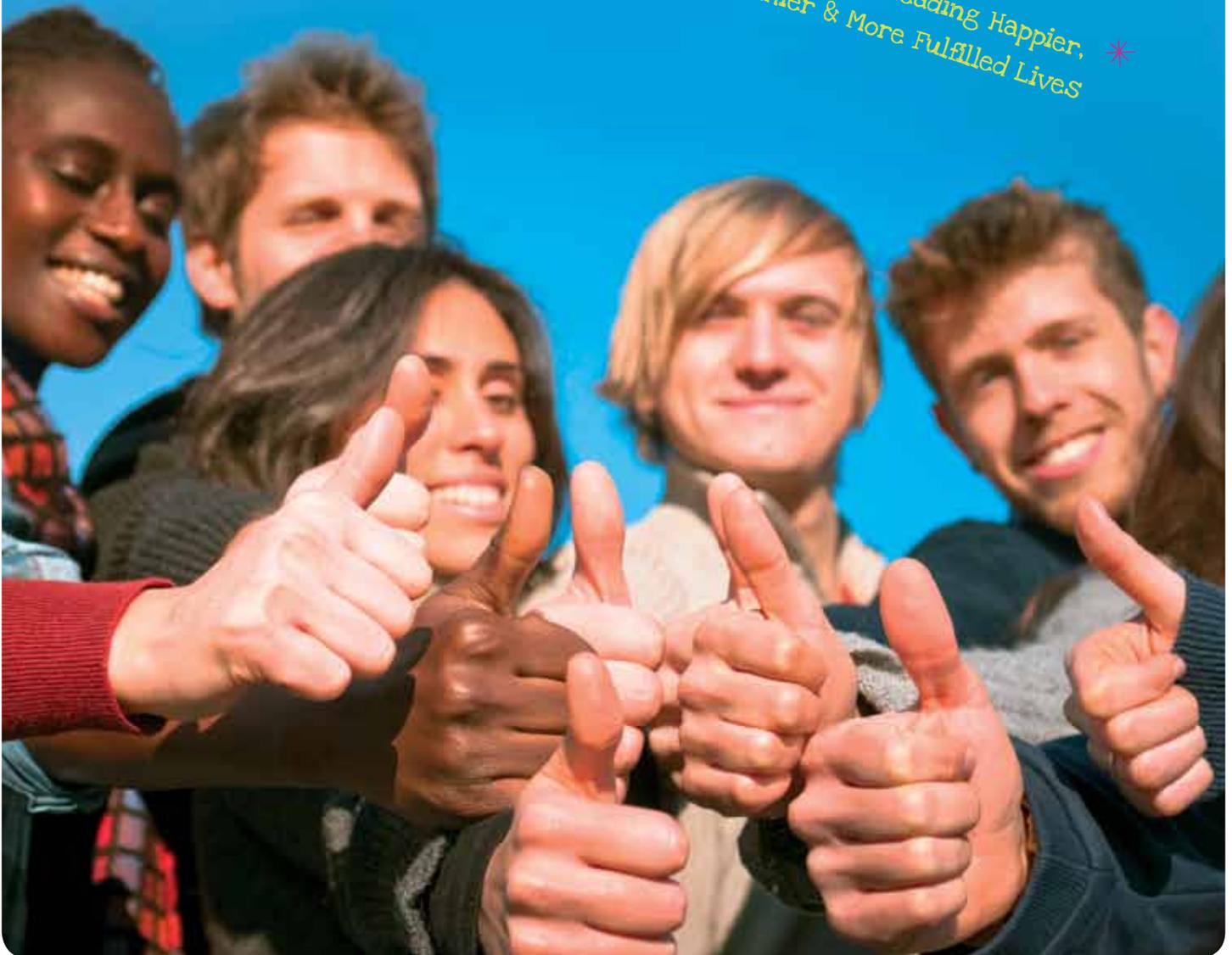


*** How are we doing?**

An Evaluation Resource
for Foróige Staff

*Young People Leading Happier,
* Healthier & More Fulfilled Lives **



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
Children, Youth and Civic Engagement
Ireland
CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE



NUI Galway
OÉ Gallimh

* **How are we doing?**

An Evaluation Resource
for Foróige Staff

Produced by the

UNESCO Child & Family Research Centre, NUI, Galway

on behalf of

Foróige's Best Practice Unit

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* Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Understanding Evaluation	7
3. Logic Models	13
4. Monitoring	15
5. Process Evaluation	17
6. Measuring Outcomes	20
7. Research Methods	23
8. Values and Ethics	27
9. Data Protection	29
10. Measuring Costs	30
11. Commissioning and Managing Research and Evaluation	31
References	32
Appendices	
– List of Standardised Measures for Consideration in Outcome Studies	33
– Logic Model Template	35
– Evaluation Resources	36

1. Introduction

In the past, youth work organisations did not need to place much emphasis on research or evaluation. In our current era of scarce resources, however, organisations are increasingly required to provide evidence that they are effectively meeting the needs of their target groups. More and more, youth programmes and initiatives are expected to be ‘evidence-based’ – in other words to demonstrate that they are based on evidence that the approach taken makes a positive difference to young people. A difficulty for staff is that the area of evaluation is complex and full of ‘jargon’. The purpose of this resource is to provide guidance to Foróige staff in relation to some of the evaluation concepts and approaches of relevance in a youth work context.

To begin with, this introductory section highlights the importance of research and evaluation in Foróige’s ten year strategy and gives an overview of the types of research and evaluation activity that take place in the organisation. Section two of the document defines and explains the key concepts associated with evaluation, including process studies, reflective practice and evidence-based practice. In Section three, the focus is on logic models, followed by sections on monitoring and process evaluation. We then look at the various designs that can be used to measure outcomes and review the methods that can be used in research and evaluation studies. Other topics covered include values and ethics, data protection and commissioning research.

Research and Evaluation in Foróige

As part of its ten year vision, Foróige has committed itself to ***demonstrating that young people significantly benefit from their involvement in Foróige.*** Research and evaluation are critical to ensure that this objective is met and three key processes will contribute to the achievement of this goal. These are planning and logic modelling; monitoring, self-evaluation and reflective practice; and research and evaluation studies, as illustrated in Figure 1. These processes illustrate that monitoring and evaluation is something that is relevant to all staff.

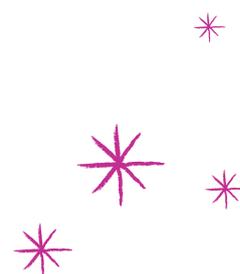
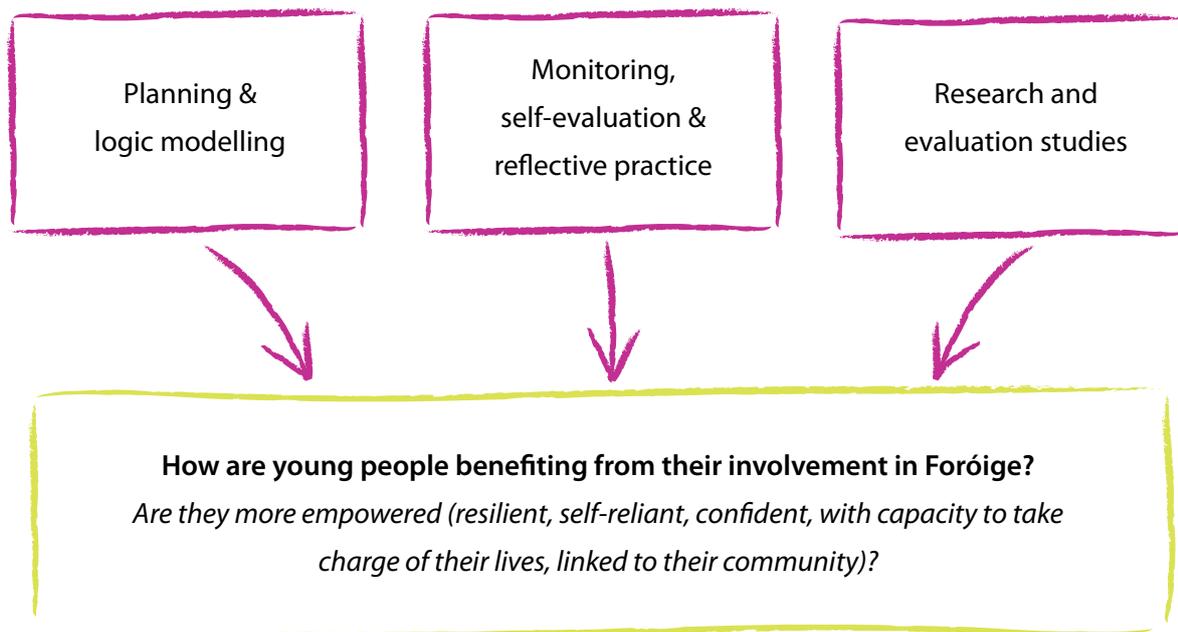


Figure 1: **Processes that will feed into Foróige's overall evaluation of its benefits to young people**



Planning and logic modelling: Most Foróige staff have taken part in logic model training. Developing logic and learning models is an important first step in clarifying the aims and desired outcomes of our work.

Monitoring, self-evaluation and reflective practice: Monitoring refers to data collected routinely by clubs, projects and programmes in relation to their work. For example, it can include the numbers of young people taking part in Foróige activities, the types of activities run and the gender or ethnic mix of participants. This information is valuable in providing evidence regarding the profile of young people that Foróige is working with and can also be an important component of evaluation studies. It is envisaged that the new correlate computer system will assist with the collection of this data.

Self-evaluation and reflective practice refer to processes whereby staff decide to review or evaluate some aspect of their work with a view to learning from the experience. The National Quality Standards Framework for Youth Work requires that staff and volunteers regularly reflect on their work, measure progress and make changes to practice as required.

Research and evaluation studies: Foróige regularly commissions evaluations of particular programmes or practices to assess their effectiveness and process. These programme evaluations are generally undertaken by an external organisation. The evaluation of the BBBS programme is an example.

All Foróige staff and volunteers will have some role to play in monitoring and evaluation of the organisation's work. The potential roles include:

- Identifying logic models for the project or programme you are working on or making sure you are clear regarding what the logic underpinning your programme is (see Section 3)

- Putting in place systems to collect monitoring data or feeding information into these systems (see Section 4)
- Engaging in a process of reflective practice in relation to your work
- Conducting internal or self-evaluation of projects alone or with colleagues. (see Sections 5 and 6)
- Commissioning or liaising with external researchers in relation to a study (see Section 11)
- Taking part in research as a respondent
- Supporting young people who are taking part in research.

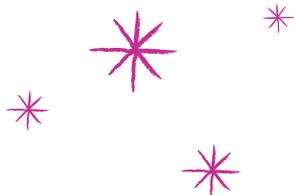
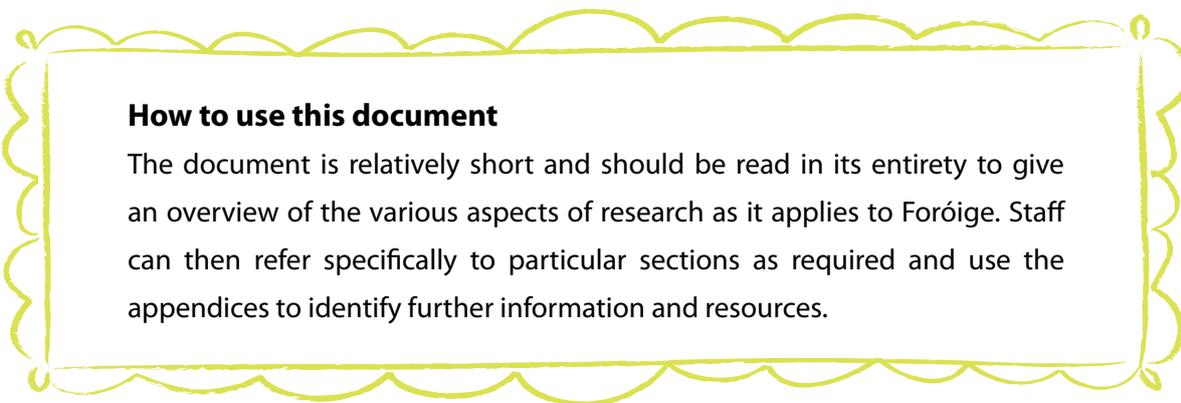
This resource is designed to assist Foróige staff and managers to have a common understanding of what is meant by evaluation and monitoring and how it can be undertaken throughout the organisation. It is a working document that will be subject to updating and review, based on feedback from staff. This document is intended to complement the training in self-evaluation that has been provided to staff.

By engaging with a process of evaluation and monitoring, the Foróige organisation can:

- Gather evidence to prove that it delivers good outcomes for young people and is worthy of investment
- Improve work practices and allow programmes to be changed or refocused as required
- Show itself to be accountable to young people, parents, funders and other stakeholders
- Contribute to the 'body of knowledge' in relation to good practice in youth work and help to foster an openness to change
- Ensure that it's work practices are in line with the vision and values of the organisation
- Comply with statutory requirements under the National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) for Youth Work (DCYA, 2010).

How to use this document

The document is relatively short and should be read in its entirety to give an overview of the various aspects of research as it applies to Foróige. Staff can then refer specifically to particular sections as required and use the appendices to identify further information and resources.



2. Understanding Evaluation

What is evaluation?

Evaluation is a process of reviewing and assessing the worth or value of a particular intervention and learning from the experience. It has been defined as:

The use of social research methods to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social intervention programs or initiatives (Rossi, 2004, p.29).

Evaluating our work enables us to:

- Identify progress towards our aims
- See if the methods we used are working
- Highlight difficulties in our work and recommend changes to our practices
- Encourage participation and feedback from all stakeholders involved in our work
- Describe and have a written record of the work we have undertaken
- Advocate for resources and account for the funding received
- Manage the project more effectively

What does an evaluation look at?

Some of the things we explore during an evaluation are:

- The need for the initiative
- The design of the initiative (including the logic model or theory of change)
- Implementation and service delivery
- Impact or outcomes

(Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, 2004)

Are there different types of evaluation?

- **Formative & Summative**

A **formative evaluation** is undertaken when a programme or project is at an early stage of development. This type of evaluation provides feedback that is designed to enhance and improve the project.

A **summative evaluation** is undertaken when a project has been in existence for some time and looks at the outcomes from the initiative, as well as the process underpinning it.

- **Process & Outcome**

A **process evaluation** explores how a project or programme operates. For example, it looks at how volunteers were recruited, how the project was managed, the types of activities that were run, the number of people taking part and how often they attended. Process evaluations are designed to inform and develop how a project does its work.

Outcome evaluations focus on the difference the programme has made to its intended beneficiaries. It assesses whether the project has made an difference in the areas it set out to.

- **Internal & External Evaluation**

External evaluations are where the organisation contracts an external person or organisation to conduct an evaluation on its behalf.

Internal evaluations are those conducted by an organisation by its own staff. This is often referred to as self-evaluation. This research has positives and negatives. On the one hand, the project staff have in-depth knowledge and know the questions that a researcher could miss. On the other hand, they may be biased towards interpreting results in a way that is favourable for the service. If doing this type of research, it is important to step back to critically analyse what you are doing and ideally have an external person to help you to reflect on your design and interpretation of findings.

Case Vignette:

Self-evaluation in practice

Cara is a project worker in a Youth development project. She is very interested in health and nutrition and noticed that a lot of the young people attending the project did not eat very well. She designed a group on healthy eating that would run over 8 weeks. Cara wanted to plan from the outset to see if her group was going to make a difference and if it would be worth doing on an ongoing basis.

- Firstly, she developed her logic model to identify how the inputs and activities would lead to the desired outcomes (logic models)
- She designed a questionnaire that the participants completed before and after the 8 week course (outcomes evaluation)
- She kept a record of attendance (monitoring)
- At the end of the group, she reviewed the experience with the young people (process evaluation)

continued on next page

- When she had gathered all her information, she sat down to review it with her team and reflect on the experience (reflective practice)

On the basis of this she made some changes to the course and plans to run it again. She will continue to collect data on the outcomes and process to ensure that the course is achieving the outcomes she wants for it.

Case Vignette:

Staff Involvement in External Evaluation

Gary is a project manager in a Garda Youth Diversion Project. The projects are being evaluated nationally and his project is included in the sample. Gary's role in relation to the research is to:

- Sit on an advisory group to discuss how the research can be undertaken, feed back on the proposed methodology and feed back on draft reports.
- Liaise with the research team regarding asking young people and their parents for consent.
- Arrange times for fieldwork to be undertaken.
- Take part in interviews or focus groups as a respondent.
- Provide support to young people and parents taking part in the research with any questions they may have.

What is meant by Reflective Practice?

Youth work is mostly about 'doing' – what young people do themselves and what adults, both volunteers and professional, do to facilitate them. At the heart of most youth work are learning processes for the young person themselves, for the community, for the supporting adult and for the organisation. Reflective practice is a term used to refer to the capacity of an individual to reflect and learn on an ongoing basis so that practice improves, leading ultimately to better outcomes (Canavan et al, 2009). It is also central to government policy and a major theme in the Agenda for Children's Services (DCYA, 2007).

For Foróige, reflective practice has the potential to be the internal engine for practice improvement, with many different models existing which could be adapted specifically for the organization and its staff and for use by young people (Schon, 1983; Kolb, 1984). At the club level, documenting reflections by young people and youth leaders, on what went well or not so well, why this was the case, and what changes should be made for the next time is a simple illustration of what reflective practice could look like. The information and knowledge generated from these internal processes can be seen as complementary to more formal, objective research knowledge generated through other mechanisms within the organisation.

What is meant by Evidence-based Practice?

Evidence-based practice requires that professional practice is based on the best available evidence. But what is considered ‘the best available evidence’? Studies with experimental designs are believed to provide the ‘gold standard of evidence’ but most interventions in the area of youth development have not undergone this form of research and are probably unlikely to, given the costs and complexity associated with this type of research.

Veerman and Van Yperen (2007) provide a useful classification of types of evidence (see Table 1). The studies at levels 1 and 2 of the table can be considered as evidence informed practice, while levels 3 and 4 can be considered evidence-based practice (Veerman and Van Yperen, 2007). Indeed the lower levels of the model need to be undertaken before the studies described at the higher levels of the model can be undertaken. This model can enable practitioners and managers to see how their efforts in the area of evaluation can build cumulatively to enhance the degree to which their work is informed by evidence.

Table 1: Levels of evidence (adapted from Veerman and Van Yperen, 2007)

Level of Evidence	Parameters	Types of research
Level Four: <i>Causal Evidence</i>	There is substantial evidence that the outcome is caused by the intervention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Randomised control trial • Quasi-experimental design
Level Three: <i>Indicative</i>	It has been demonstrated that the intervention clearly leads to the desired outcomes (e.g. increase in skills, the problem is reduced, people are satisfied)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline and follow-up measures • Process studies
Level Two: <i>Theoretical</i>	The intervention has a plausible rationale to explain why it should work with whom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature review • Theoretical basis for the intervention is articulated
Level One: <i>Descriptive</i>	The essential elements of the intervention have been made explicit (e.g. goals, target group, methods, activities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logic model • Monitoring of programme delivery



How do you go about planning an evaluation?

When deciding what type of evaluation to go for, it is important to consider the following questions:

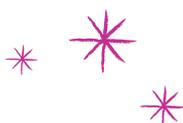
- What purpose will it serve? For example, do you want the findings to help you to improve the programme, demonstrate accountability or influence policy? You may want one or all of these things but it is important to articulate them.
- What resources are available? Resources needed for the evaluation include funding, time, expertise, information and stakeholder co-operation.
- What questions will it answer? What precisely do you want to know from this study?
- What type of evaluation will we undertake? (For example, will it be formative or summative, process or outcomes as described above)
- What methods and procedures will be used? Will you use qualitative, quantitative or a combination of both methods.
- What ethical issues arise in this research and how can they be addressed?
- How will the evaluation be managed? Who will be responsible for managing the research? If it is an external evaluation, who will set the terms of reference, liaise with the research team and so on.
- If it is a self-evaluation, who will have responsibility for pulling it all together and writing up the findings?
- How will the results be disseminated?



Table 2: Definitions of some terms used in evaluation (adapted from Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, 2004, pp423-436)

Stakeholders	Individuals, groups or organisations having a significant interest in how well a programme or project functions – e.g. funders, staff, community, participants or intended beneficiaries.
Baseline	A record of the conditions that exist at the time goals are set and against which outputs and outcomes are measured.
Objective	Specific statements detailing the desired accomplishments of a project.
Input	Resources used to implement a project or programme. Includes staff, skills, knowledge, budgets, equipment and the influences of policy or legislation.
Process	The way in which inputs are used to achieve outputs. Most evaluations look at 'process', i.e. how things were done in order to achieve objectives.
Output	Specific products of a programme, e.g. number of hours of counselling provided, number of participants who completed a course.
Outcome	The state of the target population or the social conditions that a programme is expected to have changed – e.g. outcomes in relation to education levels, participation in community activities or well-being.
Indicator	A measure used to indicate that a particular target or objective has been reached.
Efficiency	Involves a relationship between inputs and outputs. An organisation can be assumed to be efficient if its resources were used well to achieve its objectives.
Effectiveness	An intervention is said to be effective if it achieves its objectives.

*



3. Logic Models

A logic model or theory of change is a statement of how you believe your project works in order to make an impact. It sets out what you want to achieve and how you are going to go about it. Having a succinct logic model helps to ensure that you are clear regarding what your project is trying to do and importantly, what it is not trying to do. Logic models help your service to maintain an outcomes focused approach and are a valuable tool in planning a project or programme evaluation.

There are different ways of developing a logic model, but most contain the following components:

Inputs: These refer to the resources available to and required by the project, such as funding, staff, facilities and equipment.

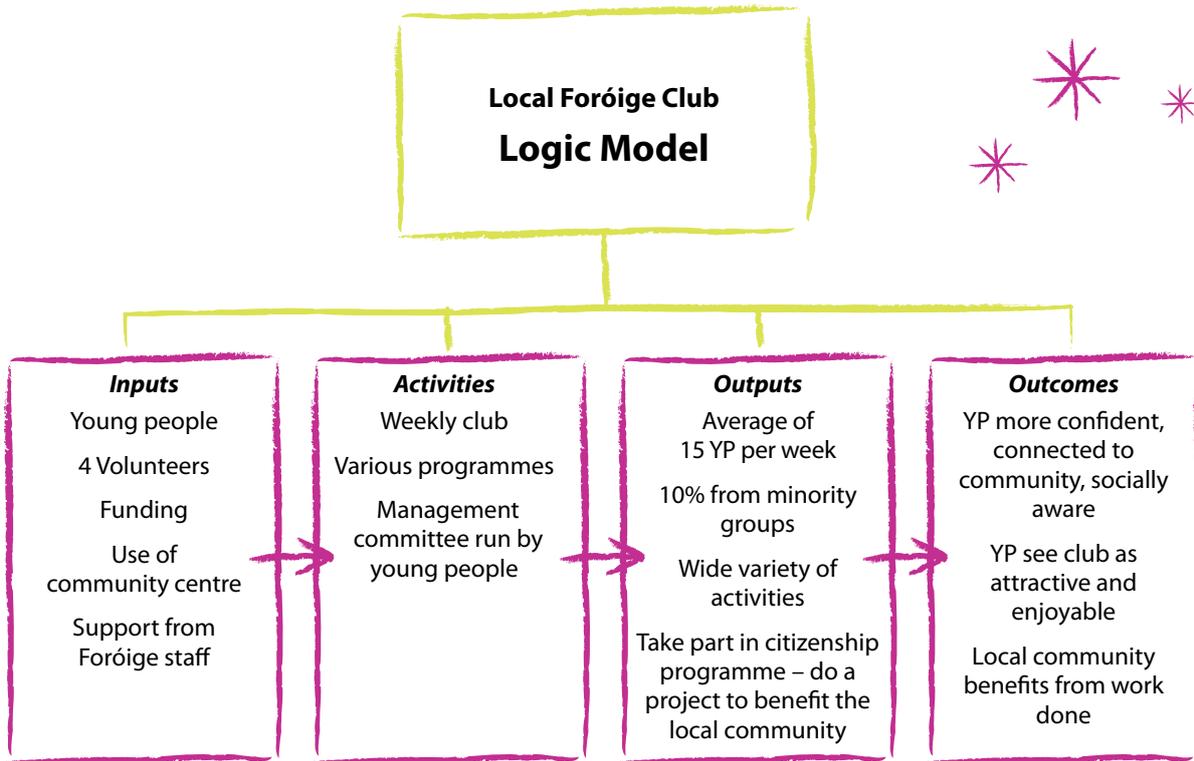
Activities: This refers to what the project will actually do and with whom. For example, running groups, operating a drop-in or summer camp.

Outputs: Outputs refer to the quantified results of your work – for example, how many boys and girls will take part in the summer camp, what types of service will you have provided and to how many people.

Outcomes: In the context of logic models, outcomes refer to the difference your project makes and the changes it brought about. Outcomes can be divided into short-term and long-term outcomes to distinguish between immediate gains and outcomes that emerge over time.



Figure 2: Simple logic model for a Foróige club



Case Vignette:

Logic models

GMP youth project has been running a summer camp for several years now. Their manager suggested they develop a logic model for the summer camp. It seemed obvious at first what the outcomes and inputs would be. However, thinking about the outcomes made them reflect more on what they wanted young people to get out of it. As a result they introduced different activities and facilitated young people to have more of a say in running the camp. At the end of the summer camp, they reviewed it with participants, staff and volunteers. They then looked back on their logic model and reflected on how well the model had worked in practice. They identified a number of changes for the following year. The staff found that this process helped them to be more confident in making funding applications for the summer camp and doing local publicity as they were more clear about the reason for the camp.

Once you have a logic model in place, the next step is to ensure that you have processes in place to monitor your progress in relation to the logic model. This is the focus of the next section.

4. Monitoring

Monitoring looks at how your work is being implemented while it is being implemented. It means keeping track of what you are doing, while you are doing it so that you can make changes if necessary (UNODC, 2006). For example, it can focus on the following:

- **Checking the extent to which the intended target population receives the intended service.** For example who came, what was done, what was achieved? Checking the conformity of the actual programme to its intended design.
- **Was the programme implemented in the way that was intended? Are the young people in a club being provided with the type of intervention that was agreed when the group or activity was being planned?** If not, is there anything that can be changed to reflect what you had planned?
- **Monitoring adherence to quality or legal standards.** There may be monitoring requirements in terms of expected standards. For example Foróige must report to its funders and the National Quality Standards Framework for Youth Work.

All forms of monitoring are dependent on good programme planning because monitoring must occur in relation to what was intended by you. Therefore, in order to monitor a programme well you must be clear about who is supposed to be targeted, what type of activities are planned, what outcome is sought, how much it is supposed to cost and what standards need to be adhered to. A detailed logic model is one way of doing this.

Monitoring is part of evaluation activity but there are crucial differences. Monitoring looks at your inputs and outputs to see if they are proceeding as planned, whereas evaluation also focuses on the outcomes part of the logic model. In other words, evaluation assesses if your work has achieved the outcomes you said it would.

The difference between monitoring and evaluation is illustrated in the following case vignette. It also shows how evaluation and monitoring activities are complementary.

Case Vignette:

The difference between evaluation and monitoring

The Highlife Project arranged interesting, exciting activities for local young people, in part to help them avoid drugs.

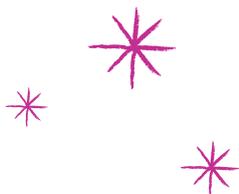
They **monitored** what they were doing by:

- Having a brief staff / volunteers team meeting after each session to discuss what went well and what needed changing;
- Sometimes designating one team member to take on an observer role, when they were not too busy and then discussing that feedback in the team meeting;
- The staff member completing a short form after each session, describing how many young people had been involved and what activities had taken place, and noting any other significant issues, especially issues raised by the team meeting;
- The team leader having regular managerial supervision sessions with her line manager at which any issues related to the sessions could be raised and recorded.
- There were monthly team meetings that included a discussion of the work. Minutes of these meetings were made.

They **evaluated** what they were doing by:

- Asking the young participants to complete a questionnaire on whether they enjoyed the activities, what could be improved and some drug-related questions, such as how many close friends they had who regularly took drugs;
- Interviewing adults in the local community to ascertain any effects of the work on their community;
- Having a special team meeting at the end of each activity period to review what had happened and to compare the results with their objectives.

* Source: UNODC (2006, pp8-9)



5. Process Evaluation

The purpose of process evaluations is to see if an intervention is turning out according to the original plan. Process measures are also necessary to ensure that the programme is delivering its services at a quality and intensity that would lead one to expect it is making its desired impact (Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, 2004). They are also valuable in allowing an opportunity for stakeholders to express their viewpoints in relation to the project or service.

Studies of this nature can look at:

- **Fidelity to the programme plan:** Were all the activities identified during planning actually implemented? Did groups meet as often as expected? Did young people participate for the minimum number of hours expected?
- **Targeting:** Did the programme reach its target group?
- **Quality:** Were services provided at an acceptable level of quality? For example, were staff trained to the appropriate level? Were child protection guidelines followed at all times? Did young people have a say in how groups were run? Did young people reflect on their activities and learning?
- **Perceptions:** How was the programme experienced by participants? Did they feel it was worthwhile and of a good standard? Did they feel it made a difference to them? How did they think it could be improved?

Table 2 sets out the potential questions, stakeholders and data sources for a process evaluation of a youth club.



Table 3: Potential questions, stakeholders and data sources for the process evaluation of a Foróige youth club

Potential Questions	Stakeholders	Data sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What proportion of the original target group participated / did not participate? 	Young people	Attendance data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the frequency and duration of involvement? 	Volunteers	Project records
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What enabled participation? 	Foróige RYO & other staff	Focus groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What constrained participation? 	Collaborating agencies	Feedback forms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What activities did the club provide? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who decided what activities to run? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did participants think of the activities? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did young people plan, carry out and evaluate the activities themselves? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did young people reflect on their activities and their experiences (learning cycle)? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were young people involved in setting their own learning objectives? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there ways in which the club could be improved? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were Foróige policies and procedures adhered to? 		

A first step in undertaking process evaluations is to identify the crucial elements of the programme as it was intended to function. Once again, this is where the logic model comes in. The nature of the intervention and what it hopes to achieve should be specified in the logic model. If this is done, it makes the design and conduct of a process evaluation easier.

The template in Table 3 is adapted from Chen (2005). It lists the components of the intervention, including target population, implementing organisation, nature of the intervention and service delivery and other factors impacting on programme delivery. Completing this grid enables you to see at a glance how the programme as delivered compared to how it was intended. It is completed with reference to the fictional Foróige club.

Table 4: Template for process evaluation of a Foróige club

Programme Components	Programme Plan	Actual Programme Implementation
<p>Target population:</p> <p>Who is eligible to participate?</p>	<p>Young people aged 10 to 18 years</p> <p>Average 15 people per night</p> <p>From X area and surrounding area</p> <p>Open to male and female</p> <p>Aims to include minority groups</p>	<p>Most young people aged 10 -13 years (80%)</p> <p>Average of 13 people per night</p> <p>Attendance low at exam times</p> <p>Came from all parts of X, highest concentration from Y</p> <p>70% of those attending were male</p> <p>Less than 5% of participants from minority groups</p>
<p>Who implements the programme?</p> <p>How is it structured?</p>	<p>Foróige volunteers</p> <p>Club Committee</p> <p>Chairperson, secretary, treasurer</p> <p>Support from RYO</p> <p>Volunteers trained in X</p>	<p>As intended</p>
<p>What does the intervention consist of?</p>	<p>Young people choose activities</p> <p>Led by volunteers</p> <p>Citizenship programme</p> <p>Some take part in leadership programme</p>	<p>Wide range of activities</p> <p>Evidence that young people-led club</p> <p>Took part in citizenship programme, reached national finals</p> <p>Young people reported high level of satisfaction with the club</p> <p>Volunteers found manual useful</p> <p>Recommendations made for more variety in activities</p>
<p>Links with associate organisations</p>	<p>Local community centre where club is based</p>	<p>Good relationships, enhanced through undertaking the citizenship project</p>
<p>Did any other factors impact on programme delivery?</p>		<p>Road works make it difficult for young people to attend</p> <p>Outbreak of swine flu affected participation for one month</p>

6. Measuring Outcomes

What is an outcome?

An outcome is the difference that can be observed as a result of an intervention. For example, a difference in knowledge, thinking, ability, behaviour or condition following the programme/intervention. Desired outcomes can be specified at the beginning of the process when the logic model or theory of change are formulated (Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, 2004).

Outcome evaluation considers whether anticipated changes occurred as intended, in the short-term and the longer-term. In all outcome evaluations, it is important to have a record of attitudes, behaviours or conditions at **baseline** (i.e. before the intervention occurred). This is the level against which subsequent change can be measured. Outcome evaluations must therefore be planned in advance to ensure that adequate baseline measures are taken and the required monitoring processes are in place.

A key concern of outcome evaluation is to demonstrate **causality** – in other words, making a plausible case that the intervention or programme understands and was responsible for the observed outcome. Outcome evaluation designs include experimental, quasi-experimental and non-experimental designs, which vary in their ability to demonstrate causality as we will see.

Experimental design

Experimental designs can provide the strongest evidence regarding causality – in other words, they can show most clearly whether the intervention under study was effective. Where an experimental design is used, eligible individuals are assigned randomly to either a control or treatment group. The main advantage of random assignment is that, given large enough groups, on average, the two groups are equivalent at the time the two groups were formed. If nothing were done to either group, their behaviours, on average, would continue to be equivalent in the future. Thus, if one group receives a particular intervention and if after the intervention, the average behaviour of this group differs significantly from that of the control group, it is likely to be as a result of the intervention (Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, 2004). While experimental designs is considered to be the 'gold standard' in policy evaluation, ethical, time and financial constraints do not always allow for this design (Shadish, Cook and Campbell, 2002).

Quasi-experimental design

Where random assignment is not possible, quasi-experimental designs may be used. These studies generate comparison groups that are not randomly chosen but resemble the intervention group in relation to a set of key characteristics. Programme participants are compared to non-participants using more complex statistical methods to account for the differences between the groups and to account for any selection bias that may arise. The weakness of the methodology is that the outcomes of the two groups can differ because of differences between the two groups. To generate valid estimates of the programme's impacts, one must control for these differences either through statistical procedures or through careful matching (Shadish, Cook and Campbell, 2002).

Non-experimental designs

Non-experimental designs do not use a comparison group but use other methods to prove programme outcomes. These approaches are widely used in small scale evaluation. These designs generally use a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data to complement and balance each other (For example, administrative data, questionnaires, interviews and standardised measures). Using a mixture of methods can deepen the understanding and interpretation of findings and highlight factors that may have been missed by a single-method evaluation. Figure 2 gives an example of outcomes and indicators used in the evaluation of an international youth initiative. It shows how this organisation identified indicators that would help it to prove that it is reaching its objectives. Again, it is important to emphasise the need to plan this type of evaluation in advance so that monitoring process can be in place to collect the required data.

Figure 2: *Example of outcomes and indicators used in an outcomes evaluation*

The outcomes and indicators of the IYF-Nokia Central European Volunteerism Model Evaluation:

Individual level:

- Increased life skills (teamwork, communication, conflict management)
- Increased project management skills (planning, implementation, budget management)
- Increased volunteerism, contribution, leadership in **communities**

Community level:

- Tangible benefit of youth projects / activities on the communities
- Youth-adult partnerships formed (parents, local authorities, etc.)
- Community perception of young people and value of volunteerism

continued on next page

Sustainability:

- Youth projects continue activities with local support
- Integration into formal education systems (as applicable)
- Youth continue volunteering in their communities

Taken from the World Bank (2008, p.17) Measuring the Impact of Youth Voluntary Service Programs

Most small scale evaluations look at both process and outcomes. For example, an evaluation of a youth service might include interviews and / or focus groups with young people, parents, staff and volunteers regarding their perspectives about the service and what they think young people get out of it. It may include questionnaires to assess people's satisfaction with the service, administrative data to see if the programme is implemented as planned and pre and post questionnaires to evaluate specific pieces of work within the service.



7. Research Methods

There are a range of research methods that can be used in evaluation. Most evaluations involve a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative methods are useful for giving an insight into how people experienced a particular intervention or project, while quantitative methods can illustrate useful data in relation to the percentages of respondents achieving particular outcomes, the numbers of participants, frequency of use and other statistical data. Before looking at the methods used in evaluation, it is useful to provide a brief overview of what we mean by qualitative and quantitative research.

What is Quantitative research?

Quantitative research involves the adoption of a systematic approach to quantify the phenomenon under study, seeking precise measurements and analysis of variables. One of the main attractions of quantitative research is that generalisation to a wider population is possible (Bryman, 2012).

Quantitative Research:

- Is rooted in a natural scientific, positivist approach that sees social reality as external and objective and amenable to being measured
- Involves precision measurement of numerical and statistical data, asking questions such as how many?, how significant?
- Is highly structured and designed to test particular hypothesis, leaving little scope for flexibility during the study
- If conducted with a representative sample of the population, findings can be generalised to the wider population
- Requires large samples for certain analyses to be performed
- Uses methods such as surveys and questionnaires
- Analysis is undertaken with computer aided programmes such as SPSS

What is Qualitative research?

Qualitative methods address questions that relate to the meaning of experiences for different people. It often precedes or is done alongside quantitative research to provide information in relation to people's experiences (Bryman, 2012). This type of research:

- Studies the social reality of a particular group/phenomenon based on their own perspective
- Uses methods such as interviews, focus groups and observation
- Chooses samples for their relevance to the topic under examination, thus sample size does not matter as much as in quantitative research
- Because samples are not representative, findings cannot be generalised to a wider population
- Is flexible - new directions can be taken where something unexpected turns up
- Emphasises in-depth description and analysis of data
- Analysis can be done manually or with computer software such as NVivo

Mixed methods research is research in which quantitative and qualitative techniques are mixed in a single study. The idea is that qualitative and quantitative methods are used in a mixture or combination so that the study can benefit from the strengths of both approaches.

Research Methods

Research methods are techniques for collecting data. Particular methods are associated with either qualitative or quantitative research. For example, interviews, focus groups and observation are used in qualitative research, while questionnaires and standardised measures are associated with quantitative research. However, the qualitative / quantitative divide is not set in stone. For example, questionnaires are often used in qualitative studies.

Interviewing

Interviewing is a conversation between two or more people, in which the interviewer asks questions to obtain information from the interviewee. Interviews can be structured, whereby a list of questions is followed closely or semi-structured whereby the interviewer can veer from the list of questions to probe more deeply if needed.

Focus groups

In a focus group, a group of people are asked about their attitudes. Questions are directed but participants are free to talk with other group members. Focus groups allow interviewers to study people in a more natural setting than in a one-to-one interview.



Surveys and questionnaires

Questionnaires and surveys are a means of asking respondents a series of questions in relation to the phenomenon under study. They have the advantages of being cheap and quick to administer and are convenient for respondents. However, as a researcher you can't prompt or probe or ask too many complex questions. Self-completion questionnaires may not be suitable where respondents may have literacy or language problems – in these cases it is better to use a different method or to provide support to the respondent in completing the questionnaire.

Standardised measures

Standardised measures are surveys that have been developed to measure particular aspects of behaviour or attitudes. They have been widely tested to prove that they are valid and do actually measure what they are supposed to. These measures are used in outcomes evaluation (particularly experimental designs) to provide a profile of the participant at baseline and then following the intervention. There are a range of measures that can be used and the measure chosen should reflect something that the intervention aims to change. A score is calculated for the respondent each time they complete the survey and their score after the intervention is compared to their score before the intervention to see if there has been any change. The measure should be sensitive enough to detect the small changes that typically result from programmes (Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, 2004).

A list of standardised measures is provided in Appendix 1. It is important that a person undertaking research understands how to administer the measure and how to score and interpret the results.

Documents and records

Documents and records of activity in a group or project are very useful methods to use in monitoring and evaluation. Analysis of this data can yield valuable insights – for example, how many young people

attended the service on a regular basis? What types of activities did they engage in? Also, minutes of meetings provide a historical overview of the key issues and challenges faced in a programme. Photos and newspaper articles are also valuable documentary evidence of a project's work.

Participant observation

Participant observation occurs where the person doing a study immerses him or herself in the research setting for a particular period of time, observing behaviour, listening to conversations and asking questions. The participant observer takes notes and may use other methods such as audio recordings, video and photographs. While this method can yield interesting insights, it is important that the researcher does not 'go native' - in other words, over-identify with the research participants and lose sight of his or her position as an objective researcher (Bryman, 2012, p.445). It is also important to ensure that the people being researched are aware that research is taking place and have agreed to it.

Secondary data

Secondary data such as CSO census reports or data produced as part of other research can be drawn upon in an evaluation. For example, CSO data can show how many young people within a particular age range live in an area, from which you could calculate what percentage attend youth services in the region.

How do I choose what methods to use?

The methods you choose will depend on the aim of your study and the resources (such as time, money, expertise) that you have available.

Examples:

Aim: To explore how a new youth café is working

Methods: Interviews, focus groups, observation, attendance data

Aim: To assess outcomes from a programme to prevent alcohol and drug use among young people

Methods: Could use pre and post standardised measures, interviews, compare to a group that didn't get the programme, follow up after one year

8. Values and Ethics

Research and evaluation activity should be underpinned by an explicit set of values and clarity regarding how ethical issues are addressed. Some of the values that relate to Foróige's evaluation work are as follows:

- Staff involved engage with an open mind and a commitment to learn and develop their practice and that they receive due respect for their willingness to do so
- There is respect for the viewpoints of all people taking part in the process – including young people, staff, managers and funders
- Evaluation and monitoring activities are undertaken with integrity and honesty
- Evaluation and monitoring are part of the culture of the organisation and something that is built into everyday practice
- The process is designed in a way that is easy to use and does not place a burden on volunteers who are already giving their time
- Stakeholders receive support and recognition for the work they have done
- The process is underpinned by a respect for people's rights, a commitment to do no harm and a respect for confidentiality
- All stakeholders taking part should give informed consent and have a right to withdraw if they wish

The core question related to ethics in research is 'how should we treat the people with whom we conduct research?'

It is incumbent on all people undertaking research to reflect on the ethical implications of their research. Researchers are expected to be honest in their endeavours and open about the nature of their research and their findings. They are expected to avoid any harm to participants, invasion of privacy and deception of any form. Anonymity and confidentiality should be protected where possible.

Furthermore, it is expected that research should be of good quality and be undertaken in accordance with best practice in the field. It is important not to use people as 'research fodder' - in other words, just using them for their viewpoints and not reporting back findings.

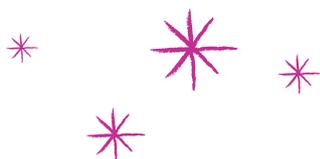
Furthermore, there is a 'duty to care' if a young person discloses self or other person harm or risk. The young person should be informed before an interview or focus group that the researcher is bound by Children First guidelines.



Some ethical guidelines for researchers are:

- Always ask for informed consent from participants and their parents / guardians. Provide a user friendly summary of the research process and a consent form for both parents / guardians and young people. Give them time to consider and read the summary before agreeing to take part.
- Adopt a reflective stance in relation to the ethical issues arising. For example, do young people feel that they have to participate in the research if they want to continue attending the project? How can you ensure that they have a free choice?
- Feed back findings to research participants where possible

When undertaking research, it is useful to submit your research plan to an ethics committee for approval. This form of peer review helps to ensure that the study is ethically sound and that any potential issues have not been overlooked.



9. Data Protection

Researchers are expected to keep clear and accurate records of the research procedures followed and the results obtained. This is necessary in the event that questions are asked about the conduct of the research or the results obtained.

Data generated in the process of research should be kept securely in paper or electronic form. Data should be anonymised to protect the confidentiality of participants. Where possible, identifier codes should be used rather than names. The storage of such data must be kept in accordance with Foróige's data protection policy.

It is considered to be good practice to store research data for several years after any evaluation.



10. Measuring Costs

While putting youth-work and monetary value in the same sentence may be unfamiliar and challenging for people in the field, there are many good reasons for doing so. It costs money to run Foróige, operating the organisation overall, paying for professional staff and covering the running costs of programmes, among other areas. Obviously, in an organisation that is dependent on outside funding, it is important that money is carefully managed. For this reason alone, good data on operational costs, either of the Foróige regions, or on individual programmes, is a good idea. Simple comparisons between regions or across programme can help monitor costs in the organisation and improve organisational and programme efficiency.

A different cost related question concerns the benefits that Foróige intends for young people. Take for example, community connectedness. If a Foróige programme was show to increase community connectedness in a cohort of young people by 25%, a useful piece of information for the organisation, its funders and other policy makers is what programme costs are necessary for this (for each €1,000 what increase in the level of community connectedness among youth can be achieved). A variation on this type of approach is to consider positive outcomes for children in terms of potential cost savings – for example, savings from maintaining youth in community settings as opposed to state care, either for welfare or justice reasons.

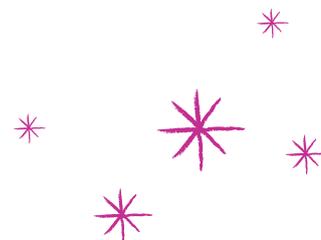


11. Commissioning and Managing Research and Evaluation

While much useful information can be generated by Foróige itself, from time to time, it will want to contract others to undertake research and evaluation studies on particular aspects of the work. It is important that the commissioning and managing of research is underpinned by good practice. One way to focus thinking on contracting research is to develop a terms of reference. Normally, a terms of reference will set out:

1. Context and rationale (context within which research is set, reason that it is being requested)
2. Aim / overall questions
3. General methodology (what the general approach to the research will be)
4. Budget
5. Timeframe
6. Governance (how the research will be managed, operation of advisory or other committee, key contact point for the research)

It is advisable to have references for any researcher or research organization involved. If the research is more technical, sometimes it is helpful to get support from a researcher to review proposals, or indeed set up an advisory group comprising experts.



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http://www.unodc.org/pdf/youthnet/action/planning/m&e_E.pdf

Veerman, J.W. & Van Yperen, T.A. (2007) Degrees of freedom and degrees of certainty: A developmental model for the establishment of evidence-based youth care. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 30 (2007) 212-221.

World Bank (2008) *Measuring the Impact of Youth Voluntary Service Programs*. Washington: The World Bank.

Appendix 1

List of standardised measures for consideration in outcome studies

Category	Name	Source	What does it measure?	No. of questions
(1) Life skills e-version	Life skills evaluation tool	http://4hcydri.org/agentresources.html 4 h centre for youth development, research and innovation Mincemoyer, C. & Perkins, D. (2005)	Communication, problem solving, making decisions, achieving goals in everyday life Has sections for pre and post an intervention – completed at the end Ages 11-19	25
(2) Positive youth development e-version	Measure of Positive Youth Development (PYD)	Richard Lerner (2008) Tufts University Used as part of the 4h study of youth development	Measures character, competence, caring, connection and confidence Ages 10 plus	77
(3) Self-concept Hard copy	Piers-Harris 2 Children's self-concept scale	Piers, Harris and Herzberg, 2002	Measures how children and young people feel about themselves. Six subscales – behavioural adjustment, intellectual and school status, physical appearance and attributes, freedom from anxiety, popularity and happiness and satisfaction 7-18 years	60
(4) Self-perception	Harter (1985) Self-perception profile for children	Harter (1985)	Sense of acceptance by peers, Sense of efficacy in relation to school work,	12
(5) Health related quality of life Copyright issues	KIDSCREEN	www.kidscreen.org Used in an EU wide survey, including Ireland, see OMC 2008	Health, peers, family, self-perception, bullying 8-18 years	52 full 27 short
(6) Resilience	Child and Youth Resilience Measure	Michael Ungar et al	Measures individual, relational, community and socio-cultural items. Higher scores indicate higher levels of resilience.	28
(7) Problem & pro-social behavior Available online	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)	Goodman (1997) www.sdqinfo.com	Emotional and behavioural problems. Can be completed by either (or by a combination of) the child, parent or teacher. Good for screening level of risk.	25
(8) Social support e-version	Social Provisions Scale – SPS	Cutrona & Russell, 1984; Modified by Dolan & Cutrona, (SPS-R) 2002	Support from parents, peers, siblings and other adults	16
(9) Self-esteem e-version	Rosenberg	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE): Rosenberg, 1965:	Measure of global feelings of self-worth/self-acceptance ages 11 plus	10
(10) Self-esteem	Hare	Abbreviated Hare Area-Specific Self-Esteem Scale (AbHASS) Kelley, Denny & Young (1997):	Peer self-esteem, Home self-esteem, and school self-esteem.	
(11) Hopefulness / agency e-version	Children's Hope Scale	Caplan, M.Z., Weissburg, R.P., Grober, J.S., & Sivo, P.J., 1990	Perceptions that the child has the capacity to produce routes to goals	6

List of standardised measures for consideration in outcome studies *continued*

Category	Name	Source	What does it measure?	No. of questions
(12) School Liking e-version	School Liking	Adapted from scale used by Eccles in a study with middle school youth	Whether look forward to / like school	3
(13) Misconduct E-version	Misconduct	Brown, Clasen, & Eicher, 1986, adapted by Vandell, 1996	Measures engagement in risk behaviour – drugs, alcohol, skipping school, hitting, taking things	6
(14) Trust in parents e-version	Parental Trust IPPA subscale	Armsden & Greenberg, 1987 (short version)	Degree of trust in parents	4
(15) Wellbeing e-version	Adolescent wellbeing scale	AdWs; Birelson, 1980	Screening tool for depression in young people. Scores above 13 indicate a problem.	17
(16) Impulsivity	UPPS short scale	Whiteside, S., Lynam, D.R., Miller, J.D, Reynolds, S.K., 2005	Measures facets of impulsivity, including urgency, lack of premeditation, lack of perserverance and sensation seeking. May be useful in youth justice contexts.	20
(17) Empathy	Basic Empathy Scale	Jolliffe, D. & Farrington, D.P. 2007 (seek permission for use)	Measures levels of cognitive and affective empathy. May be useful in youth justice contexts.	20
(18) Parent-child relationship	Parent-child relationship questionnaire	Ghate & Hazel (2002) Parenting in poor environments.	Assesses the parents coping and enjoyment of parenthood. May be useful in working with young parents.	6
(19) Drugs & alcohol	Drugs and Alcohol Education Questionnaire	Adapted by Sue Redmond from HBSC and ESPAD surveys	Questions relate to young person's attitude to drugs, cigarettes and alcohol. Could use some of the sub-scales in evaluation of a drugs / alcohol education programme.	63

Appendix 3

Evaluation Resources

Key Text on Evaluation:

Rossi, PH, Lipsey, Mark W. and Freeman, Howard E. (2004) *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach – Seventh Edition*. Sage Publications.

Evaluating Youth Work / Youth Development:

Bradford, S., Cullen, F. (2011) *Research and Research Methods for Youth Practitioners*, Routledge.

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Web Resources:

W. K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook (1998)
<http://www.wkkf.org/knowledge-center/publications-and-resources.aspx>

W. K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide (1998)
<http://www.wkkf.org/knowledge-center/publications-and-resources.aspx>

Basic Guide to Program Evaluation
http://managementhelp.org/evaluatn/fnl_eval.htm#anchor1665834

The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/other_resrch/pm_guide_eval/reports/pmguide/program_managers_guide_to_eval2010.pdf

What is evaluation? A Beginners Guide
<http://gsociology.icaap.org/methods/BasicguidesHandouts.html>

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