

Centre for Remote Health
A joint centre of Flinders University and Charles Darwin University

10 years a decade of achievement

Building evaluation capacity in non government organizations: an action research approach

The "Top End Team"
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- This presentation describes the collaborative project with CRH Katherine and Darwin Units and Amity Community Services
- There is a deliberate focus on content (ie what we actually did)
- The reason for this is to give people a “feel” for the action research project

- For the purpose of this paper action research is defined as “learning by doing” while taking a systematic approach which is “informed by theoretical considerations” and has the objective of turning the participants into researchers.(O’Brien 1998)

Rationale

- There are many NGOs working in a primary health care context. These organizations often work with the most disadvantaged sectors of the community
- Many of their staff are highly dedicated people often working with limited resources and would welcome any support and capacity building opportunities
- By using a strategy of building appropriate research and evaluation capacity in these organizations the use of resources can be maximized and the impact of the results increased.

Background

- Amity Community Services is an incorporated non-government community organization who provide a range of services to assist people with behavioural and lifestyle problems.
- During 2006 it was reported by indigenous community members that extreme social disruption and family violence associated with the harmful use of solvents was occurring.

- Amity initiated a project to address this issue and received one years funding from DoHA. Following the completion of the project ARHEN in conjunction with CRH successfully tendered for and subsequently completed the evaluation.
- Amity received a further three years (conditional) funding to extend their work in this area and developed a project entitled “Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Indigenous communities project”.

- ARHEN and CRH were contacted by Amity concerning the evaluation.
- From the lessons learned in the initial evaluation Amity wished to take an active role in the design and conducting of the evaluation and also wanted the evaluation to be an integral part of the project from the start.
- CRH were contracted by Amity to facilitate the process

7

Objectives

- To facilitate the production of an evaluation plan based on sound program logic
- To upskill the partner organisation in the area of evaluation and program logic
- To provide training and practice for the CRH team in the same area
- To provide good clear evidence of program effectiveness to instill donor confidence and inform policy

8

Approach

- In line with Amity's development philosophy an action research approach was requested and developed
- Three workshops were designed and conducted with the objective of producing an evaluation plan that could be implemented by the Amity project team.
- The plan would be developed in such a way as to provide a framework that could be directly transferrable to other projects and would require minimal (or no) input from outside the organisation.

9

Workshop 1

- Presentation on project design and evaluation using LogFRAME
- Case study - evaluating capacity using a participative approach in Indigenous communities
- Case study – A worked example from Amity's "Retailers responsible sale of solvents project"
- "Hands on exercise" -Worked through the current project using information in the presentation and case studies

10

The LogFrame

Narrative Summary	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)	Means of Verification (MOV)	External Factors
GOAL The Vision The big WHY	Measures to verify accomplishment of the GOAL.	Sources of data needed to verify status of the GOAL (ie. did we reach or attain the goal?)	Important external factors necessary for sustaining the program
PURPOSE The primary reason for the project - desired impact - Why?	Measures to verify accomplishment of the PURPOSE.	Sources of data needed to verify status of the PURPOSE (ie. what was the impact of the program?)	Important external factors needed to attain the GOAL.
OUTPUTS Deliverables The terms of reference - What?	Measures to verify accomplishment of the OUTPUTS	Sources of data needed to verify status of the OUTPUTS	Important external factors needed to attain the PURPOSE
ACTIVITIES Main tasks to produce the outputs - How?	Measures to verify tasks completed	Sources of data needed to verify status of the ACTIVITIES	Important external factors necessary to accomplish the OUTPUTS

11

The objective of case study 1

- To familiarise participants with the concept of community capacity building and how it can be evaluated
- To illustrate how this can be done participatively with Indigenous communities

12

The objective of case study 2

- To illustrate the importance of evaluability
- To demonstrate how a project can be made evaluable through the application of project logic by using a project which was familiar to the participants

13

Hands on exercise

- Using knowledge gained from the presentations and case studies, the current three year project plan was closely examined by the team to determine the strength of the project logic and evaluability
- This also became the topic of two further workshops

14

Further Work

- Provide ongoing support in-
 - Building a questionnaire (complete)
 - Conducting an interview (in progress)
 - Running a focus group (in progress)
 - Collation and data analysis (in progress)
 - Writing up a report (in progress)

15

Outcomes

- Increased capacity in our own organisation in both doing and teaching evaluation
- Increased capacity for NGO to design evaluable projects and do evaluation
- Forged links providing opportunity for ongoing cooperation and research
- Increased donor confidence exemplified in the form of further and extra funding

16

Further expected outcomes

- Clear and concise evidence based reporting to support policy direction

17