School of Life Sciences
University of Dundee

Our Evaluation Story

We started looking seriously at our evaluation strategy at the end of 2017 and quickly realised we didn't really have one. That didn't mean we weren't doing evaluation, but it was very 'apples and oranges' – evaluating the individual aims of the projects and whether they were 'good'. We wanted to be able to look at our evaluation as a whole but didn't know where to start.

We realised we needed external advice and help, and this is where **Evaluation Support Scotland** came in. They visited us on-site and ran several 3 hour interactive sessions with our team, leading us through the process of identifying our outcomes, indicators and then the methods of determining whether we achieved them (which seemed sort of backwards at first, but soon made sense!)
It was extremely helpful and refreshing to have experienced evaluators coaching us through the process, which included discussions of the best way to analyse and report on our evaluation once it was finished.

One of the first things we did was complete a logic model of all our activities.

The logic model is a simple visual communication tool to help you set out your project goals and aims. It can be for one discrete activity or expanded to encompass an entire approach for example, a PE team strategy (see page 6).

Quantifying what your inputs and outputs are can help you 'take stock' of the activity or programme and look at whether you are being realistic.

- Short term outcomes are things you can actually expect to influence – and measure
- Medium term outcomes might be measurable, but need time and money dedicated to doing so
- Long term outcomes you may never measure (or divorce from multiple influencing factors) – it's better to link with existing research

Key things to keep in mind are your WHO: who are you working with and WHAT: what are you trying to achieve

You can't evaluate anything unless you know both these things!

Once you know your desired outcomes you can set your indicators – i.e. how will you measure if you've achieved them successfully?

It's important to note that you should NOT use 'change words' here. This is supposed to be a static measurement – something you could take at the beginning, middle or end of a project and compare to one another. This could take the form of statements participants might agree or disagree with, the existence of certain key things, etc. You can list as many as you like, but ideally you should narrow these all down to the most meaningful 3-4 indicators so as not to overload your evaluation.

Once you have decided on these (no easy process) it's time to figure out what methods you might use to gather this information. A huge variety of evaluation methods exist but remember you should use the ones best suited for the type of information you're looking to collect. (See page 3.)

Examples include: questionnaires, interviews, internal records, observation, interactive feedback, external endorsement.

It's as important to analyse, report and act on your evaluation as it is to gather it – without doing so you won't know if you're achieving your aims! Whether quantitative or qualitative the data you collect will tell you something about your activities, even things you might not be expecting. This unexpected information can be just as useful as the expected – sometimes moreso!

When reporting on your evaluation remember that you are trying to tell a story about what you are doing and why. An effective framing device can be as simple as:

- Once upon a time (where we started)
- Along the way (what did you do?)
- At the end (where did you end up?)
- And the moral of the story is (key lessons learned)

So what is our story?

Once upon a time we believed we were doing a lot of great PE. So we decided to take a step back, look at our evaluation plan strategically and get help.

Along the way we really had to think about what we were doing and why, and pin down what was important to us about our work and our projects. We gathered a lot of tools to make it easier to think and talk about these things and learned that there's a wealth of information out there.

At the end we had a really solid idea of what we were trying to achieve and who our audiences were, which helped us focus our planning better. We also had an evaluation strategy that allows us to evaluate throughout a project and analyse and act on what we learn.

The moral of the story is that coming up with an evaluation strategy really helps you figure out what is valuable in what you do and focus your efforts on doing it even better. It takes time and a lot of thought to do properly, but it's a very useful process that everyone should undertake!

Outcomes and Indicators with Evaluation Methods

Key for Evaluation Methods

- **Q** Questionnaire
- **O** Observation
- **IF** Interactive Feedback
- **I** Interview
- **IR** Internal Records
- **EE** External Endorsement

Outcomes for public (including teachers and pupils)

Greater understanding of science

- No. of learning outcomes adequately achieved **Q, O, IF, I**
- "I can explain [activity]" **Q, O, I**
- "I understand the world of science" **Q, IF, I**
- "I understand the methodology of science" **Q, IF, I**

Greater enthusiasm for science

- "I feel enthusiastic about science" **Q, O, I**
- No. of events that individuals come to **IR**
- "I share what I have learned" **I**

New skills

- I can do/explain/teach [skill] **Q, O, I**
- No. of repeat requests for skill training (inc. teacher CPD) **IR**
- "I have used [skill]" **Q, I**

Outcomes for teachers and pupils

Increase in pupil attainment

- Number of learners continuing in science at next stage **EE**
- Quality of classroom engagement/questions/projects **O**

Outcomes for staff and students

Staff and students have increased PE skills

- "I can run a PE event safely" **O, IR**
- "I can reflect on what I did/what happened" **Q, I**
- "I know how to help people learn" **Q, O, I**
- "I can explain my ideas in simple language" **O, I**

Staff and students have greater enthusiasm for PE

- "I feel confident to do more of this" **Q, O, I**
- No. of staff participating/Repeat participation **IR**
- Positive comments about experience **Q, O, I**
- Variety of activities/novel approaches **O, IR**

Staff and students have increased access to useful resources

- No. of (useful) resources **IR**
- "I am aware/know there are resources"/"I know how to access resources" **Q, O, I, IR**
- "I feel this is useful/the best resource for its intended purpose" **Q, I**

New perspective on topic in question

- "I understand the public perspective on my topic" **Q, O, I**
- No. of new collaborations/partnerships **IR, EE**

Outcomes for School of Life Sciences Public Engagement team

More meaningful PE activities

- "I feel this activity reflects the research taking place within the University" **Q, O**
- Activities have explicit learning outcomes **IR**
- Number of uses of each resource, idea or activity **IR**
- Consultation and development with audience or partner groups **IR, EE**

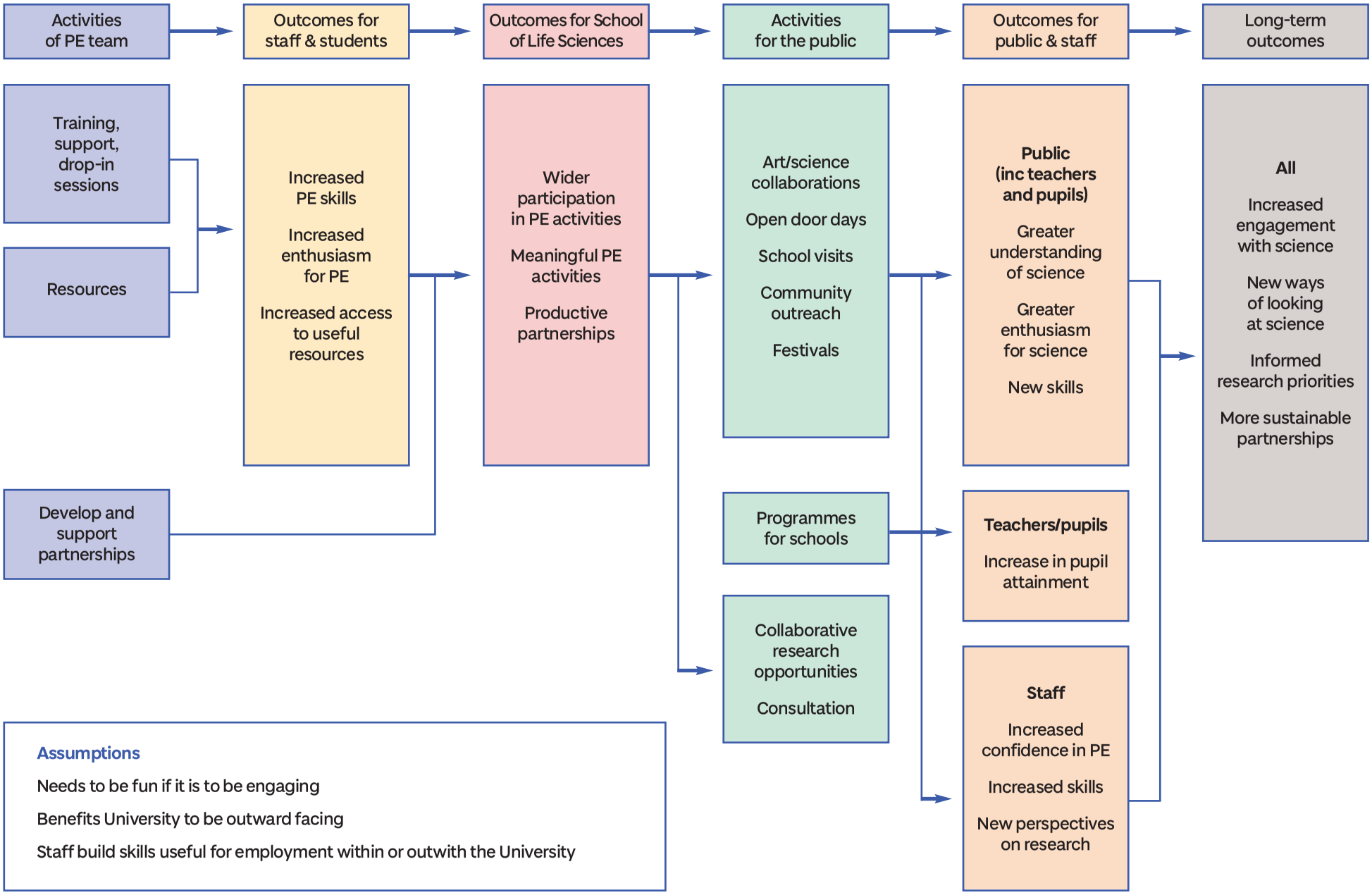
More productive partnerships

- Length of time for partnership and number of projects/activities produced **IR**
- Partnership agreement exists **IR**
- "I feel all partner goals are being worked towards and there is good communication in place" **Q, I**
- Instances of sharing outcomes externally **EE**

Wider participation in PE activities

- Demographics of staff members and students taking part **Q, O**
- Demographics of public engaged with **Q, O**
- "I can see myself reflected in those participating" **Q, I**
- No. of people attending training sessions **IR**
- Have the participants engaged before? **Q, I, IR**
- How did participants hear about us? **Q, I**

School of Life Sciences University of Dundee logic model



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National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement

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