Implementing and evaluating co-design
A step-by-step toolkit

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Part of NPC's work on user involvement

Key terms

User: A person who uses or is intended to benefit from a service or intervention

Participant: A person who is actively involved in the co-design process, e.g. users, staff, volunteers

Co-design: When an organisation and its stakeholders are involved in designing or rethinking a service, with designers and people not trained in design working together in the development process

INTRODUCTION

Putting users at the heart of your work

At NPC we believe many charities could be doing more to involve users in decisions which affect them. In many cases, the people that charities exist to help have little or no influence over those organisations' decisions. Through our work on user involvement, we encourage charities and funders to explore how they can design and deliver solutions 'with' people rather than 'to' people, to build services that better address their needs.

As part of NPC's work on user involvement, we are pleased to offer this toolkit, which focuses specifically on co-design. We explore what co-design is and why it matters. Our five-stage process offers a roadmap for planning and implementing your co-design, with tips and tools for each of the five stages. We also explore how you can assess the outcomes of your co-design and the quality of your processes, and how to review and learn from the data. We use case studies throughout to illustrate how these ideas work in practice.

We have written this with service delivery organisations in mind, but you can apply these principles to any organisation looking to start or improve its co-design.

To find out about what others are doing in the sector come to our training events and seminars, or speak with our team of consultants, who can provide bespoke support. Discover more of what we offer at www.thinkNPC.org.

Rosie McLeod, User Involvement Lead

What is co-design?

Co-design is when an organisation and its stakeholders are involved in designing or rethinking a service. The central feature of any co-design process is how it recognises the agency of users, who are experts of their own experience. Organisations can provide ways for users to engage with each other as well as with staff, to communicate, be creative, share insights, and test out new ideas.

Co-design sits on a spectrum of ways in which users can be involved in service design and development, as shown in Figure 1. Co-design is about more than just consultation and feedback. In co-design, your users will actively identify the issues and potential solutions with you, rather than merely responding to what you have already set out for them.[1]

Figure 1: Spectrum of user involvement approaches

Research	Consultation and feedback mechanisms	Collaboration and co-design	Co-production	User-led
Inviting views; no commitment to respond	Systematic request for views, organisation committed to respond/ acknowledge	Contribute to decision-making	Shared decision-making, influence on delivery	Governance and decisions led by users

What are the potential benefits of co-design?

There are many potential benefits to co-designing products and services, which reflect wider benefits to involving users in decisions. For example:

- **For the participants involved**: Co-design can create intrinsic positive benefits, as explored below.
- **For organisations and their users:** Co-design can be instrumental in creating better services, and better outcomes for users and organisations. There is widespread recognition that services co-designed with users are more likely to: be responsive to their needs and able to create the right conditions for engagement; facilitate openness and trust; and, ultimately, be effective.
- **Morally**, there is the argument that users should have a say in the decisions affecting them.

Other benefits will depend on the intended purpose of your co-design, and your reasons for choosing co-design as a way to involve your users.

Example: Improving youth centres

A charity worked with young people on a project to make youth centres more welcoming for young people. Participants co-designed an audit that the youth centres could use to improve their facilities. As a result of participation, the young people learned new skills and increased their confidence. The youth centres were able to improve the environment they provided for young people and engage with more young people.

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[1] For more information on other forms of user involvement, see NPC (2018) *Make it Count: Why impact matters in user involvement.*

How co-design helps participants

A participant is anyone who is actively involved in the co-design process, such as users, staff, and volunteers. Positive outcomes can include:

- Increased confidence and engagement
- New and stronger social connections
- Improved access to information
- Stronger leadership and convening skills
- Greater knowledge and expertise on a particular issue and/or the co-design process[2]

Figure 2 outlines an example of positive outcomes for participating users, which also contributes to the organisation's intended impact, which in this case is '*Young people contribute to stronger and more resilient communities*'. Co-design helps achieve this by improving the skills and knowledge of participants, enabling them to engage more in community activities.

Figure 2: Outcomes of co-design for participants from an organisation's perspective

Young people co-design a local community project → Young people develop their skills and knowledge → Young people have increased awareness of local issues → Young people engage more in local community activities → Young people contribute to stronger and more resilient communities

Figure 3 shows how co-design can generate positive outcomes for participants beyond the intended impact of an organisation. In this example we see how the same organisation as described above can facilitate additional positive outcomes for participants.

Figure 3: Outcomes of co-design for participants from a participant's perspective

Young people co-design a local community project → Young people develop their skills and knowledge → Young people have improved confidence and self-esteem → Young people progress in/into employment or education → Young people are in fulfilling and sustainable employment

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[2] For more information on the outcomes of involvement for participants, see NPC (2018) *Make it Count: Why impact matters in user involvement.*

How co-design helps organisations and the wider sector

Co-design can improve the way services are designed and delivered to make them work better for users, organisations and the wider sector. Specific outcomes for organisations and services might include:

- Improved knowledge of users' needs and responsiveness to those needs

- Smarter decision-making

- Better ideas

- Cheaper development costs for services

- More effective cooperation between people and organisations, and across disciplines

- Greater satisfaction and loyalty from service users

- Stronger support for innovation and change

- Improved relationships between organisations and users

Figures 4 and 5 show examples of the positive outcomes that co-design can have for users and the wider sector, by improving a charity's service delivery or provision:

Figure 4: Outcomes of co-design for an organisation

Young people co-design a local community project → Young people feel inspired and engaged → Young people engage more with the project and invite others to do the same → The local community project is scaled up and replicated → Young people contribute to stronger and more resilient communities

Figure 5: Outcomes of co-design for broader service users

Young people co-design a local community project → Young people's needs shape service delivery → Local community project is more responsive to young people's needs → More young people engage in activities that suit their needs → Young people contribute to stronger and more resilient communities

It is important to bear in mind that co-design can also generate negative outcomes when done badly. Tokenistic co-design or poor execution risks cynicism amongst participants by raising expectations and not meeting them.

Example: User advisory panels

To co-design new marketing materials, a charity established a user advisory panel. The panel helped scope the problem and ideas for new materials, and then worked with the organisation to co-design and disseminate the new materials.

CO-DESIGN: A FIVE-STAGE PROCESS

When planning and developing your co-design process, it is important to be clear about the purpose. For example, your objective may be to re-think an existing service to better reflect user needs, by their own report. Or a key priority could be achieving positive outcomes for participants, such as encouraging and empowering users to engage with specific activities. You may be seeking to strengthen relationships between staff and volunteers. Ultimately, you need to know **what** you are trying to achieve to be able to monitor and understand if you are going in the right direction.

Figure 6 outlines a five-stage roadmap to co-design.[3] In this section, we discuss how to approach and monitor each stage, along with links to useful tools. The five stages build on each other and the advice outlined in each stage applies to each successive stage as well. Remember that each stage relates to the co-design process, not the actual design and delivery of a service.

Figure 6: The five-stage process of co-design

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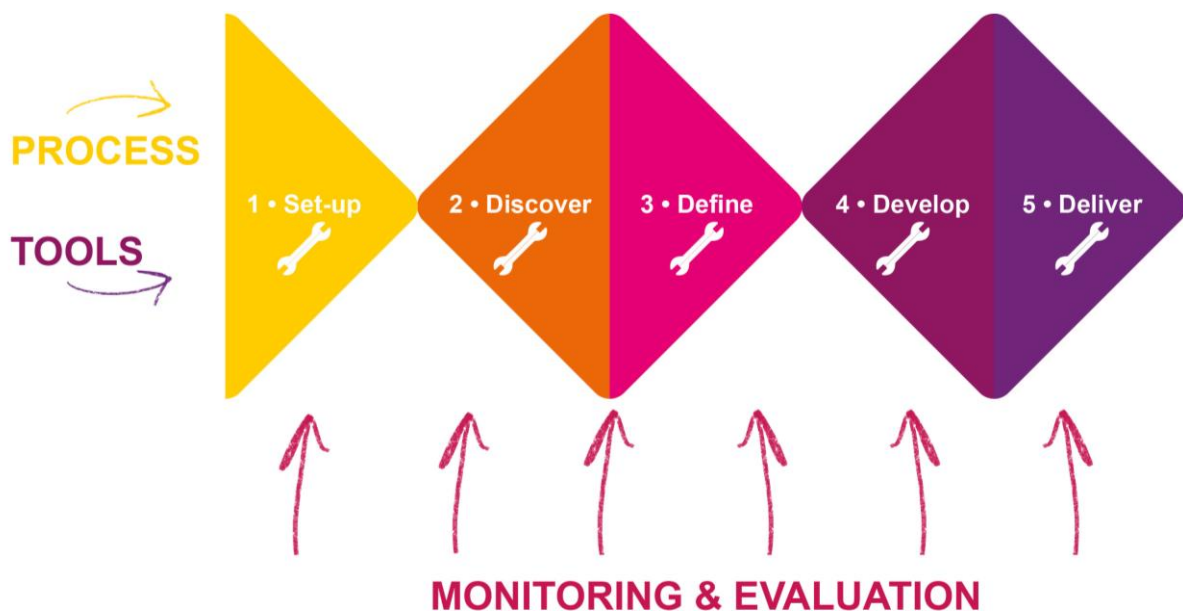
[3] The five-stage process of co-design is adapted from the Design Council (2015), *Design methods for developing services*.

Stage 1: Set-up

The aim of this stage is to **get your co-design off to a solid start**:

- **Engage participants.** They should reflect your intended user groups and broader community.

- **Be clear and collaborative** in agreeing the intended aims and outcomes of the process, different levels of involvement, the scope of influence for participants, and how decisions will be made.

- Think about where participants may be able to **take on new roles** to develop skills or contribute beyond their "day job".

Tips and things to monitor:

- **Define your scope and approach:** What do you want your co-design to achieve? Are there limitations? Discuss potential disagreements, seek common ground, and try to agree both with your participants.

- **Set clear aims for the co-design process:** Agree what your priorities are and how you're going to assess progress. Choose simple metrics to review your performance against.

- **Involve participants early in the co-design process:** Don't wait until you have a set of polished options. Involve participants in the development of ideas and approaches.

- **Involve participants in decisions about *what* and *how* to evaluate**. You could involve participants in deciding what it is you most need to learn, and what the intended outcomes should be. You could offer training to enable them to contribute to peer-to-peer research, such as facilitating group discussions. You could consider holding a session with users and participants to reflect on what the findings are saying.[4]

- **Consider how to support participation**, particularly for those with special needs. Co-design is about encouraging and supporting people to engage and enabling them to participate in a way that suits them. Consider whether target participants have the information, skills, and confidence to participate, and whether there is anything you can do to improve this. It may be helpful to define clear boundaries and set realistic parameters, so all participants understand what is or isn't possible within the context of the partnership.

- **Ensure diversity and inclusivity:** Seek a mix of participants with different kinds of knowledge (lived experience, professional and specialist expertise). Try to recruit participants who reflect your target audience, not just those you currently support. Consider how to accommodate people's availability and needs, for example by holding workshops on a weekend, and ensure venues are accessible to all. Monitor inclusivity and representativeness by tracking outputs such as: number of users and staff involved; range of participants (age/ethnicity/disability/gender); whether users are invited or volunteer to participate; and the percentage of users with access to training to develop their skills.

- **Don't focus too much on the long term at this stage**. It's challenging and resource-intensive to evaluate long-term impact. Instead, focus on the relationships and quality of setting you create for participants.

Tools to consider using:

- Customer Journey Mapping, Ideas Farms and Scenarios from OPM

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[4] User-Focused Monitoring (UFM) is a user-led approach to the evaluation of services. Users take the lead on the delivery, collection, analysis and interpretation of data—both qualitative and quantitative. For more information, see The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health (2007) *A Guide to User-Focused Monitoring: Setting up and running a project.*

- The DIY Toolkit (Development Impact & You: Practical Tools to Trigger & Support Social Innovation): https://diytoolkit.org/tools/

Engaging and involving users: Lessons from Cessnock City Council, New South Wales

Cessnock City Council wanted to involve the people of Cessnock and other interested parties in planning renovations of the CBD. Citizens were invited to use an online map to position flags, comments and changes to the CBD. 100 people left a total of 200 comments. A workshop was also held with 30 stakeholders. Following this stage, the city council drafted a masterplan and invited citizens to give feedback. 40 comments were received. A stakeholder workshop was held with 20 participants before the masterplan was finalised by the council.

Some good practice to note included the use of multiple modes of engaging users, such as online, workshops, drop-in sessions and flyers, which increased the breadth of participants. The use of an online, interactive platform likely increased reach and, over time, allowed the discussion to evolve through asynchronous engagement.

The reduction in online and in-person engagement between the two phases suggests that efforts to engage citizens may have been inconsistent or participants may have felt their contributions were not sufficiently meaningful. Workshops were held in the middle of the working day, which likely reduced attendance and skewed participation. Using an online platform may have excluded less digitally-connected groups, and potentially exacerbated existing inequalities in civic engagement. Additionally, the allocated periods for providing comment were relatively short.

Stage 2: Discover

The aim of this stage is to **discover new insights that may influence your co-design process**:

- Undertake **research and enquiry** into the area
- Try to look at the issue from **different perspectives**, noticing new things, and gathering insights
- Surface and **challenge existing assumptions** about the issue
- **Understand what is important** to your potential users
- **Look for examples** of comparable services elsewhere
- **Produce insights** to base the next stage of the process on ("Define")

Tips and things to monitor:

In addition to the tips in the previous stage:

- **Ensure respect:** All co-design participants should be treated as experts. Their time, knowledge, and other contributions must be valued. Explore how you can ensure everyone understands their role and purpose, feels listened to, and is given appropriate compensation.

- **Facilitate meaningful participation:** Co-design is not tokenistic engagement or consultation; people should be involved as active participants with meaningful input throughout the process. Consider how you can allow enough time for participants to really consider and influence decisions, and ensure they feel free to disagree with the facilitators.

- **Prepare to adapt and iterate:** Co-design should be a creative process where you aren't tied to pre-defined outcomes and are prepared for stakeholders' input to shape what you end up designing and delivering. It should be full of learning, iteration, and trial and error. Select activities, tools or methods that are responsive to the opinions and desires of all participants and plan how to review them regularly.

Tools to consider using:

- Customer Journey Mapping, Ideas Farms and Scenarios from OPM

- The DIY Toolkit (Development Impact & You: Practical Tools to Trigger & Support Social Innovation): https://diytoolkit.org/tools/

Example: Involving a range of participants in co-design

An organisation working with young people with disabilities sought to engage both users and non-users in co-design, to understand the barriers to engagement and ensure a full range of perspectives were represented. They used specially trained learning disability youth workers to try to engage with the most vulnerable young people. The work was led by a user committee.

Another organisation working on the social support needs of young men set up a peer research team to co-design solutions, strategies and processes. As part of this, they introduced an inter-generational element, enabling the team to meet with and learn from older groups, to learn from established 'best practice' among other groups.

Stage 3: Define

The aim of this stage is to **define the specific problem to be addressed**:

- **Prioritise key insights** and identify patterns and themes in the insights you have uncovered
- **Define** the key problem to be addressed
- **Check** your co-design approaches against the initial capabilities and interests of the participants. Do they still feel achievable?

3 • Define

Tips and things to monitor:

In addition to the tips in the previous stages:

- **Focus on the problem to be addressed and your intended outcomes:** What is your agreed focus at this stage? Revisit your scope, and consider if you are ready to move on. Hold off from starting on developing your solutions until you've got to this stage, to avoid narrowing your thinking.

- **Check engagement:** Participants' continued engagement with the process is a good sign of how it is progressing. Do participants want to come back? Is engagement growing as the process unfolds? If engagement is decreasing, try to find out why this may be the case and whether you can change your activities and processes to improve participation.

- **Stick to agreed roles:** It is important for participants to have the level of influence they expect. Is decision making transparent? Does everyone understand how the process is developing and feel confident enough to contribute and test ideas out loud?

Tools to consider using:

- **Brainstorm drivers and hurdles:** Brainstorm what participants perceive to be the drivers and hurdles to a project's success. The Design Council suggests establishing what the project can and cannot address, and agreeing which drivers it would be best to focus on to overcome hurdles.[5]

Stage 4: Develop

The aim of this stage is to **develop ideas or solutions and refine them through a series of prototypes**:

- **Generate ideas**, including "wild" ideas to encourage creative solutions

- **Think and learn** through doing

- **Identify risks** and design around them

- **Make ideas real** in small tests, so you can get feedback and generate evidence that ideas will work in practice

- **Get buy-in** from key people needed to deliver the idea

Tips and things to monitor:

In addition to the tips in the previous stages:

- **Adopt the right mindset:** No one has all the answers. Don't be afraid to try things out and fail. Stay focused on your problem and the people experiencing it. Think of as many ideas as you can, make them tangible, and test them as much as possible.

- **Prioritise ideas:** Prioritise ideas using your agreed aims and intended outcomes. Consider the views of multiple stakeholders and decide which are the best ideas to take forward. Different criteria can be used for different groups of stakeholders and each idea can be scored against them and discussed as a group. There are lots of good reasons to prioritise and select ideas for further investigation. You might want to select ideas that:

  - o Have the potential for the greatest impact on your target users

  - o Generate a new way of looking at the problem you identified in your brief

  - o Are most likely to unlock new resources

  - o Are most unusual, and therefore represent the greatest learning opportunity

  - o Challenge some functions of your organisation that you would like to explore creatively

  There is no 'correct' way of balancing these factors. You will need to decide which are most important for your project.

- **Consider creative ways to test your ideas:** It's easy to believe that testing involves too many people, or too much time and resources. Consider what you are trying to find out and how you can gather feedback in a low-risk, low-scale way. For example, to test the basic premise of a website, draw an outline of the page using pen and paper, and ask potential users for feedback on the layout, language, and content. You may be able to test products with small groups of users, or use social media to quickly gauge opinions.

Tools to consider using:

- [Customer Journey Mapping, Ideas Farms and Scenarios from OPM](#)

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[5] See the Design Council's four-part guide for understanding the methods designers use, Design Methods Step 2: Define: https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/news-opinion/design-methods-step-2-define

- [The DIY Toolkit (Development Impact & You: Practical Tools to Trigger & Support Social Innovation):](https://diytoolkit.org/tools/) https://diytoolkit.org/tools/

- **Role play:** Define a character or characters who will use or deliver the end product or service you are designing. Isolate key moments where these users interact with it and act them out.[6]

- **Surveys:** Survey users on their views and preferences. You can use your findings as a basis for helping co-design participants to narrow down final options.

> **Example: Using co-design to test and explore ideas**
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> An organisation aiming to build a social community used a co-design phase to test and explore ideas. This phase enabled participants to start building connections with each other and with staff, identify ideas, and start developing and testing approaches. After the co-design phase was complete, the charity was then able to seek funding to deliver a full programme.

Stage 5: Deliver

The aim of this stage is to **finalise, produce, and deliver the activity identified through the co-design process**:

- **Detail a final solution** before producing and launching it

- **Gain support and funding**, if needed, for a solution

- **Map** how you want to develop it in future; for example, is the intention to scale up the solution, replicate it elsewhere, or make it sustainable in the long term?

5 • Deliver

Tips and things to monitor:

In addition to the tips in the previous stages:

- **Ensure the loop is closed:** After people have given their time and knowledge, it is important they still feel involved if they want to be. Ensure you communicate the changes made and that exit and development strategies are created for users who want to continue engaging with the work.

- **Gauge the effectiveness of the process:** To do this, you can measure outputs such as:

    o Percentage of users who felt valued in the process

    o Number of users who dropped out of process

    o Number of users who want to stay engaged in the project

    o Changes in participants' self-esteem, confidence, and skills

    o Changes in facilitators'/designers' knowledge, and understanding of users

This is explored in more detail below in '*How to evaluate co-design'*.

Tools to consider using:

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[6] See the Design Council's four-part guide for understanding the methods designers use, Design Methods Step 3: Develop: https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/news-opinion/design-methods-step-3-develop

- "Decide" and "Change" tools from PWdWA's *Co-design Guide: Co-design for organisations working with people with disability*

After your co-design process

Ultimately, an objective of your co-design activities is to increase the effectiveness of your provision at delivering intended outcomes. When the co-design process is complete, a key indicator of your project's success will be if positive change happens as a result.

You may already have tools and frameworks in place for measuring and evaluating whether and how your activity achieves its intended outcomes. For more information about this, see: NPC (2014) *Building your measurement framework: NPC's four pillar approach*; NPC (2015) *Five types of data for assessing your work: An explainer*; and the Inspiring Impact website (https://www.inspiringimpact.org).

Example: Co-design to facilitate further engagement

Co-design can help organisations reach other users. For example, one organisation sought to co-design services with young carers. They initially developed learning sessions with those who were willing and able to participate. They then used learnings from these sessions to reach other young carers in more effective ways.

Another organisation involved community stakeholders in their co-design project, targeting under-represented groups and developing the support they would need to overcome barriers to participation. They held creative workshops for participants to map local networks and resources, and identify gaps in who was participating. Participants then worked on sharing the project more widely themselves to groups they had identified. Peer mentors were also trained to support those groups and explore other ideas to overcome barriers to participation.

HOW TO EVALUATE CO-DESIGN

Assessing the quality of your co-design process and measuring its impact will help you think about how it can be improved. However, co-design can be challenging to measure. This is because:

- It can include a wide range of activities
- It is a process rather than a programme or intervention
- It may not have pre-defined outcomes
- Different participants are likely to engage in different ways or have different experiences

In this section we explore how you can evaluate your co-design by focusing on three areas:

1. Assessing the benefits for participants
2. Assessing the quality of your co-design processes
3. Obtaining insights into how to achieve your organisation's intended outcomes

1. Assessing the benefits of co-design for participants

It is important to understand how co-design activities directly affect participants through the process itself.

We recommend using the five types of data framework, which provides an overview of the kinds of data to consider collecting.[7] The table below sets out the five types of data, explaining what each might tell you about the effects of participation in co-design on participants, and suggesting possible tools to use for collecting data. Of course it's important to be proportionate: you may not be in a position to collect outcomes data, and only collect what you will make use of.

The framework covers a spectrum of data. It starts with data that every organisation should be able to capture routinely, regardless of size or capacity (user, engagement and feedback data), and moves onto data that may be captured occasionally, if at all (outcomes and impact data). It emphasises the importance of your co-design process—what happened, how it was experienced, and why it occurred—rather than just the end results.

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[7] For more information on the five types of data, see NPC (2015) *Five types of data for assessing your work: An explainer*.

	Type of data	What will it tell you about the benefits for participants	Tools
All organisations should collect regularly	**User data** About participants, e.g. age, gender, socio-economic status	*Whether the intended participants are involved* User data can be compared with data for your target audience more broadly to determine whether users reflect your target group. You may want to consider whether any particular groups are over- or under-represented, and whether some steps to engage participants were more effective than others. It may be possible to explore the relationship between these characteristics and the other types of data, including the type and level of engagement, the positivity of their experience, and the outcomes achieved.	Registration or sign-up forms, referrals, partner records (e.g. from schools, healthcare providers)
	Engagement data *How* participants are engaging with you: how often, how long for, in which activities	*Whether participants are engaging with the co-design process as intended* You can explore which types of co-design activities are being provided, which activities participants are engaging with the most, the extent to which they engage (e.g. staying for the full session, consecutive sessions), and the extent to which engagement is sustained. You may find you need to design particular types of approach to engage different groups. The impact of co-design on outcomes for participants is likely to be greatest when engagement is sustained. For example, sustained engagement can help build relationships that can improve wellbeing.	Registers, sign-in sheets, website analytics, digital tools e.g. smartphones
	Feedback data About participants' experiences	*Whether participants are experiencing the co-design process as intended and where you can improve* Effective co-design is about sharing power with participants as equals. Whether participants *feel* they have experienced this is critical. You need to provide consistent ways for all participants to tell you what they have experienced, anonymously, and for you to respond by explaining what you heard and what you've changed as a result. Feedback data should be light-touch—to minimise the burden of data collection—and, ideally, systematic—to increase consistency and allow for comparability. In the section below we suggest questions you can ask participants to assess their experiences.	Conversations, social media, instant feedback tools (e.g. '*Rate your visit*'), short surveys, self-assessments, peer observations.
Some organisations should collect	**Outcomes data** How participants have been influenced in the short term	*What has changed in the short term—for organisational processes and services, and the participants involved* It is likely that observed changes will relate to skills, knowledge and awareness, and behaviour. There may also be changes, for example, to participants' levels of self-efficacy, motivation, and empowerment. Some of these changes will be "intended" and some will be "unintended"—i.e. you didn't expect or plan for them to happen. Unintended outcomes can be positive or negative, so it's important to check what else might be happening alongside the outcomes "of interest". You are not trying to "prove" that these outcomes were caused by the co-design process. This data will tell you how participants *think* they have been helped.	This will often draw on a mix of quantitative (numerical) and qualitative (non-numerical) data.
	Impact data The long-term difference experienced by participants	*Whether the changes reported by participants have helped them to make longer-term positive changes in their lives and organisations* In some cases there may be long-term impacts you want to capture, such as better health and wellbeing, or stable housing. The key is that users achieve these changes for themselves, sometimes several years after leaving your provision. It is likely that these changes will also have been influenced by other factors in people's lives.	High-quality evaluation, sometimes carried out externally and/or with a comparison group

2. Assessing the quality of the co-design process

To assess the quality of your co-design process, it is important to reflect on *how* the process was experienced by everyone involved. You will need to consider questions relating to your staff, the other participants, and your organisation's experiences as a whole.

Co-design can include a wide range of activities, and different participants are likely to engage in different ways and have different experiences. Part of your evaluation should focus on the quality of those activities and what opportunities people had to engage with them.

Co-design also attempts to put everyone on an equal footing, where each person's opinion carries the same weight. This is underpinned by the voluntary engagement of participants and building trusting relationships. It is important to evaluate the facilitator's role and the relationships they have developed during the process.

Some questions can be answered by consistently monitoring the five stages of the co-design process, as laid out in the previous section. Others can be answered by participants sharing their perceptions (e.g. how they felt or what they thought). For this, it might be helpful to divide questions for participants into stages; either using the five stages of the co-design process, or before, during, and after the co-design process. These might include:

Before co-design process:

- Why did you want to get involved with the co-design project?
- What were your expectations of co-design before you started the work?
- Was the information given prior to starting adequate? Did you know what you would be doing and what was expected of you?

During co-design process:

- What did you think of the process overall?
- Which activities did you enjoy? Which activities did you not enjoy?
- Did you feel your opinion was listened to and acted on?
- What were your relationships like with other stakeholders?
- What were your relationships like with the facilitators?
- Were you provided with enough support to participate in the activities?
- Were you happy with the results of the co-design process?

After co-design process:

- How did you feel once the project had finished?
- Did being involved in the project have any impact on you, whether positive or negative?
- Did you feel informed after your involvement had finished?

Ultimately, how you measure the effectiveness of your co-design activities will depend on your aims and approach, the setting you work in, and the steps your co-design process followed.

3. Obtaining insights into how to achieve your organisation's intended outcomes

The co-design process will give you valuable and important insights into what participants feel are the best outcomes for them, and how they might be achieved. Understanding how and why change occurs matters as much as understanding whether there was any change at all.

Your insights and learnings can be shared with other organisations in your networks or partnerships as well as funders. They can also be shared with participants and other users to sense-check their relevance and importance.

To draw out insights into how to achieve your organisation's intended outcomes and impact, you could reflect on what you've learned through the co-design process and try to answer questions such as:

- What do you know about the assets you are trying to build on, or the problem you are trying to address among the people you aim to support?

- What has been tried before with people similar to those you support?

- What do your co-design participants say about what would help them?

- What are the "active ingredients"—or the key experiences for users—of your work?

- What have you learned about the key design features for your work (e.g. duration, intensity, group versus one-to-one, targeted or open, based in buildings/centres or outreach)?

- What have you learned about what "success" looks like?

- Have you learned anything about how you might evaluate the extent to which success has been achieved?

Example: Co-design to shape and strengthen delivery

A charity uses a strengths-based approach to encourage people to see themselves as assets within their communities. Involving users helps them to understand their concerns, as well as those of their wider target audience. Co-designing their services helps the organisation to address barriers to engagement and strengthen opportunities for development, while also building confidence in participants and empowering them to engage in their local communities.

Putting everything into practice

Evaluation helps you learn what went well and what you can do better in the future. In addition to the tips in the 'five-stage process' section above, it can also be useful to bear in mind some general evaluation principles:

- **Embed evaluation activities into provision as far as possible**, thinking about how you can build a culture of continuous learning and improvement, while measuring at the same time.[8]

- **Focus on learning as you go**, rather than trying to "prove" something at the end. For example, you could set up regular reviews to discuss progress against your aims and identify anything you might want to change.

- **Balance quantitative (numerical) with qualitative (non-numerical) data** to help you gather different types of insight. For example, numerical engagement data might tell you about the extent to which people are engaging with your activities, while qualitative data from interviews could tell you about *why* people engage.

- **Don't be afraid of sampling** when you can only ask a segment of users about particular topics. If your sample is large enough and representative of your users, you may be able to use your findings to generalise about the wider population. If this is not possible, you may still get valuable insights from your sample, but it is important to acknowledge the limitations of your data.[9]

- **Draw on standardised measures**—for example the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scales—where it is appropriate for your work. These have been statistically tested to ensure the quality of information provided by their usage, and will also enable you to collect data that is comparable with data from other organisations using the same indicators.

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[8] For guidance on developing impact culture, see Inspiring Impact: https://www.inspiringimpact.org/learn-to-measure/review/improve-your-work/

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TRANSFORMING THE CHARITY SECTOR

NPC is a charity think tank and consultancy. Over the past 15 years we have worked with charities, funders, philanthropists and others, supporting them to deliver the greatest possible impact for the causes and beneficiaries they exist to serve.

NPC occupies a unique position at the nexus between charities and funders. We are driven by the values and mission of the charity sector, to which we bring the rigour, clarity and analysis needed to better achieve the outcomes we all seek. We also share the motivations and passion of funders, to which we bring our expertise, experience and track record of success.

Increasing the impact of charities: NPC exists to make charities and social enterprises more successful in achieving their missions. Through rigorous analysis, practical advice and innovative thinking, we make charities' money and energy go further, and help them to achieve the greatest impact.

Increasing the impact of funders: NPC's role is to make funders more successful too. We share the passion funders have for helping charities and changing people's lives. We understand their motivations and their objectives, and we know that giving is more rewarding if it achieves the greatest impact it can.

Strengthening the partnership between charities and funders: NPC's mission is also to bring the two sides of the funding equation together, improving understanding and enhancing their combined impact. We can help funders and those they fund to connect and transform the way they work together to achieve their vision.

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