

## Taking a team approach to develop a theory of change

**This case study is about how working as a team can help develop good evaluation practice**

**Read it if you work in third sector organisation that hasn't worked out its evaluation plan yet**

**It will show you that developing logic model helps you understand the difference you want to make and makes it easier to identify outcomes and indicators.**

### Introduction

The Ecology Centre is an inclusive, community-led charity which inspires positive change through directly connecting people and the natural environment for the benefit of both.

The Ecology Centre was initially referred to Evaluation Support Scotland for support by our funders Robertson Trust and then NCLF for further support. Our funding manager had attended *Let's Evaluate* and passed on some of her learning before leaving the organisation and this was picked up by manager, David Stockwell to take forward.

"The Ecology Centre knows that it needs to evaluate its work but is nervous about **how** to do it and how to **embed** it in a way that **adds value** rather than derailing the good work which is already being done. It will be important to be sure there is a **shared understanding** of what evaluation means and how to go about thinking about doing it." David Stockwell

### What we did

ESS worked with us over a few months.

- 3 Education Team staff received tailored support to review our Weaver's Triangles
- Staff and board members attended a whole day session to think about evaluation and how best to embed it, and to develop a Logic Model for our Education Team.

The morning session aimed to get everyone on board with the value and language of evaluation, and a shared sense of where we're at as an organisation. The afternoon was split so the Education Team could work together on developing a Logic Model for their work, and the Volunteer Team could spend some time thinking through outcomes for their projects.

- Our Marketing Manager attended Inspiring Impact: sharing tools session in November 2018
- Our evaluation lead attended Let's Evaluate! workshops
- Our manager and evaluation lead went to the NCLF 'How's it going?' session in February 2019

### Challenges and successes:

- Getting staff to understand and acknowledge the role that they all play in obtaining evidence for effective evaluation was the hardest part, but also the key to success.
- Staff turnover and changes in roles meant that responsibilities had to be shared and passed on where appropriate, which challenged our

ability to collect coherent evidence over a sustained period.

- We were worried about evaluating work that had been going on for a long time which didn't have clear baseline data for. ESS suggested how we might gather 'on the spot' baseline and review by asking people what had changed for them since being involved with the projects.

## The difference we made



The session worked very well in stimulating the entire staff team to reflect on the importance that the organisation was placing upon evaluation going forward.

We have completely reviewed and revised our evaluation planning and methods for our educational work.

We have used the Capturing Casual Moments to gather evidence about their outcomes in their Nature Therapy project:

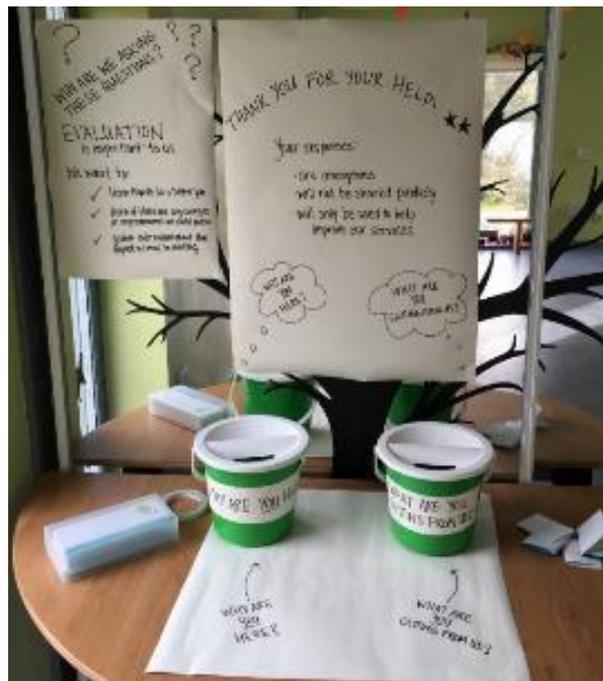
Capturing Casual Moments  
Nature Therapy

Child's Name: [redacted] Age: [redacted] School: [redacted]

Context: [redacted]

Outcome	Indicator	Evidenced
Children are more confident	Children can name things that are good in nature Children engage in new activities Children demonstrate trust in group leader and/or other group participants	✓ ✓ ✓
Children are better able to work with others including adults	Children successfully work in groups of 2 Children successfully work in groups of 3-5 Children are able to listen and take turns	✓ ✓ ✓
Children are more resilient	Children return to a task they found difficult Children are able to engage in learning in all weathers Children engage in activity they are nervous or frightened of	✓ ✓ ✓
Children are more empathetic	Children show concern for others Children help others in the group Children can put themselves in the shoes of others, group leaders, other children or living things in nature	✓ ✓ ✓
Children have a stronger connection to the natural world through increased skills and knowledge	Children can name a native species they have seen Children report enjoying spending time in nature Children demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the natural world	✓ ✓ ✓
Children are more engaged with learning	Children show an increased attendance on outdoor learning days Children show curiosity in the natural world Children ask appropriate questions	✓ ✓ ✓

*We were planning near a tree. Ryan did not want to engage so had been sitting. I noticed he was just watching. I noticed Ryan had said he was not sure if he could do this as he was a particularly difficult task. Ryan said this & I would have said to come and to watch. After that Tony had finished looking me, he turned to Ryan and said 'you could have a shot'. Ryan then let Tony lead him around a small tree which was not to peak. Tony made a lot effort to make the game fun for him.*



We tried a new method to evaluate our long-running Volunteer Wednesdays, as seen in the photograph above.

## What we learnt

- We need to take time as a team to keep evaluation on the agenda.
- We have to share responsibilities for evaluation for it to be effective and to support each other.
- It's not that complicated! We kept data capture techniques simple and made sure we didn't ask too much of our service users.
- **Looking to the future** – We are hoping to continue our evaluation journey to fully embed our evaluation process across all of the organisation's activities.

## Contact details

If you want ESS's support please contact [Evaluation Support Scotland](mailto:info@evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk) July 2019

Evaluation Support Scotland 5 Rose Street, Edinburgh, EH2 2PR 0131 243 2770

[info@evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)

[www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk](http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)

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