

GOOD PRACTICE PARTICIPATE

MEASURING SUCCESS

In the course of your work you may need to research or evaluate a project. First find out what information already exists.

“Participation works best when people feel that they can make a difference, when they have the time to fully engage with the issues, and when there is a healthy relationship of mutual respect.

It works worst when it is rushed, ill-informed and vague about the links to formal decision-making or when it allows the loudest voices to dominate.”

Geoff Mulgan, Involve Chair, United Kingdom.

A lot of effort can be wasted duplicating or partially duplicating information that is already known to others in the sector, because those asking for the information – or those being asked – either don't know where to find it, or do not have the time to locate the material or to assess its usefulness. They can, therefore, assume that something completely new needs to be undertaken.

This can lead to a lot of one-off, small-scale projects, with short deadlines that may be useful immediately to one group of people but the findings are never used again or shared with others.

The result can be repeated cycles of work that use up scarce resources (time, money) and don't build on previous learning.

How can we find out what we need to know in a smarter way?

To build knowledge in smarter ways:

- check databases like www.communityresearch.org.nz to find existing research
- ask other agencies what research and evaluation and reports they have
- use skilled librarians to help with key word-synonym development so published material can be sourced (not everything useful is published on google or in libraries).

Don't automatically discount information published more than five years ago. While policy or legal frameworks may alter, much human behaviour does not alter very quickly. Depending on the issue, work done well 20 or 30 years ago may still be very relevant.

If you decide research or evaluation is still needed, the next decision is to get advice from experienced people about resources likely to be needed and whether the project is actually feasible in research/evaluation terms. If you are still proceeding, then the project needs some scoping and decisions made about whether all or part of the project work can be done in-house, or externally.

[Check the Tangata Whenua, Community and Voluntary Sector Research Centre Clearing House online to see what research already exists](#)

[Community Research](#)

Identify existing knowledge or expertise via SPEaR

Another good starting point is the Social Policy Evaluation and Research (SPEaR) website and Secretariat. SPEaR (through its Secretariat housed by the Ministry of Social Development) is a co-ordination hub for government agencies and the social research and evaluation sector to improve research capability, capacity and outcomes.

The team can potentially identify previous work that could be useful to your project.

SPEaR has Good Practice Guidelines for social policy research and evaluation undertaken by government agencies or commissioned by these agencies.

[Visit the SPEaR website](#)

Research and evaluation use depends on relevance, timing and credibility. Credibility depends on practice standards. The good practice programme is a process of pooling expertise acquired by individuals and agencies here and overseas to reflect the practical realities involved in social policy research and evaluation.

Related resources for measuring success

New Zealand resources

[CEDAR community engagement research](#)

This paper captures experiences in engaging with communities and shares these with other practitioners and the wider stakeholder community so as to contribute to building collective knowledge on this subject. Department of Labour, New Zealand, 2002-03.

[Growing Research in Practice \(GRIP\): An Innovative Partnership Model](#)

This report documents three different types of research carried out by social workers and discusses the benefits and draw-backs of each type of research. N Lunt, C Fouché and D Yates for the Families Commission, Wellington, New Zealand, 2008.

[Module 3: Engaging with stakeholders over measurement](#)

To assist managers, planners and analysts in State sector agencies to develop robust performance measurement and reporting frameworks, the State Services Commission and the Treasury prepared this resource: Performance Measurement: Advice and examples on how to develop effective frameworks. New Zealand, August 2008.

[Social Policy Evaluation and Research \(SPEaR\) Committee](#)

SPEaR is a cross-agency group overseeing government investment in social policy research and evaluation. Its resources include good practice guidelines on commissioning quality research. New Zealand, 2008

[Tangata Whenua, Community and Voluntary Sector Research Centre Clearing House](#)

The Research Centre was established to “contribute to the strengthening of the capacity of the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector through research”. A Code of Practice benchmarks principles and standards by which researchers can measure their work. It represents what contributors consider to be important when doing research. The Clearing House enables people to look for research partners and access existing research about the community and voluntary sector in New Zealand.

[Using Participatory Action Research in a Local Government Setting](#)

The role of the researcher in action research is that of a facilitator who works collaboratively to involve the stakeholders in every aspect of the research process. This article is based on a playground consultation

conducted by Dunedin City Council. J Aimers, 1999.

[Working safely for your community](#)

This report is an evaluation of the effectiveness of a booklet for community and voluntary organisations about coverage of volunteers in the Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Act 2002.

International resources

[Approaches to Measuring: Community Change Indicators](#)

This consolidates the research and content of four previously published papers measuring less poverty in communities, more vibrant communities, more collaboration and more citizen engagement. This Vibrant Communities paper reviews measurement tools and techniques used by a variety of organisations across Canada and internationally. Tamarack – an Institute for Community Engagement – may upgrade this living document periodically based on new learning and feedback from readers. Canada, 2010.

[Assessing Engagement with the Voluntary and Community Sector: A Mini Self-Evaluation Tool](#)

This self-evaluation tool is designed to support those planning and delivering services through children’s services providers, to review their levels of engagement with the voluntary and community sector (VCS). It includes a number of questions for statutory and community partners to discuss, so they can consider their progress and establish agreed actions for further development. Also read the Engaging Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations: Best practice case studies working with children’s trusts and the report on *VCS engagement in the development of Children and Young People’s Plans 2006/07: current status and good practice*. Produced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), United Kingdom (2008).

[Auditing Community Participation: an Assessment Handbook](#)

This book has been written as a framework for auditing community participation in public decision-making. Burns, D and M Taylor (2000) United Kingdom: Policy Press.

[Bringing Clarity to Health Systems: Conflict Negotiation Guidelines \(Section 4\)](#)

This guideline has been written for the health sector and sets out what is involved in conflict negotiation. It is part of a policy toolkit to be used in strengthening health sector reform. It includes templates for analyzing different responses to conflict, and how to deal with them and worksheets that can be used to clarify the conflict before any discussion has occurred. Novak, K. and C Hall. (2001). United States of America: Health Systems 2020

[Engaging Queenslanders: Evaluating community engagement](#)

This Australian resource provides guidance in developing an evaluation framework; developing evaluation data collection tools, interpreting and analysing evaluation data, ensuring evaluation outcomes feed into future planning and decision-making. The resource is designed to be used in conjunction with the Queensland Government’s Get Involved website (www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au), which provides additional evaluation resources such as tools to develop an evaluation framework, case studies, and examples of community engagement evaluation performance criteria and indicators. Produced by the Department of Communities, Queensland, Australia. Nov 2004.

[Evaluation of the Academy of Medical Science’s Drugs-futures Public Engagement Programme](#)

This report presents an evaluation of the public engagement activities undertaken through the Drugs-futures project. It has an emphasis on the successfulness of the deliberative public engagement elements of the project. It documents elements that worked well and suggestions for improving future projects of a similar type. Brighton, United Kingdom: Shared Practice. Warburton, D. (2008)

[Evaluation: Practical Guidelines](#)

This guide is designed for those who lead projects intended to engage general audiences in science, social science, engineering and technology. It is intended to help project managers evaluate individual projects regardless of their experience of evaluation. People Science and Policy Ltd (2005). London, United Kingdom: People Science and Policy Ltd

[Good Practice Guide: Working in Partnership](#)

Based on findings from the evaluation of the legacy Research Grants programme, the guides cover good practice in relation to user involvement, partnership working and dissemination. United Kingdom, 2008.

[International Association of Public Participation \(IAP2\) Certificate Training Program](#)

The IAP2 Training Program offers a Certificate in Public Participation throughout Australasia, North America, Europe and Asia. The certificate program consists of three courses: Planning for Effective Public Participation (2 days); Effective Communications for Public Participation (1 day); Techniques for Effective Public Participation (2 days). All three courses are presented in an experiential learning environment that provides students with the opportunity to explore their own public participation challenges with their instructor and peers. Interactive exercises and practical tips are used to enliven the basic theory and reference materials presented throughout each module and reinforce skills that participants can put to immediate use.

[Making a Difference: A guide to evaluating public participation in central government](#)

This guide gives practical steps for assessing the success of public participation, and states that successful engagement will depend on three elements: the purpose, the process and the context within which it is taking place. It covers the evaluation process, the costs and benefits of engagement and includes a case study. At its most basic, evaluation should answer three

simple questions: 1. Has the initiative succeeded (eg: met targets, met objectives, resulted in achievements). 2. Has the process worked? (eg: what happened, what worked well and less well, and lessons for future participatory activities). 3. What impact has the process had? (eg: on participants, on the quality of policy, on policy-makers or on others involved). Produced by Warburton, Wilson and Rainbow for Involve, Shared Practice and Department of Constitutional Affairs, London, United Kingdom, 2007.

[People and Participation: How to put citizens at the heart of decision-making](#)

This was the first publication from Involve, and provides much needed practical detail. It draws on the experiences of many hundreds of practitioners who have used new methods to involve the public in issues ranging from local planning to nanotechnology. Its starting point is that deepening and strengthening democracy depends on success in learning lessons about why some kinds of participation lead to better and more legitimate decisions, while others do not. Its content is complemented by the interactive website peopleandparticipation.net. United Kingdom, 2005.

[The True Costs of Participation: A Summary](#)

This report discusses the problems encountered in placing a monetary cost on participation and the reasons for this. It then goes on to suggest a framework for thinking about costs and value of participation in a structured way. Involve.Org.UK. (2005). United Kingdom: Involve.

[Urban Research Program \(URP\) Toolbox: Evaluating Community Engagement](#)

Established as a strategic research and community engagement initiative of Griffith University, the URP is now the largest dedicated urban research grouping in Australia. Urban research is founded on a set of guiding principles for effective and inclusive participation and partnerships to achieve sustainability. The Toolbox states that evaluation is deeper and more analytical than monitoring, focuses on results and impacts as well as describing

activities, and is long term. The Toolbox highlights what evaluation might cover and includes links to a number of evaluation resources. Australia, 2003.