

# *planning & evaluation pack*

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# planning & evaluation pack

Welcome to Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action's Planning and Evaluation Pack. As money becomes tighter and competition for funding increases, it is vital that voluntary groups are able to plan their activities and demonstrate that they are running an efficient and effective organisation, as well as constantly monitoring their activities to show that they are providing good value for the money that they receive. This pack is intended to guide you through the key principles behind monitoring and evaluation, and signpost you to some of the tools that are available to help you through these.

*Other packs in this series: Funding, Governance*

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## *Planning...*

*“Planning: the process of setting goals, developing strategies, and outlining tasks and schedules to accomplish the goals.”*  
(www.investorwords.com)

An effective organisation plans its activities and evaluates their success. By doing this, the group can be forward thinking, and also learn from past experience. The size of the group, and the extent of its activities will affect the scale of the planning and evaluation processes, but the principles and tools in this pack can be applied wherever your organisation falls.

Plans might be known as business plans, annual plans, project plans, action plans, individual plans, or a number of others - the name doesn't matter, what is important is that your plan suits your needs.

### *Why have a plan?*

A good plan will enable a group to work methodically and efficiently as a team to achieve its objectives. It should be used by everyone within the organisation, but can also be a tool for reinforcing funding applications, encouraging support from the public and statutory bodies etc.

A plan provides an opportunity for an organisation to:

- ◆ Pull together ideas
- ◆ Clarify aims and objectives
- ◆ Ensure that everyone is working towards the same goal(s)
- ◆ Assess its strengths and weaknesses
- ◆ Highlight risks and opportunities
- ◆ Judge whether plans are achievable
- ◆ Identify resources required to achieve the objectives, and how to find those resources
- ◆ Set targets against which success can be evaluated.

It is often the case that a group will only consider writing a plan in response to the demands of a funding application, and will tailor the plan to the specific funder. This is a wasted opportunity as a plan should be a resource that is used by the organisation to improve its over all performance, make provision for the future and have a framework to evaluate its successes. The plan should be understood by everyone and should be reviewed regularly. A plan written with this in mind is likely to suit most funders with little adaptation.

## Who should write the plan?

Although it is likely to be most appropriate for the Management Committee to lead the process of writing the plan, staff, volunteers and stakeholders should be consulted as widely as possible. The process of writing the plan can be as valuable as the plan itself, and is an ideal opportunity to gather the views of everyone involved.

## What goes into a plan?

*Plan: "Written account of intended future course of action (scheme) aimed at achieving specific goal(s) or objective(s) within a specific timeframe."  
(Businessdictionary.com)*

Plans come in different forms for different purposes. Your plan might be looking at the long-term direction of your organisation, or it might take one specific project which will have to be completed within a defined amount of time.

Whatever the type of plan, it should contain some key elements:

1. Executive Summary
2. Organisational Background
3. Project or developments
4. Finances
5. SWOT Analysis
6. Risk Analysis
7. Action Plan/timelines



### Executive Summary

This should summarise the rest of the plan, and although it should appear at the start, it should be the last part to be written.

### Organisational Background

- a) General purpose of the organisation  
This should be concise. It may be that the purposes in the governing document will be suitable, or you could create your own mission statement. To help you do this, ask yourselves the following questions:
  - ◆ What is our purpose for being?
  - ◆ What is the ethos of our group or project?
  - ◆ Why are we here?
  - ◆ How would we describe our atmosphere to the outside world?

- b) Background, structure and context  
Give a brief history of your organisation and describe the structure, including staff and volunteers. Set the context that you work within.
- c) Your clients  
Who are your clients? Are their numbers/needs increasing, changing?
- d) Your services  
What services do you currently supply? Do they address the needs? Who else supplies similar services? What makes your services unique?
- e) Your partners and stakeholders  
Who do you work with? What agreements do you have with partners?

### Project or developments

- a) Project description  
Describe the project or developments that you plan to make – what are the outcomes that you intend to see? How do your plans fit in with/reflect the group's purposes?
- b) Project need  
How have you identified that there is a need for this project or development? What makes you the most appropriate organisation to tackle the need?
- c) Project activities  
What are the broad activities that will take place to achieve the project aims?
- d) Project resources  
What resources do you have? What resources will you need?
- e) Project evaluation  
How will you demonstrate success? How will you collect this information throughout the project?

When writing this section, remember to be SMART (see page 5).

### Finances

- a) Project costs  
A breakdown of all the costs involved in this project – this should be realistic and should include the cost of time of existing staff, material costs, volunteer expenses etc.



b) Project funds

What funds do you have? Include donations in kind.

How do you intend to raise outstanding funds?

Is this a one-off self-contained project, or will there be ongoing costs involved?

If there will be ongoing costs, how do you plan to sustain this project in the long term?

Once you are in a position to do so, a detailed budget for the project should be produced.

c) Financial systems

Rules and procedures for money handling. What procedures do you have in place to ensure the correct handling of funds?

### Self analysis

Take the time to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that affect the organisation. Show how the strengths and opportunities will be applied to this project, and how you will tackle weaknesses and threats.

### Risk analysis

All groups or projects face some sort of risk, and it is important to recognise and prepare for such risks. A risk is an unknown - it may be positive or negative, so you should consider the possible consequences of unexpected levels of success as well as potential problems. Go through your plans and consider all the risks. Prioritise these risks, so that you can be sure that you prepare for the most serious. Agree appropriate measures to avoid or manage the risk. This could involve:

- ◆ Preventing the risk
- ◆ Minimising the impact
- ◆ Transferring the risk to a third party
- ◆ Planning contingencies in case the risk happens
- ◆ Accepting the consequences.

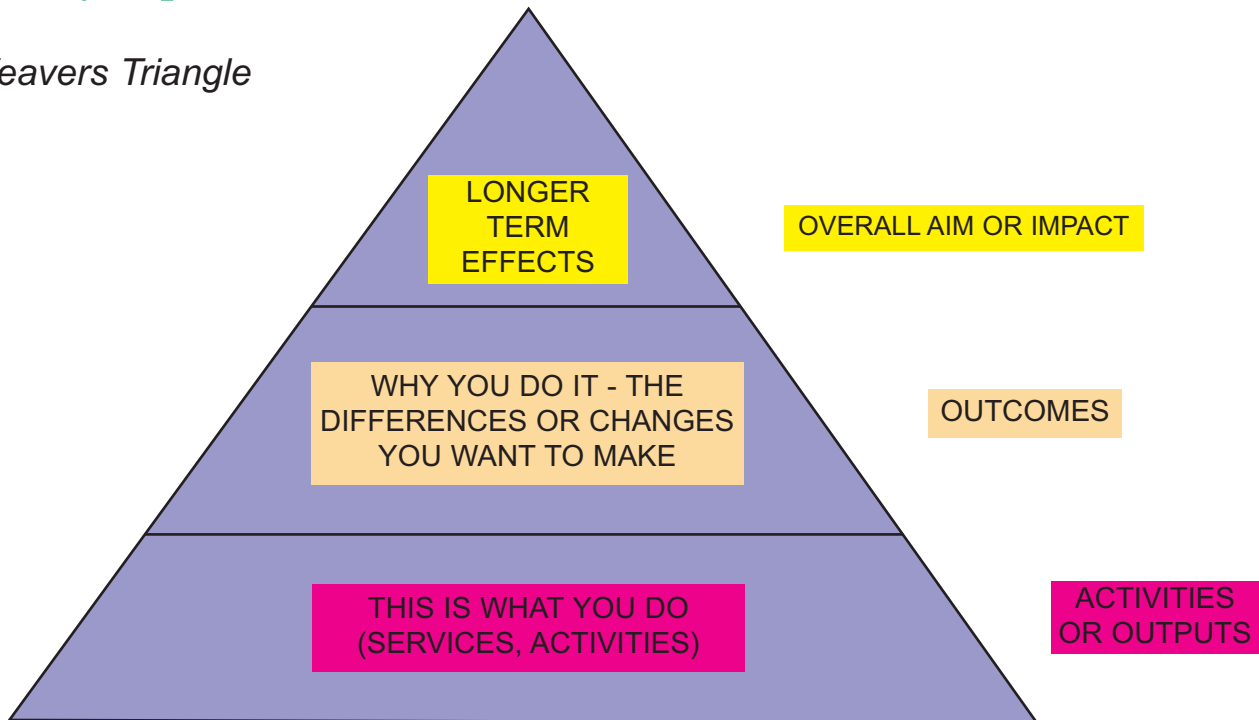
Whatever you decide, make this part of your plan, ensure that you have the resources to implement your decisions, and regularly review the risks.

### Timelines/action plans

Once everything else is in place, a detailed timeline or action plan showing what will be done, by who, in what order, by when. Be realistic - for a longer term project it may be that the initial activity will simply be fundraising and setting up. Do not set targets that will be impossible to achieve.

## Tools for plans

### Weavers Triangle



This simple tool allows you to identify and differentiate between your activities, outcomes and impacts, and clearly see how one leads to another going up through the triangle. It will help you to see where there are gaps, and which aspects need more thought.

### What does it mean to be SMART?

- S** Be specific:
  - are you addressing specific needs?
  - do you have specific aims and goals?
  - what will be your outcomes?
  - how will these be achieved?
- M** Are your outcomes measurable?
  - how will you know that you have achieved what you set out to achieve?
  - how can you demonstrate this to others?
- A** Are your goals achievable?
- R** Are your plans realistic?
  - do you have the resources and expertise necessary to accomplish what you want?
- T** Is your project timely?
  - is this the right time to be starting this project?
  - do you have enough time to achieve it?

## SWOT Analysis

<p><b>STRENGTH</b></p> <p>Now: good</p> <p>Action: eg maintain, build on</p>	<p><b>WEAKNESS</b></p> <p>Now: bad</p> <p>Action: address, remedy, stop</p>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITY</b></p> <p>Future: good</p> <p>Action: optimise,</p>	<p><b>THREAT</b></p> <p>Future: bad</p> <p>Action: prepare, counter</p>

- S** - strengths: the situation now
- W** - weaknesses: the situation now
- O** - opportunities: may occur in the future
- T** - threats: may occur in the future

A simple SWOT matrix is a useful tool for analysis of your organisation as it is now, and what might affect it in the future.

List all the strengths and all the weaknesses as they exist now, then create an action-plan of how you are going to maintain and build on your strengths, and how you are going to address and remedy your weaknesses. List all the opportunities and threats that might occur in the future, prioritise them, and then create a plan for how you will make the most of the opportunities and how you will prepare to counter the threats.

This method can be applied to the organisation as a whole, or to a specific project depending on the scope of your plan.

### TOP TIPS

When writing the plan, think of your potential audience – will they understand what you are saying? Not everyone who reads it will be an expert in your field: don't assume knowledge, and don't use jargon and acronyms.

Build into the plan methods to measure and evaluate what you do. Ability to measure and evaluate is essential, knowing how you plan to do this from the start of the project will make this task much easier.

Involve staff and volunteers in the writing of the plan to encourage a feeling of ownership and working towards shared goals.

Ensure that new staff and volunteers are given the plan to read when they start. Keep the plan 'alive' by regularly referring back to it and assessing achievements against it.



## *Monitoring and Evaluation*

*Monitoring and evaluation is closely linked to planning  
– it should be part of the same cycle.*

### **Why is monitoring and evaluation important?**

As with any business or provision, community organisations and voluntary groups need to ensure that they are providing the best possible service to their users, which is delivered efficiently and effectively. Not only that but you need to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in and satisfied with the running of the organisation. Stakeholders include service users, employees, volunteers, board and committee members etc.



If you have evidence about the value of your work – what your organisation has achieved and how you have made a difference - you are in a better position to thrive. The knowledge and information you build up can indicate what does and does not work, what needs to change and therefore how to improve your service. This is especially so when resources are tight, funding difficult to obtain and there is competition for supplying services. Monitoring and evaluation may also show areas where you could work in partnership or diversify. Regular monitoring and evaluation can also be good for moral and enable organisations to highlight achievements.

However, although the two terms monitoring and evaluation are often joined together they are separate activities, which are related but not identical.

### **What is Monitoring and Evaluation?**

Monitoring is an ongoing collection and analysing of data as the project progresses to check on progress and achievement. The information collected should be based on targets set at the planning process and be collected in an organised and routine way. This collated information should help keep the project on track by providing regular feedback, alert you to any problems and help with evaluation.

Although it is an ongoing process the information tends to be gathered at regular intervals – i.e. monthly or quarterly.

**For example** - counting the number of young people using services to see whether demand is increasing or decreasing.

Evaluation is about using the monitoring and other information collected to assess the effectiveness of an organisation, service or project. It helps the organisation reflect on and make a value judgement on what it has achieved towards its aims and objectives and thus learn how well it is succeeding. The evaluation will also help identify where changes or improvements to the existing service may be required or where new projects developed.

Evaluation should also be undertaken on a regular cycle, perhaps annually or at the end of a specific project.

**For example** – using the figures obtained with regular monthly monitoring it is evident that there is an upward trend of young people using the service. Together with other monitoring information a value judgement is made that the number of young people using the service has increased because of a recent publicity drive.

### External Funding

If you receive funding from external organisations, most will ask for feedback on how your community group has used the money that they granted you and whether or not it has been successful. Some funders may have a form to complete; others will expect the receiving organisation to have their own monitoring and evaluation process in place. It is therefore important that monitoring and evaluation is part of the planning process and not an after thought.

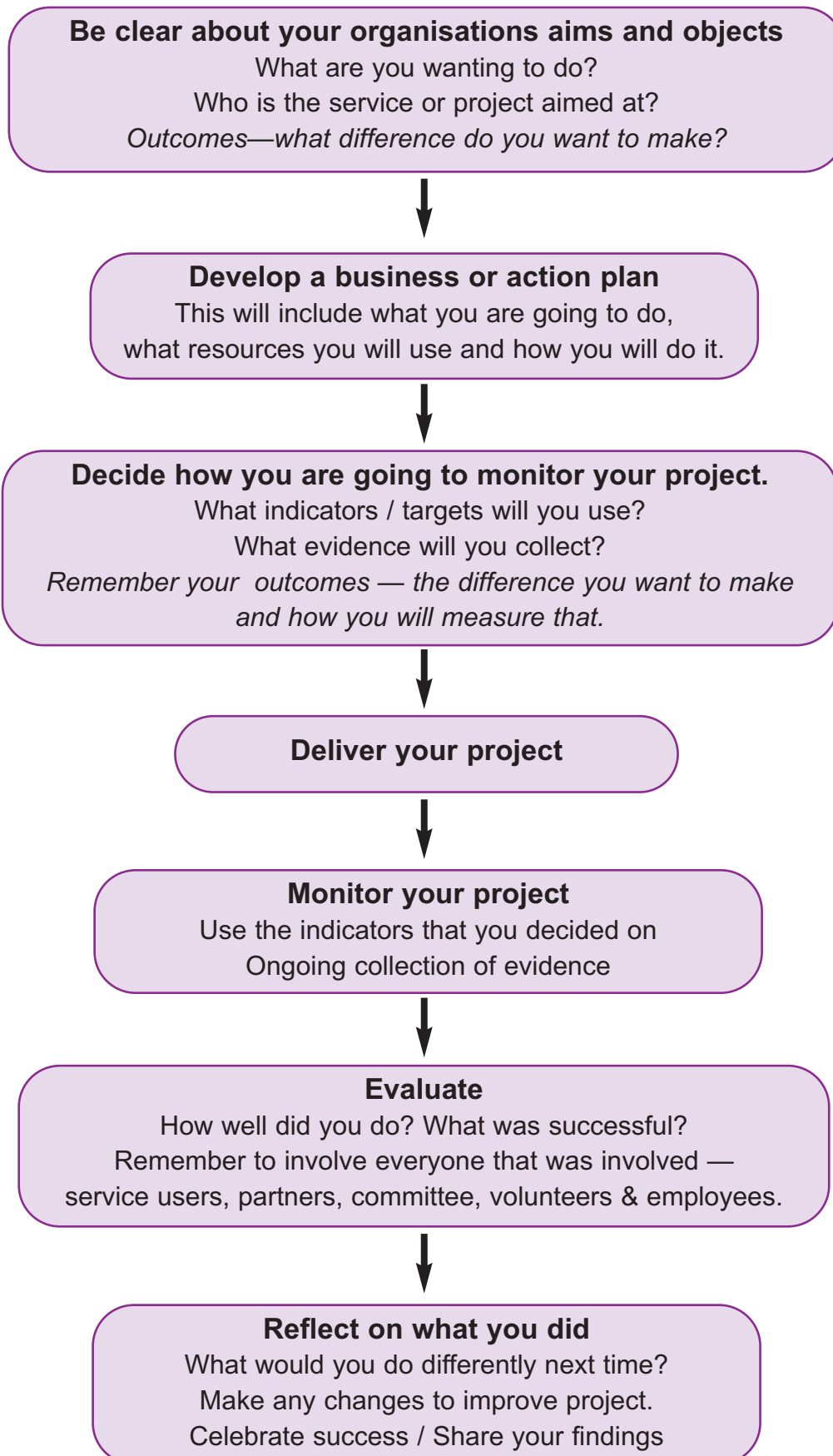
Part of the application process often asks ‘what difference you want to achieve’ or ‘what benefits are there to your service users’ by undertaking the work or project - these may also be referred to as ‘outcomes’. When talking about outcomes use words such as improve, decrease, develop and expand. See the ‘Common terms used in Monitoring & Evaluation’ below for further information.

Increasingly the term ‘outcomes’ is used, which is in line with public sector planning and ‘Single Outcome Agreements’. The Scottish Government publication ‘Capacity for Change’ states ‘In the past, there was a strong focus on monitoring what activities organisations spend their time and money on. Now, the Government is increasingly keen to focus on the real outcomes of activities - what has the impact of the funding and activities actually been. Success can then be measured based on real impact and change’.

## CHeCKLiST

Are you clear about the organisation’s aims and objectives?  
Have you included how you propose to monitor & evaluate in your business or action plan?

## Principles of Monitoring and Evaluation



## How to collect evidence

During the planning stage you need to decide on what information or evidence to collect so that you can demonstrate whether or not you have achieved your goals and made that difference that you wanted to. This evidence is often referred to as 'indicators' and needs to be relevant to the 'outputs' and 'outcomes' of the project, so ask

- ◆ How will it demonstrate the work carried out in order to accomplish the activity?  
How will you monitor the products or services delivered?
- ◆ How will it show that you have made the desired changes that you wanted to?  
How will you measure the impact your project made?

To allow you to gauge the difference made you also need a starting point or baseline, which will give you something to measure against. Initially gather information you already have, which may be the number of people using your service, external statistics, needs analysis etc. You may also want to undertake a baseline survey to find out quantitative information for example on how confident learners are. Set up a system that makes gathering the information as simple as possible, on a regular basis - we all get very involved in the delivery of activities and it is easy to forget to collect the relevant information.

## Types of evidence

The evidence collected can and should take various forms to allow a broad range of information that can then be analysed. Different methods are suitable for different situations, stakeholders and project size. You may want to use pictures if working with children, telephone interviews if working over a large geographical area – be inventive and make it interesting!

Some examples are outlined below

- ◆ **'Number crunching'** including monitoring data, census and poverty / deprivation statistics, financial information
- ◆ Surveys which could provide quantitative and qualitative information depending on the questions for example exit questionnaires; street interviews; survey monkey; feedback forms etc
- ◆ Evaluation forms often used after a specific project or activity has finished.
- ◆ Interviews which are a good way to include including all stakeholders and need not be formal but take place in service users' homes; over the telephone etc.
- ◆ Focus groups. This method can bring together a range of views and promotes discussion.
- ◆ Visual approaches are good to use with all age groups and abilities, for example drawings, maps and graffiti walls
- ◆ Photographs, video can be utilised to show changes pictorially or ask clients to make video diaries.

Many more methods and information can be found on the Evaluation Support Scotland website under resources <http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/resources.asp>

## Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Tools

There are various tried and tested methods available to help you through the monitoring and evaluation process some of which are outlined below.

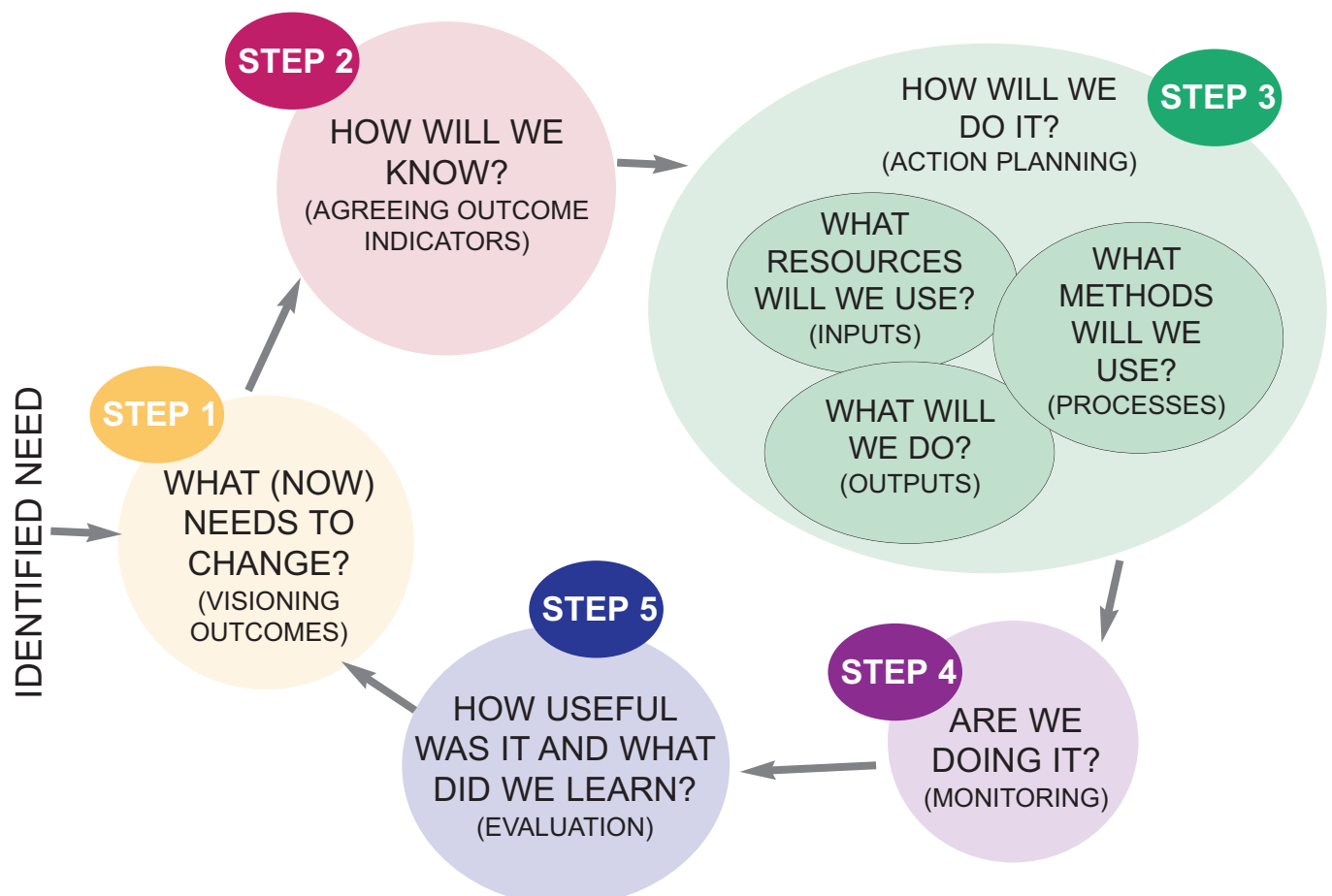
### The LEAP Framework

LEAP stands for Learning, Evaluation and Planning. It was established by the Scottish Community Development Centre. Detailed information on the framework and how to apply it can be found at <http://leap.scdc.org.uk>.

The framework is a practical toolkit that helps organisations plan their work; identify and evidence the changes they make and subsequently learn from their experience. LEAP can be used by community organisations and there are specific models for community health, volunteering and environmental projects.

The method is ideal to use when working in partnership as the process can lead to discussion about individual organisations perspective on issues and bring together joint solutions.

Firstly the need must be identified and the issue that needs addressed stated and understood. Below is the 5 step planning and evaluation cycle taken from the LEAP website, as above.



## Social Auditing

*‘Social accounting: the process whereby the organisation collects, analyses and interprets descriptive, quantitative and qualitative information in order to produce an account of its performance.’ (Social Audit Network)*

Social accounting enables organisations to examine and review their work, what they are achieving and importantly the views of their stakeholders. The process looks at all aspects of the organisation – social, environmental and financial. A report, the accounts, is produced based on quantitative and qualitative information sourced through a variety of methods suitable to the organisation – collection of factual data, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups etc. The final accounts are then ‘audited’ externally to ensure that the findings are credible. This information can then be used to plan for the future and improve performance of the organisation.

Prior to commencing their first accounts organisations are encouraged to prepare adequately for the process, understand the principles, commitment and funding required and how to manage the process. The three steps to social accounting, shown below, can be found on the Social Audit website, [www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk](http://www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk), which also gives information on training, the audit process, links to completed accounts and user manual.

### Step 1

#### **Social, Environmental and Economic Planning**

At this stage a Mission, Values, Objectives and Activities Statement is produced for the organisation. A stakeholder ‘map’ is produced stating who the organisation affects or who has an interest in it. These will be both internal and external to the organisation, perhaps with no formal links.

### Step 2

#### **Social, Environmental and Economic Accounting**

It is now time to collect information to prove that the organisation is carrying out the claimed activities and consult with stakeholders to demonstrate findings are not partisan.

### Step 3

#### **The Audit**

A Panel is convened and the draft accounts checked and any queries resolved. The Chair (an approved Social Auditor) writes detailed notes which are used to amend the draft accounts. If the Chair is happy with the revisions he/she will issue a Social Audit Statement.

## Social Return on Investment

*'SROI is an approach to understanding and managing the impacts of a project, organisation or policy. It is based on stakeholders and puts financial value on the important impacts identified by stakeholders that do not have market values.'*  
- <http://socialvalueuk.org>

SROI expresses the value of change made to individuals and organisations by measuring the social, environmental and economic outputs and giving them a monetary value. This value is then compared to the amount of investment. For example, a ratio of 1:4 shows that every £1 invested in the project gives a return of £4 to society. Whilst the process enables a monetary value to be attributed to the organisation's outcomes it also includes and reports on qualitative, quantitative and financial information.

The publication, 'Social Return on Investment – an introduction' on the Social Value UK website, <http://socialvalueuk.org/> outlines the six stages involved as below.

### Carrying out an SROI analysis involves six stages:

1. Establishing scope and identifying key stakeholders.
2. Mapping outcomes. Through engaging with your stakeholders you will develop an impact map (also called a theory of change or logic model) which shows the relationship between inputs, outputs and outcomes.
3. Evidencing outcomes and giving them a value. This stage involves finding data to show whether outcomes have happened and then giving them a monetary value.
4. Establishing impact. Those aspects of change that would have happened anyway or are a result of other factors are taken out of the analysis.
5. Calculating the SROI. This stage involves adding up all the benefits, subtracting any negatives and comparing the result with the investment. This is also where the sensitivity of the results can be tested.
6. Reporting, using and embedding. This vital last step involves verification of the report, sharing findings with stakeholders and responding to them, and embedding good outcomes processes.

### **PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations)**

This self assessment tool has been developed by the Charities Evaluation Services. There are three levels covering 12 topics which help organisations take a systematic look at how they are operating and decide on areas for improvement.

Further information can be found at [www.ces-vol.org.uk/](http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/)



### **Quality Scotland**

Quality Scotland is a framework, which can be used as a diagnostic tool, enables organisations, irrespective of size or sector, to assess strengths and areas for improvement across nine key areas. There is a European-wide network of National Partner Organisations, who provide local advice, training and assessment services, in Scotland this is the Quality Scotland Foundation. [www.qualityscotland.co.uk/](http://www.qualityscotland.co.uk/)



### **National Standards for Community Engagement**

The Standards can be used as best practice tool for engagement between communities and agencies by setting out mutual commitments, promoting equality and driving continuous improvement.

[www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards](http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards)



### **VOiCE**

VOiCE was developed for the Scottish Government as part of its support of the National Standards for Community Engagement. It is planning and recording software in four sections : Analyse, Plan, Do, Review and aims to assist individuals, organisations and partnerships to design and deliver effective community engagement using a common system.

The tool is available to download with support information on the SCDC website [www.scdc.org.uk/what/voice](http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/voice)



Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement

### **HGIOCLD 2 (How Good is Our Community Learning and Development)**

HGIOCLD is a quality framework designed to support Community Learning and Development practitioners in self-evaluating their own work. It uses a systematic approach to monitoring progress and assessing the impact of community learning and development on individuals and communities. A useful guide can be found at [www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/206707/0054906.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/206707/0054906.pdf)





## *Jargon Buster*

There are a number of terms you will come across when reading about planning and evaluation, and frequently in funding applications.

**STAKEHOLDERS:** The people or groups who are affected by or who can affect the activities of the organisation.

**MISSION STATEMENT:** A statement that briefly describes the nature of an organisation, clearly and concisely setting out what it does.

**VALUES:** The key principles that underpin the way an organisation operates and which influence the way it behaves.

**ACTIVITIES:** The work you do to make your project or services happen, such as running the project, organising events etc.

**OUTCOMES:** The benefits and changes that happen as a result of your work. Some of these will be practical changes, for example someone being housed, but often they will be less tangible, such as a client having more self-confidence, better community spirit etc. There are sometimes additional outcomes, which are not expected or not desired.

**INPUTS:** The resources you put into a project or activity , such as staff time, volunteers' time, equipment, funds.

**PROCESSES:** These are the methods used to make the activity or project happen – providing information, applying for funding, training of volunteers etc.





**OUTPUTS:** The products or services that the organisation delivers in order to achieve the desired changes , such as training courses, publications, a helpline or a website. Outputs are normally activities that we control and can therefore set targets for.

If you are not sure whether you are looking at an outcome or and output ask the 'so what' question.

Young people went on an outward bound weekend – So what?  
Six young people took part in the weekend – so what?

These activities are important but not outcomes – they are outputs.  
'So what' came out of the weekend?

The young people worked together as a team – outcome  
The young people became more confident – outcome  
The young people involved in running their youth project - outcome

**INDICATORS:** the evidence that you will collect to allow you to measure progress and show what you have achieved.

Indicators fall into two groups:

### **Output Indicators or Targets**

Are specific activities, deadlines and / or numbers which you aim to meet when planning your project. For example - you will run three training courses in IT for older people (8 per class) before end of March. This information needs to be collated at regular intervals and compared – monitoring.

### **Outcome Indicators**

These help inform whether you have actually made the difference to or change to people's lives that you set out to do -

Quantitative – these are the factual numbers that you collect – if you want to reduce homelessness it may be the number of people being housed.

Qualitative – if it is about increasing confidence the indicators could be young people taking part in meetings or able to express their views clearly.



## **SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

There are many websites and downloadable publications with tools, methods and information about Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation including

Businesslink: [www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk) , see 'Starting-up', 'Considering starting up? Prepare a business plan.

Skye and Lochalsh Community Toolkit: [www.slcv.org.uk](http://www.slcv.org.uk) , see 'Planning'.

National Lottery: [www.lotteryfunding.org.uk](http://www.lotteryfunding.org.uk), see 'Need more help?'

Voluntary Arts: [www.voluntaryarts.org](http://www.voluntaryarts.org), see 'Running your group'

The Evaluation Trust is a Community Development Agency which provides information, advice and ideas - [www.evaluationtrust.org](http://www.evaluationtrust.org)

Evaluation Scotland is a dedicated website with lots of different tools, methods, guides and online training - [www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk](http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)

Charities Evaluations Services has common questions & answers, guides and a comprehensive list of publications - <http://www.ces-vol.org.uk>

National Council for Voluntary Organisations has some useful pages outlining the process focusing on the importance of 'impact', and how you can assess the difference your organisation makes - <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/>

Voluntary Action Sheffield have produced an information sheet - [http://www.vas.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Legal/Monitoring\\_and\\_Evaluation\\_14.pdf](http://www.vas.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Legal/Monitoring_and_Evaluation_14.pdf)

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