

What might success look like and how will we record it?



This question is important because...

When you start planning you need to imagine what will count as success for your project. This not only gives you something to aim for, it also tells you what kind of things you will need to look out for and take note of in order to measure how successful you are being. However, remember that this is just your best guess – as you gain experience of the reality of running your project, your idea of what success is may change.



Key messages

- ✓ Before your project starts, ask yourselves:
 - “What kind of things do we need to record as we go along (indicators) in order to know whether we’ve been successful?”
 - “When and how often do we need to record these things? At the start? Every session? At the end?”
 - “Who should be keeping records of these things? Staff, volunteers, participants...?”
 - “How do we want to gather this information? Can we make it part of our session?” (For example, you could ask people to throw a ball into different baskets depending on how they are feeling)
- ✓ Remember, you will need a record of how things are at the start in order to be able to compare this to later records and then work out how much change there has been.
- ✓ Make sure you have plans to capture information but don’t make them too complicated or turn evaluation into a burden. You need to be able to work out and demonstrate whether or not you’ve been successful, but you don’t have to carry out a huge research project. Build evaluation into your everyday processes so it doesn’t become an extra task that you risk forgetting to do.



What might success look like and how will we record it? (continued)



- ✓ The kind of things you might need to record include:
 - how easy it is for people to do the activity, ie how fit they are (how far can they walk or swim?) at the start and over time
 - who is coming along and whether they are the people you most wanted to work with
 - whether or not the same people *keep* coming along
 - when and why people stop coming (they might be moving on to other types of physical activity – success!)
 - whether people become inspired to get involved in other physical and/or social activities as well
 - what difference people hope being involved will make, compared to the reality for them
- ✓ Be willing to change your ideas of success and your timescales as you learn more about what's easy and what's difficult.
- ✓ Success is often subjective – it may be different for different individuals.
- ✓ There are free resources on Evaluation Support Scotland's website to help you think about what to measure, when and how:
www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk.