

PROGRAMME EVALUATION

What do we want to find out? This is the basic question you should ask yourself before embarking on an evaluation. An evaluation provides very useful and important information for the organisation and contributes to future action. Evaluation should be part of an ongoing process and is a tool that can allow you to:

- Examine failures and successes and investigate the reasons for them.
- Look at strengths and weaknesses both as individuals and as a group.
- Explore how effective the organisation is
- Generate action and identify new areas of need (Henderson and Thomas 1980)

Your evaluation should be done to:

- Find out if what is being done is what was intended
- Ensure that the project is working as well as can be expected
- Check that resources are being fully utilised
- Show the project is cost effective
- Help decide whether to renew or change the project
- Show the areas where change would be most useful
- Provide material for increased involvement and funding

The information gained from the evaluation will be useful for participants, funders and potential funders.

WHAT DOES AN EVALUATION CONSIST OF?

There are many types of evaluations but the main components should be:

Monitoring (reviewing) - It checks regularly to ensure that the programme is reaching the targeted group, and that it is being delivered as intended. Any significant shifts or changes in pattern are noted and if appropriate, corrected. It involves observation, record-keeping, staff and participant surveys. These should be ongoing and built into the programme as part of the record-keeping and summarised regularly.

Impact Studies - These can involve experiments and surveys and often involve research which should be systematically and methodically planned.

Cost analysis - This involves working out the cost of delivering the service and whether the outcome is worth the resources which have been committed. Cost analysis also includes human cost, a project is often outwardly successful but inwardly leaves staff disgruntled and depleted of energy.

EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Clarify the focus

What do you want to discover and who needs to know?

How widespread will your evaluation be? All encompassing or targeted?

Select an evaluator

This can be an individual or a group. The choice will also depend on the focus of the evaluation, how big a task it is, and how much time it is likely to take.

Research the yardsticks

This is, the aims, objects, goals, mission statement/statement of belief, the constitution.

Determine the criteria

Some may have been built into the planning process, others may require some extra work e.g. totalling staff hours. Some may need to be instituted specially for the evaluation.

Collect the data

This may be done by using existing material eg doing a client survey, based on interviews and comparing with a sample from an earlier survey. (Test your survey with a small group to make sure the questions are interpreted as you intended!).

Assess the data

Relate the data to the questions at the top of this checklist. Be as specific as possible, but note any "oddities" - these may signal a new area of development, or possibly the beginning of a problem.

Write a report

This report can cover the aims, questions, methods, findings and interpretations of the evaluation. Data can be made available in raw form, perhaps as supplementary material or an appendix. Survey results should offer a tabulated summary of responses.

Present the results

Include the implications for policies.

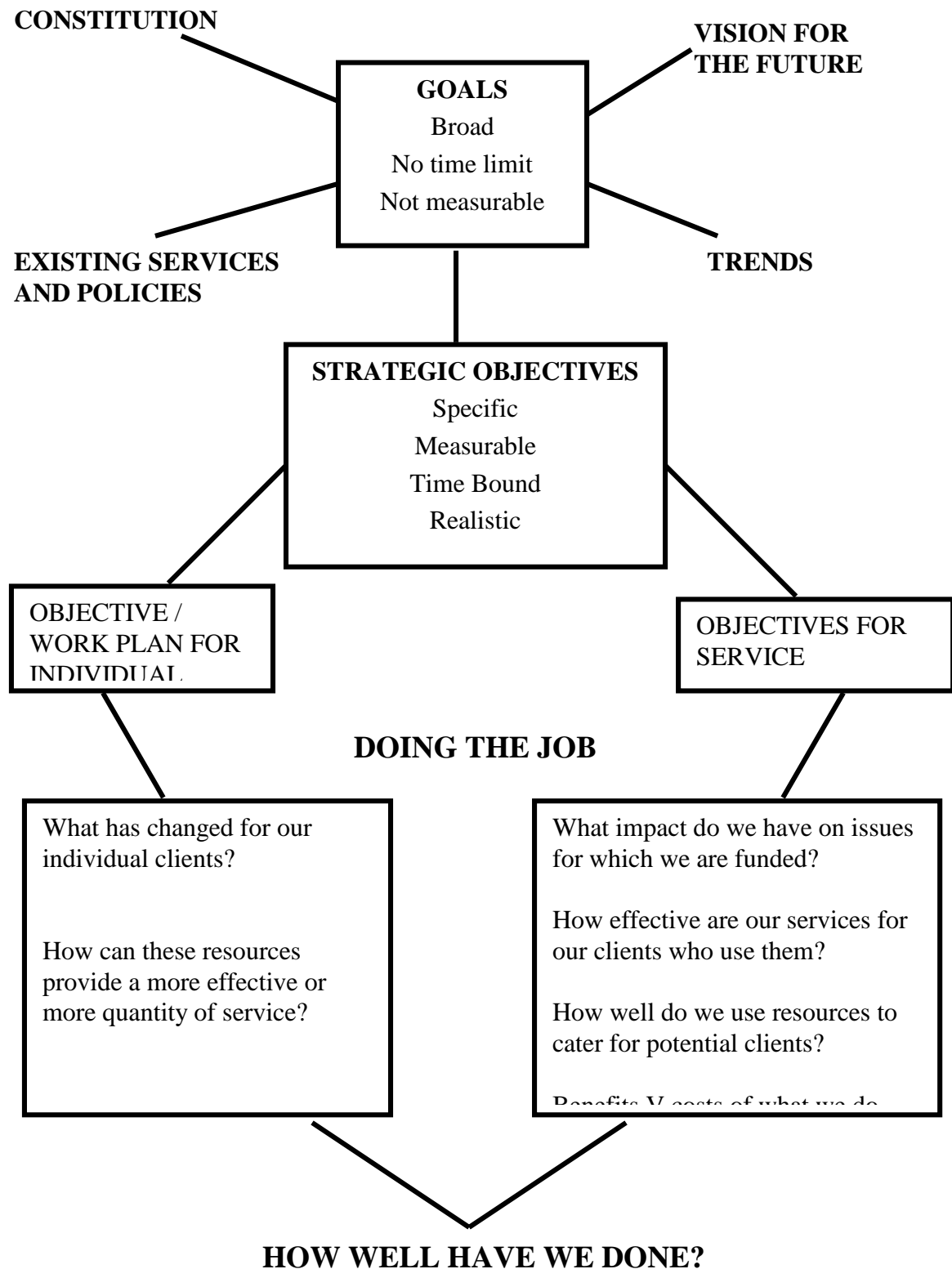
Examine and revise

Policy and strategic planning may need to be revised. Without this evaluation can be a waste of time and effort. Workers as well as board members should be involved here.

Everyone will want to know the results of this work; input equals commitment.

(Adapted from *Managing your Voluntary Agency in New Zealand 1993 NZ Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations*)

Like performance appraisals it is very difficult to evaluate a project that has not had a sound planning process. The process should be as outlined below:



The above form of evaluation can be used for any project and volunteer programmes are no exception. At the end of the evaluation you may wish to make changes and modify your programme but you can be assured that you will be making these changes based on sound evidence and not on a singular adhoc decision.

FURTHER READING

Managing your Voluntary Agency in New Zealand 1993 - NZ Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations

Management Plans - North Shore Community and Social Service Council

If you would like a list of our other community resources, or to be put on our mailing list, contact us at:



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