Designing a Programme to Support Nonprofits Identifying, Understanding and Reporting on their Effectiveness and Results

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In this paper, we look at

1. Unpacking what a focus on Effectiveness Results and Outcomes might mean for non-profits,
2. How long term change and learning really takes place for non-profits and their leaders, and
3. How we might put this together to develop a practical programme of support for non-profits on Effectiveness, Results and Outcomes.

1. Focusing on Effectiveness, Results and Outcomes

Both the *Ministry of Social Development* and *Community Research* have an interest in supporting non-profits to be able to identify, understand, and (in some ways) report on effectiveness, results or outcomes.

Non-profits are, by nature interested in changing things for the better – at an individual, family/whanau, hapu/community, and/or societal level. We want to make a difference. This implies *an in-built interest in our effectiveness, results or outcomes*. Are we actually making a difference? Are we achieving what we set out to do? Can we do things better or more effectively? If we take our eyes off our ultimate purpose, we risk focusing on tasks, activities, and just 'keeping busy'.

There is also a power in focusing on our ultimate purpose – it is energizing and motivating, as we are 'meaning-seeking' creatures (Gratton, 2000, & Wheatley, 2001). This is explicitly recognised by Appreciative Inquiry and many other specific techniques, but is also implicit in the key role accorded in most modern facilitation, planning and strategising methods of 'beginning with the end in mind' (Covey, 1989).

Early in his book on *Results Based Accountability*, Friedman (2005), asks "what would we do differently if outcomes really mattered?" Among the powerful consequences of having clear, agreed and measurable results he suggests we might: *assess whether things are likely to get better or worse if we keep doing what we are doing; dig into what was causing conditions to get better or worse; think about partners who might help us do better; and think about what works to do better* (pp.6-7).

Friedman (2005) suggests that the main reason this isn't happening more often is 'a culture of defeatism' in the face of the big and complicated problems non-profits tackle. However, there are also some other systemic reasons for taking care in how we focus on effectiveness, results or outcomes (especially when they are linked to measuring, reporting, and funding):

- the most important ultimate outcomes are often difficult, if not impossible, to reliably measure
- measurement (let alone reporting or funding) of anything less than the ultimate outcomes can distort behaviour and be counter-productive
- the most important outcomes usually take a long time to achieve
- the most important outcomes are usually the result of multiple actions from multiple sources, so that 'attribution' (proof of who caused what) is usually difficult, if not impossible
- we are often not be able to predict all the important outcomes, nor what may lead to them (this includes negative as well as positive consequences of our activities), and
- the higher the stakes and the resulting 'fear of failure', the greater the risk-aversion, and the more difficult it is for learning and innovation.

Some Implications

Even when it can be difficult to design reliable measures, the process of an organisation working on identifying and obtaining *a collective understanding of 'what success looks like*' can be a valuable exercise in its own right.

While anything can be 'measured', it is not always useful. We need to be careful what we measure, as whatever we pay attention to, we almost inevitably do more of. Often we need to navigate a pragmatic path between what is impossible to measure, and what is just convenient to measure (*its usually better to roughly measure the right thing, than precisely measure the wrong thing!*) All measurement needs to be treated with a grain of salt.

We need to keep a pragmatic balance between *the demands of the short-term and the value of focusing on the long-term*.

Any centrally determined Outcomes handed down to the rest of an organisation *risks a return to a 'command and control' approach*, which ultimately undermines personal and organisational learning (for reasons discussed below).

There is a risk that a narrow focus on Outcomes can lead to a *simplistic 'checklist' approach*. While there are important strengths in an *Audit Review* approach (checking progress against pre-determined objectives), evaluation also recognizes the value of an *Open Inquiry* approach as well (Wadsworth 1997).

Real learning requires candor and humility – an ability to learn from mistakes as well as (perhaps even more so than from) achievements. This, in turn requires a *culture that doesn't promote blame and a fear of failure*. (This is one of the reasons that it is now widely argued that evaluation for learning needs to be separated as far as possible from both internal and external accountability requirements – see Attachment 2.)

Too much emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness in achieving Outcomes (in a narrow sense) can *undermine responsiveness, innovation, creativity and resilience* (which all need space to explore, test and develop as you go).

2. How do Nonprofits and their Leaders Learn?

EvaluLead (Grove, Kibel & Haas, 2005), developed with support of W K Kellogg Foundation and US Agency for International Aid, provides a useful framework not only for evaluating capacity development of non-profits and those who lead them, but also (using a 'retro-fitting' approach) offers useful insights into conceptualizing and designing more effective, and especially more sustainable, capacity development. It is based on an extensive review of the literature of "theories and accompanying instruments for assessing changes in individual and group leadership characteristics linked to programme activity. (p2). It has also been field tested across a wide range of organisations in the US (p3).

It assumes a 'complex, open systems' approach, where both predictability and unpredictability will cooperate, rather than a 'simple, closed system' of linear 'cause and effect' (p4).

It is based around a 3x3 grid – three types of results across three domains. One dimension reflects a concern that the impact should not just be felt by the **individual** participants, but also their **organisations**, and ultimately the **communities** they serve. (The framework refers to these as three 'inter-penetrating domains'.) The other dimension focuses attention on three fundamentally different, yet inter-related forms of change or 'result types':

- **Episodic** changes are typically well-defined, time-bound results; an intervention is made and predictable results ideally follow (eg, information or technical skills acquired, etc)
- **Developmental** changes occur across time, and usually include forward progress, stalls and setbacks, at different paces and varied rhythms; results are open-ended, less controllable or predictable – often subject to external influences and internal willingness (eg sustained change in behavior, a new organisational strategy guides operations, etc)
- **Transformative** changes represent fundamental shifts in values and perspectives that see the emergence of fundamental shifts in behavior or performance; regenerative moments or radical redirections of effort (eg, substantial shifts in viewpoint, vision or paradigm, and fundamental reforms of what is done or how it is done).

Episodic changes *address deficits*; developmental changes *support growth*, and transformative changes *set new directions*. In an open-systems approach these three 'result types' are seen as concurrent (unlike linear, closed system approaches).

Similarly, because learning is occurring at all times, and there are feedback loops between the three domains of individuals, their organisations and their communities, change can also be occurring at multiple levels at the same time.

	Individual	Organisational	Community
Episodic			
Developmental			
Transformative			

There is increasing awareness of keeping an eye on community impact or results. This is ultimately the reason for change and development. However, much of the discussion about capacity building is still focusing on episodic, rather than developmental or transformative change. While developmental and transformative change may be difficult to achieve, they are ultimately more sustainable – in that they have a lasting, rather than a one-off effect.

Some Implications

If we want to get beyond the individual domain, we need to make it easier for the individual to apply learnings at an organisational level or even community level:

- This could include focusing learning around 'live' problem-solving, real world/work place application
- Ensuring understanding/support/endorsement from their organisation, not just the individual
- Ensuring peer or back-up support/sounding boards, for when organisational or community barriers appear
- Teams of people learning together, from the same organization and/or same community to make collaboration for organization-wide or community wide changes natural
- ??Other ideas

If we want to go beyond episodic impacts, we need to move beyond technical skills and knowledge, into the realm of change management, attitudes and insights:

- People will need to see a bigger picture, and be able to link that to what they are aiming to achieve and the values that are important to them
- Build on and reaffirm what people already know; push them to their leading edge
- Confidence, commitment and enthusiasm can be as important as particular skills or knowledge
- People will need time and space to reflect and apply; multiple and reinforcing opportunities (including from other sources)
- We need to consider organizational and community 'politics', the human dimensions, resistance, etc
- ??Other ideas

Publication of *resource material* (no matter how accessible), and *one-off training* alone (no matter how well designed) are unlikely to take us much beyond episodic results. So while useful for technical skill acquisition, these need to be part of a broader system, if we are seeking developmental or transformative results. These have **longer time frames** and require **multiple and reinforcing initiatives** at different levels. The process is more **iterative and multi-pronged**, and less predictable and controllable, however, it is likely to involve:

- in addition to technical skills/knowledge acquisition from *accessible training and toolkits*,
- development of *reflective disciplines* in both individuals and organisations (See also the concept of 'learning organisations', including culture of learning and learning systems - *The Learning NGO*, Britton

1998 and *Organisational Learning in NGOs: Creating the Motive, Means and Opportunity,* Britton 2009), and
- access to *mentors, peer-supports, communities of practice/learning communities*, etc, etc. (See also the concept of 'developmental evaluation' and accompaniment of a 'critical friend' – *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use*, Patton 2010).

Support for Learning Organisations

In effect we are trying to encourage and support the development of Learning Organisations. Britton (2009) writes about the importance for organisational learning of facilitating:

- *motive* (understand learning and why it is important, learning seen as an integral part of who the organization is and how it operates specific projects or activities, contributions of all staff valued, promote a 'no blame' culture/expect some things not to work, and learning attracts internal recognition)
- *means* (tools and methods for learning and for using their learning in practice are readily accessible, invest in training, coaching and action-learning, all supported by appropriate ICT) and
- *opportunity* (don't overload and over-programme every last minute, build reflection and learning into realistic job statements, break-down organisational silos & open up opportunities for peer and cross-organisational communication, provide space for networking beyond the organisation).

If any one of motive, means or opportunity is missing, the development of a Learning Organisation will be undermined.

Wheatley (2001) observes that: first its natural for people to create and share knowledge because we are constantly looking for meaning in what we do; second, everybody in an organisation – not just a selected few – is likely to a source of useful knowledge; and third, we will choose whether we share or withhold information, and we are more willing to share if we feel committed to the organisation, value our colleagues, respect our leaders, and are given encouragement to participate and don't fear negative repercussions.

Britton (1998) also identified **8 key functions of a Learning NGO:**

1. Creating a supportive culture
2. Gathering internal experience
3. Accessing external experience
4. Communication systems
5. Mechanisms for drawing conclusions
6. Developing an organisational memory
7. Integrating learning into strategy and policy
8. Applying the learning.

This will also involve understanding the (internal and external) **barriers** to organisational learning (Britton, 1998) – some we can do something about, others which individual non-profits can only work out how to minimize or cope with.

The various **mechanics** of a Learning NGO, in practice, is well illustrated by the regular cycles of multi-level activities in the CDRA case study (Wadsworth, 2004, and Soal, 2001):

- Daily reflection
- Regular 'snap' evaluations
- Weekly debrief
- Monthly reflection/problem solving
- Annual stock-take
- Comprehensive 3-10 year reviews)

3. A Programme of Support for Non-Profits on Outcomes

The above analysis suggests that any programme to support non-profits identifying, understanding and reporting on their Effectiveness, Results and Outcomes should ensure the non-profits:

- know why and how it can be useful for them, in the broader context of organisational learning and evaluation

- understand the methods and have the tools available (at sufficient depth not only to use them, but also to appreciate the risks and avoid the traps inherent in different approaches)

- can construct the space and supportive culture not only to implement the specific tools, but also to put learnings to use, and even share with others

- can be in control of their own refection and learning, and be empowered to determined what they share, in what ways, with whom (outside of their organisation).

Most of all it is crucial not to be so focused on any particular method or tool, that one loses the whole point of it being a means to the end of greater understanding and learning that can be put to use to improve what the organisation achieves. Such a

- Skills in identifying, understanding and reporting Outcomes are acquired through a combination of theory ('learning from others'), reflection and practical application etc
- 'Outcomes skills' are acquired continuously, throughout leaders' careers and organizational lifecycles. But support is often needed immediately before a new programme of work begins, particularly to choose methodologies, agree intended outcomes and to help set baseline data.
- First an organisation needs to identify the Outcomes they want to achieve. This can be a significant process requiring time, resources, and a whole-of-organisation approach to identify and agree the organisation's specific effects and effectiveness, often across multiple strands of work, and to agree the organisations specific, measurable activities, as well as identifying realistic intended outcomes.
- Possible supports for this process include:

- Targeted training, which is local and accessible to the groups whom it seeks to engage, and targeted at their needs (eg non-Profit, Maori, Pasifika, etc)
- Time, resources and guidance for a reflective 'whole-of-organisation' process
- A 'go to' person who is available to advise, mentor and/or support, eg for the design phase, but also when obstacles appear
- Collaboration with other groups to learn, encourage, compare, as well as to determine collective impacts

- An organisation needs to gain an overview of the full range of possible data collection, analysis and reporting methodologies, each with their diverse paradigms, sufficient to select a suitable methodology for the particular programme or organization, in its specific context.
- Possible supports for this process include:
  - Targeted training, which is local and accessible to the groups whom it seeks to engage, and targeted at their needs (eg non-Profit, Maori, Pasifika, etc)
  - A 'go to' person who is available to advise, mentor and/or support at milestone points, and throughout the programme of work
  - Peer support - providing a forum to problem-solve, provide mutual support and encouragement, etc
  - Accessible resources in a form that can be directly made use of, eg a searchable on-line, one-stop storehouse of resources (some of which will need to be bespoke for the Aotearoa New Zealand context, where they don't already exists or are difficult to access or apply for a lay person)
  - Grants for mentors, and/or training, and/or resources, and/or peer review which organisations can spend as they see fit

- An organisation needs to continuously review how well it is monitoring its Outcomes.
- Possible supports for this process include:
  - Targeted (refresher or Stage 2) training, which is local and accessible to the groups whom it seeks to engage, and targeted at their needs (eg non-Profit, Maori, Pasifika, etc)
  - Time, resources and guidance for a reflective 'whole-of-organisation' process
  - A 'go to' person who is available to advise, mentor and support at milestone points, and throughout the programme of work
  - Peer support - providing a forum to problem-solve, provide mutual support and encouragement, etc.
  - Accessible resources in a form that can be directly made use of, eg a searchable on-line, one-stop storehouse of resources
  - Grants for mentors, and/or training, and/or resources, and/or peer review which organisations can spend as they see fit
  - Opportunities to review and critique other organisations' approaches to identifying and reporting outcomes (eg an on-line, one-stop storehouse of case studies and examples)

Next Steps

The next steps in determining *Community Research's* contribution involves

- Understanding what *Community Research* can offer – our current and potential resources, expertise, experience, reputation and connections, etc
- Understanding who else is doing what, or is adequately available elsewhere, and
- Thus determining where it may be most useful for us to focus.

The following framework may offer a starting point for considering those questions. In each box we could consider: what is already happening, or others could do; and then what *Community Research* is particularly well-suited to contribute:

	Directly for Non-profits and their staff	Indirectly for Capability Mentors and others assisting non-profits
Overview of evaluation concepts & practice - training - toolkit - shared experience		
Elements of a Learning Organisation - training - toolkit - shared experience		
How to engage a mentor or consultant - training - toolkit - shared experience		
Identifying Outcomes - training - toolkits - shared experience		
Outcomes for Maori in mainstream services - training - toolkits		

- shared experience		
Indicators for 'hard to measure' Outcomes (eg community devpt, advocacy, capacity building, prevention, etc, etc) - training - toolkits - shared experience		
Other specific evaluation tools (see list in Attachment 1) - training - toolkits - shared experience		
How to make the most of data you already have - training - toolkits - shared experience		
Specific research techniques (sampling, survey design, focus groups, etc) - training - toolkits - shared experience		
Accessible resources on Outcome and Indicator banks		
Accessible resources on 'What Works' research		

TWCVSRC 'Code of Practice' more user-friendly		
Develop &/or support peer 'Learning Communities' in specific geographic or interest areas		
Accessible links to expert advisors		
Other?		

NB: There is a continuum of 'training' possibilities:

- one-on-one consultancy/mentoring,
- group 'clinics' on broad topics or issues (where the agenda is primarily participant-driven through Q&A, etc),
- semi-structured problem-solving workshops, and
- more trainer-directed training on specific skills or topics.

There is also a range of ways accessible resources or 'toolkits' can be offered:

- gateway of searchable links to existing resources
- development of searchable bespoke resources
- guided pathways to the above resources (if you want x, then click here – at its most ambitious can have multi-levels)
- on-line, self-paced learning or instructional videos

Attachment 1: Thinking about Content: What do we Want to be Learnt?

These are possible areas of content that may be important to cover. Its not expected that any single exercise will include all possible content areas. It will also be important to consider where else this content is already readily available – how we can collaborate and make existing resources more accessible.

What's Involved with Evaluation?

Evaluation is usually considered to be *the systematic assessment of the worth or merit (value) of something*. (Research Methods Knowledge Base http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/intreval.php)

Three levels of evaluation:

- **Descriptive** – basic questions about what happened, to whom, in what ways?
- **Explanatory** – explaining what's behind what happened
- **Impact Assessment** – assessing the results of what happened (Coup, de Joux, & Higgs, 1990).

Increasing complexity, uncertainty, time and budget required as move along the three levels.

While it sounds simple on paper, as Bullen (1996) points out:

"Human services are complex and full of uncertainty:

- The services any one organization provides are only a small part of people's dynamic, open-ended, complex lives
- Human services are made up of many elements with complex relationships and dynamics
- There can be as many different views about the same event as the people you ask
- People don't always tell the truth
- Stories of real human service disasters come out years later

These confounding factors can effect even relatively simple Descriptive Evaluations, but are likely to have and even more dramatic effect on the more significant Explanatory and Impact Assessments.

True impact or outcome evaluations seek to answer cause-and-effect questions. Proving **attribution** requires not only finding changes, but establishing whether those changes might have still happened without the programme (the 'counter-factual'). The gold standard for establishing attributable results is the double-blind, matched sample, randomly allocated evaluation. While there are exceptions, even when not ethically dubious, this is usually well beyond any non-profit evaluation budget, and its usually not useful to do such evaluations inside an individual organisation (sample sizes are usually too small to test many meaningful variables). True impact or outcome evaluations are really best the province of funders, policy-makers and academics – with substantial budgets and patient time-frames. We should be aware of and make use of this research, but its generally unrealistic to expect these to be undertaken by individual non-profits.

Along with Impact Evaluation, lesser and more realistic standards of 'proof' are available from Duignan's (2008) *Sources of Evidence That a Programme Works* http://outcomescentral.org/_Media/screenshot_175.png :

- Outcomes Model
- Progress Indicators
- Controllable Indicators
- Non-Impact Implementation/Improvement Evaluation, and
- Economic and Comparative Evaluation

What's working and not working?

Based on an evaluation of Social Audit Pilot in NZ (Nowland-Foreman, 2000), though supported by experience in the US (Reed & Morariu, 2010) and UK (Paton, 2003) it seems relatively common-place that:

- We collect much more quantitative information, and very little qualitative information in comparison (even though we say quantitative information is less useful)
- We usually already have most of the information we need, but large amounts of information already held are not analysed or utilized
- When we do analyse and use that information, it is more often to satisfy funders, rather than for our own learning
- It is hard to attract the time and attention of an organisation's leadership to evaluation (other than to meet funders' requirements)
- We lack confidence to use evaluation tools, and when we do pick up a tool, we often don't stick with it for long.

But the good news is that what's most important is not complex. We don't have to be too worried about finding the best methods; almost any can work well for us if we:

- **Take Time** (we need to move beyond the activist culture of many non-profits in order to prioritise time for thinking as well as doing)
- **Thinking** (reflection is a key; though we may need time, frankness, encouragement and cunning questions to best elicit all our tacit knowledge
- **Together** (cross- and multi-stakeholder efforts are more fruitful) (based on Paton, 2003).

"*Evaluation processes that are able to deal with this reality [the complexity and uncertainty] inevitably requires a group of people to collaboratively reflect and dialogue. Evaluations where an external evaluator does an evaluation of a service and makes a definitive judgement of the value of the service are not appropriate. The role of the evaluator is to facilitate a process of dialogue and reflection that is grounded in people's experience (eg clients) and other relevant facts and figures*." (Bullen 1996)

- Collaborative reflection
- Grounded in people's experiences and stories
- Using lots of facts and figures to ask good questions.

Evaluation and Maori

Te Puni Korkiri (1999) found that many of the efforts by mainstream agencies have elicited limited information on the outcome of government programmes and services for Maori; and many of these evaluations were inadequate – either not involving Maori (type 1) or containing only limited information *on* Maori and/or have limited involvement by Maori (type 2):

Type 1: Not Involving Maori	**Type 2: Involving Maori**
• Nil analysis of Maori • Maori participation or data not sought or considered relevant • Results thought to have no impact on Maori • Mainstream control & knowledge	• Minimal analysis of Maori • Maori involved as participants • Maori sometimes junior members of research team • Maori data sought & analysed • Use mainstream methods • Mainstream control & knowledge
Type 3: Focus on Maori	**Type 4: Kaupapa Maori**
• Moderate to maximum analysis of Maori • Maori involved as participants • Maori typically senior members of research team • Maori analysis produces mainstream & Maori knowledge • Knowledge is measured against mainstream research standards • Mainstream control	• Maximum analysis of Maori • Maori are significant participants • Typically Maori make up all of research team • Maori analysis produces Maori & mainstream knowledge • Knowledge meets expectations & quality standard set by Maori • Maori control

Although focusing on Government programmes and now over a decade old, it probably still has a number of important lessons for non-profits today.

TPK identified the following critical success factors for ensuring better quality evaluations for Maori:

Planning

- Assess the Treaty implications of the programme or policy (for example, partnership implications, protection of knowledge, cultural property or mana, and potential outcomes)
- Analyse data to estimate the current, potential; and future participation by Maori in the programme or policy
- Identify people with an understanding of issues for Maori to be on the planning team, as well as potential Maori stakeholders for the evaluation
- Specify clear and realistic objectives for Maori
- Estimate the resources, both human and material, required to collect quality information from Maori

Design

- Ensure researchers who are skilled in conducting research with Maori are identified and included on the evaluation team
- Ensure the research design method(s) will be conducted in a manner appropriate for Maori
- Use data collection methods that gather reliable and sufficient information about Maori
- Apply the Statistics NZ Principles for Maori data collection when collecting information about Maori

Analysis

- Ensure Maori are involved in the analysis process as researchers, reference groups and/or stakeholders
- Ensure information about Maori in the evaluation is appropriately and systematically analysed so that the evaluation questions for maori are answered and reported
- Examine other issues identified by Maori participants during the course of the evaluation

Reporting and Communication

- Report the reliability and sufficiency of the data and conclusions for Maori
- Demonstrate the links between data, conclusions and recommendations for Maori
- Communicate the findings effectively for Maori to key audiences (eg face to face where possible or providing a summary sheet)
- Communicate evaluation results in a way which encourages follow-through by stakeholders and encourages the improvement of services for Maori.

Data Collection

Data just means little bits of information. It comes from the same Latin root as 'donate'. These little bits of information are like many little gifts to the enquirer.

It is important to understand the strengths and limitations of different data collection methods (otherwise we tend to automatically gravitate to favourite or best-known methods, especially the survey, regardless of its fit with what is needed in a specific situation):

- Document Review
- Individual interviews
- Focus Groups
- Other Group Interviews
- Observation
- Written Survey

An understanding of the strengths and limitations of different collection methods also helps us appreciate the value of using multiple methods to obtain more reliable results.

Dilemmas and tensions in data collection that need to be acknowledged and confronted, in terms of how to deal with them, include issues such as:

- Open-Ended versus Closed Questions
- Open Inquiry versus Audit Review
- Information indirectly from Key Informants versus direct from Community Members
- Subjective verses Objective methods
- Insider versus Outsider approaches
- Overall value in mixed methods, and 'triangulation' (of methods, respondents, sources).

Specific Tools

In order to use any method or tool, it is important to have an appreciation of its *Key Elements and Underlying Assumptions*, its *Strengths* (what it is especially good at), and its *Limitations* (what it is not so good at and its 'blind spots'). This will also assist in select the most relevant and useful methods for any particular exercise. While fads and fashions in evaluation methods come and go, the following are some current and potentially useful evaluation tools to consider:

Appreciative Inquiry

Logic Models & Theories of Change

Most Significant Change

Outcomes Models

P.A.T.H.

Quality Systems & Benchmarks

Results Based Accountability

Return on Social Investment

Social Audit

Any other important Tools?

Measurement Techniques

All measurement is ultimately **comparison** and we can find comparisons for most things. Patton, 1997, offers 10 different comparisons that can apply to most programmes.

1. The outcomes of selected similar programmes
2. The outcomes of the previous year (or previous quarter, etc)
3. The outcomes of a represented sample of programmes in the field
4. The outcomes of special programmes of interest (either exemplary or having difficulties)
5. The stated goals of the programme
6. Participants goals for themselves
7. External standards developed by the profession

8. Minimum standards (eg licensing or accreditation standards)
9. Ideals of programme performance
10. Guesses by staff or others about what the outcomes would be

We can even develop indicators for 'values'. In fact, Hailey (2000) suggests we should and offers examples of how it can be done for the NGOs he was working with.

Validity – the soundness of the measuring instrument (the value of using 'tests' or indicators – including scaling - that have already been validated by wide use – also, see various Outcome and Indicator Banks http://www.ces-vol.org.uk/Resources/CharitiesEvaluationServices/Documents/outcomeandoutcomeindicatorbanks-786-794.pdf)

Reliability – how well the same results are consistently achieved (the use of *triangulation* in qualitative research to establish reliability)

Understanding **Sampling**, and **Rates of Return** (Random, Stratified, Quota). What is an acceptable sample size? What is an acceptable Rate of Return

You are what you measure

People end up focusing on, and doing more of, what ever gets paid attention to (like measuring or reporting on) – even when they know its not the most important thing.

Best to roughly measure the right thing, than to precisely measure the wrong thing (eg emphasis on measuring the economic multiplier of arts activities, when the arts organisations do what they are doing because they believe the arts make better people - *Counting New Beans: Intrinsic Impact and the Value of Art,* 2013)

Making sense out of Findings

Data Collection → Data Reduction → Data Organisation → Data Interpretation

Pattern recognition (from charts to word clouds) – arranging for ease of interpretation (coding, organising around themes, visual presentations)

Simplicity, without sacrificing fairness, is the goal. Being aware of the limitations and possible sources of error.

Both numbers and qualitative data are always imperfect indicators of what the world is really like, and need to be interpreted to have meaning.

Having reviewed the data, ask people to list possible claims that could be made; sort them according to both Importance and Rigour (ie a Claims Matrix).

Basic Ethical Principles

- First, do no harm
- All participation is voluntary
- Preserve anonymity or confidentiality
- Avoid deceit
- Analyse and report data faithfully (Tolich & Davidson, 2003)

Each ethical principle is important, but there may also be times when exceptions may be needed.

"Ethical requirements arise from an evolving understanding of the rights and duties of human beings. Researchers are part of a changing social system. They are obliged not only to abide by the ethical principles so far discussed but to attend to the evolving understanding of these principles in a particular society at a particular time. In NZ, for example, they must be aware of cultural sensitivities, the Treaty of Waitangi, and gender and socio-economic differences. They must also recognize the power component of their work particularly where there are age, race, cultural, religious, class or gender disparities between researchers and their subjects. This cultural sensitivity is not an additional moral principle. It is simply the recognition that basic principles (like respect for others) have constantly to be applied in new ways." (Snook, 2003)

Include something here on **TWCVSRC Code of Practice.**

Evaluation and Power

The power of evaluation: Information leads to knowledge; Knowledge reduces uncertainty; Reduction of uncertainty facilitates action; Action enhances power, but…

1. Not all information is useful
2. Not all people are information users
3. Information targeted at use is more likely to hit the target
4. Only credible information is ultimately powerful (Patton, 1997).

Negotiating the political game:

- Find and cultivate people who want to learn – especially strategically located people who are enthusiastic, committed, competent and interested
- Quantity, quality, and frequency of interactions with intended users are all important; typically you will have to work to sustain interest
- Seek to negotiate win-win scenarios with stakeholders; help primary stakeholders avoid getting their egos attached to specific results; help develop a long-term view of learning and improvement; seek to reaffirm that all are interested in what works for beneficiaries
- Diverge, then converge; generate alternatives, then focus; get diverse views, then prioritize; create an environment that values diverse perspectives (Patton, 1997)

Attachment 2: A Note on Learning and Accountability

Almost all the available evidence suggests that when we mix efforts at Learning ('improving') with requirements for external Accountability ('proving'), we achieve neither (Smillie, 1999, and Nowland-Foreman & Rivers, 2005). Learning requires vulnerability, a willingness to learn from failure and honest reflection. Because of the power differentials between funders and non-profits, externally imposed accountability requirements – even with the most enlightened funders – almost inevitably encourage 'putting the best foot forward' (which risks, even for the best intentioned non-profits, becoming self-delusional – and certainly crowding out opportunities for candid reflection and learning) .

Thus the importance, if we want to encourage effective learning, of de-coupling it as much as possible from accountability. In fact, from an external accountability point of view the most important questions may not so much be about specific outcomes as to demonstrate evidence that:

- it is doing what it promised with its funding?
- it is clear what it is trying to achieve, and is serious about understanding whether things are getting better or worse
- it is digging into what causes conditions to get better or worse
- it is actively working with partners who might help them do better; and
- it is thinking about what works, what could be improved, and applying what it has learnt, to do better. (based on Friedman, 2005)

Smillie (1999), for example, suggest the best form of accountability is to require, as a condition of funding, an NGO to undertake whatever form of evaluation it wants in whatever way it wants – as long as it publishes the results.