charities evaluation services

becoming more effective

an introduction
to monitoring
and evaluation for
refugee community organisations

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Becoming more effective: an introduction to monitoring and evaluation for refugee community organisations

Charities Evaluation Services (CES) works with a wide variety of voluntary and community organisations and their funders. CES provides training, advice and support on quality systems and monitoring and evaluation. If you have any questions about introducing monitoring and evaluation or quality systems in your organisation, you can get free advice from CES. Phone: 020 7713 5722 or email: enquiries@ces-vol.org.uk

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Becoming more effective: an introduction to monitoring and evaluation for refugee community organisations

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Inside this guide

Why are monitoring and evaluation important?

As a refugee community organisation (RCO) you may want to make sure your services are effective. You may need to show that you are working to high standards and that you are making a real difference to the communities you work in. Funders want to know how well you are doing and what works.

Monitoring and evaluation are important because they can help you know how well you are doing and what works. They should help your organisation to learn and develop. They should also help you provide information to funders and other people who are interested in your work. And if you learn from the information you gain through monitoring and evaluation, and use it, your services should improve.

Some community organisations – and refugee organisations like yours – are put off by some of the language used in monitoring and evaluation. You may think monitoring and evaluation is a job for experts, that it costs too much or will take you away from providing services to the community. This guide will reassure you. You may already have many of the skills and resources you need.

This guide takes you through five steps you can follow to do self-evaluation. It will help you to:
- be clear about the information you need and how to collect it
- use that information to improve your services
- demonstrate to your funders that you are running an effective service.

How to use this guide

We have written this guide for refugee community organisations (RCOs) who have little or no experience of monitoring and evaluation. We use the term 'project' throughout the guide, and by this we mean any project, service or organisation.

The guide describes five steps to follow in order to carry out monitoring and evaluation, and demonstrates each step using examples. In particular, we have developed an example of a refugee community association and use it to illustrate the five steps.

Once you have read the guide, you can follow these five steps to help you monitor and evaluate your project, taking a fresh look at what you do. This should strengthen the whole project. But it should also improve your services and your organisation's performance as a whole.

The guide uses everyday language and gives you a practical, easy-to-follow approach to evaluating your project. We explain the different terms as we use them. There is also an 'explanation of terms' on page 30.

There are five sections in this guide:

1 **What are monitoring and evaluation?**
The first section explains the terms *monitoring, evaluation* and *self-evaluation*. It looks at why monitoring and evaluation are important and introduces the five-step approach developed by CES.

2 **What you do and why you do it.**
The second section looks at the language of monitoring and evaluation – *aims, objectives, outputs, outcomes* and *indicators*. We also introduce the CES planning triangle.

3 **Monitoring.**
The third section is about setting up your information collection tools and starting to collect information.

4 **Evaluation.**
The fourth section is about using your monitoring information to do evaluation. We look at analysing information and presenting your findings.

5 **Using your results.**
The fifth section looks at how your findings can be used and explains the self-evaluation cycle.

In each section there are **checklists** to help you to think about what you need to do when you monitor and evaluate your own project.

Section 1
What are monitoring and evaluation?

Section 1 introduces monitoring and evaluation and explains the five-step approach used by CES.

Monitoring means collecting information regularly and systematically. It is important to plan and organise when and how you will collect information on your project so that your monitoring is not forgotten. Monitoring information helps you to answer questions about your project and to report on it to other people.

Evaluation is about using monitoring and other information you collect to make judgements about how your project is doing. At specific points during your project you can study the monitoring information you have collected to answer questions such as: How well are we doing? What difference are we making? Are we doing the right things? The answers to these questions will help you improve your work so your services become more effective.

Why should you evaluate?

Monitoring and evaluation are important for two main reasons:

1. For learning and improvement
Monitoring and evaluating your services will help you to assess how well you are doing and help you to do even better.

Through monitoring and evaluation you can find out what has happened during the life of your project, and assess what has helped and what difficulties there have been.

This information will help you learn more about your organisation's activities. You can use what you have learnt to improve your work further and to make a strong case for your services and any new services that may be needed.

2. To show others that you are effective (some call this 'accountability')
Your funders, service users and other people with an interest in your project want to know: Does it work well? Does it get results?

You need to demonstrate that your project has spent its money in the right way and that your services are making a positive difference to the people who use them.

Through monitoring and evaluation you can show how you have used your funding and how well your services are being run and received.

What is self-evaluation?

'Self-evaluation' is when you do it yourself. It is when you use your own people and their skills to collect information, and then use that information to evaluate – that is, to ask questions and make judgements.

Through self-evaluation you can build monitoring and evaluation into your everyday work.

There are many different ways to do self-evaluation. This guide takes you through one possible way which has been developed by CES. It is a five-step approach to self-evaluation, helping you to collect and use information to make your services more effective.

Five steps to monitoring and evaluation

The five-step approach is one possible way of doing self-evaluation. It can help you to be clear about what you are trying to achieve for your service users and help you develop specific aims and objectives.

Each of the five steps below is an important part of monitoring and self-evaluation. In this guide, we concentrate mainly on Step 1 because it is the starting point for the next steps.

'I am going to set up what I have learnt and bring awareness of the necessity of monitoring and evaluating services to the organisation.'

STEP 1: Clarify what you do and why you do it

STEP 2: Select information collection tools

STEP 3: Collect the information

STEP 4: Review the information and present your findings

STEP 5: Use the findings

STEP 1: Clarify what you do and why you do it

What are the aims of your project?

Aims are the changes you are trying to bring about for the service users of your project. These aims are based on the needs of your service users. An example of an aim is: *to increase refugees' knowledge of local services.*

What are your objectives?

Objectives are the broad activities you plan to allow you to achieve your aims. They are the services you believe will help you bring about those changes, for example: *to provide advice*, *to run training* or *to offer support*.

What are your outcomes?

Outcomes are the changes, learning, benefits or other effects that result from what you do. Planned outcomes are directly related to your aims. An example of an outcome is: *increased knowledge among refugees of local health services.*

What are your outputs?

Outputs are the detailed activities, services and products you offer. They come from your objectives. For example, if your objective is to provide advice, some outputs could be: *a telephone advice line, information leaflets and one-to-one advice sessions.*

What are your indicators?

Indicators are the 'clues' or 'signs' that you will check to assess how well you are doing. Indicators help you provide evidence of how well you are delivering your outputs and achieving your outcomes. They help to show how well you are meeting your aims and objectives. Here are two examples of indicators: *number of refugees attending advice sessions; level of knowledge among refugees of local health services.*

We will look at all these terms in more detail by using some examples.

STEP 2: Select information collection tools

Once you have set your indicators you can choose some 'tools' to help you collect information. For example, a registration list is a simple tool to record how many people attend a workshop and who they are. A form at the end of a workshop can be a useful way to get participants to give their feedback on the day. It is good practice to try out these tools with just a few users at first. This will help you check that the tools work well and that they give you the information you need in a helpful way.

STEP 3: Collect the information

This is the monitoring step. You need to decide how often to collect different types of information, and then collect the information regularly and in a systematic way. This will help you to do the next step of evaluation.

STEP 4: Review the information and present your findings

After you have gathered information you need to look at it all, analyse it and think about what it is telling you. Ask yourself: How well has the project done? Are we delivering our services well? What difference is our service making to our users? Have we achieved our aims and objectives? You might need to prepare a report or presentation to share what you have found with other people. This is part of the evaluation process.

STEP 5: Use the findings

Finally, take some time to think about what you have learnt about the project from the evaluation you have done. How can you use the findings? Can you use the findings to get more money for your project? Are there any changes you can make to improve your service next year?

In the next sections of this guide, we look at the five steps in more detail by using some examples.

Section 2
What you do and why you do it

Section 2 takes a detailed look at Step 1, clarifying what you do and why you do it. We look at the language of monitoring and evaluation – words such as aims, objectives, outputs, outcomes and indicators. We will use the example of a refugee community association throughout this section. We will also introduce you to the CES planning triangle. This will help you to set your own aims and objectives.

You may already have set the aims and objectives for your project or service. When you begin self-evaluation it is useful to look again at your project's aims and objectives to make sure they are clear.

What are your aims?

Aims describe the planned changes you are trying to achieve for your service users – often called your 'target group'.

You will probably want your aims to be based on the needs of your target group.

What is your target group?

Your target group is made up of all the people or organisations you hope will use your services. They are the people that will benefit from your project. For example, the target group for a refugee community association might be all the refugees living in the local area. This includes older people, parents, young people and children from different refugee communities.

Once you are clear about your target group you can think about and research their needs. This is the first stage in setting your aims. Remember that different groups may have different needs, and these might affect your aims. First, think about your overall aim.

Overall aim

Some organisations call their overall aim a 'mission statement' or 'purpose'. This describes in very broad, general terms the change the organisation wants to see. It is usually something that will take several years to achieve. For example, the refugee community association has an overall aim: *to improve the lives of the refugees living in the local area*. This could take five, ten, twenty years or more.

Because the overall aim is a broad statement of change it will be difficult to use it to monitor and evaluate your work. Specific aims are more precise statements about different aspects of your overall aim.

So you will need to break the overall aim down into specific aims.

Specific aims

Specific aims should be directly related to the overall aim and the particular needs of the people that benefit from your services. Specific aims often take a few years to achieve.

To identify its specific aims, the workers at the refugee community association had to ask themselves:
- What do we mean by improving the lives of refugees who use the services of the refugee community association?
- What needs do we want to address?
- What changes do we hope will happen?

The refugee community association found that the refugees in the local area had many needs, but they decided that these four were the most important **needs** to focus on:	Based on these needs the refugee community association defined its four **specific aims** as:
• more information on Jobcentres and other local services	• to increase access to local services
• help to get better grades at school	• to improve the educational achievement of refugee children
• more information on their rights to housing and other benefits	• to increase access to benefits
• more contact with other refugees.	• to reduce isolation.

The refugee community association was now able to monitor and evaluate against each separate aim.

Checklist – setting your aims

It will help you to bear in mind the following points when agreeing your aims:

- **Know your target group**
  Make sure everyone involved is clear about who you hope will be using your services. Which areas do they live in? What are their needs? Who exactly will benefit from the project?
- **Use helpful language**
  Use verbs ('action' words) that describe change, such as *to increase, to improve, to reduce* or *to enable.*
- **Get agreement**
  Does everyone involved understand what each aim means? Think about who are the relevant people – both inside and outside your organisation – to involve when you set your aims, and try to involve as many as possible.
- **Check that your specific aims relate directly to your overall aim**
  You will find it more difficult to set the right objectives and to evaluate the project if your aims are unclear. Once you have agreed on the changes you want to see (your aims), you can plan how to achieve them – your objectives.

'I think I feel better equipped to help my organisation to demonstrate its effectiveness and push for change.'

What are your objectives?

Objectives are the broad activities you plan to carry out so that you achieve your aims. Objectives are usually agreed once a year.

To decide on their objectives, the workers at the refugee community association looked at each specific aim in turn and asked: What do we need to do to achieve this aim? They agreed on five objectives:

1. To provide one-to-one advice sessions
2. To offer workshops to local service providers
3. To offer language classes
4. To organise social and cultural events
5. To run activities for young people.

Each objective related to at least one of their specific aims in the following way:

Aims	Objectives
• To increase access to local services	• To provide one-to-one advice sessions • To offer workshops to local service providers
• To improve the educational achievement of refugee children	• To offer language classes
• To increase access to benefits	• To provide one-to-one advice sessions
• To reduce isolation	• To organise social and cultural events • To run activities for young people

The table on page 9 shows that there is a direct link between each specific aim and its objectives. To achieve some aims, you may need to have more than one objective. Similarly, one objective may help you achieve more than one aim.

Checklist – setting your objectives

It will help you to bear in mind the following points when agreeing your objectives:

- **Use helpful language**
  Use verbs that describe actions when setting your objectives, such as *to provide, to offer, to set up, to run* or *to support*.
- **Be realistic**
  Don't be over-ambitious. Before you decide on your objectives, check that you have:
  - enough money
  - enough workers or volunteers
  - enough time.
- **Check that your objectives directly relate to your specific aims**

Distinguishing aims from objectives

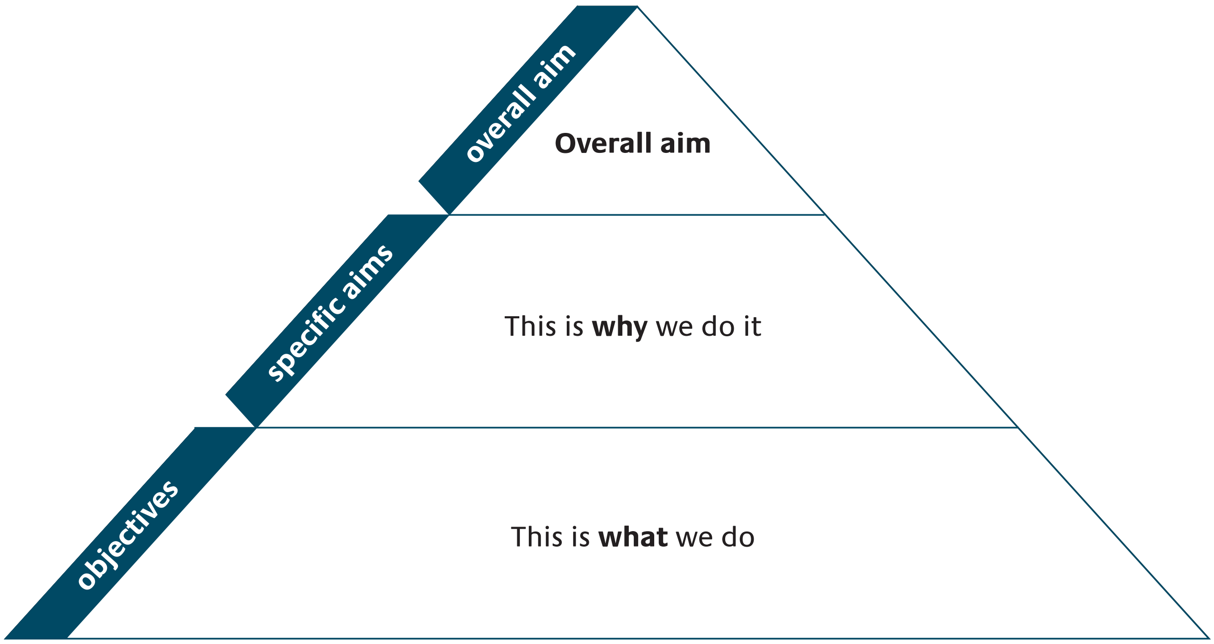
Using different types of words for your aims and objectives will help you keep them distinct from one another.

For example:
To **increase** access to benefits, the refugee association **provides** one-to-one advice sessions.

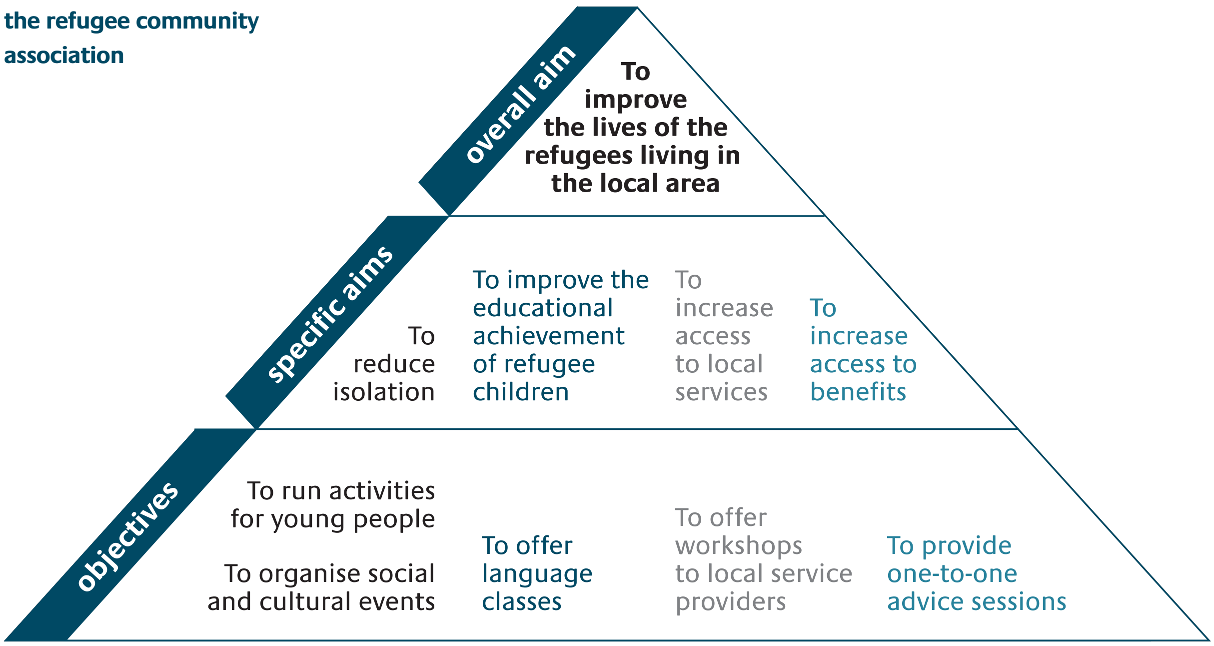
Aim: to **increase** access to benefits
Objective: to **provide** one-to-one advice sessions.

The CES planning triangle

The CES planning triangle[1] is a useful tool to organise your aims and objectives. It also shows how what your organisation does (your objectives) can lead to changes (your aims). Over time these can then lead to greater progress towards your overall aim.



Planning triangle for the refugee community association



The colours used in the triangle above show how each objective relates to at least one specific aim.

[1] © Charities Evaluation Services

The planning triangle can be a good way to picture what you do and why. You and your colleagues can develop a triangle together for your project, to help you agree your aims and objectives.

Once you have set your aims and objectives you can move on to the next part of Step 1 – agreeing on your outputs and outcomes.

What are your outputs and outcomes?

Once you have agreed your aims and objectives you can develop your outputs and outcomes.

Outputs

All the activities, products and services provided by your organisation for your users are called your ‘outputs’. In other words, outputs describe in more detail all the work done by your project that users can directly access.

Your outputs come from your objectives. For example, the refugee community association has an objective: *to organise social and cultural events*. So its outputs could include cultural events such as celebrations and parties, and social events such as trips. Examples are an Eid celebration party or a trip to the local market.

Another objective is: *to provide one-to-one advice sessions* so outputs could include advice sessions on employment or housing in the area.

Outcomes

Outcomes are all the changes, benefits, learning or other effects that happen as a result of the activities, products and services provided by your organisation.

Planned outcomes come directly from your specific aims.

Another way to think about outcomes is to ask: How do we hope people will benefit from what we do? For example, when the refugee community association holds its Eid Party, the workers hope that the people who go will feel a sense of belonging and that the children have fun and make new friends. The advice sessions on employment would help refugees become more familiar with the UK job market and have more understanding of how to apply for jobs.

You could look at what the refugee community association does (its outputs) and the effects on users (its outcomes), like this:

Outputs	Outcomes
• Celebrations and parties	• Refugee parents and children feel a sense of belonging • Children have fun • Children make new friends
• Trips	• Refugee parents and children learn more about their local area • Young people get to know each other better
• Advice sessions on employment	• Refugees are more familiar with the UK job market • Refugees have more understanding of how to apply for jobs • Refugees understand the benefits of doing voluntary work

It is also important to remember that outcomes can be:

- welcome or unwelcome
- expected or unexpected.

For example, if you have activities for young people, you might welcome outcomes such as:

- young people take part in interesting activities after school
- young people have fun
- young people learn new skills.

You could also find some unexpected, welcome outcomes. For example, more young people might take up voluntary work. But if local residents complained about there being more young people in the area, this would be an unexpected, unwelcome outcome.

Checklist – setting your outputs and outcomes

It will help you to bear in mind the following points when setting your outputs and outcomes:

- **Make sure your outputs are directly related to your objectives**
  Remember that your outputs describe objectives in greater detail: they are like 'broken down' objectives. They describe what your organisation actually does or provides for its users, such as workshops, advice sessions and leaflets.

- **Be realistic**
  The number and types of activities, products and services that your organisation is able to offer will depend on the level of resources you have – that is, the time, money and workers or volunteers you have available.

- **Make sure your planned outcomes relate to your specific aims**
  Remember, outcomes describe the more detailed changes you expect to see in your users as a result of your services. This might be, for example, increased knowledge, better skills or more confidence.

- **Choose outcomes carefully**
  The emphasis on outcomes has increased in recent years. Funders and the government are interested not only in what you do but the difference this makes to the lives of the people you serve. It is tempting to list lots of outcomes but be careful to choose only a few that you think you can achieve, measure and report on. Your outcomes should be realistic given your outputs and resources.

  For example, if you are running a job club for young people, it is reasonable to hope they become more aware of jobs in the area. If they attend a workshop on interview skills, then you could hope that their interview techniques improve. But it would be unrealistic to expect them to be able to set up and run their own business straight away!

- **Communicate with funders**
  If possible, try to talk to your funders about their expectations of your project. What outputs do they expect you to deliver each year? What outcomes do they think you will be achieving? More and more funders are prepared to meet organisations to discuss and agree plans, and to provide support and guidance with monitoring and evaluation – especially to do with outcomes.

When you have listed your outputs and outcomes, you can move on to the final part of Step 1 – setting your indicators.

What are your indicators?

Indicators (also called 'performance indicators') are the 'clues' or 'signs' you use to help you assess the progress and success of a project.

Indicators can be 'quantitative' or 'qualitative'. Quantitative indicators help you to collect information that can be given as numbers, for example: how many people attended a course; how many children aged between 5 and 15 went on a trip to the local market; how many refugees were given advice on employment. Qualitative indicators help you to collect information that is presented in words – for example, the feedback from people who attend a course, or feedback from people about how far the advice they received helped them to solve their problem.

There are different types of indicator. We use two types of indicator in this guide:

Output indicators. These help you to assess the work produced by the project and to show progress towards meeting your objectives.

Outcome indicators. These help you to assess the changes that take place as a result of your project and show progress towards meeting your aims.

What are output indicators?

So far we have shown you how to set your objectives and then break them down into more detailed outputs. Outputs describe your project's activities, services and products – that is, the work produced by the project. Once you have identified your outputs, you can agree on indicators for them.

Output indicators may be set for the following:

- **quantity** – the number of services you run and products you offer
- **take-up** – the number of people or organisations who use your services and products
- **access** – the type of people or organisations who use your services and products
- **quality** – the nature of the service or product, for example, how long people have to wait for an advice session.

Output indicators will help you answer important questions about your outputs and assess whether or not your project delivered what it intended.

Here are examples of outputs and output indicators from the drop-in centre run by the refugee community association:

Objective: to provide one-to-one advice sessions

Outputs	Output indicators
• Advice sessions on employment	• Number of advice sessions held • Length of sessions • Type of advice given – for example, where the local Jobcentre is, how to get a part-time job • Number of referrals • Where people are referred to – for example, the local Jobcentre

Objective: to offer language classes

Outputs	Output indicators
• ESOL classes • Mother-tongue classes	• Number of classes • Length of classes • Number of children attending classes • Profile (age, gender, ethnic background) of children attending classes

Objective: to organise social and cultural events

Outputs	Output indicators
• Celebrations • Parties • Trips	• Number of people attending • Age range of people attending • Quality of refreshments

Once the workers at the drop-in centre had collected the information against their indicators, they could assess how well the advice sessions, classes, celebrations, parties and trips were running. This helped them to assess how well they were achieving their objectives.

Knowing if, or how, you are achieving your objectives is only half the story. It is also important to know whether you are actually bringing about the changes you wanted – your outcomes. To assess how well you are achieving your outcomes, you need to set outcome indicators.

What are outcome indicators?

Outcome indicators will help you assess whether you really are bringing about the changes you want. They are clues to show whether your expected outcomes are happening. Outcome indicators show progress towards meeting your aims.

Before setting outcome indicators it is important to review your specific aims and outcomes as described earlier in this guide.

Here is another example:

One of the refugee community association's specific aims is: *to improve the educational achievement of refugee children.*

Thinking about the outcomes they expected from this aim, the workers at the refugee community association discussed what they meant by 'improved educational achievement'. What changes would show them that the children's educational achievement had improved?

The workers thought of three main changes that would show improved educational achievement. The children would have:
- improved literacy skills
- improved numeracy skills
- reduced truancy – that is, children would miss less school.

These were the expected outcomes for this aim. They then moved on to identify indicators for each outcome – the things they could assess to see if the changes had happened.

Here is what the refugee community association thinks they should look at to assess whether children's educational achievement is improving:

Specific aim: to improve the educational achievement of refugee children

Outcomes	Outcome indicators
• Improved literacy skills	• Ability to read mother tongue/English • Ability to write mother tongue/English
• Improved numeracy skills	• Ability to do basic addition/subtraction
• Reduced truancy	• Number of days children miss school • Reasons why children miss school

Checklist – setting indicators

It will help you to bear in mind the following points when setting your indicators:

- **First set your aims and objectives**
  Once you have set your aims and objectives, ask: What changes (outcomes) do we want to see in our users? What signs (outcome indicators) will show us that the change we hoped for has happened? What services do we want to offer (outputs)? How will we know we have delivered them (output indicators)?

- **Be realistic**
  Don't set too many indicators. Think about your existing workload and how much information it is realistic for you to collect. Will you need skills and resources you do not have?

- **Choose the most important indicators**
  Only collect information that will help you evaluate the project. Think about what you and your funders want to know. There is no point collecting information that you do not need or cannot use.

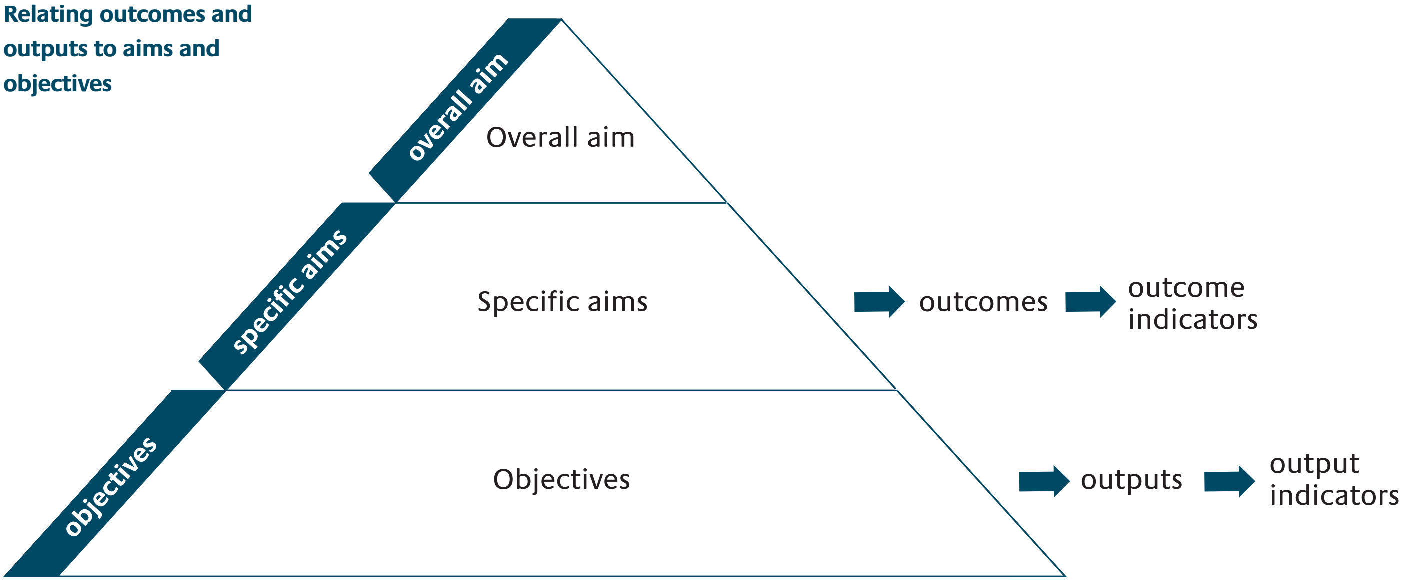
What are targets?

You can express outcomes and outputs in numbers. These are called targets. They express how much you will do, or how well you will do, within a certain time period. You may find it helpful to set these targets when you are planning, or your funders may ask you for this information.

For example, when the refugee drop-in centre runs mother-tongue classes, it might set targets such as:
- 70% of children attend every week (output target).
- 60% of children have improved language skills after one year of attending classes (outcome target).

When you have agreed your indicators, you need to decide how often to collect different information and what methods and tools to use. You can then start monitoring. Keep a regular check on both your output and outcome indicators to see whether you are achieving your outputs and outcomes. The information you collect will help you to answer your evaluation questions.

Relating outcomes and outputs to aims and objectives



Section 3
Monitoring

Section 3 is about selecting your information collection tools and starting to collect monitoring information. This is Step 2 and Step 3 of the five-step approach.

Remember, when you have completed Step 1 you will be clear about what you are going to do, what you hope to change, and what information you are looking for. You can then move on to Steps 2 and 3. Step 2 is selecting information collection tools and Step 3 is collecting information to be able to check systematically on the progress of your work. This collecting and checking process is known as monitoring.

When you monitor, you can collect information on a wide variety of things relevant to the project. You are most likely to need information on:

- **your outputs** – how your activities are running, how your services are being delivered, and progress towards meeting your objectives
- **your outcomes** – the changes resulting from your activities, whether your services are leading to benefits for your users, and progress towards meeting your aims.

There are many methods and tools for collecting information. You need to find ways that are suitable for your project and your service users. We will look at some examples now.

Monitoring outputs

To see how they were meeting some of their objectives, the refugee community association used a number of tools to collect information on their outputs. These are shown in the table on the next page.

Tool	Information collected (output indicators)
• Class log book	• Number of children attending classes • Profile (age, gender, ethnic background) of children attending classes
• Case notes	• Type of advice given during one-to-one advice sessions • Number of referrals • Where people are referred to
• Comment form	• Quality of refreshments at events

'I am very happy at having learnt practical skills for funding applications ... this is essential knowledge.'

By collecting this information regularly for classes, events and advice sessions, the refugee community association could see whether it needed to make any changes.

For example, workers found that fewer people came to classes on weekday evenings than on Saturday mornings. When they asked why, they found out that transport during weekday evenings was more difficult than during the day on weekends. So they moved the evening classes to a Saturday morning.

It is important to collect information about your outputs to check whether your activities are running as planned. However, you also need to monitor outcomes to find out whether the changes you hoped for have happened, and whether there are any unexpected results.

Monitoring outcomes

The teachers running the language classes at the refugee community association wanted to collect information about whether the aim 'to improve the educational achievement of refugee children' was being met. So they asked the children and their parents about the grades they were getting in school. When the children attended the classes at the refugee community association drop-in centre, the teachers gave them tests and did quizzes to check progress. At the end of term the teachers asked again about school grades.

Sometimes you may find collecting information about outcomes more difficult, as it could involve collecting information about people's behaviour and attitudes. For example, to check whether the aim 'to reduce isolation' has been met, the workers at the drop-in centre needed to ask several questions such as:

- Are our service users getting involved in more activities in the community?
- Do they have more friends?

To collect this information the workers:

- asked people who came to the advice sessions whether they were getting to know other service users, and noted this in their **case notes**
- observed children when they attended classes to see whether they were making friends, and noted this in a **log book**
- observed people attending the centre and coming to social events to see if there were new people coming, and made a note in the **attendance lists**.

Here is the evidence they collected:

- The **case notes** showed that many people who came to advice sessions were talking to each other in the reception area while they were waiting, so it seemed that people were getting to know each other.
- The **log books** showed that children who had come to more than one class often sat with the same child for the rest of the classes and did not make new friends.
- The **attendance lists** showed that new people were coming to the centre and to social events.

Checklist – monitoring outputs and outcomes

It will help you to bear in mind the following points when you are thinking about selecting information collection tools and collecting your monitoring information:

When to collect information

You need to collect information regularly and systematically. You might collect some information every day. For example, at the refugee community association the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers take a register and note who is attending the class each day.

Remember that with outcomes you are looking to see if there have been any changes or benefits. Ideally you need to collect the same information from the same people at least twice. For example, the ESOL teachers would look at the grades in English the children were getting at the beginning of the term and at the end of the term. They could then see if there had been any improvements in the children's English language skills. Some of these changes may be to do with the ESOL classes that the children attended.

Who collects the information

Be clear about who collects the information and how often, and where they store it. You should also explain why the information needs to be collected.

How to collect the information

The three main ways of collecting information are:

- **Observation:** You may want to collect information by carefully observing your activities over a period of time to see how people interact with one another.
- **Asking questions:** You could use a written questionnaire, or hold group or individual discussions, to find out whether any changes have happened.
- **Using records:** Log books, registers, databases, case notes or diaries can be helpful ways to collect and record information.

More creative ways of collecting information that will get people more involved include: a 'comment wall' at an event – where you can give post-it notes to service users for them to write a comment and stick it on the wall; using video recording; using drama; or getting children to draw how they feel or what they have learnt.

Look at how other organisations are collecting information

You could get in touch with another organisation that does similar work to you and find out what tools they use for collecting information. You might be able to adapt these tools for your own use, or they may give you ideas for developing your own tools.

Look out for the unexpected

Remember that outcomes can be unexpected, both welcome and unwelcome. Your monitoring should be able to pick this up. For example, the last question on a workshop feedback form might be: *Please tell us about any other things you learnt from attending this workshop.*

Checklist – monitoring outputs and outcomes

Continued

- **Be realistic**
  Don't collect too much information. Think about what you are already collecting and what more information you need.
- **Maintain complete and confidential records**
  Make sure that monitoring records are filled in fully and accurately. If you are keeping personal records, they should be stored safely and confidentially.
- **Check with your funders**
  Find out whether the tools you are planning to use will give your funders the information they will find helpful.

Monitoring advice sessions – what funders want to know

The refugee community association drop-in centre gets funding to run its advice sessions. Every year they have to provide statistics and other information to their funders on:

- who asks for advice
- what type of advice is asked for
- how people benefit from the advice they receive.

To help them do this, the advice workers have a record sheet they fill in every day. They record each person's age, gender and ethnic group only. These are kept separate from names and addresses, which are stored confidentially. They record all the advice they give by ticking boxes against eight main types of advice. Every week the numbers are added up and stored.

Every six months the advice workers call some of the people they gave advice to. They ask how the advice was used and record the information in their case notes. For example, some people say that the advice they received helped them to make a successful claim for housing benefit.

Using all this information, the manager is able to write her report for funders.

Once your monitoring is working well, write down how you are doing it and make it part of your project procedures.

When you have collected information about your project's outputs and outcomes, you can then analyse how far you have achieved your aims and objectives, assess other aspects of the project and present your findings. **This is Step 4 – evaluation.**

Section 4
Evaluation

Section 4 is about using monitoring information to do evaluation. We look at analysing information and presenting your findings.

Evaluation is about making sense of the information you have collected and making judgements about your project.

When you have completed Steps 1, 2 and 3, you will have:
- clear aims – the changes you are trying to achieve for the service users of your project
- expected outcomes – the more detailed changes you hope will happen
- clear objectives – the planned areas of work the project will do
- outputs – the detailed activities, products and services you offer to bring about the changes
- output indicators and outcome indicators – guiding you on what information to collect
- information collection methods and tools to monitor relevant information.

Once you have collected the information, you will now be ready to evaluate – that is, to analyse the information and make informed judgements.

Analysing your information

You can use the information you collect to help you answer the following questions:
- Did the project achieve its aims? Did it make the changes you hoped for? If your project did not achieve its aims, why not?
- Did the project achieve its objectives? Did its activities run as planned? If not, why not? What worked well and what did not work so well?
- Did you reach the target group you hoped to? If not, why not?
- What else have you learnt from the evaluation? For example, what has it told you about the way the project works, your management support, workers and other resources?

The answers to these questions will help with your planning, allowing you to see how to change, develop and make your services more effective.

Remember also to review how your monitoring and evaluation worked. Think about how you might do it differently next time.

Once you have analysed your information you can think about how to present your findings.

Presenting your findings

How you share and use the results of your monitoring and evaluation is very important. Think about who would be interested in your findings and how that information should be reported.

You may have to write a report for your funders or fill in a standard form with the information. However, there may be many other people interested in the evaluation, such as your workers, trustees and service users. So take these different groups of people into account when thinking about how to report your evaluation findings.

Think creatively about ways of reporting information. For example, the refugee community association decided to write a short piece for the local newspaper. They described how some of the refugee children were getting better grades at school and how the children felt their classes at the drop-in centre were important.

Here are some more ways to present your findings:

- annual reports
- training or 'open day' events
- conferences
- meetings
- videos
- letters to local councillors or other politicians
- radio interviews
- websites
- newsletters.

When you are deciding how to report your results, think not only about who would be interested in the results, but also about how you want to use your evaluation findings within your organisation. Remember, evaluation will help you both to show the effectiveness of your services and improve your work.

Here is an example of how the refugee community association presented some of its findings in a written evaluation report:

'We will make more effort to monitor and evaluate our performance and believe our funding applications will be more inclusive and articulate.'

In 2007, a total of 52 children took our ESOL classes. We monitored their progress in a number of ways: we asked children and their parents about their grades at the beginning of term and again at the end; the teachers gave the children tests and quizzes, such as writing a story at the beginning of term and then again at the end; we also asked children and their parents about their views on the classes. Here are some of our findings:

- 90% of children attended 5 or more classes (from a possible 8 classes).
- 88% of parents said they thought the classes were good or very good.
- 85% of children showed some increase in their ability to write in English.
- 60% of children said they felt more confident to speak in English.
- 20% of children achieved higher grades at school.

Section 5
Using your results

Once you have carried out the first four steps of the self-evaluation process, you will have reported your evaluation findings. However, the process should not stop there. Most importantly, you now need to agree how to apply what you have learnt to your daily work and the project's future development. This is the final step – using your results.

There are a number of ways you can use the results of your evaluation:

Share your findings
You can tell other workers and volunteers within your organisation about your findings and discuss what you have learnt. For example, you might want to do a short presentation at a meeting and talk about what the evaluation shows.

It is also important to share your findings outside your organisation, with funders and other organisations. For example, you might send a summary of your findings to an organisation that offers services in your area, such as your local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) or other RCOs in the area, so that they become more aware of your achievements and how you meet local needs.

Tell service users
It is often a good idea to show the results of your evaluation to the people that use your services. For example, if you did a survey with your users, you could put the results on a poster and display this in your waiting area. This will show your service users that they are an important part of the evaluation process.

Think about your most important resources
It is important to use the results of your evaluation to plan your services better. Each year you should review your work and the resources you use. For example, do you have enough workers and volunteers? Do you need a better building for your services? Could you do with more money for your work?

Apply for further funding
Demonstrating the results of your work is useful when you need to get more funding for your services. Funders will ask if you do monitoring and evaluation, and if so, what it has shown about your work.

Promote your organisation and raise your profile

You could put some of the evaluation results on your leaflets and other marketing material. This will help people to know who you are, what you do and what people think of your services.

Keep a record

You should keep paper or electronic copies of all your evaluation reports and the summary information you have collected. This will be useful if you want to look back on your work and see how your projects have progressed.

Review your services

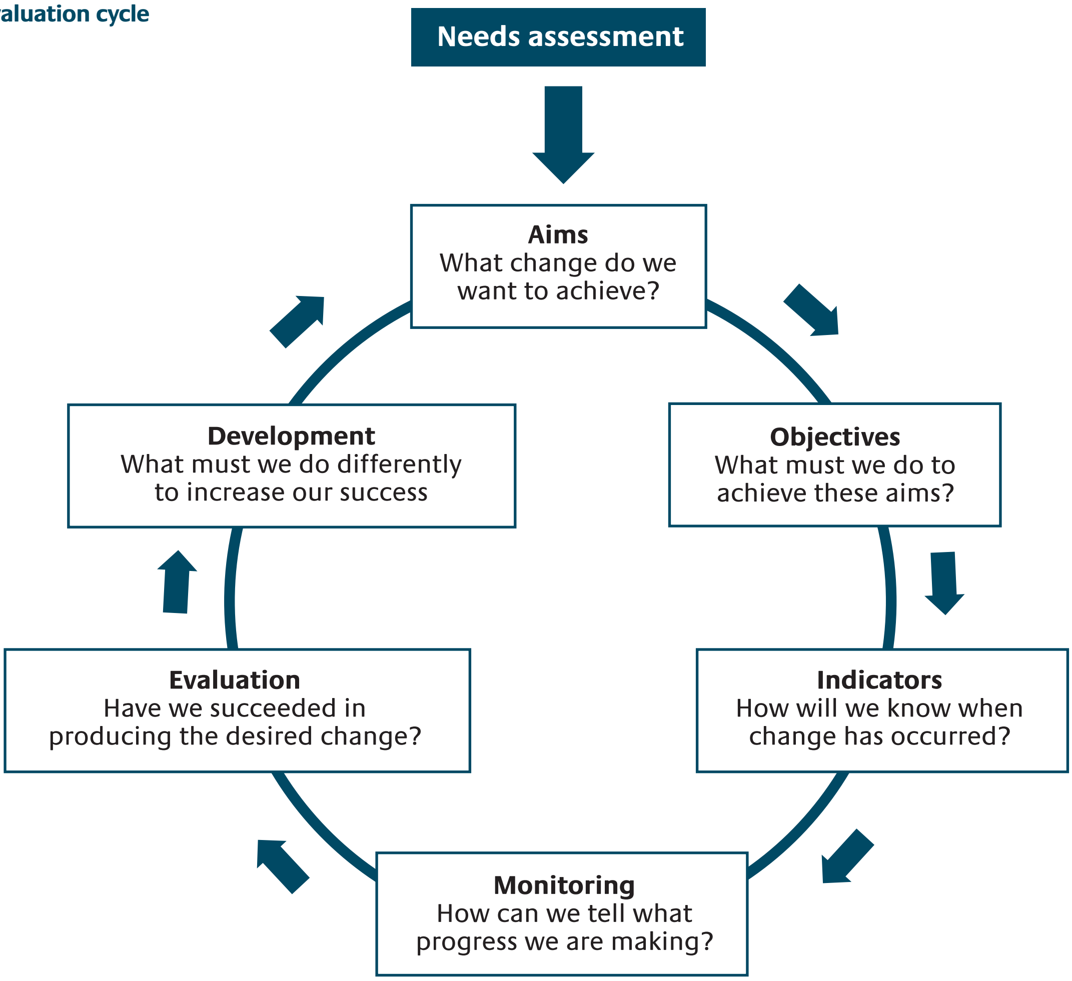
Look at what your evaluation tells you about your existing services. Ask yourself: Could we focus our work better? Is there a need for new projects that we could try to get funding for?

The self-evaluation cycle

Once you have finished Step 5, you have completed one cycle of self-evaluation.

The self-evaluation cycle shows how evaluation should be a continual process, built into your annual work plan. This will help your project to remain healthy and to provide effective, high-quality services. Above all, it will help the work you do make a **real difference.**

The self-evaluation cycle



Ways forward

Now that you have reached the end of this guide, we suggest you share it with colleagues and discuss what this means for your organisation.

You may have some questions or want more guidance. The next sections should help you. They contain:

- a case example of a Manchester refugee organisation
- frequently asked questions
- information about more resources on monitoring and evaluation.

You might want to consider:

- talking to other organisations to see if you can help each other
- getting trained on monitoring and evaluation
- buying some publications
- asking for some support.

In particular, you may want to look at 'Practical Monitoring and Evaluation: A Guide for Voluntary Sector Organisations' which is also published by CES. This has been designed to take you from the first steps through to a more advanced level of evaluation. It includes a Practical Toolkit with guidance on collecting and analysing information, and on writing reports.

Frequently asked questions

1. How many aims and objectives should we have for our project?
There is no set number. What is important is to be as clear and focused as possible. We recommend that you have one overall aim, between three and five specific aims, and between five and seven objectives for each project.

2. Do we have to find out about people's needs?
Yes. Ideally, before you start any project you should find out what the people you want to work with need. This will help you define the aims of your project and help you develop services that are useful.

3. What is a SMART objective?
The term 'SMART' stands for 'specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound'. To be useful your objectives should all be SMART. When you set your output indicators you will be clear how SMART your objectives are.

4. Do I have to set targets?
No – unless your funders have asked for them or you think they will be helpful to your project. Targets can be useful to plan your work. They may help to motivate your workers and volunteers. Targets should be realistic – not too high and not too low.

5. What is the difference between outcomes and outputs?
Outcomes are the changes that happen for your clients or target group. Outputs are the products, activities or services you deliver. Outcomes show progress towards meeting your aims. Outputs show progress towards meeting your objectives. Both outputs and outcomes are important, but they are different.

6. How much monitoring can we do with only a few volunteers?
Be realistic about the amount of monitoring and evaluation you can do. It will be affected by the size of your organisation as well as how much time and money you have. But even if you have a very small budget and little time, you can collect basic information. Identify a few key outputs and outcomes and some clear indicators against which information can be collected without needing more staff or money.

7. Do we need computers to collect and record monitoring information?
Not necessarily. If you are collecting limited amounts of information, you could use cards and paper files. If you are using computers, you could set up a simple spreadsheet (eg Excel) to record output and outcome data. If you already have a database for information about your project, you could develop it to store and analyse this extra information. Remember that if you collect and use personal information, you have to follow the rules of good practice for handling the information given by the Data Protection Act 1998. You can phone 01625 545 745 for more information. Whatever you use should be secure and able to store different types of information. People using it should find it easy to use.

Case example: United Somali Bravanese Community

This example shows how one RCO run by volunteers has developed monitoring and evaluation.

The United Somali Bravanese Community (USBC) is an organisation based in Manchester. It was set up in 1996 to help asylum seekers from Somalia to access services in Manchester.

It is run by six volunteers and offers a variety of services including:
- interpretation
- advice and support on how to contact service providers
- advice and support on housing and benefits
- help with health issues
- help on accessing schools.

Around 500 people use these services each year.

How did they start with monitoring and evaluation?

In 2007, one of the volunteers attended 'Making your services more effective' – a monitoring and evaluation course run by CES. Before the training, they collected information on their services for the Community Legal Service Quality Mark. But they wanted to improve.

The volunteer shared the information from the CES training course with other people in his organisation, and also with other Somali organisations in the area. USBC has since used its learning to improve on its existing monitoring and evaluation by:
- reviewing aims, objectives, outputs and outcomes
- developing information collection tools
- collecting monitoring information
- improving information analysis and presentation
- reviewing and learning from monitoring information.

What has helped?

As well as what they learnt from the CES training, USBC have had support and help from the Manchester Refugee Support Network.

What has been difficult?

USBC have faced two main problems:

- Volunteers often leave after they are trained, and their skills go with them.
- There is a continued lack of funding.

What have been the benefits?

Despite these difficulties, USBC have felt the benefits of their improved monitoring and evaluation:

- Their advice service is better monitored. They now collect information on the numbers of enquiries, types of enquiry and the areas people come from.
- Comments on their monitoring forms suggest that services are getting better.
- They are more able to demonstrate effectiveness to others and have a better chance of getting funding. USBC have been using the information collected from monitoring and evaluation to report back to funders and also to apply for further funding.

'It is important to have [a monitoring and evaluation system], in order to improve ourselves, to get funding and to get other projects. [We] need to be able to show that projects are viable and sustainable.'

A USBC volunteer

Explanation of terms

Accountability: being held directly responsible for something, such as spending or activities.

Activities: the actions, tasks and work a project or organisation carries out to create its outputs and outcomes, and achieve its aims and objectives.

Aims: describe why the organisation exists and the difference it wants to make. Aims can be overall or specific. (See **Overall aim**; **Specific aims**.)

Assessment: judgements about the organisation's or project's performance.

CES planning triangle: a visual tool which can be used to develop and distinguish between the aims and objectives of a project.

Community Legal Service Quality Mark in England and Wales: a standard specifically designed for organisations providing legal information and advice to the public.

CVS: Council for Voluntary Service.

Effective: having the required results or effect; producing the intended benefits.

ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages.

Evaluation: involves using monitoring and other information to make judgements on how an organisation, project or programme is doing. Evaluation can be done externally or internally. (See **Self-evaluation**.)

Indicators: well-defined things to measure to show how well an organisation or project is performing. For example, outcome indicators are used to assess whether expected outcomes have occurred. Output indicators are used to assess whether outputs have been delivered. Indicators can be qualitative or quantitative.

Monitoring: the regular, systematic collection and recording of information about a project, mainly to check its progress against its plans.

Mission: describes why an organisation or project exists and the broad effect that it wants to have. A summary of the overall difference it wants to make. (See **Overall aim**.)

Objectives: describe the planned areas of activity by which a project is going to achieve its aims.

Outcomes: the changes, benefits, learning or other effects that happen as a result of services and activities provided by an organisation.

Outputs: the activities, services and products provided by an organisation.

Overall aim: describes why the organisation exists and the broad effect it wants to have. It summarises the difference that an organisation wants to make. It is often linked to the mission of an organisation. (See **Mission**; **Specific aims**.)

Plan: a written description of the steps an organisation will take to achieve certain things.

Profile: the characteristics of a group of people such as age, gender, ethnic background, or of an organisation, such as size, type.

Project: a major task, involving several activities and resources, which may need special attention and control. (Note: some organisations are called 'projects'.)

QASRO: The 'Quality Assurance System for Refugee Organisations' developed by the Refugee Council. An organisational development tool based on self-assessment to help organisations to continuously improve all their operations.

Qualitative: about qualities or characteristics; descriptive information rather than numerical.

Quantitative: about numbers or quantity; can be measured or counted.

RCO: Refugee Community Organisation.

Self-evaluation: a form of evaluation where people within an organisation make judgements about their organisation's performance towards meeting its aims and objectives, usually against a set of indicators.

Services: all the goods and information supplied, and all the things an organisation does for its users.

Service users (See **Users**.)

Specific aims: statements about the particular differences an organisation hopes to make to its user group. These usually stem from the needs of the user group. (See **Overall aim**.)

Summary: a short re-statement of the main points of a report.

Target: a defined level of achievement that a project or organisation sets itself to reach in a specific period of time. For example, you could set a target to do ten, one-to-one interviews each day.

Target group: the people or organisations you hope will use your services. They are the people that will benefit from your project.

Users: all the people who use the organisation's services. Also called 'service users'.

Resources

Specialist refugee support organisations

Refugee Council: The Refugee Council is the largest organisation in the UK working with asylum seekers and refugees. It also works with refugee community organisations, helping them grow and serve their communities. www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Evelyn Oldfield Unit: The Evelyn Oldfield Unit provides professional training and support to refugee community organisations. www.evelynoldfield.co.uk

Refugee Action: Refugee Action is an independent national charity that works with refugees to help them build new lives in the UK. www.refugee-action.org.uk

Publications

First steps in Monitoring and Evaluation, Charities Evaluation Services

Practical Monitoring and Evaluation: a guide for voluntary organisations, Charities Evaluation Services

Your project and its outcomes, Charities Evaluation Services

QASRO – Quality Assurance System for Refugee Organisations, Refugee Council, London. Please phone the Refugee Council on 020 7346 1173 or email: qasro@refugeecouncil.org.uk or visit the QASRO section of the website: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

Web resources

For a monitoring and evaluation resource guide, free guidance papers and other resources including 'Jargonbuster' which defines terms used in the voluntary and community sector, visit the CES website. www.ces-vol.org.uk

Local resources

Local infrastructure organisations offer development support to RCOs and other organisations. For example, your local infrastructure organisation could give you advice on monitoring and evaluation, how to start up an RCO, where to get funding and other help with financial and legal matters. Some have a library of books and leaflets you can look at, and provide photocopying facilities and training courses.

You might want to keep a record of the contact details of your nearest local infrastructure organisation. This could be a refugee support network in the area or your local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) or Council for Voluntary Action (CVA).

To find your nearest local infrastructure organisation, use the NAVCA website: www.navca.org.uk or phone: 0114 278 6636 or email: navca@navca.org.uk

Keep a note of your local infrastructure organisation here:

Nearest local infrastructure organisation

About Charities Evaluation Services

Charities Evaluation Services (CES) is an independent charity with unrivalled expertise in monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance systems in the voluntary sector.

CES produces a range of publications, including PQASSO – the quality system specially designed for small and medium-sized voluntary organisations.

How will CES work with you?

Phone us on 020 7713 5722 for free advice.

Our consultants will talk to you about your organisation's needs and offer you practical advice about monitoring, evaluation, self-evaluation and quality systems.

What services does CES offer?

In-house training
CES offers training in monitoring, evaluation and quality systems. Training courses can be run in-house and tailored specifically to the needs of your organisation.

Open training
We also run a programme of training courses covering monitoring and evaluation and quality systems from our accessible central London venue.

Phone us for our full training brochure on 020 7713 5722, or email: training@ces-vol.org.uk or visit our website: www.ces-vol.org.uk

Consultancy
Our consultancy service is flexible and provides support for organisations that want to understand and implement monitoring, evaluation and quality systems.

External evaluations
CES has carried out evaluations of a large number of organisations since 1990 as well as working with funders to evaluate their programmes and funding strategies.