



Measuring the impact of volunteering⁴⁶

Organisations embark on volunteering projects because they want to make a positive difference to the people they support. Measuring the impact that volunteering makes helps:

- ◆ Demonstrate what has changed as a result of the involvement of volunteers.
- ◆ Understand what has worked well.
- ◆ Identify areas for improvement in the volunteer programme.
- ◆ Provide feedback to volunteers on the difference their contribution has made.
- ◆ Provide evidence for funders on the added value that volunteers bring.

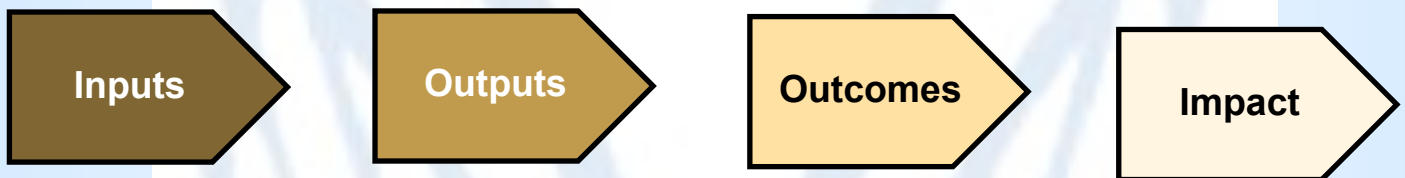
Impact

It is perhaps most useful to think of impact as the change that happens as a result of an activity or project.

This will be different for different groups of people depending on their involvement with the project.

Measuring impact can tell you whether changes have been positive or negative, and how much change has taken place.

Example:



Not everyone defines “impact” in the same way. Some organisations use it to describe the outputs and outcomes from volunteering. However, the Charities Evaluation Service defines it as something which is longer term and broader than outcomes. Therefore you need to understand what your audience means by the term “impact”. There is no right and wrong answer, only what is appropriate for your audience.

Monitoring

Monitoring is the process of collecting facts and figures relating to volunteering in your service. This may include data such as the number of volunteers and the number of hours they contribute.. Monitoring helps you check that activity is being undertaken as you expected. However, it does not tell you what changes have been experienced as a result of the volunteering.

Evaluation

Impact and monitoring information describe what has happened. Evaluation involves interpreting that information and putting a value on it. For example:

- ◆ Is the impact good enough?
- ◆ Is the programme worth the resources that are being put into it?

Why do you need this information?

The first step in impact measurement, monitoring or evaluation is to define why you need the information and how it will be used. This will determine what information you collect, the methods you use and how much time and resource you invest in data collection and evaluation.

At this stage it is important to consult people who may have a stake in the results of this assessment. This may include your line manager, your finance manager, your team or a funder.

The information may be used to:

- ◆ Account for funding.
- ◆ Provide evidence to support a tender or funding bid.
- ◆ Showcase achievements.
- ◆ Develop a structured programme or activity.
- ◆ Identify good practice.

At this stage it is helpful to identify who is your primary audience. Once you have determined why you want this information and for who it is for, your answers will guide:

- ◆ Who is involved in the impact assessment.
- ◆ The questions you ask about impact.
- ◆ The type of data you collect.
- ◆ How you communicate your findings.