

# Journey of a Group: Measuring impact

## Overview

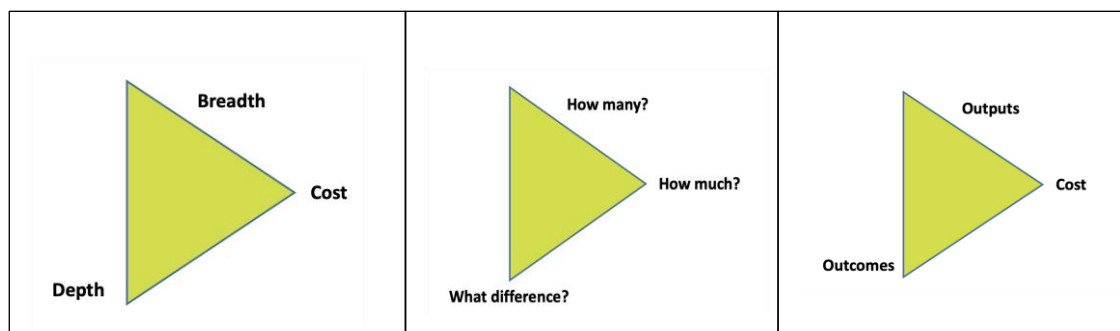
This factsheet is a short guide to measuring impact for voluntary and community groups. It will give you an overview of what measuring impact means, the tools you can use and how to report it.

### What we mean by measuring and impact

**Measuring** means using data and evidence. This can be both quantitative and qualitative. It helps to gain important insights about your group's work. It is about knowing whether your activities, projects, and service have made a difference to your beneficiaries' lives. If yes, how? If not, why not?

**Impact** directly refers to the difference that has been made. It is important because it can help you to evidence the good work that you do. It can also help to improve the work that you do, as you capture the learning and insights that your evidence has provided. Learning and improving is ultimately your best way to attract sustainable, long-term support to deliver a safe, high-quality, and targeted service.

### Keys to measuring impact:



- **Breadth** refers to the numbers of sessions, interventions, activities, people, attendees, etc. It is purely the numbers/how many? This is also technically known as '**Outputs**'.
- **Depth** refers to what difference your activities have made in the lives of your beneficiaries. This is also technically known as '**Outcomes**'.
- **Cost** is your total spend on the activities that you are measuring.

### Example

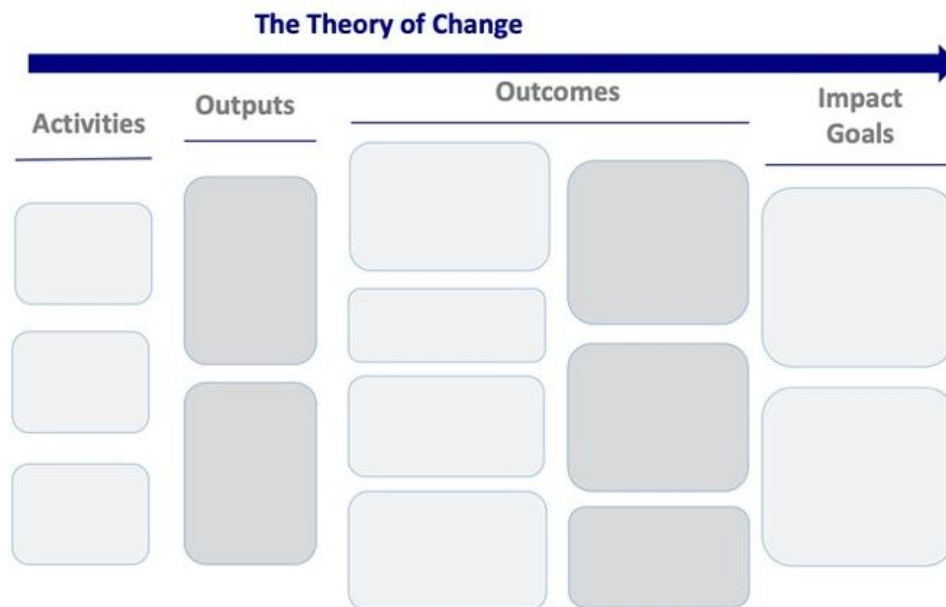
A local volunteer-led community group runs a Friday lunchtime/afternoon food and activity club aimed at local residents aged 55+. The group is particularly keen to connect with those residents who may be socially isolated. The group wants to raise money to cover their costs. They know that being able to describe their impact will build confidence with supporters and potential funders. Working with the Golden Impact Triangle, they decided to record the following:

**Outputs:** Using signing-in sheets, they will record (i) how many Friday sessions take place, (ii) the total number of people who attend, and (iii) how many volunteers are involved in running the group.

**Outcomes:** Using their own simple questionnaire, they will ask 10 new attendees to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 (i) how confident they felt yesterday, (ii) how happy they felt yesterday, and (iii) how lonely they felt yesterday. They will include a comments box at the end of the questionnaire. They will repeat the same questionnaire with the same attendees six weeks later. This, along with the comments, will give them a way to gauge the change that attending the group makes to those individuals surveyed.

**Cost:** Using bookkeeping records, they will record the full cost of their group's activities.

## The 'Theory of Change' (TOC)



This approach introduces the term **Impact Goals**, which refers to the bigger, longer-lasting impact that you are working towards but cannot claim to have achieved on your own.

Your recorded outcomes will demonstrate that you play a part in 'nudging' your beneficiaries towards a greater change. Your **TOC** describes a clear narrative between your activities and the desired impact goals.

### Example

Using the same example above, the local volunteer-led community group can legitimately state their Impact Goals as (i) the elimination of loneliness in the 55+ age group and (ii) the elimination of health inequalities in the 55+ age group.

## How and when should you measure?

There are a variety of tools for collecting both the quantitative and qualitative (outputs and outcomes) data and information that you will require to complete any evaluation of your impact. Examples include:

Outputs: (all the time)	Outcomes: (periodically)
Registers, signing in sheets, diaries, session notes	Questionnaires, outcome stars, feedback sheets, surveys, case studies, quotes, comments book, word scores, focus groups

Outcome tools that allow the collection of data from the same beneficiaries over a period of time are useful for evidencing impact. Groups can design tools that are most suitable for them.

Collecting data should be made as easy as possible for staff and volunteers.

- Where possible, it should be included as part of the normal project activities being undertaken. This is likely to lead to better engagement and a better data set to work with.
- Make time to collect quotes and comments
- Negative data or comments is a rich source of learning.
- Case studies can be hugely instrumental in demonstrating impact, and never be afraid to publish one that doesn't record 100% positive outcomes. It can be used to highlight lessons learnt and therefore, what changes are being planned for the future.

## What should you report and how?

An impact report needs to be interesting, easy to read, and targeted to a defined audience. Try to keep it brief, but make sure the following are included:

- **What you did.** A brief description of your project activities: what, with whom, and when.
- **The numbers.** Not everything needs to be measured, so select only outputs and outcomes that illustrate what you were aiming to achieve. Don't forget the human story, and so at least one case study is almost always a necessary part of your impact report.
- **Costs.** Report on the total spend on the project activities included in your report.
- **Lessons learnt.** A vital part of the report, which demonstrates what worked, what didn't work, and what you will do differently in the future as a result of evaluating your data and evidence
- **Pictures.** Where appropriate, a picture or two can bring a report to life; "A picture is worth a thousand words."

## Further Sources:

- For resources on measuring impact and social accounts, visit the [Social Audit Network \(SAN\)](#)
- For more resources including 'Impact Practice' visit [Inspiring Impact](#)
- For resources including 'Social Return on Investment (SROI)', visit [Social Value UK](#)
- For more on creating a Theory of Change, visit [NPC](#)
- For a robust guide on how to maximise your impact, visit [here](#)

**This factsheet is for guidance only. For any further information, guidance and support, please contact Bolton CVS on: 01204 546010 or e-mail: [info@boltoncvs.org.uk](mailto:info@boltoncvs.org.uk)**