
Tip Sheet: Evaluating Your Impact

Below are some tips to keep in mind as you evaluate your project’s impact.

Knowing Your Context

Present your evaluation results in context. Data in context give a more realistic picture of your program’s impact. Context includes:

- Your program history – when it got started and why
- Your program values and goals
- The relationships among the key people and organizations
- The cultures in which you operate
- The broader political, legal, and economic setting of your program

Tracking Your Key Measures

Make sure that you’re measuring what’s important, not just what’s convenient or “interesting.” The following make good key measures to track:

- *What’s most important.* Start by asking yourself and your team, what measures are important to you? You might have things in mind that you need to know for making decisions, or that your funder wants to know.
- *Your ultimate goal(s).* This is your purpose in starting your project – what you consider success. Things like people having enough clean drinking water, more wild elephants, or more girls going to school.
- *Shorter-term goals.* These are the things you’ll achieve sooner, leading to your ultimate goals. For example, people learning about business skills could be a shorter-term goal leading to people owning their own businesses, leading to financial stability.
- *Actions to get to goals.* Measuring actions your taking shows your progress in taking steps leading to goals.

Listening to Your Stakeholders

Stakeholders can provide valuable perspective for understanding your impact. Plus, listening to stakeholders builds trust. Here are some stakeholder groups that are often important:

- People you serve/community members
- People next to them (advocates, family members)
- Your own people (volunteers, staff, board)
- People near you (collaborating organizations, funders)
- Researchers/experts, the media, elected officials