

ESS principles for good evaluation

ESS is clear that there is no absolute standard for self-evaluation. What is good enough depends on what you need evaluation for, your context, the needs of your service users and practical considerations like time and resource.

However there are principles to help you judge if you are happy with your evaluation. The following principles are the distillation of ESS's 17 years' experience.

We will consult later in 2022 on how we can best support third sector organisations to meet these principles; and how funders can help. If you have any comments now please get in touch at info@evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk.



1. About what matters

- the focus of evaluation is outcomes – what difference you make (or not), how you make that difference and to whom



2. Fits the way you do your work

- methods and recording are as easy as possible for everyone
- evaluation happens as part of delivery



3. Involves the people you support

- the people you support (service users) have the opportunity to feed back and they know what you do with their feedback
- service users are able to reflect for themselves on progress and feel included
- ideally service users have a chance to lead on some aspect of evaluation such as setting outcomes, designing methods or analysing data
- your evaluation does no harm



4. Used by you

- to understand the value of your work and to celebrate
- to improve
- to plan what to do next



5. Communicated well to others

- funders, policy makers, and other stakeholders are convinced and able to use your evaluation to take action themselves