

Measuring impact for Community Foundation grants

Many funders, including South Yorkshire's Community Foundation, are keen to find out what difference their grant funds make – how it improves things for people and communities.

This is often a tricky area if funders have previously just wanted to know “did you hold the event?” and are satisfied if you say “yes, 20 people came” and send them some photos.

When they start asking “what good did the event do?” it's not so easy to say, but it is a fair question. If you think a social event will reduce isolation, but in fact everybody there goes to lots of other activities, you're not having the benefit you think, and it's important to know that.

Have a good think about how people benefit from your activity - what do they get out of it?

We'll take you through the stages of being able to provide that information.

1. Decide what change your project will make

On the Community Grant application form, you will have been asked to select at least one outcome from one of six categories. This is the main change you are saying the project will achieve, so it's important that you have selected one you feel you can deliver, as we will ask you about it in the monitoring. There's a table at the end of this paper to help you think about which fits best.

2. Think about what you need to measure to get the information

In the example above, a social group to reduce isolation, you need to find out how isolated people are. You could ask members if this is the first time they've come, whether they go to any other events, or how many other people they have spoken to in the last week. You could just ask how isolated they feel on a scale of 1 to 5. We are not looking for complicated questionnaires, just some very simple information.

3. Find the best way of asking for the information

The easiest ways of collecting information are those that fit with what you already do. If you ask new members to complete a form with contact details on, add a couple of question relevant to what you need to know. You might then follow up few weeks later with the same question, and see how many have reported an improvement.

For the social group you could also:

- simply ask people – before the bingo shout out “how many here are talking to

- more people since you started coming?" and write down the number
- ask friends and relatives, or a group volunteer, to write down what changes they have seen

It can be a bit trickier if you are doing a big community event. What about:

- put big sheets of paper on the wall labelled with things like 'learned something' or 'tried something new' or 'first time I've come to an event' and ask people to put a sticker on to show their feedback
- you could use social media feedback – ask on Facebook what people thought and record the responses
- do some simple surveys on the day - and encourage people to complete them by having a prize draw
- do a quick online survey if you have people's email addresses

Sometimes it can be easy. If you are running courses, people achieving a qualification or completing a structured course have automatically shown that they have learned something. If you aim to recruit new volunteers, just count them.

4. Collect and report it

Again, we're not looking for anything fancy.

- "When asked the question, 15 out of 18 people said they were talking to more people now."
- "30 people came to our activity for the first time."
- "12 people achieved their basic maths qualification."
- "18 people's self-confidence score averaged 2/5 when they joined, but was 4/5 a month later."
- "Of 20 online responses, 16 said they had never tried dance before."
- "We have six new volunteers."

5. Is it really necessary?

If you want funding for your group, you have to give the funder the information they want. If people coming to your activity want it to happen, spending five minutes answering a few questions is a small price to pay. But more positively, the reason your group exists will be to help people, and checking impact tells you whether you are. If you find out you aren't changing anything, you can try something different.

So, which of these 'impact categories' does your activity fit with? The six on the form are along the top of this table. They sound a bit complicated, but cover some very simple ideas like 'people meeting up'. Below are some common projects, indicating which ones they fit:

Local knowledge.
Wise investment.
Stronger communities.



	Improve life skills, education employability & enterprise	Maximise community cohesion & build social capacity	Promote reduction of isolation & disadvantage	Advance people's physical health & wellbeing	Connect people with arts, culture & heritage	Transform access and engagement with public spaces and environment
<i>Pensioner's social club</i>		✓	✓	✓		
<i>After school club</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		
<i>Pilates sessions</i>		✓	✓	✓		
<i>Amateur theatre group</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<i>Bingo evenings</i>		✓	✓	✓		
<i>Put in a new heating boiler</i>		✓	✓	✓		
<i>Mower for cricket club</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		
<i>Job club for young people</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		
<i>Improve some land</i>		✓		✓		✓
<i>Volunteer befriending scheme</i>		✓	✓	✓		
<i>Toys for a toddler group</i>		✓	✓			
<i>Dance festival for different cultures</i>		✓	✓		✓	
<i>Repair the hall floor</i>		✓	✓			
<i>Community allotment project</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

You'll see that essentially any group activity covers at least two, and even improvements to buildings can fit, as you can argue that more people will want to come to things in a nicer venue.

When you've picked you main 'Impact' heading, you need to pick an outcome (you can pick up to three, but don't have to), which will tell you what change you should aim to make:

Improve life skills, education employability and enterprise:

Improve economic wellbeing
Improve employability
Increase enterprise
Increase in training, education, accreditation, and employment
Increase participation in lifelong learning
Increase qualification and skills

Maximise community cohesion and build social capacity:

Improve access to volunteering
Improve community cohesion
Improve the community working together
Improve community facilities
Promote safer communities
Reduce crime, violence, and anti-social behaviour
Strengthen organisations through capacity building

Promote reduction of isolation and disadvantage:

Increase access to services

Promote human rights and equality
Reduce isolation
Support vulnerable people

Advance people's physical health and wellbeing:

Improve health (physical/mental/emotional)
Increase access to sport, exercise and leisure opportunities
Reduce substance misuse and addictions

Connect people with arts, culture and heritage:

Increase opportunities for public to engage with arts, culture or heritage activities
Preserve local heritage
Promote opportunities for creativity

Transform access to and engagement with environment and public spaces:

Improve quality of local environment and public space
Increase biodiversity
Reduce carbon footprint (i.e. waste, emissions, energy)

If you're not sure about this or any of the stages, get in touch with us. We can tell you what information is expected for each of the outcomes. It may be as simple as checking how many new people come, so don't worry that you will need to do anything complicated.

For general advice on applications, call 0114 261 5141 or email advice@syfab.org.uk . To talk about an application in progress, call 0114 242 4294 or email grants@syfc.org.uk