National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement

How to…

…evaluate your public engagement support programme

Guidance on how to evaluate the impact of your public engagement support programme and to monitor ‘culture change’ in your institution

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Evaluating your work is key to reflecting on what is working well and where improvements can be made, as well as assessing the impact of your work. The key steps to any evaluation plan, whether you are evaluating a public engagement activity, a culture change project, or a long term support programme, are the same.

The **NCCPE website** provides resources to help with the basic steps to evaluating your work.

In this guide we share some of the ways people have used evaluation to measure the impact of their work to support engagement effectively.

Logic models

A really helpful tool for planning your approach is to use a logic model. Logic models are a tool used by many funders, managers and evaluators of complex interventions to help them plan and evaluate their success. Using a logic model enables you to map your project, considering what you are hoping to achieve, and how you plan to achieve this, and to make your assumptions about change explicit. A typical logic model will include the following features:

- Current situation - A description of the situation you are trying to change
- Aims – what you hope to achieve
- Activities – what you are going to do to achieve the aims
- Outputs – what you plan to create
- Outcomes – what you expect to happen as a result
- Impacts – what is the long term effect you hope to achieve
- Assumptions – that you are making in designing your approach
- External factors – that could influence the outcomes of your project

A logic model can provide a useful framework to map out these things – and understand better the shape of what you are trying to do. Working through the logic model with those who will be involved in the project (e.g. team members, partner organisations) helps you have a useful discussion about your project, and highlights the assumptions you are making. It helps you make explicit how you think the activities you are planning will lead to the desired impacts.

A logic model can be used to inform your approach to evaluation. What questions do you have about your approach? What do you want to know? It may be that you are interested in the current situation, if and how the activities influence the outputs and outcomes, or whether you have actually made a difference. Your questions might focus on the current situation; the processes you are using; or the outcomes and impacts. A logic model helps you make those important decisions about where to focus your attention.

What are outputs, outcomes and impacts?

When planning an evaluation it is helpful to differentiate between outputs, outcomes and impact as these provide useful ways to define the different ways in which your work can contribute to change, over time.

Outputs are usually tangible products, and as such are relatively easy to capture. Examples of outputs for a support programme might include:

- Public engagement award scheme operational
- Promotion criteria for all grades now include public engagement
- Performance review paper work references public engagement
- A published definition of public engagement
- Integration of public engagement within strategic plans
- Changes to planning cycles that support public engagement – e.g. included in workload planning
- Changes to formal governance arrangements to ensure oversight of public engagement
- Changed senior manager job descriptions that include public engagement
- Evaluation plan
- Breadth and depth of participation in activities. – e.g. numbers of staff trained and/or advised; attending events; subscribing to newsletters or joining networks; roles of champions/ coordinators created

Monitoring outputs is relatively straightforward. You should make sure you have routine ways to collect this data.

When considering numbers of people involved it is often useful to capture some information about them e.g. for staff you might want to capture their role, discipline, or department; for members of the public you may want to capture demographics.

Outcomes and impacts

Outcomes are usually easier to capture than impacts, as they happen in a quicker time frame. Outcomes are the results of the activity and could be described as immediate impacts. Impacts relate to longer term change.

Typical **outcomes** for a support programme might include:

- Greater awareness amongst staff about what public engagement means and confidence in the agreed definition
- Staff make use of strategy and definition in informing their PE work
- Senior staff champion engagement in key meetings, and tackle areas where engagement is not supported well
- The quality of public engagement activity increases, due to effective evaluation and support
- Submission of public engagement with research activities within the RCUK Research Outcomes System or ResearchFish
- Inclusion of public engagement within RCUK Pathways to Impact or other funders' schemes
- Improved staff practices and attitudes to public engagement
- Public engagement more regularly included in institutional meetings, networks, activities

In thinking about longer term **impacts**, it can be helpful to categorise these into three types:

- **Conceptual impacts**: changes in knowledge, understanding, attitude, or awareness, for instance:
    - A robust, shared understanding of Public Engagement
    - Clear understanding where to go to get support for public engagement
    - Staff recognise the value of public engagement to the university

- **Instrumental impacts**: changes to policies, behaviour or practices, for instance:
    - Additional funding is secured to support high quality public engagement with research
    - Engaged staff are rewarded for their engagement work alongside their research and teaching work
    - More effective engagement leads to mutually beneficial impacts, that are captured

- **Capacity building impacts**: development of skills to do engagement well, for instance:
    - Larger number of staff offer leadership for engagement, across all levels of the institution
    - Partnerships with key organisations enhance the work of the university, as well as delivering value to the partners involved
    - Champions are equipped to support their colleagues to get involved

Planning your evaluation

Here we provide some examples of aims and objectives you might set for your support programme, and a list of possible outputs, outcomes and impacts for each of these, to help you plan your evaluation.

Your overarching aim might be: **To create a culture within the HEI where excellent public engagement with research is embedded**

To achieve this aim, you might set three different objectives:

1. To develop and demonstrate a strategic commitment to public engagement
2. To reward and recognise staff and students for their public engagement work
3. To create effective approaches to encourage and support staff at all levels to become involved

Below, we look at each of these objectives in turn and provide suggestions of the potential outputs, outcomes and impacts.

AIM: TO CREATE A CULTURE WITHIN THE HEI WHERE EXCELLENT PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WITH RESEARCH IS EMBEDDED

OBJECTIVE 1: DEVELOP AND DEMONSTRATE A STRATEGIC COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT BY…

- Developing a shared understanding of public engagement across the institution within 12 months
- Embedding public engagement within the strategic goals of the institution; planning cycles; formal governance; academic workload planning; and within responsibility of senior managers
- Creating a public engagement strategy for the institution (and/ or departments) in consultation with staff, students and external partners
- Integration of public engagement into the core activities of the organisation, including measuring the quality and quantity of public engagement activities
- Allocation of strategic funding to support engagement work
- Intelligence gathering about public perceptions, and into areas of need/ opportunity to inform planning
- Development of effective long term partnerships with key organisations outside of the institution

Potential Outputs	Potential Outcomes	Potential Impacts
Shared definition of public engagement Integration of public engagement within strategic plans Changes to planning cycles that support public engagement – e.g. included in workload planning Changes to formal governance arrangements to ensure oversight of public engagement Changed senior manager job descriptions that include public engagement Evaluation plan Value of strategic funds to support central engagement unit Number of external partners engaged Outputs from the research into public perceptions, and areas of need/opportunity Sign up to NCCPE manifesto	Greater awareness amongst staff about what public engagement means and confidence in the agreed definition Funding and support in place to deliver strategic plans / engagement strategy Staff make use of strategy and definition in informing their PE work Senior staff champion engagement in key meetings, and tackle areas where engagement is not supported well The quality of public engagement activity increases, due to effective evaluation and support Input prepared for the REF, within HEIF, Knowledge Transfer Grants Submission of public engagement with research activities within the RCUK Research Outcomes System or ResearchFish Inclusion of public engagement within RCUK Pathways to Impact or other funders' schemes	More effective engagement leads to mutually beneficial impacts, that are captured Additional funding is secured to support high quality public engagement with research Larger number of staff offer leadership for engagement, across all levels of the institution Partnerships with key organisations enhance the work of the university, as well as delivering value to the partners involved

OBJECTIVE 2: REWARD AND RECOGNISE STAFF AND STUDENTS FOR THEIR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WORK BY…

- Developing an annual award for public engagement with research within 12 months
- Supporting researchers to apply for the NCCPE Engage awards (ongoing)
- Developing recognition for public engagement across all grades in promotion criteria within 24 months
- Including public engagement within performance review processes within 24 months

Potential Outputs	Potential Outcomes	Potential Impacts
Public engagement award scheme operational Applications for Engage Award Promotion criteria for all grades include public engagement Performance review paper work references public engagement	Raised awareness of the value of public engagement amongst staff Increased number of applications to the universities award scheme, and the Engage Awards Applicants for promotion choose to cite their engagement work within their application, and panels choose to recognise this in their assessment Engagement is raised within performance review	Staff recognise the value of public engagement to the university, and an increased number get involved in public engagement as a consequence Engaged staff are rewarded for their engagement work alongside their research and teaching work

OBJECTIVE 3: CREATE EFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT STAFF AT ALL LEVELS TO BECOME INVOLVED BY…

- Building capacity for public engagement with research through creating champions, networks, professional development, partnership working and creation of resources within 12 months
- Establish practical support for public engagement with research e.g. central support unit within 6 months
- Training provision for public engagement with research to be developed and delivered within 24 months
- Communicate clear messages about the value and purpose of PE and how to get involved through events and conferences; publicity materials; newsletters; web presence ongoing
- Provision of opportunities/platforms for researchers to engage with the public on an annual basis

Potential Outputs	Potential Outcomes	Potential Impacts
Breadth and depth of participation in activities. – e.g. numbers of staff trained and/or advised; attending events; subscribing to newsletters or joining networks; champions / coordinators created Professional development scheme Partnerships developed Resources created Public engagement activities completed	Staff and students regularly use the resources to inform their own work Improved staff practices and attitudes to public engagement Public engagement more regularly included in institutional meetings, networks, activities Increased demand for core public engagement services Greater confidence in public engagement in those participating in training or platforms for engagement Public engagement opportunities benefit the public in relevant ways	Clear understanding where to go to get support for public engagement Raised awareness of the value of engagement, with champions equipped to support their colleagues to get involved

Gathering evidence

Once you have developed your logic model you need to consider what you want to know about your programme. You may wish to focus on evaluating the results of the activity ('summative' evaluation), but don't forget how useful evaluation can be when used 'formatively' to inform the development of your approach, or to provide ongoing reflection on what is working well, and where improvements could be made.

Initially you need to consider the overall questions your evaluation will address. Questions might include:

- Have the activities you have chosen to do led to the desired outcomes
- What have been the most effective interventions for supporting public engagement within the research community, and why?
- Have staff and students recognised a culture change in your institutions support for public engagement?
- What types of intervention matter most to your staff and how can they be implemented

It is great to start from these questions to inform your approach to evaluation. One of the primary audiences for this work will be you and your team, and therefore it is important to think through how evaluation will help you do your work well. It is also important to think through the evidence you may need to justify your business case.

Having an external evaluator can really help. Some universities choose to have an evaluation officer as part of their engagement team, building capacity for effective evaluation, whilst providing a focal point to evaluation to the work of the team. Others bring in expert consultants to help inform their approach, and provide tools to enact it.

Once you know your questions it is important to consider how you will approach gathering relevant data. Here are a few mechanisms commonly used to evaluate culture change and engagement support.

Staff surveys, focus groups and interviews

These are really effective tools if you want to find out whether people's attitudes and approaches have changed over time. Clearly it is important to base line this at the beginning of your work, so that you can assess whether any change has happened. You can also do some of this work as part of events you run to support your engagement work.

Culture change can take time, and it is important to consider how often you need to assess where things have got to. The EDGE tool provides a great focal point for this – and assessing progress on a biannual basis can provide useful intelligence as to how things are changing.

Enquiry logs

If you are working as a Public Engagement Professional a useful way of exploring how things change overtime is to capture enquiries and responses. This data can help you track if and how the nature of these enquiries change over time. For example, as awareness increases you would

expect to have more people draw on your services; however, as you create effective online resources you would expect the nature of the questions people ask you to change.

Other data sources

Universities are consistently having to report back to funders about their work. Therefore you may find the existing data sets helpful. For example:

- Data on awareness, support and capacity for public engagement within institutions is captured in two national surveys, the **Careers in Research Online Survey** (CROS) and the **Principal Leaders and Research Leaders Survey** (PIRLS).
- RCUK quality assurance data is collected on a 6 yearly basis, and includes questions relating to public engagement
- HEFCE require universities to provide data relating to their **HEIF funding** and questions linked to public and community engagement are included in the **Higher Education Business and Community Interaction survey** (HEBCIs)
- REF 2021 returns and applications for research funding may provide useful data

NCCPE resources and support

The NCCPE offer a baseline survey resource to help you assess staff and student perceptions of the support the institution or department offer for public engagement against the EDGE tool.

We also offer **the Engage Watermark**, a rigorous evaluation of the current public engagement support culture at your university or faculty which considers a range of sources of evidence including: documentary evidence; survey of staff, students, and partner organisations; a site visit; interviews and focus groups; and a review of future planning. Get in touch if you want to access this support.

The NCCPE also run various **evaluation courses**, and can offer bespoke consultancy and training. Do get in touch if you could like advice or guidance about what we can offer.