

## Evaluating...the ABCD Way

ABCD evaluation asks, “What community strengths, connections and local leadership are growing?” rather than “What services were delivered?”

Traditional Project Evaluation	ABCD Evaluation
Deficits and problems	Assets and strengths
Service delivery	Community-led action
Professionally led	Resident-led
Outputs and outcomes	Relationships and capacity
Short-term activity	Long-term resilience

### ABCD Evaluation Asks Different Questions

Are local assets being mobilised?

- Skills
- Spaces
- Networks
- Associations

Are relationships becoming stronger?

- New connections
- Trust
- Mutual support

Is local leadership increasing?

- Residents initiating action
- Shared ownership
- Greater decision-making power

Is the community becoming more resilient?

- Greater confidence
- Stronger collective action
- Reduced dependence on external support

**Levels of change:** the differences you want to understand may sit at the individual, community/neighbourhood, and wider systems level.

**However, funders and other stakeholders may still ask:** “Yes, but what tangible, measurable difference does this make to the outcomes we care about?”

**You will need to decide how best to navigate that tension!**

## Some things to think about

### 1. Intentionality

- Why are you evaluating? What is driving it? Who are the key stakeholders, and what do they want from the process?
- How will you balance those different expectations so that the evaluation remains useful to you?
- What resources do you have in terms of time, skills and budget? What can you do in-house, and where will you need support?
- How is your evaluation approach genuinely ABCD? Where are the trade-offs between working *with/by* communities and doing things *to/for* them?

### 2. Focus and Definition

- What exactly are you evaluating? In other words, what does your project do?
- Can you sketch out a theory of change?
- What matters most, and what is out of scope?

### 3. Monitoring, Evaluation, Reflection and Reporting – overlap but are not the same

- Treasuring, measuring, or trying to do both?
- How will you build understanding of both process and impact, and how will you communicate and share that story?
- How can you be creative? – in data creation methods and results presentation

### 4. Complex and Complicated

- How will you respond to emergence (things changing on the way)? And to ‘things’ (people or projects) that are resistant to evaluation?
- How will you navigate complicated projects/systems? Can you map helpful pathways, typologies or frameworks, even if “the map is not the territory”?

### 5. Who Should Be Involved, and How?

- What are the strengths and limitations of internal evaluators who are known and trusted, compared with external evaluators who may bring greater independence?
- Is there value in technical expertise and/or academic or professional credibility?
- What capacity do you have - to carry out evaluation, engage with it (team), involve participants and provide effective project management and oversight?
- Overall approach and detailed methods: Consider both quantitative evidence (numbers) and qualitative evidence (stories), as well as ways of demonstrating change such as before-and-after measures, retrospective reflection, established tools or bespoke indicators.

## **Some (possibly!) useful further reading**

ABCD-focused resources

CUF Knowledge Bank - <https://cuf.org.uk/knowledge-bank>

Making It Happen Learning Resource Bank (Section 8 and 9) - <https://making-it-happen.org.uk/learning-resource-pack/>

Tamarack Institute (Canada) - <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/skills-for-change/evaluating-impact>

More traditional evaluation resources

National Lottery - Gathering Evidence and Learning:

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/funding-support/managing-your-funding/gathering-evidence-and-learning/>

Better Evaluation - Rainbow Framework

<https://www.betterevaluation.org/frameworks-guides/rainbow-framework>

**Contact:** Jane Perry – [janeperry@live.co.uk](mailto:janeperry@live.co.uk)