

4.7 How to know you are really making a difference

If you are going to give up your time to volunteer you want to make sure that what you are doing is having the maximum possible impact and is helping as many people as possible in the most useful way. Keeping track of what you have been doing and finding out what people think of the project is the best way to do this – this is what you call ‘monitoring and evaluating’

What is monitoring and evaluating?

Monitoring is simply recording what you’ve done so you know how things are going with your project and so you can check you are doing what you set out to do (i.e. meeting your objectives). This could be counting how many children come to your club each week, how many bags of clothes you collect for a destitution project, how many volunteers turn up or gathering feedback from participants after a trip to the seaside. Taking photos is also a good way to record what has happened.

Evaluation is a more in depth look at what you have been doing so you can plan for the future and make changes, often people do this at the end of a project but it can also be useful to evaluate what you do as you go along e.g. evaluate at the end of a party so the next one you organise can be even better. It will use the monitoring information and other more detailed information you gather - like peoples opinions about the project in general. To do it well you should ask the people you are helping, the volunteers and your partner organisation what they think of the project. It answers questions like:

- ★ How well are we doing?
- ★ Are we doing things right?
- ★ What would we change?
- ★ What difference are we making?
- ★ Were there any negative consequences of our work?

Why evaluate?

1. So you can check what you are doing is really making a difference and to make your project even better...

- ★ To find out what has worked, what hasn’t, how people have been helped and to see if you can make the project better.
- ★ It is not just about fixing things when they go wrong, it is also about finding out what you did well so you can do it again. Make sure you remember to tell us at STAR national about it! We really want to hear about all those successful events, parties and projects so we can share it with other STAR groups...

2. To demonstrate achievements...

- ★ To show STAR members that the time they have given up has been worthwhile
- ★ So STAR can show funders that their money has been well spent and we can ask for more to keep helping you and providing resources.

- ★ It gives you great material to promote volunteering opportunities to new volunteers e.g. quotes and photos.

There are lots of ways you can evaluate your project from getting people to fill out questionnaires (see useful documents for a template questionnaire) to fun activities for children. See below for some ideas and ask STAR national for advice if you want some more.

And remember to let STAR national know what you find out so we can share it with the network and get more funding to support your work!

Ideas for evaluation activities

These are some simple, quick and fun ways to get feedback from people, you can use them in your volunteering projects or events you hold on campus. Remember – keep a record of the information you collect, take photos if you can and let us know what you find out!

1. Graffiti walls

Hang large sheets of paper on the wall that people can write their opinions on. You could ask one question like “tell us what you thought of the party?” Or you could have a few sheets asking different questions...

WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THE PARTY??	
Music was too loud!	More games next time please
Food was yummy	

2. Give people disposable cameras and get them to take photos of the things they like/don't like about a project or event. Talking about the photos can be a good way to start a discussion.

3. Set up a 'big brother' style diary video camera that people can talk to about how they feel about a project or answer a specific question.

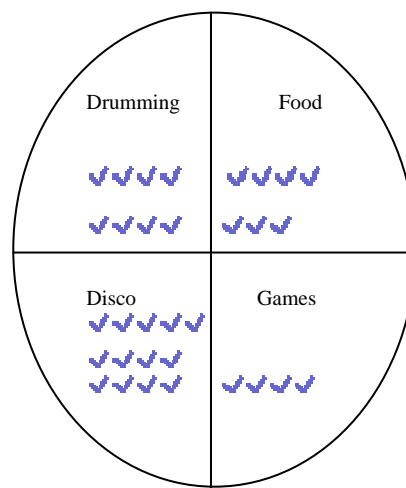
4. Get people to draw pictures of the things they like about a project – this is particularly good for children because they love to talk about what they have drawn and it won't feel like you are trying to interview them.



5. Give people beads or sticky coloured dots so that they can vote for - e.g. their favourite activity or what they feel is the most important aspect of a project

6. Ask people to create a song, mime or sketch about how they see the project

7. Evaluation wheel – ask people to tick the things they like

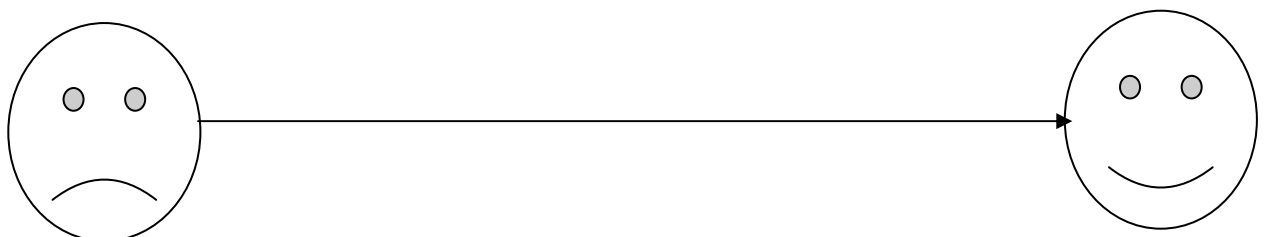


9. Musical tables – have a few small tables set out with questions or issues for people to respond to. Divide people into small groups and get them to go to a table and write down ideas and comments. When the music starts again they have to move tables. If people might need help writing you might need a facilitator at each table.

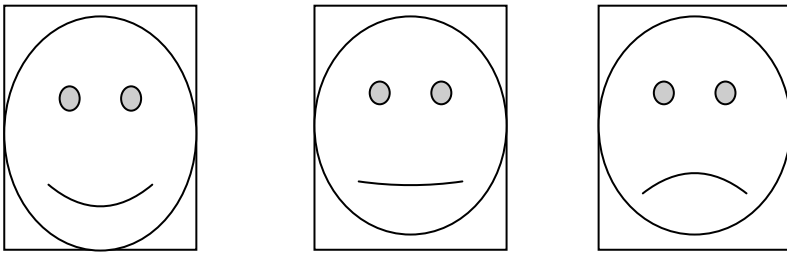
10. Card sorting – these can be words or pictures. People can sort them in order of things they like, things they thought were ok or things that they don't like.

11. Quick and easy feedback....

- Continuum line – get people to put a mark on the line



- Face cards – people can either hold them up in answer to questions or stick them on a board or piece of paper



- Use a room as a continuum with one end positive and the other end negative/ I like and I don't like/ yes and no. Ask people questions and ask them to stand in the room depending on what their answer is. Get someone to take photos or just count how many people are at each end of the room for each question.