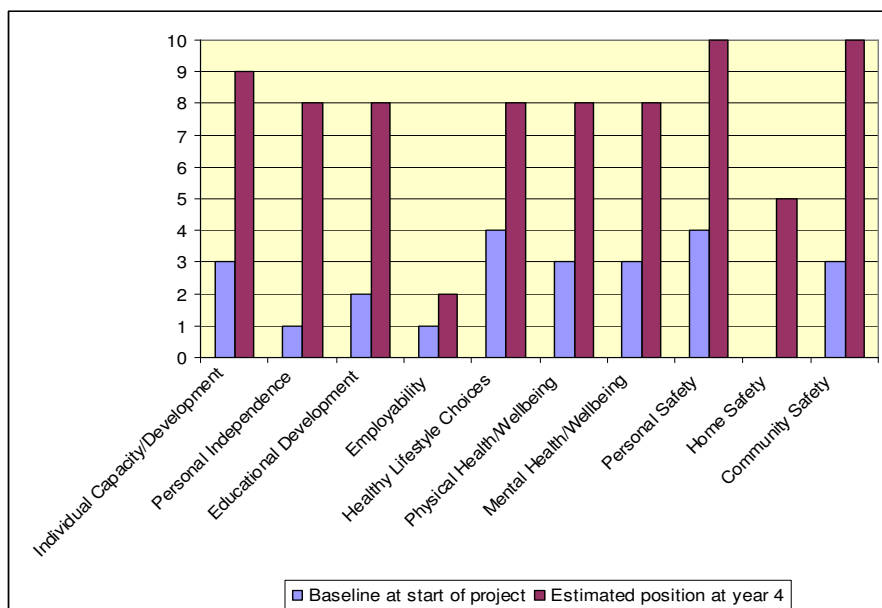
What Did We Do?

Defining Change: CENI engaged with Big Lottery Fund programme staff to develop a ‘theory of change’ to clarify the goals and identify key outcomes for Live and Learn and Safe and Well. This facilitated process informed the production of a framework of outcomes structured across four themes - **People, Place, Organisation and Relationships**.

Capturing Change: CENI then helped funded projects to estimate change against these outcomes over time. This was carried out in two stages – a baselining exercise in 2011, followed by an exercise to revisit and review progress against the baseline position, carried out in 2013/14. Critical to our approach was the idea that those responsible for and affected by the project should be involved in the measurement process. Stakeholder panels representing different perspectives were set up for each project; these included project partners, managers, staff and volunteers, users and representatives from other community, voluntary and statutory organisations. Using the Treasury-endorsed Nominal Group Technique, CENI provided independent facilitation to enable the panels to reach consensus on their baseline and subsequent change positions against each of the outcomes, on a 0-10 scale. The debate and discussion which informed the estimated positions was also recorded.

Showing Change: Applying *Measuring Change* at an early stage in implementation, and again towards the end of funding, generated quantitative data about projects’ Time One and Time Two positions against the outcomes. The panel discussions also produced a wealth of qualitative data about the nature of change, key achievements and challenges. For individual projects, this data helped to illustrate their ‘distance travelled’ and explore the ‘story’ behind the change. Generating information in a standardised format across multiple projects against a common framework also meant that the data could be aggregated and analysed to inform an understanding of impact at overall programme level.

Graph: Project A’s baseline and change position against the people-based outcomes theme



This graph presents the baseline and change data for one of the projects in relation to a range of outcomes under the *people-based theme*.

How Did the Projects Benefit?

Provided **valuable time out and space** for reflection on outcomes, beyond the day-to-day business of operating the project.

- Brought together **diverse stakeholders** and created a **dynamic** for the exchange of knowledge and experience of the project from different perspectives
- **Engaged beneficiaries** and **enhanced understanding** amongst stakeholders about users' experiences of the project
- Enabled stakeholders to make a **measured and realistic assessment** and **reach consensus** about achievements and challenges
- Helped to **recognise, affirm and reinforce success**, with the baseline and change estimates providing a **tangible measurement of success**
- Helped **inform planning** by identifying areas for further focus
- Generated data which could be used to inform **reporting and communication**
- Provided an approach to measuring outcomes which was **easy to understand** and **time-efficient**

At Programme Level

The focus of the exercise was primarily on supporting projects, but there were also programme-level achievements.

- Programme personnel were **facilitated** to define a 'theory of change' and reach consensus on outcomes
- The process helped to identify **important outcomes which had not been made explicit or articulated** during programme design (such as those arising from partnership)
- Multiple funded projects were supported to generate baseline and change estimates against the outcomes framework in a **standardised format**
- The data helped to **evidence the progress of individual projects** and **demonstrate their contribution to the achievement of programme outcomes**
- Project data could also potentially be **aggregated and analysed** to indicate **overall programme impact** and explore issues and learning

Feedback from Participating Projects...

"We are normally focussed on the demands of running the project but this provided a good mechanism for focussing on outcomes at different levels"

"Helped us to think about areas where we maybe aren't doing so well – we did know about where we're doing well, but it challenged us about some of things which we weren't perhaps so focussed on"

"Found it a very positive and affirming exercise in relation to what had been achieved"

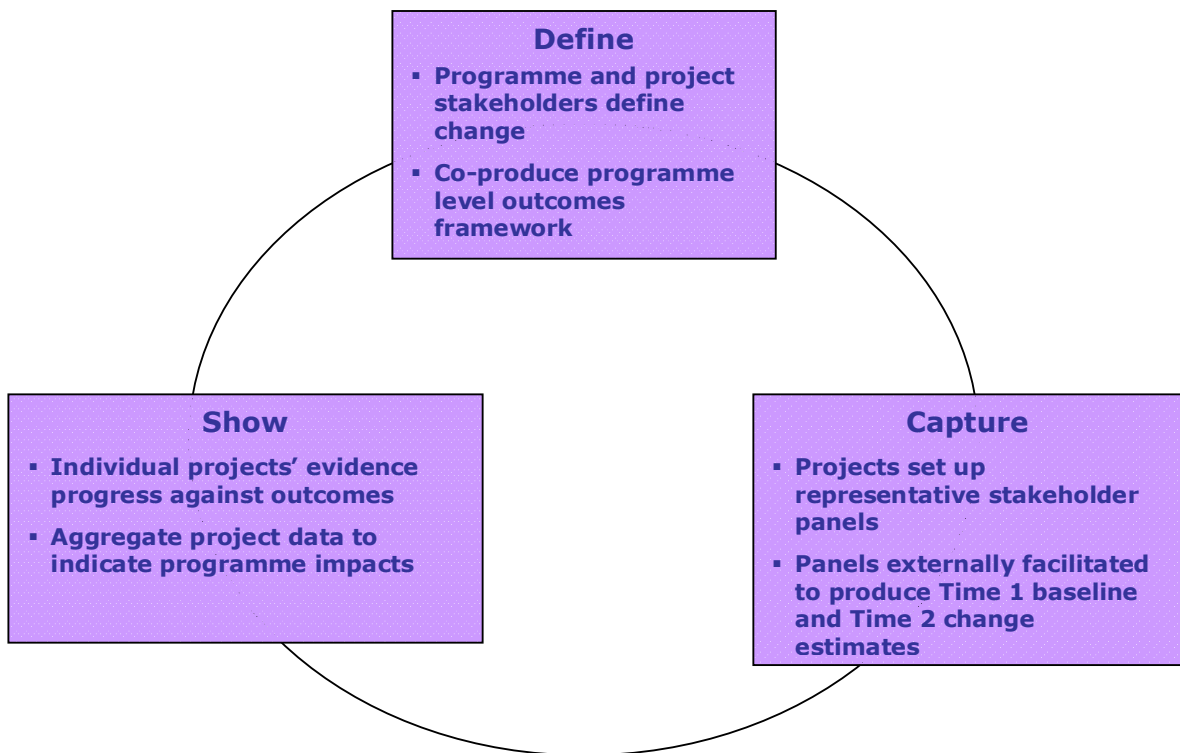
"A fantastic way of doing an evaluation – having the users there with the staff and partners gave a really rounded view – we heard everyone's perspective"

What Has Been Learnt?

Four years ago, in 2010, the Big Lottery Fund showed considerable foresight and innovation in commissioning this support programme for its Live and Learn and Safe and Well projects.

Since then, the debate on impact measurement has shifted considerably within the voluntary and community sector and amongst its funders. Most recently, we have seen the emergence of Inspiring Impact UK, which aims to put impact practice at the heart of the sector's work by 2022. This promotes impact practice as being more than just measurement; it is also about planning for impact, learning from and using impact data to effect change.

Measuring Change, as applied within Live and Learn and Safe and Well, provides a practical illustration of the implementation of this broader impact practice approach and in particular the importance of facilitating support at programme as well as project level at each stage in the impact cycle, including: **Define** -planning for outcomes; **Capture** - collecting outcomes data; and **Show** - analysing and reporting on outcomes. This is summarised in the diagram below.



This model or template helps to illustrate how the *Measuring Change* approach is transferrable and could be used to support outcome and impact measurement within other funding programmes. The learning which has emerged from this unique and experimental approach, as applied to Live and Learn and Safe and Well, can also contribute to the wider debate on impact and measurement in the sector.