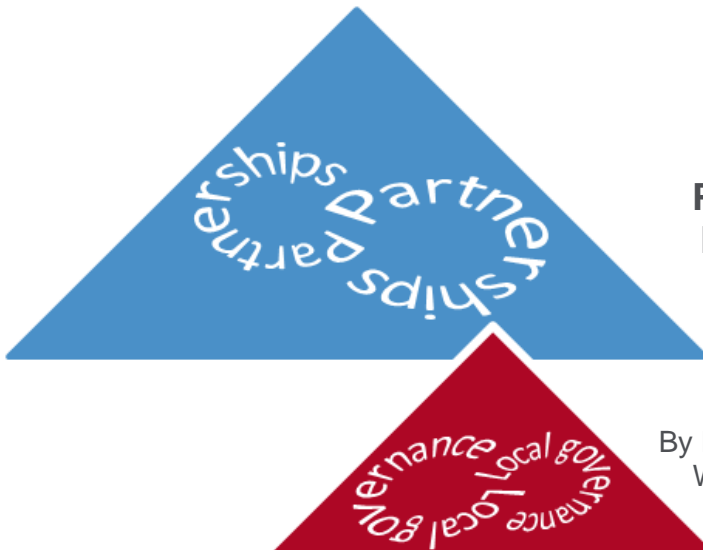




OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Governance
HANDBOOK no. 2



**Partnerships, Performance
Management and Evaluation**

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Summary

The establishment of partnership work within a locality often begins with high enthusiasm from policy makers and individual organisations but the maintenance of an effective partnership along with the support and ownership of the initiative by stakeholders can be a difficult process. The value of developing a clear evaluation strategy early in the life of a partnership is that members of the partnership can use the strategy to describe how they will know whether their work is on track and effective. Without such a strategy, it becomes increasingly difficult to show what is working within a partnership, to improve delivery and to maintain ownership.

This handbook provides some background information and practical advice on performance management and evaluation. It is written for people working in partnerships and people in governments, who are working with local partnerships.

The brochure is not meant to be an exhaustive guide to performance management. It provides an overview of the rationale behind it and a collection of examples of “promising practice” that warrant further investigation by the reader.

Target audience: Partnership practitioners, local and regional governments.

Note: Parts of this material were first presented at an OECD Capacity Building seminar in November 2008 in Trento, Italy where representatives from national ministries, local governments, regional development agencies, universities and local partnerships discussed about the why, and how in performance management. To learn more about OECD Capacity Building in Trento, Italy, visit www.trento.oecd.org.

Andrea-Rosalinde Hofer from the OECD edited this brochure.

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1. Why performance management and evaluation?

The establishment of partnership work within a locality often begins with high enthusiasm from policy makers and individual organisations but that the maintenance of an effective partnership along with the support and ownership of the initiative by stakeholders can be a difficult process. An effective partnership has to produce a robust plan of action which involves and is supported by all stakeholders. It also has to continually win over those agencies which are being drawn back into the view that single agency service delivery can address all social issues within a locality.

Sometimes, the need to establish a partnership quickly because, for example, funders require it or there is a need to ride on a wave of current political enthusiasm can mean that there isn't time to develop a clear evaluation strategy. The value of developing a clear evaluation strategy early in the life of a partnership is that members of the partnership can use the strategy to describe how they will know whether their work is on track and effective. Without such a strategy, it becomes increasingly difficult to show what is working within a partnership, to improve delivery and to maintain ownership. Any growing criticisms of the value of partnership work in, say, the context of budget or funding cuts, are then difficult to counter as there is no evidence of its value. In such situations, partnerships often suffer, their funding is reduced and they revert to talking shops. A clear system of evaluating the work of the partnership with agreed ways of receiving information about performance and rectifying any problems helps to assure partners that they are actually making a difference and achieving what they set out to achieve. It helps to "flush out" any differences between partners as to what they want to achieve through the partnership and offers them the opportunity to agree as to what the key issues and priorities should be for their locality.

If the partnership is part of a national or international framework, the establishment of a performance framework should be one of the core criteria for receiving funding.

An evaluation strategy does not need to be complicated. You can find an example of a strategy – described as a toolkit – which was developed by The Coventry Partnership in 2004 at Annex 1. It outlines how all of the partnership's projects should be developed and against which criteria they should be evaluated.

2. Developing the framework

The performance framework is often developed when the partnership's overall purpose and strategy has been agreed. However, in order to ensure that the strategy is robust, it is useful to conduct what is often called "prior assessment" i.e. a systematic examination of the evidence upon which the strategy and its objectives are based. This avoids the danger of the strategic plan being based on the subjective judgements of partnership members and begins to develop a culture of evaluation which is important when the partnership begins to deliver its activities.

"... the purpose of ...Prior assessment ... is to gather information and carry out analyses that:

- help to define **objectives** ...
- ... to ensure that these objectives are **feasible**
- that instruments used are **cost effective** ...
- ... and that subsequent evaluation will be **robust**

A serious prior assessment approach is likely to contain a number of components:

- Defining strategic objectives
- Identifying the options for intervention
- Assessing expected impacts
- Making use of the results
- Establishing the framework for intervention
- Setting up an information system.”¹

Partnerships need to fit within a wider context if they are to be effective. This context may be found in, for example, local government policies, or national strategies

The following is a government’s description of partnerships which it wishes to promote.

*“... Local Strategic Partnerships should ...bring together the public, voluntary, community and private sectors to coordinate the contribution that each can make to improving localities”.*²

At a local level, the partnership itself should be clear about what it aims to do. It should establish a high level strategy that will guide all the partnership’s activities and direct its funding where it is most needed.

A good example of a partnership’s strategy can be found at <http://www.devonsp.org.uk/scs/vision.html>. In this example, Devon Strategic Partnership has built its strategy around a number of key elements:

- **Vision** – a broad description of where the partnership wishes to be at the end of a given period of time – say 5, 10, or 20 years;
- **Key Strategic Themes** – broad areas such as equality, accessibility of services, protecting the environment. These should then run through all the work of the partnership;
- **Priorities** – Specific service areas or target groups such as Health, Housing, Employment, Young People, the Elderly; and,
- **Action Plans** – detailed actions that will deliver the partnership’s vision and which will include information on current position, targets, the people who are responsible for delivering the activity, how the activities will be evaluated and how performance will be reported.

This structure helps to both ensure that actions are in line with the strategic wishes of the partnership as well as providing confidence that there are practical actions planned which will deliver the vision.

1 OECD (2008): “Making local strategies work - building the evidence base”. See in particular, the introductory paper by Mike Geddes “Developing an Evidence Base: The Issues” and chapter 2 “Making Use of Prior Assessment Results” by Ville Valovirta.

2 Strong and Prosperous Communities – the Local Government White Paper, p.98, sect. 5.13, HMSO, 2008.

3. Managing performance

With these elements in place, a performance framework can be developed through which performance can be monitored and which an evaluation can use to discover whether what is being delivered is what was expected.

3.1 Performance frameworks and government

If national governments wish to promote or encourage successful partnerships it is important to ensure that each partnership develops a performance framework. Without this, neither the government nor the partnership can be sure they are making the best use of their resources. Governments can promote such frameworks in a number of ways:

3.1.1 The Directed Approach

In this approach, government specifies a common structure and set of processes for all the partnerships it wishes to support. Whilst this approach may appear to be administratively “neat” and is relatively simple to check on through inspection regimes, there is little room for local partnerships to adapt themselves to the needs of their localities which may hamper their ability to respond to changes in local circumstances.

3.1.2 The Accreditation Approach

An alternative approach that national governments can adopt is to propose broad national criteria that each partnership should use in developing itself but to leave the decisions as to how these criteria are enacted to each locality. In 2002, the UK government used a criteria-based approach and coupled this with an accreditation process that regional government used to assess whether each partnership was ready to receive government funding. Those that were deemed as good when assessed against the criteria received funding. Those that were not seen as satisfactory were given support and did not receive government funding until they improved. Regional government led this approach and used the criteria listed in Box 1 below:

Box 1. Performance criteria applied by the UK government in 2002

Strategic: Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are effective, representative, and capable of playing a key strategic role

Inclusive: LSPs should actively involve all the key players, including the public, private, community and voluntary sectors

Action Focused: LSPs have established genuine common priorities and targets, and agreed actions and milestones leading to demonstrable improvements against measurable baselines

Performance Managed: Members (organisations) have aligned their performance management systems, aims and objectives, criteria and process to the aims and objectives of the LSP

Efficient: LSPs should reduce, not add to, the bureaucratic burden

Learning & Development: LSPs need to build on best practice from successful partnerships by drawing on experience of local and regional structures, and national agencies

Source : Accreditation 2002/03: Guidance for Local Strategic Partnerships, HMSO, 2002

This approach gives more local flexibility to develop detailed structures and processes but still assumes that the government “knows best” as to what a good partnership should look like in all localities. Also, unless there is a clear understanding of what each of the above statements mean and judgements are carefully moderated, the exercise can be very subjective.

3.1.3 The Outcome-Based Approach

An alternative approach that can be adopted is to focus on outcomes and targets and to leave the internal workings of the partnerships to the localities to decide i.e. the “what” rather than the “how”.

In 2007, the UK government established a National Performance Framework for local government agencies when working together to address local problems. It contains seven outcomes and 198 indicators or measures that local partnerships can use to set delivery targets against.³ The box below shows one outcome and the indicators that the government expects partnerships to use when addressing this outcome:

This approach focused on results rather than internal processes and aims to leave decisions as to what is best for the locality to each partnership. Each partnership is expected to develop an action plan⁴ using the outcomes and indicators in the national framework and these are reviewed annually by government. This approach provides greater flexibility for the partnerships.

However, because each government department has an interest in certain outcomes being achieved there can be varying degrees of “negotiation” with or “pressure” from particular departments in order to agree which outcomes and targets are most important.

3.2 Performance Management Frameworks in the locality

3.2.1 An effective partnership

Whichever approach is adopted by government, the local partnership needs to be confident that it is clear as to how it will operate (as outlined in its performance framework) and what it will be delivered (as described in its action plans). All stakeholders need to be involved in these developments at some level along with the establishment of the partnership vision and high level strategy. These will form the basis of future evaluations and will be the measure by which they or others will assess the potential for their partnership to deliver its actions.

One way of doing this is to ask key stakeholders to agree a simple set of descriptors of how they want their partnership to operate and then to describe how the partnership should deliver each one. An example of a set of descriptors, based on those developed by the UK government in collaboration with representatives drawn from local partnerships is shown below.

3 You can download the whole framework from <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/nationalindicator>

4 For an example of such an action plan please see Annex 2 where there is an extract from a high level action plan developed by a city in the West Midlands region of the UK in 2008.

Box 2. Key features of an effective partnership

An effective partnership should be able to:

- Agree strategic priorities
- Exert strong leadership
- Demonstrate clear accountability
- Develop effective links and relationships
- Agree and set clear indicators of success
- Monitor and report on performance effectively
- Manage and improve performance
- Plan delivery effectively

The partnership would then describe each in more detail. Here is an example using the first statement above and using a Performance Assessment Framework developed by the UK government:

“Our partnership will “Agree strategic priorities that will be based upon evidence of local circumstances. To do this, we will ensure that:

- *Communities have been involved in the development of the strategic objectives and share a clear vision and the priorities*
- *There is local consensus on the strategic priorities across all partners*
- *Priorities are linked by evidence to the problems faced by the local area”*.⁵

As each statement is described in this way, a framework is built up which outlines how the partnership wants to operate. The members of the partnership and those working for the partnership can then use this framework to inform the way they operate. The government, if an assessment or inspection process is in operation, can also use it to judge whether the partnership is performing effectively.

3.2.2 Effective delivery

A key element of any performance framework is a strong approach to delivery planning. Again, whilst government can specify the key elements it wishes to see in any approach to planning and the results it requires in return for its funding, it is the locality that needs to develop an approach which best suits its way of working.

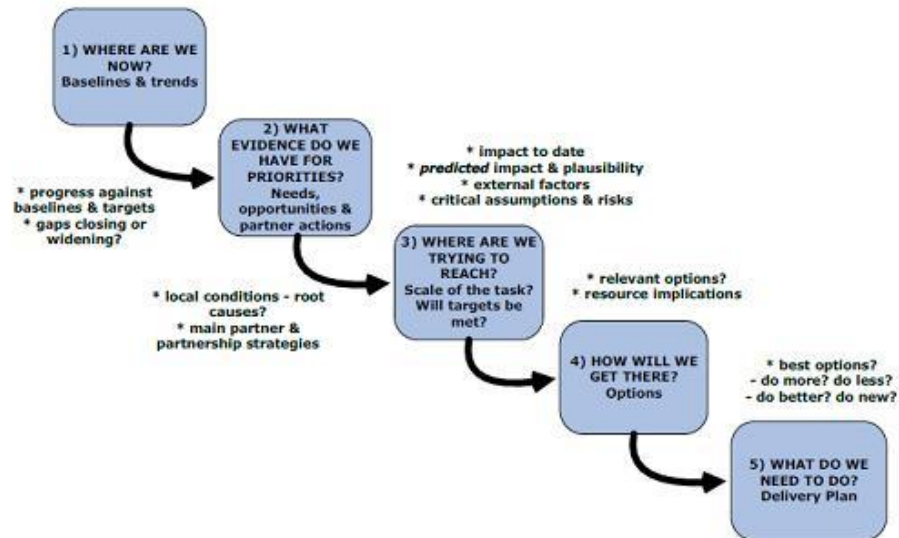
A delivery planning methodology that has been used successfully in the West Midlands region of the UK is the “Five Steps to Better Outcomes” model⁶. It takes partnerships through a series of questions which help to develop plans that can deliver the

⁵ The source of this example is the “ODPM Performance Management Assessment Toll” which can be found at <http://www.wmcoe.gov.uk/index.php?page=495>.

⁶ This model was developed by Derrick Johnstone, as an assignment for the Department for Communities and Local Government in the UK and was then adapted for use by Learning to Deliver, the support programme for Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements in the West Midlands. For further information about the model, its use and latest developments, contact Derrick Johnstone (derrick.johnstone@educe.co.uk) or David Galliers (dgalliers@westmidlandsiep.gov.uk).

partnership's strategic priorities in the form of evidence-led actions as shown in the diagram below. You can download the Five Step Planning Model.⁷

Figure 1. Five Step Delivery Planning Model



Source : Derrick Johnstone (2008).

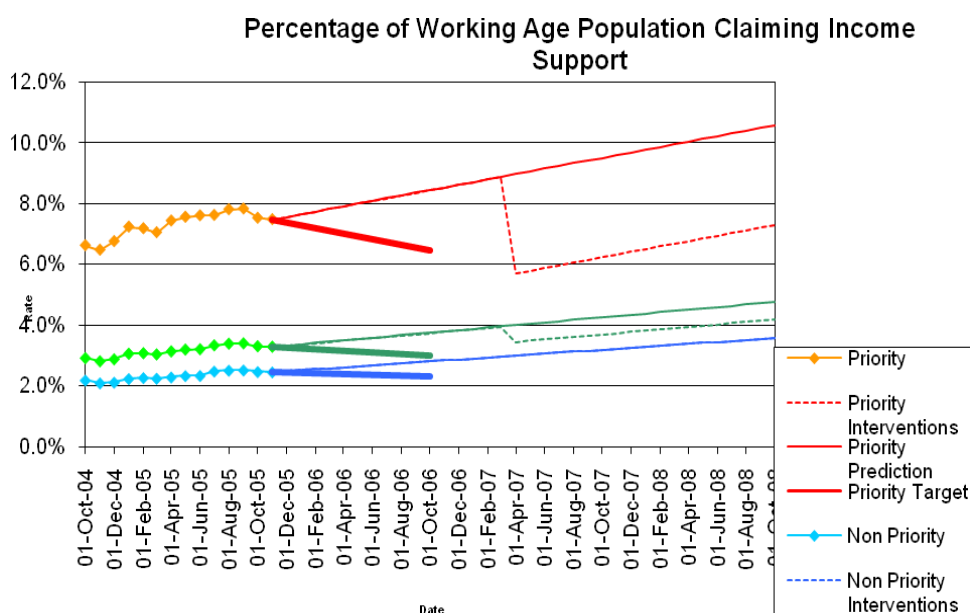
Once a methodology such as this is in place, it is then possible to monitor the performance of the delivery side of the partnership by checking whether these steps have been completed and also to evaluate the results of the actions. Because this model is evidence based, any evaluation of the partnership's actions can use the same pool of data to assess results.

As part of this approach, a trajectory planning tool⁸ has been used to establish baselines when data is available, to plot trajectories over time and to compare trajectories with actual performance. The focus of the tool is small areas such as neighbourhoods but the same approach can be used for any size of locality. As data is input into the tool i.e. the predicted achievements over a period of time, charts are generated which plot the forecast projected performance over time. The charts are useful in deciding whether current progress is reasonable and whether external factors are likely to reduce performance over time. The figure below gives an example of the type of chart the trajectory planning tool generates.

7 <http://www.wmcoe.gov.uk/download.php?did=1566>.

8 You can download the tool at <http://www.wmcoe.gov.uk/download.php?did=1544>.

Figure 2. Example of the trajectory planning tool



4. Evaluating the results

Having established a performance framework for the partnership which includes priorities, mode of operation and how it will plan and deliver its activities, it is possible to conduct evaluations against all or part of this framework.⁹ For example, it may be that an aspect of the partnership's working or the whole of the delivery programme of the partnership needs to be evaluated. Alternatively, there may be interest in evaluating one particular project or activity only. Whichever is chosen, the performance framework can be used as the basis for the evaluation.

4.1 Using information

When evaluating the actions of a partnership, a common problem is the lack of access to good quality data in order to establish current positions and future trends. It may be possible to access national datasets through organisations such as the Office for National Statistics in the UK or Regional Observatories such as that in the West Midlands region of the UK. Alternatively, some localities may decide to establish their own local observatories that they can commission to undertake specific pieces of research and evaluation – although the latter can become a costly exercise.

Sometimes it is not possible to find data that can form the basis of sound delivery planning. In this case it may be appropriate to develop local surveys that ask communities or particular groups of stakeholders whether the actions of the partnerships are working. Such surveys, if repeated, can not only establish baselines but can also be useful in considering strategic priorities as well as plotting the predicted impact of an action. The collection of documents which can be found at <http://www.coventrypartnership.com/PIEdocuments> describes how a local survey was

⁹ The OECD publication (2008) "Making local strategies work - building the evidence base" provides a range of more detailed discussions on evaluation that the reader may find useful.

developed and how further work was done as a result of the survey. In this case two universities worked with a locality to identify a range of questions which needed to be answered. These questions were based upon current services that were being offered and the priorities that residents had in relation to these services e.g. how important was it to reduce crime compared to cleaning the streets and improving housing. Researchers were employed to go into a range of neighbourhoods and to interview around 10,000 householders drawn from a range of different backgrounds.

The results of this survey was that the city's partnership were able to make decisions as to where funding would be located in relation to particular areas of the city, specific services and particular types of citizens.

It can be both difficult and expensive to ask a wide range of stakeholders (government officials, members of different communities, public service managers and staff) about their perceptions of the progress of a partnership. A useful tool that has been proved to help when conducting surveys (assuming those surveyed have access to computers and the Internet is [SurveyMonkey](#)¹⁰ – an inexpensive survey tool which can be used to construct bespoke surveys, track responses and generate reports based upon these responses.

An important question that any evaluation should ask is whether the work of the partnership is achieving value for money. In the UK at the moment, the government is promoting a strong efficiency drive and, quite rightly expects the public sector to be able to demonstrate efficiency and make savings through improved service delivery. [Mietool](#)¹¹ was commissioned by the UK government to help calculate the potential savings from a proposed activity. It can also help to strengthen project planning by posing searching questions about the cost of an activity. The tool is new and the main users currently are individual service managers rather than partnerships.

However, initial indications are that it will prove useful to partnerships when they need to demonstrate rigorous project planning and that their work will either save money or improve delivery.

4.2 Who should evaluate?

Before embarking upon an evaluation exercise it is important to be clear as to who is commissioning the evaluation. Without all stakeholders understanding and accepting this, it is possible that different expectations can limit the usefulness of the work and much confusion and argument can be generated. Box 3 below presents an example of such difficulties.

10 www.surveymonkey.com.

11 <http://www.rseconsulting.co.uk/PDF/mietool.doc>.

Box 3. Evaluation of a UK Neighbourhood Partnership Initiative

This initiative was commissioned and funded by the UK government as an approach to neighbourhood regeneration. Substantial funding was provided to the neighbourhood as one of a number across the country. The initiative was managed by a Board consisting of community representatives, public sector organisations (including the Local Authority) and regional government. The Director of the initiative was answerable to the Board. A local university was asked, by the Director, to evaluate the initiative and to report its findings to the Board and to the government. The initiative was paying for the evaluation (although of course this was funding provided by the government). The researcher, who was committed to providing an honest and truthful account of his findings, presented his draft report and because there was little clarity as to whose report this was, a range of reactions resulted.

The report provided some unpalatable observations about the running of the initiative and the Director assumed that, because his initiative was paying, he could insist on editing rights. The community representatives had some ongoing and unresolved issues with the Director and the public sector agencies and, because they felt that the Board had commissioned and paid for the evaluation, they wanted to use the report to address these. The government and the public sector agencies had concerns about the pace of the initiative and the running of it by the Director and therefore thought that the report would help to resolve these problems. All of this was exacerbated by the researcher who resisted making any changes to the report and strongly believed that his observations were accurate and no-one, least of all the funders had the right to change the report.

Such problems can be overcome by formalising the relationship through a clear and unambiguous “contract” between the evaluator and the partnership which spells out how the evaluator must handle sensitive findings and whether the partnership has the right to veto any findings or edit the way in which they are presented.

5. How to evaluate

There are three ways in which the evaluation of partnerships can be done: *external evaluation, self assessment and peer review*.

5.1 External evaluation

Sometimes, the need to establish partnership work in a country by government and to ensure that the public funding that partnerships receive are being used effectively, will lead to forms of external evaluation being imposed by government on such partnerships. If used carefully and sensitively, such regimes can help to strengthen partnerships particularly if government is also offering support to those partnerships which need to improve. However, if used as a blunt method of enforcement, it can have the effect of driving poor performance “underground” as the partnership attempts to hide the weak performance from the perceived “enemy”. This is particularly likely if the external evaluator has the authority to recommend taking control of the partnership away from the locality or removing its funding as a result of weak systems or poor performance.

Key stakeholders in many partnerships either as members of the partnership or as recipients of the actions of the partnerships are local communities. In some cases, community organisations i.e. local charities or voluntary organisations have been commissioned to evaluate the work of partnerships by partnerships themselves. This has the advantage of empowering the community by giving them a real stake in improving the partnership and, if the community organisation is paid for its work, enables it to sustain itself through the delivery of a service. However, in order that a community organisation can deliver an evaluation, which is a specialised activity, it is likely that the partnership will need to provide initial training and support, perhaps

through the services of a local university.¹² The [Coventry Community Empowerment Network](#)¹³ currently helps with partnership consultation exercises and has representatives as members of the partnership's sub-groups. This enables a challenge to the partnership to be continually available and evaluation and self reflection to be a continuous activity. They also report back to the partnership on specific issues regarding the partnership's performance in relation to particular groups of people e.g. the disabled, ethnic minority groups etc.

5.2 Self-assessment

An alternative to external evaluation is for the partnership to conduct its own assessment by identifying members of the partnership itself to carry out the work. This approach can have the disadvantage of not having an external and objective view. This can be mitigated by employing an external facilitator which is charged with challenging the assessors if s/he sees bias creeping into the process. The advantage of self assessment is it encourages ownership of the results and generates debate amongst the members of the partnership as they share and compare their views on the evidence and feedback they receive.¹⁴

Box 4. Self-assessment case study

An external facilitator was appointed to enable a group of people drawn from different parts of a partnership to conduct an evaluation of their partnership using the assessment tool. 12 people were selected on the basis of their knowledge of different aspects of the partnership's work. The partnership ensured that members of the community that had been involved in the development of the partnership were part of this group also. The facilitator explained that the assessment would be a quick exercise as quite often initial impressions and views were more accurate than long drawn out discussions when looking at qualitative information. The group was split into three smaller groups and each was asked to consider a different aspect of the partnership's performance using the questions in the assessment tool. Each group was given score cards coloured red (poor) amber (satisfactory but with some weaknesses) and green (good).

In discussion, each small group agreed a score on their designated section of the tool and then expressed this by posting the relevant score cards on a chart displayed on a wall of the room. Each group then presented the reasons for their score to the other members of the whole group and any changes to the scores were agreed collectively. The facilitator then asked the participants to identify the top 3 aspects of the partnership's performance that were exceptionally good and the 5 that were most in need of performance. When these were agreed by the whole group, the small group that originally worked on the aspects in need of improvement were asked to identify their solutions to these problems which were discussed by the whole group and an agreement reached as to what actions the partnership should take to improve these 5 key issues.

These findings were then taken back to the Partnership Board in the form of a short Powerpoint presentation (3 slides – the best aspects, those most in need of improvement and recommended actions) and following agreement by the Board, an Improvement Plan was developed to deliver the agreed actions. It was also agreed to repeat this exercise the following year to check if improvements had taken place.

12 A description of such an approach can be found in Cameron, J and Gibson, K (2001) *Shifting Focus: Alternative Pathways for Communities and Economies*, A Resource Kit.

On-line available at <http://www.communityeconomies.org/training/Trainingp2CPCCommunityResearchers%20.pdf>.

13 CovCen's website is at <http://www.covcen.org.uk>.

14 A helpful discussion of the pros and cons of internal and external assessment can be found in *Assessing Partnership Performance: Understanding the Drivers for Success* by Ken Caplan, Joe Gomme, Josses Mugabi and Leda Stott, Building Partnerships for Development, October 2007.

On-line available at http://www.bpdws.org/bpd/web/d/doc_191.pdf?statsHandlerDone=1.

5.3 Peer review

The third approach to evaluating partnership work involves assessment and challenge by those who are not part of the partnership but who are considered equals and are involved in similar work elsewhere – perhaps as members of a neighbouring partnership. The Peer Review approach was originally developed by Warwick Business School (WBS) and has since been further developed by WBS along with IDeA¹⁵ and SOLACE Enterprises¹⁶ both of which are national support agencies in the UK.

It was found that, this approach was extremely productive in that those who came to the partnership to conduct the review often commented that they had learnt more about partnership working than the host partnership and host partnerships were surprised how accurate they felt the reviewers were given they were with the host for a short period of time (usually between 1 and 2 days.)

Box 5. Warwick Peer Review Model

The “Peers” (between 8 and 12 in number) were selected from a group of volunteers who had experience of working in a number of partnerships across the West Midlands. They were given the performance framework (INSERT REFERENCE) developed by the host partnership and agreed between themselves what questions they would ask and what evidence they would require from the host based upon the materials they were given.

The Peers would be accompanied by a facilitator who would make all the necessary arrangements and liaise with the host partnership and ensure that all parties recognised that the review was done in the spirit of “critical friendship” rather than as an inspection. The host partnership would identify a key contact whose role would be to arrange a series of meetings and interviews for the Peers and would also collect the required information and evidence.

Having conducted their visit, met with key people and studied the relevant materials, they would then draft their findings at a final meeting of the Peers supported by their facilitator. This draft would be shared with the partnership before it is finalised in order to ensure that any factual inaccuracies were eliminated. The final draft would be the property of the host partnership and would not be shared elsewhere without the expressed permission of the partnership.

The typical outline of a review was:

- Day 1 (Evening): Peer Review Team meet to discuss the issues to cover, agree the questions to ask and review the programme of meetings and discussions currently arranged.
- Day 2 (Full Day): Programme of meetings and discussions conducted by small groups of reviewers
- Day 2 (Early Evening): Agreement on key points to be included in the draft report.
- Within 7 days: Review facilitator sends draft report to host partnership for comment
- Within 14 days: Report finalised and ready for Partnership Board consideration.

6. Promoting Positive Behaviours

We have seen how important the development of a clear strategic plan, performance framework and evaluation strategy is for a developing partnership – how it sets the direction of the partnership, helps to bring members together under a common vision for their locality and how the whole system can be used to ensure that the work of the partnership is “on track”. However, no matter how many systems and processes are put in place in a partnership, the key to success will be the extent to which members of the partnership are able to be honest with each other, share their successes and their failures and work towards the development of a questioning and challenging culture

15 <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=1>.

16 <http://www.solace.org.uk>.

within the partnership that continually strives for improvement by seeking out evidence from stakeholders and elsewhere of where it is making a difference and where it needs to improve. It is worth remembering that most partnerships, and indeed most people, thrive on success and often, publicising in the media (newspapers, DVDs, websites, awards ceremonies, prize givings etc.) the successes of a partnership, generated through its evaluation work will greatly enhance the commitment and enthusiasm of its members.

Hopefully this short paper has provided some ideas for government officials and practitioners to use as a basis for their own work.

Annex 1: Coventry Partnership Evaluation Toolkit I: Recommended Guidelines

Making our Voices Heard Project, April 2004 Coventry and Warwick Universities

1. Introduction

In this document we propose a Framework and Toolkit for Coventry Partnership Evaluations, consistent with the Community Plan and Performance Management Framework. It arose from an initial document that we developed in the autumn of 2003 and subsequently tested out through pilot evaluations of 4 NRF funded projects that had been successful in receiving continuing funding beyond the end of March 2004. It found that though monitoring was normal, evaluation was not.

Accompanying this Toolkit is a separate Rationale, which provides a discussion and explanation of the principles underpinning the Toolkit.

2. A Framework and Toolkit for Coventry Partnership Evaluations

We propose the adoption of the following items for the Toolkit:

2.1 General principles:

1. Evaluation should take place at the beginning of the project and involve a process of periodic or continuous review.
2. Project aims and objectives should be clearly defined in ways that make them capable of evaluation.
3. The evaluation should be seen as a collaboration involving elements of external review combined with participation in self-evaluation and review by project workers, with report and accountability to target groups and communities. If feasible the community as well as project workers should be involved in the design and delivery of evaluations to cement ownership.
4. Projects should devise evaluation plans that include the methods to be used, and the means by which the findings will be considered and disseminated.
5. Where feasible this should involve 'tracking' of changes to beneficiaries who have received an intervention.
6. Sufficient internal and external resources should be set aside to undertake proper evaluations, 5-10 per cent is normal.
7. All stakeholders who are subject to evaluations should always have an opportunity to comment on draft findings.
8. No one group of stakeholders should be in a privileged position, for example, senior management, to suppress or restrict dissemination of independent evaluation findings.

9. There should be systematic consideration of the practical implications of any project evaluation, with sufficient time set aside for stakeholders to engage in this through workshop-style activities.
10. Evaluations should be competently conducted to good ethical standards such as advocated by the UK Evaluation Society's *Guidelines for Good Practice in Evaluation* (www.evaluation.org.uk)

In terms of the evaluations that are most consistent with the Coventry's Partnership's aims and objectives **we additionally suggest that:**

1. Projects demonstrate how their aims and objectives and 'plausible' methods of intervention have been influenced by a search for relevant evidence, and are aware of standards of 'good practice' in their field of intervention e.g. using databases such as <http://www.regen.net>. Any models of intervention used should be clearly identified e.g. cognitive behavioural therapy.
2. Projects identify which objectives of the Community Plan that they believe their interventions will influence, and which NRU/PSA floor targets, and in what ways.
3. Projects show 'criteria of success' and indicators they propose to use to show that they are both meeting their immediate objectives and the broader goals of the Community Plan to improve the quality of services and reduce inequality gaps in the city. We give some indications below of how they might do this in terms of specifics, and also in developing 'intermediate' outcomes that could start to show progress against achieving change outcomes
4. In evaluating outcomes, projects show how they are taking account of contextual influences and project (process) effects, and producing evidence that project interventions make a difference in creating adding value, both in what they do and the way that they do it (since the two are linked).

We therefore propose that projects produce evaluation plans which, as well as meeting the requirements identified above, evaluate project interventions against the **following criteria** from the outset:

5. **Core Values** – do these correspond with those of the Partnership, such as improved quality of life or services, promotion of equality in relation to priority neighbourhoods and defined communities of interest, partnership and collaboration
6. **Aims and Objectives** – are these clear and appropriate? Do they offer a plausible and sustainable solution to problem that has been properly investigated?
7. **Organisational Structures and delivery mechanisms** - is there an appropriate organisational framework for ensuring values, aims and objectives are realized in efficient and effective ways, including appropriate arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and review?

3. Focus on 'intermediate outcomes'

We strongly recommend that projects decide from the outset the kinds of intermediate outcomes that link the immediate goals of the project to longer term changes which, if sustained over time, could plausibly contribute to improvements identified by the Community Plan and NRU floor targets. In our pilot review (Allender et al 2004) we found that NRF funded projects in Coventry often claimed a direct linkage to floor

targets that was not necessarily plausible, and typically did not show how they intended to bring this about.

We cannot specify in advance what intermediate measures to use, and mix of qualitative and quantitative evidence to collect to show change in relation to project aims and Community Plan/NRU targets, as this will depend on the circumstances of the project and what it is trying to achieve. However we do give two examples below to illustrate how they might be developed.

Example 1: Smoking cessation and life expectancy. Getting people to quit smoking permanently will not definitely lengthen a particular individual's life but there is a body of evidence that it may well have this long-term effect. A good intermediate measure might be not just the proportion that stops smoking as a result of a quit group, but also those who sustain this for 6 months or more (see Nutbeam (1998) for more on intermediate outcomes in health promotion).

Example 2: Improving employability and reducing unemployment. There is evidence that in tight labour markets those who need jobs often face substantial personal and structural barriers. It might not immediately be feasible for training and other forms of help to get them into sustainable jobs immediately, so 'soft' measures of 'distance travelled' have been developed to show progress in terms of time-keeping, improved appearance, job search etc (see Renewal.net for more on so-called 'soft outcomes'). A little further down the line it might be a good idea to track people once they have got into jobs, to see whether they sustain them for, say, 6 months or more.

On the basis of our pilot research into NRF projects (Allender *et al* 2004) we therefore recommend that projects also develop strategies for evaluating their success against the following criteria, using appropriate qualitative and/or quantitative measures. We see the overlap that exists between the categories below as a strength rather than a problem.

- **Plausibility** – This refers to the extent that the project interventions are evidence-based and develop evaluation strategies that link immediate project effects and broader Community Plan objectives, and develop appropriate intermediate outcomes. Is the activity based on plausible actions – the right actions *to* achieve results? Does the partnership build on local, regional and national experience and good practice? Is the activity managed in a responsive way, which changes tack when outcomes are not achieved? Is the 'theory of change' tested by appropriate evaluation strategies?
- **Sustainability** – will the difference that project makes be sustained over time in an immediate sense such as quitting *smoking* or obtaining a job, and thus prevent reoccurrence of problems? Or does it only provide short-term interventions through uncertain funding. Does the project not only produce changes in individuals but also people who seek to achieve broader cultural changes for others? We could call the latter multiplier effects.
- **Partnership working and added value** – To what extent does the project operate in conjunction with other key players to help realise values, aims and objectives? How does it help to join up services to provide better quality local provision? How will the activity add value to what partners are already doing, which could be called synergistic effects e.g. co-ordinate initiatives in the area, avoid duplication, encourage joint working, encourage shared use of facilities?
- **Social Capital** – does the project help strengthen social networks and community social capacities, rather than just 'doing things' for people, as we know that this has many positive benefits for community *well* being and

health, not just the negative benefit of reducing pressures on public services. These can be measured through quantitative means (e.g. Groundwork's 'Prove It' methodology) or through qualitative examples or 'vignettes'.

- **Empowerment, well-being and liveability** – does the project have positive effects on people's ability to exercise greater individual and collective influence, and contribute to positive community and *environmental* goals. This can be shown by both quantitative and qualitative means showing concrete examples of empowerment, wellbeing and environmental gain (vignettes), but also statements from end beneficiaries themselves
- **Equality and diversity effects** – Is the project reaching appropriate target groups, and is it helping to close inequality gaps and promoting cohesion, toleration, and respect for difference, using an agreed system for identifying beneficiaries.
- **Mainstreaming Issues** – Is the project simply a way of covering gaps in provision that should be statutory responsibilities? If it is being innovative, is it doing so in ways that have implications for mainstream services, and what are these? Will the activity lead to long-term improvements in mainstream services? Is there a commitment to sustain the activity with core funding? Is there a commitment to learn from the activity and roll out identified good practice or to influence policy (e.g. change providers of the service)?

ANNEX 2: An Extract from a Local Area Agreement

The following is an extract from a Local Area Agreement developed in the UK. It is an example of a “government sponsored” action plan designed to help localities focus upon outcomes and indicators devised by government and to set baselines and targets against them. More detailed action plans are then developed around each outcome and cluster of indicators.

A West Midlands City, UK						
Outcome	Targeted priorities		Baseline	LAA Improvement Target		
	National Indicator	Description		2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
stronger communities	NI 008	Adult participation in sport and active recreation	18.7% (2006)			4% increase
	NI 015	Serious violent crime rate	1.24 recorded incidents per 1000 population (2007/08)	3.23% reduction	7.26% reduction	10.48% reduction
	NI 016	Serious acquisitive crime rate	20.2 recorded incidents per 1000 population (2007/08)	3.66% reduction	7.52% reduction	11.19% reduction
	NI 020	Assault with injury crime rate	13.7 recorded incidents per 1000 population (2007/08)	1.9% reduction	3.87% reduction	5.77% reduction
	NI 040	Number of drug users recorded as being in effective treatment	836 (2007/08)	5.98% increase	7.06% increase	8.13% increase

David Galliers has specialised in multiagency service delivery in Coventry and the West Midlands area of the UK for over 20 years. He has worked as adviser to national and regional government departments in the UK on partnership working, the development of performance management frameworks and the establishment of Local Area Agreements – the mechanism that central government in England uses to contract with local government and monitor its service delivery. He has developed and now leads the UK's first regional support programme for Local Strategic Partnerships. David has managed neighbourhood regeneration initiatives in disadvantaged communities, has run an Adult Education service and has worked in schools, colleges and universities. David has written extensively in national professional publications and founded England's LSP Futures network which is a national network of Local Strategic Partnerships that helps spread good practice and develop effective policies with government departments.

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OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Governance

The OECD LEED Forum on Partnerships and Local Governance is a worldwide network of local development practitioners. The Forum informs its members on local development innovations, organises capacity building seminars and study visits, releases handbooks and training materials, and provides networking opportunities through international conferences and an Annual Meeting held in Vienna. Today the Forum has over 2.600 members in some 53 countries. All institutions and organisations involved in local development may join the Forum. The activities of the Forum are supported by the European Commission, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Economy and Labour and Pobal, Ireland.

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