

BUILDING YOUR MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

NPC's four pillar approach

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Anne Kazimirski and David Pritchard

At NPC we believe in impact measurement as a way for charities and funders to increase their effectiveness. We know it helps organisations improve what they do and deliver the best results for their beneficiaries. Here we publish our four pillar approach which provides clear and practical guidance on developing an impact measurement framework.

A journey to greater impact

Building an effective measurement framework depends on a strong foundation. It requires buy-in from senior staff and trustees, the investment of time and money, and a culture that is committed to learning and improving—only then can our four pillar approach be applied. But the development and implementation of a measurement framework is not an end in itself either: you need to use the findings to review and improve your practices to see the benefits.

NPC's four pillar approach



While ours is not the only approach, we know through our experience that it works for a variety of sizes and types of charities and funders, and results in an efficient, understandable and useful end product.

'The work NPC performed on developing a theory of change and measurement tools was hugely useful... the importance of having an impact-focused organisation cannot be overestimated.'

Nick Carey, Shaw Trust

The four pillars

Our guidance takes you through four steps to developing a successful measurement framework.

Step one: Map your theory of change



Many charities struggle to know where to begin with impact measurement. A theory of change should be at the heart of your approach because it shows what you want to achieve and how you plan to achieve it, setting out the causal links between your activities and your end goal. It provides a theoretical framework to underpin your measurement efforts, so you can move away from ad hoc, opportunist data collection.

We explain the benefits of a theory of change, how to develop one and the pitfalls to avoid.

Step two: Prioritise what you measure



Your impact is likely to be diffuse, affecting different people in different ways. Trying to capture all these changes is complicated and may not be the best use of resources. Prioritise the most important outcomes in your theory of change and focus on measuring those. Remember to consider data on the possible negative unintended consequences of your work too; this will help further improve what you do.

We help you decide which outcomes to measure and what to prioritise in your measurement framework.

Step three: Choose your level of evidence



Choose an appropriate level of rigour of evidence that suits the needs of your stakeholders. This will depend on a combination of what is desired or needed and what is practical. Funders may want a certain level of rigour for a project they have funded; academics or government research departments may want to see a counterfactual. Above all, choose an approach that helps you achieve your mission.

We offer four main ways to show you make a difference and the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Step four: Select your sources and tools



You may be able to use existing data or tools, or you may need to develop your own. It is likely others will be measuring the same outcomes as you, so look at what already exists and assess its suitability. This should be done after you have created your theory of change and are clear on the change you want to bring about. Do not be tempted to prioritise data that is easy to collect but does not tell you much about your impact.

We help you decide what type of data you need, who to collect it from, and which tools to select.

To download the full guidance and for more information about NPC visit www.thinkNPC.org

Get in touch

NPC's mission is to help charities and funders improve the lives of their beneficiaries. We seek to help them become more effective and efficient, through our consulting, advice, training and research. But we are also on our own journey to improve, and we would like to hear your views on our approach and what more we could do. Please contact info@thinkNPC.org with your comments.