



What makes a successful set of indicators?

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- Not easy to define or measure key concepts such as 'success', 'use', 'influence'
- It depends on objectives of indicator set:
 - Awareness and regular use of indicators by target audiences
 - Mention in media
 - Use in politicians' speeches
 - Clear influence of data on policy change or social outcome

What is 'success'?

...assuming that the purpose of all indicator sets is for the data to be used in some way, we define success as **constructive and appropriate use by the target audience(s).**

Case studies - overview

- 5 case studies:
 - Measures of Australia's Progress
 - Measuring Ireland's Progress
 - UK Sustainable Development indicators
 - EU Structural indicators
 - Santa Cruz Community Assessment Programme

Case studies- methodology

- Desktop research (journal and newspaper articles, indicators publications and websites, speeches etc.)
- Interview with experts
- ‘Before-during- after’ questions to build up a narrative around the indicators

‘Before’

The before questions examine the circumstances leading to the emergence of the indicator project. The aim was to identify the problem or need for the development of the indicator set, and to assess which data already exist.

- What problem or need was the impetus for the development of the indicator set?
- What data already exist and how was it being used?

‘During’

➤ Explore 3 different aspects:

- The design development process
- The final product
- The communication/application process

'After'

After questions focus on the outcomes, which can be said raised as a result of the indicator project.

- the purpose of this part is to evaluate the results of the indicator project,
- and to attempt to deduce the main contributing factors of success or failure of the enterprise.

Be clear about your objectives

- It is as important to focus on the intended outcomes, and the political/social processes and institutional arrangements necessary to achieve those outcomes, as on the measurement task itself.
- Different objectives will probably entail different approaches – it is unlikely that one indicator set can simultaneously inform policy makers, educate the public, frame policy issues, and increase accountability.
- Constraints of the institution undertaking the work will shape the possible outcomes (if seen as inappropriate for a NSO to undertake statistical work which is too closely linked to policy objectives, it may not be possible to produce indicators that have the objectives to inform policy makers)

Be realistic about what an indicator set can achieve

- Direct policy use of indicators is rare and difficult to identify
- The most important role of indicator sets may be in framing the issues and defining the problems, rather than suggesting the solutions.
- Indicators can help to clarify and quantify policy objectives and strategies, but there is a danger in excessive use of targets.
- Local indicators may stand a greater chance of encouraging change due to the greater potential in bringing key actors together in the development process

Never underestimate the importance of the process

- Influential indicators must be **credible** (technically sound), **salient** (relevant to user needs) and **legitimate** (seen to reflect shared values of different stakeholders).
- To build trust in the legitimacy of the indicators, you must include those you hope to use the indicators (policy makers, societal stakeholders such as NGOs) in the process from the start, as well as technical experts.
- It may be that the process itself brings deeper and more lasting benefits than the indicator set itself. A process can create new working relationships and build shared understandings of the issues among those working in different disciplines or representing different interests.

Think long-term; be persistent and flexible

- Change often takes time: Years and decades, rather than weeks and months.
- For long-term stability, indicators need to be appropriately institutionalised.
- If you want to encourage policy change you need the support of policy stakeholders.
- Be prepared to adjust the indicator set and methods as needs change and as you learn from your mistakes.

Key lessons

- Be clear about your objectives and how you expect to achieve them
- Be realistic about what an indicator set can achieve
- When developing the indicators never underestimate the importance of the process
- Think long-term: be persistent and flexible

Thank you