Evaluating and communicating your project

Specifically to commissioners and funders

Welcome to My Community
mycommunity.org.uk

My Community helps communities take control over their neighbourhoods through advice, direct support and grants to enable communities to have influence and control over local assets, services and development.

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Background to the guide

- The guide has been developed by OPM, an independent, not-for-profit research and consultancy organisation that has supported community initiatives forming part of the *Our Place programme*.
- It has been developed based on insights gained from our work with Our Place projects, and a series of regional workshops we delivered to support project leads to build their knowledge and confidence in evaluation and communicating with funders.
- The guide is also informed by OPM's wider experience in research and evaluation of many different public service initiatives and programmes over the past 25 years.

This guide is for:

This guide has been produced for Our Place areas who are implementing their Operational Plans, to support you to explore the reasons and uses for evaluation, and why it might help to add value to your work. It explores the principles that underpin robust (but realistic) evaluation, presenting guidelines that you can use to inform the development of your own evaluation plan.

The guide provides information about **different types of evaluation** and when you might want to consider using each one. It goes on to explore how to develop an **evaluation plan**, taking you through a step-by-step process.

Finally, the guide considers some of the processes through which you might capture and **report your evidence** - in ways that speak to commissioners, potential supporters and funders.

What you will get from using this guide

- ✓ An understanding of how and why good evaluation can prove useful
- ✓ An overview of the different types of evaluation
- ✓ A step-by-step guide through the process for developing the ‘theory of change’ for your initiative
- ✓ Practical tips and tools to help you feel more confident about evidence, and how to identify, obtain and use it
- ✓ Guidance on mapping your stakeholders and identifying those you might need to inform versus those you need to influence.

What is evaluation all about?

What is evaluation?

- It's not just a measurement issue, it is about demonstrating impact & value:
  - Knowing that you are making a difference to the people/community you serve
  - Communicating your evidence in an impactful way
  - Influencing commissioners/funders
  - Accountability and doing better.

Evaluation comprises of association, attribution and performance.

Association:

- Establishing baseline of logic and process
- Tracking against the baseline
- Is what is happening on the ground actually what was intended?

Attribution:

- How sure are you that what you did brought about the changes?
- What evaluation design will best enable you to 'attribute' robustly?
- Which indicators are most suitable?

Performance:

- Are you meeting set standards?
- Performance alone doesn't tell you about coherence or the impacts on different groups.

Different forms of evaluation

Summative and formative

Summative evaluation

Tests the impact of what you've done

- Can help to develop ownership and build consensus
- Uses emerging findings to shape and improve practice as you go along
- Maximises the chances of success
- Focuses on understanding the activities that have underpinned the programme
- Formative evaluation focuses on the process
  - This can be just as important as understanding and learning about the impact, depending on what specifically you need to get out of the evaluation.

Formative evaluation

Tests the process you've gone through

- Helps answer 'what works', 'how things work', 'why things work', and / or 'who needs to be involved'
- Some can answer 'how much does it cost?'
- Tells you after the event
- Understanding what has happened as a result of the programme: impact
- The two can be mutually dependent, or you can focus on one of the other.

Case studies

Some examples of different types of evaluation

Formative evaluation - *Making it Better*

OPM were commissioned to undertake a process evaluation of the Making it Better reconfiguration of children's, neonatal and maternity services in Greater Manchester. The work was originally commissioned by NHS North.

This process evaluation involved over 50 in-depth interviews with politicians, clinicians, Trust managers and policy makers, to understand the processes undertaken, what worked well and less well, who was involved in each aspect (and why), and identify learning and advice for others. Document reviews were also undertaken to enable us to understand the processes and strategic plan, and workshops were facilitated with commissioners and programme leads.

The evaluation led to the production of a guidance toolkit, to help others planning a major NHS service reconfiguration to learn from the Making it Better experience. The toolkit and report can be accessed here.

Formative & summative evaluation - *Early Language and Development programme*

OPM were commissioned by the Department for Education to evaluate the brand new Early Language Development Programme, a training and development programme aimed at increasing practitioner and parental awareness and confidence in supporting young children's speech, language and communication.

OPM generated both formative (process) learning about the pilot, including learning about the cascade model, training materials and recruitment processes. OPM also generated summative (impact) evidence regarding the impact of the programme on practitioners, those providing the training, and on parents and carers. The evaluation involved surveys carried out before (baseline), immediately after training, and follow up (6-9 months after training), to assess impact. OPM also carried out site visits, telephone interviews, and developed case studies to explore the impacts of the programme within different early years settings. The findings can be accessed here.

Different forms of evaluation

- If you are building up an evaluation plan to run alongside a programme, to understand processes and what works well or less well, you should be working to a *formative evaluation*
- If you are looking at outcome indicators to demonstrate impact, you are working to an *impact evaluation*

The two are not mutually exclusive, so an evaluation can include elements of more than one of these.

Co-produced, internally conducted or externally led?

- You may wish to 'co-produce' your evaluation with service users, which means they would help you design the evaluation, collect the data and make sense of it. You may conduct the evaluation in-house, or you could commission an external provider (e.g. possibly a university or consultancy)
- The boundary between the 'evaluator' and the 'evaluated' can be slightly blurred. Collaboration and capacity building can help to enhance likelihood of sustainable improvements - through skill/ knowledge transfer

Again, it's about identifying your priorities and what you hope to get from the evaluation.

Formative & summative evaluation – *Early Language and Development programme*

OPM were commissioned by Macc and North, Central and South Manchester Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to undertake a 2.5 year evaluation of the Reducing Social Isolation and Loneliness Grant Programme. The evaluation was designed to capture formative and summative evidence, to show the impact achieved and also to inform future programmes funded or supported by the CCGs and Macc, whilst also informing the support provided as part of this programme.

OPM worked alongside the CCGs, Macc and the larger grant funded projects to co-produce the evaluation tools. Following a desk-based review of validated tools aimed at measuring social isolation and loneliness, OPM ran workshops with the programme leads and undertook 1-1 discussions with the leads from all large grant funded projects, to design common and bespoke indicators for measuring the impact and capturing emerging learning. This ensured the tools generated comparable learning across the programme, whilst also capturing insights specific to the aims and client group of each funded project. This co-production approach helped to secure buy-in to the monitoring processes, and helped to build understanding about evaluation across the programme leads and project staff.

The tools which were agreed upon to capture data include quarterly monitoring forms, service user 'before' and 'after' self-completion questionnaires, telephone calls / meetings to discuss impact and emerging learning, and two programme-wide workshops.

Logic modelling

- Logic models are also known as ‘pathways to outcomes models’ or ‘theory of change models’
- They aim to articulate the inputs, outputs and outcomes emerging as a result of a particular programme or initiative
- These are extremely useful underpinning tools for any evaluation
- Some logic models also show the linkages between different factors – e.g. which inputs are intended to lead to specific outputs and outcomes: presenting the logic underpinning the programme or initiative
- There are different templates or models you can use: some examples are provided on the following pages, along with prompt questions for you to think about when developing your model
- You may want to keep your logic model ‘live’ as your evaluation progresses, amending and adding to it as needed
- Don’t forget to validate your model with key stakeholders, to ensure it resonates with them and you’ve not missed anything.

Why create a logic model?

- It can help you and others understand how a project or initiative is seeking to achieve its desired effects
- It can help you to learn from and reflect on your project as it takes shape, as it sets out very clearly the assumptions you have made about how you will achieve impact
- It provides a framework that will guide the development of research tools for use during evaluation fieldwork, as well as an analytical framework to guide the analysis of findings
- It allows evaluators to build a clear narrative of how the programme is intended to work and make a difference, then monitor the extent to which these intentions and assumptions are born out in practice.

Example of a logic model template

Long term outcomes

Long term outcome you want to achieve, e.g.…

'Older people in our community live happier and healthier lives'

Intermediate outcomes

In these boxes write the outcomes you would expect to see in the short term as a result of the outputs you've created – e.g. fewer older people report feeling lonely or isolated, fewer GP visits made by older people accessing the new activities. Also ask yourself: could there be any unintended outcomes or negative consequences?

Outputs

In these boxes write the tangible things you're going to create – e.g. an older people's lunch club which caters for 50 people once a week, or befriending scheme which reaches 25 people every week etc.

Activities

In these boxes write the activities you plan to undertake as part of your project, e.g. setting up an older people's lunch club or setting up a befriending scheme. You could do this at a more detailed level, e.g. for the lunch club this could include recruiting volunteers, getting local businesses involved, inviting older people to attend etc.

Inputs

Funding and funding environment

Who's funding this and what money is going in?

Internal expertise and capacity

Where is this coming from?

External expertise, capacity and experience

Where is this coming from?

Physical resources

What are these? Equipment, a venue etc.

Intangible resources

What are these? Ideas from your services users? Networks with local partners which you can tap into?

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Other uses for your logic model or 'Pathways to Outcomes' model

Not just for evaluation, logic models can also be useful for:

- Service design or re-design
- Service review
- Generating consensus and clarity internally
- Generating buy-in and clarity regarding your initiative or programme with external partners
- Helping to communicate your initiative or programme.

Exercise

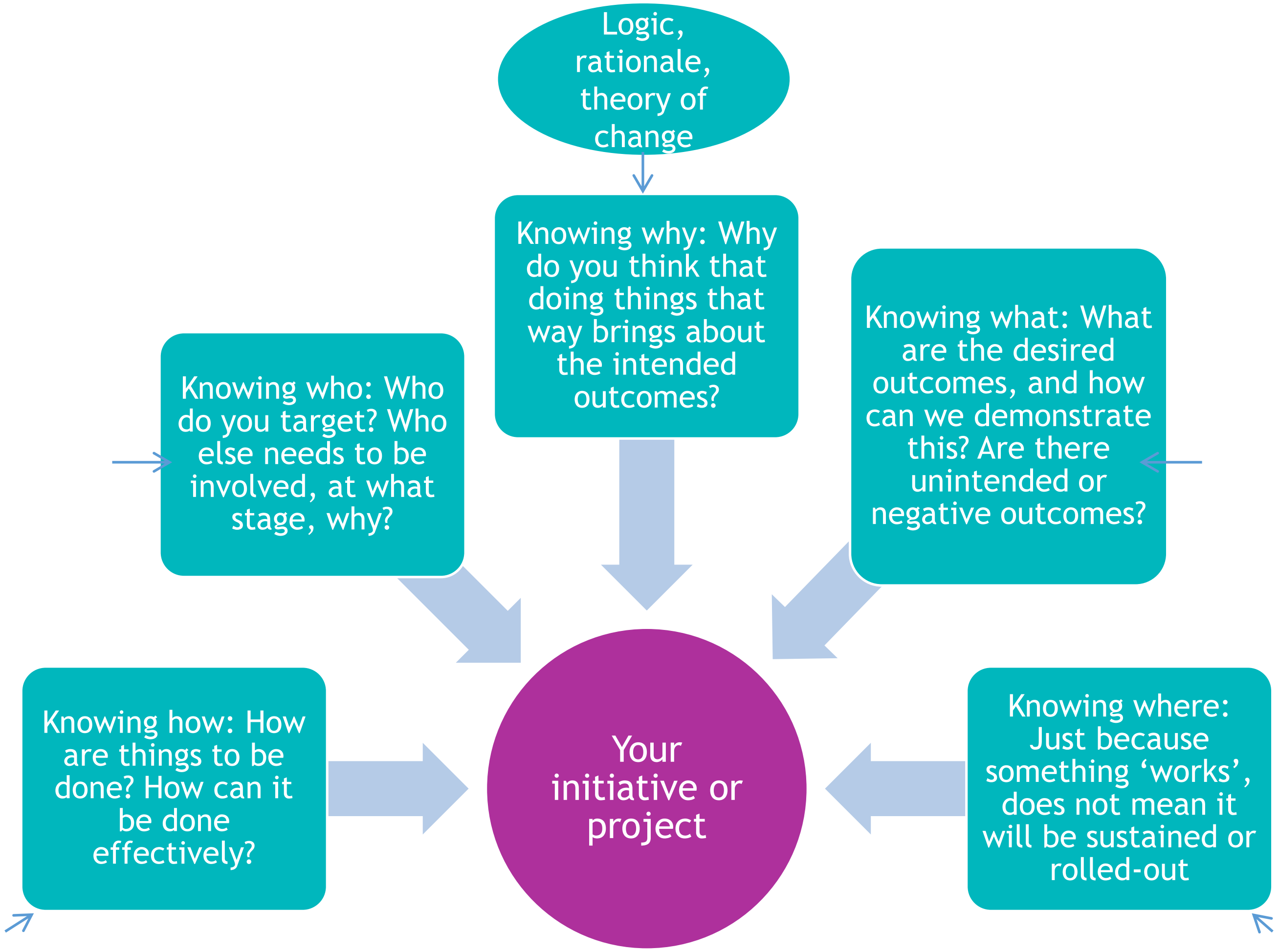
1. If you don’t have a logic model for your initiative, programme or project, start mapping one out following the examples given. This is something the project lead should direct – perhaps by arranging a discussion with colleagues, funders or partners involved in the programme or project. If you have time, you could then test this out with a wider group of stakeholders to see if they agree, e.g. in a workshop session.
2. If you do have a logic model, things to start thinking about include:
   - Who benefits from each outcome?
   - Which outcomes are likely to be realised within 6 months; 12 months; 18 months; longer term?
   - What data will help you to evidence the outcomes listed in the logic model? Who holds this evidence? How frequently is it collected? Is there a time-lag?

Making evaluation work for you

Telling the story

- Your evaluation should ‘tell the story’ of your initiative or project.
- Assuming you are undertaking both a formative and summative evaluation, readers should be able to understand the rationale behind the particular approach or project, the activities delivered, who was involved, where it was undertaken, and what the impacts were. This means exploring the **who, what, where, why and how** regarding your project or initiative.

Key components of your story



Building your evaluation plan

- It is important to systematically plan out your evaluation. This does not necessarily have to be a hugely time consuming or bureaucratic exercise. Building an evaluation plan will enable you to be clear on:

- The key questions you're trying to address: e.g. what are you trying to show via the evaluation?
- The type of evaluation you will be undertaking: e.g. Formative, summative, and / or economic?
- What 'success' looks like for your initiative: e.g. what outcomes are you seeking to achieve?
- What you will be measuring, how and when?
- Who will need to be involved in this process?

Building your evaluation plan

As well as the above, it is important to also think about the following when building your evaluation plan:

- Who are you communicating to?
- What are they interested in?
- What type of evidence will resonate with them?
- What resources have you got to deliver the evaluation? Who will do the work? How much time do they have? What skills do they have?
- What data can you access?
- When do you need to start communicating findings? When is evidence likely to begin emerging?
- Do you want to generate process learning as well as impact evidence?

What evaluation questions do you want to explore?

Evaluation plan template

Stakeholder group	Intended outcomes	Outcome indicators	Measurement tool/s (who and how)	Data collection points	Responsibility

Starting your Evaluation Plan

Breaking it down

Stakeholder group	Intended outcomes	Outcome indicators	Measurement tool/s (who and how)	Data collection points	Responsibility
E.g. residents aged 50+ who take part in the project	Community networks will expand	Individuals no longer feel isolated Made new friends, know who to turn to for advice	Measures of 'inclusion'		Internal/ LA and health service/ other partners
As above	Increase in resilience	Individuals have increased confidence	Qualitative research, ad hoc feedback SDQ	Ongoing feedback /use of measures pre- and post support	Internal/ LA
Residents aged 50+ with one or more long-term condition(s)	Increase in capacity	Increased awareness of own condition Increased self-care/ taking more responsibility for care Increased involvement in support planning Agree reduced contact with statutory services	Care plans Standardised outcome measures Self-reported knowledge/ confidence about condition Service activity data/ Client Service Receipt Inventories	Ongoing feedback and interviews during programme. Surveys post support & programme	Internal/ LA/ NHS

Step 1: Revisit your outcomes

- **Who are you hoping will benefit from your project?**
    - Individuals / citizens in targeted groups
    - The organisation / service
    - Wider community
    - Relationships between groups
    - Others?
- **What benefits do you expect for each of these stakeholder groups?**
- **When do you think benefits will manifest themselves?**
    - Short term
    - Intermediate
    - Long term
- The *more specific* you are, the more nuanced your evidence will be.
- Being specific and 'unpacking' your outcomes into tangible things will also enable you to quantify - and then possibly monetise - outcomes and added value

Why is it important to revisit the outcomes you’re trying to achieve?

- It is all about where you are making a difference
- It is about being realistic
- It is about helping you think through whether what you are doing, who you are targeting, etc. is likely to bring about desired outcomes
- It is about understanding indicators – it’s not just an outcome, it’s how you break it down into tangible things
- It’s about understanding the unintended or wider impact you have.

Note down the outcomes

for example, for clients in a high priority or targeted group

Intended outcome (Service users)	Indicator/s	Measurement tool/s (who and how)	Data collection Points	Responsibility	Intended outcome (Service users)
Families on the edge of crisis	e.g. shared decision making				
	e.g. self management of condition and care				

Step 2: Moving on to indicators

- What indicators can help you measure against these outcomes?
- Ask yourself:
- How will it look and feel if the intended outcome happens?
- How will the target group behave or appear different?
- Are there any tangible actions/outcomes that would indicate that positive change has taken place?
- This is where outcome indicators need to be used. Indicators need to be quantifiable in some way, to indicate a change (or where we are trying to prevent something, that no change has taken place), and be appropriate to the outcome
- Using multiple indicators for the same outcome can help build confidence in your data (e.g. self reported increase in confidence, *and* an increase in levels of self-managed care, can help demonstrate that the project has increased self confidence)
- Tracking changes over time will build up the robustness of your data.

Breaking down outcomes by indicators

Think about what indicators you will use to track the progress of your project or initiative.

You could start by looking for tried and tested indicators already used for similar projects, or you may need to develop bespoke indicators that better match up with your project and the outcomes you're trying to achieve.

Intended outcome (Service users)	Indicator/s	Measurement tool/s (who and how)	Data collection Points	Responsibility
E.g. shared decision making	Know more about their condition, influence their care plans, know who to turn to for advice,			
E.g. self management	Undertake agreed care procedures for themselves, greater sense of control			
E.g. increased self confidence	Mentors other service users, presents own ideas in care reviews			
What else??				

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Step 3: Measurement

What are the most effective ways to gather data against each of the indicators?

- Think about quantitative and qualitative approaches
- Think beyond 'traditional approaches' such as interviews and questionnaires
- Will you use existing tools or design your own?

What is the most effective approach?

- Think about how data collection can be built into the design of your project so that it is done routinely
- Are there opportunities for peer or citizen involvement?
- This is not just about the tools, but also the questions asked: what has happened (the impact) but also what led to that change ('what worked').

Relevant measure tools

Intended outcome	Indicator/s	Measurement tool/s (who and how)	Data collection points	Responsibility
E.g. shared decision making	Know more about their condition, influence their care plans, know who to turn to for advice,	Qualitative interviews with users, review copies of care plans, use of journals		
E.g. self management	Undertake agreed care procedures for themselves, greater sense of control	Qualitative interviews with users, review of care plans, use of journals		
E.g. increased self confidence	Mentors other young people, presents own ideas in reviews	Qualitative interviews with users, use of outcome rating scale, participant surveys of peers and staff, review meeting minutes		
What else?				

Step 4: When is the best time to collect data?

You are likely to need to capture a baseline position (a starting point as in slide 6), as well as follow on data to evidence a change (or no change).

1. Think about the time points at which you would expect changes to manifest
2. Think about longer-term impacts that will happen after service users have left the project:
    - Can these be captured somehow?
    - Is there evidence in wider literature which you can draw on?

For instance, you may want to collect data immediately after a particular intervention. If it's a training programme or awareness raising scheme, you would expect both immediate impacts and longer-term impacts, so should assess impacts at different milestone points.

Design the evaluation so you capture evidence of 'quick wins' wherever possible, to provide evidence to funders and other stakeholders that you're on track, as well as to generate some formative learning (i.e. learning about the process) wherever possible. This can then inform any revisions to the project that might be needed.

Data collection points

Intended outcome	Indicator/s	Measurement tool/s (who and how)	Data collection points	Responsibility
E.g. shared decision making	Know more about their condition, influence their care plans, know who to turn to for advice	Qualitative interviews with service users, review copies of care plans, journals	Interviews at start and end of project, journals filled out throughout project	
E.g. self management	Undertake agreed care procedures for themselves, greater sense of control	Qualitative interviews with service users, review of care plans, journals	Interviews and care plan data at end of project, journals filled out throughout project	
E.g. increased self confidence	Mentors other service users, presents own ideas in care reviews	Qualitative interviews with service users, use of outcome rating scale, Participant surveys of PNs and staff, review meeting minutes	Interviews at end of the programme, rating scale administered start and end of programme, surveys post programme, review minutes throughout	
What else?				

Who is responsible for collecting data?

It is unlikely to be a single individual that will hold key data for your evaluation. For example, finance colleagues, frontline practitioners and partner organisations are all likely to have a role to play.

Think about what data is already available and who will have access to this data:

- Journals, action plans, attendance figures etc.
- What data do you already have?
- What new data will have to be collected and who is best placed to collect this data?

Responsibilities

Intended outcome	Indicator/s	Measurement tool/s (who and how)	Data collection points	Responsibility
E.g. shared decision making	Know more about their condition, influence their care plans, know who to turn to for advice,	Qualitative interviews with service users, review copies of care plans, use of journals	Interviews at start and end of project, journals filled out throughout project	Lead designs the journals with intern support, project lead complete interviews
E.g. self management	Undertake agreed care procedures for themselves, greater sense of control	Qualitative interviews with service users, review of care plans, use of journals	Interviews and care plan data at end of project, journals filled out throughout project	Lead designs the journals, project lead complete interviews and monitor plans
E.g. increased self confidence	Mentors other service users, presents own ideas in care reviews	Qualitative interviews with users, use of outcome rating scale, participant surveys of volunteers, staff, review meeting minutes	Interviews at end of the programme, rating scale administered start and end of programme, surveys post programme, review minutes throughout	Lead & volunteers design the rating scale and post project surveys, project lead complete interviews, project lead reviews care plans & meeting minutes. Plus intern/ volunteer support.
What else?				

Reflecting on this process

This is about:

- demonstrating impact and how you are making a difference
- Using resources wisely
- Being sustainable
- Keeping people motivated.

Being clear about your priority outcomes:

- Have you defined them clearly?
- How are you measuring progress / achievement?
- What data are you already collecting, or planning to collect?
- What else needs to be collected?
- Are there any gaps?

Taking your evaluation forward: practical steps

- Engage others: continuing the dialogue, including key stakeholders identified via the mapping exercise
- Clarify the priorities and resources for evaluation
- Keep referring to your logic model and evaluation framework
- Develop tools and agree timing
- Data collection
  - Gaps, access, ethics
- Analysis
  - Methods, skills, support
- Reporting
  - Format, QA and sign-off, consultation, recommendations

Top tips

1. Keep sight of your logic model as the guiding framework
2. Your evaluation plan should be a ‘live’ document, to be re-visited and refreshed on a regular basis
3. Encourage joint ownership by continuing to involve key partners in developing the plan and in collating, analysing and/ or interpreting data and conclusions
4. Use findings to shape and improve what you’re doing on an ongoing basis
5. Share emerging findings with service users, colleagues and other stakeholders to communicate your impact and what you are doing well.

Stakeholder mapping

Why map your stakeholders?

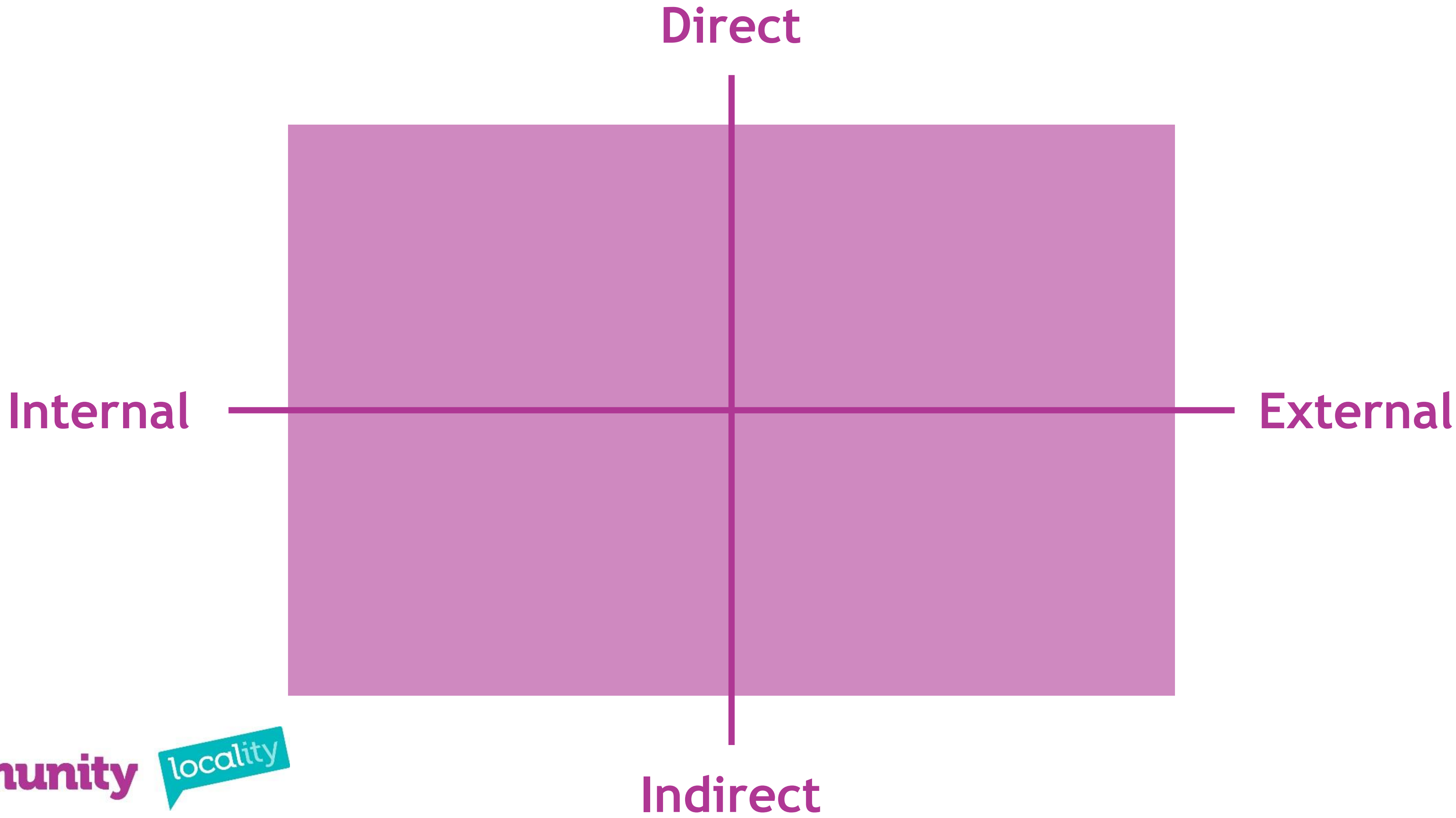
- Stakeholder mapping can help to identify who is, and who needs to be, **involved in** or **informed about** your initiative or project.
- It can help to identify who the 'core' stakeholders are that are critical to delivery, as well as those who might be **affected** by the initiative, and those you need to inform about it. It can also help to identify those stakeholders that you need to **influence**.
- It can also help you to identify key people to consult about what they need from the assessment as well as informing your communication plan.

Exercise: Stakeholder mapping

- Exercise:
- For your initiative or project, identify all the stakeholders associated with it
- Think about direct, indirect; internal, external
- Identify:
  - The ones you are trying to influence with the results of your evaluation
  - The ones whom you think are making the (direct and indirect) inputs
  - The ones whom you think experience (direct and indirect) benefits

[template overleaf]

Stakeholder mapping matrix



Stakeholder mapping expanded

Influencing versus impacted

For those you are hoping to influence with your evaluation, clarify:

- Whether you have an existing relationship with them
- If not, identify who you may need to help broker a relationship.

For those whom you think are impacted by the project (beneficiaries of direct and indirect benefits):

- Write down the specific types of benefits experienced by each of these stakeholders
- Do you have data on these benefits? Who holds it?
- Are some stakeholders impacted in other ways – e.g. not necessarily beneficially?

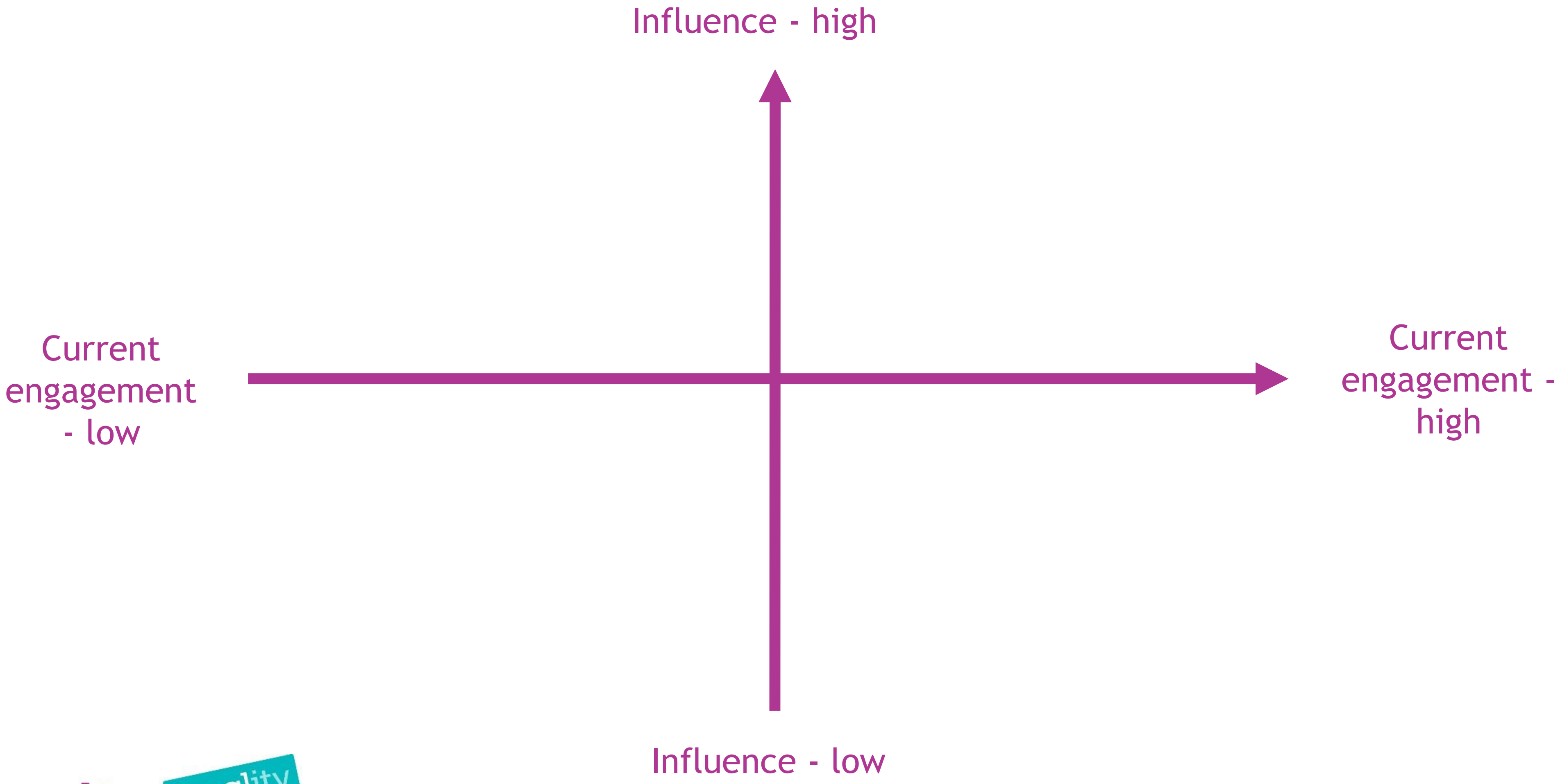
Stakeholder mapping expanded

Influence versus level of engagement

- Another way of mapping your initiative or project’s stakeholders is by the **level of influence and engagement** they have.
- This can help to determine where you should invest your efforts and focus when it comes to communicating the messages from your evaluation (i.e. if some stakeholders have high levels of influence but are not very engaged, you need to focus more energy on reaching them)

Stakeholder mapping matrix

Influence versus level of engagement



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Exercise: Stakeholder engagement

From your mapping exercise:

- identify who you need to engage/involve more
- What processes are used to make decisions about key funding in your area / sector?
- Whose and what preferred outcomes are considered to legitimate or are most valued?

You may also want to consider…

- Mapping the web of relationships: who knows who? Who is influential within the relationship?
- Systemic thinking - understanding how broader issues in the wider system can play out in micro-interactions
- Paying attention to language and mind sets
- Group dynamics; power
- Valuing and working with difference
- Considering different levels of client – who makes decisions about different things?
- ‘Generative governance’ – working to create the conditions for conversations about the issues that matter the most.

Communicating your evaluation

Planning your communications

In order to effectively plan your communication strategy, it may be useful to work through the following questions, to ensure your communications are proportionate, well targeted and timely.

1. Review the stakeholder mapping: Who do you need to **inform**? Who do you need to **influence**?
    a) How well engaged are these stakeholders already?
    b) Who do you need to prioritise for engagement? To what extent do you know the key people to target within each organisation? Do you know their contact details?
    c) What communication channels might work well in reaching them? What is likely to resonate for them?
2. Review the evaluation plan – what do you expect to be able to communicate? When? How widely do you expect to want to disseminate the findings (e.g. might some findings be sensitive, or need to be shared with internal stakeholders first?)
3. What key milestones do commissioners work to? E.g. when do they do their budget setting / business planning?

Different communication channels

Consider the following communication channels.

All have different advantages and disadvantages, and you'll want to select the approach that:

- best suits your needs
- the type of message you're communicating
- who the audiences are (different audiences are likely to require different forms of communication
- whilst individuals all differ in their personal preferences)
- the resources available to you.

Speaking at events

Email

Website

Newsletter

Local press

Delivered letter

Pop up engagement hub

Door knock

Face-to-face meetings

Toolkits

Journal article

Exercise: Commissioner or funder resistance

Exercise – it might be useful to consider:

- Why might commissioners challenge your findings?
- What happens if commissioners challenge your findings? What are the risks / implications associated with this?
- How could you address or mitigate this?

Tips for addressing resistance

Some tips for addressing commissioner push-back:

- Sense check your evaluation plan at the outset
- Identify potential barriers or concerns – classify them, explore how to overcome them
- Triangulate findings against other studies or sources of evidence. Ground findings in the local context.
- Develop case studies, to richly illustrate the impact your project is having on individuals or at community / organisational level. This can help to 'make it real' for funders, and enable them to really understand the difference your project or initiative is making.
- Pull out key headlines – what are the funders likely to be most interested in? Align findings with their key priorities. Are there any national priorities you can align the findings with?
- What makes your project different or particularly effective? How is it different to what would have otherwise happened?

Resourcing communication activities

- It might be useful to consider the following key questions when planning your communications. This will help to ensure your plan is pragmatic and realistic, and also identify any support you might need.
- Who would take forward these activities? When?
- What is this dependent on?
- Do you / they need any additional support?
- If so, in what areas? How much? Who could provide this?
- Are there any gaps in capacity?

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