

Evaluation of Engagement

International Public Engagement Workshop
8 March 2017
Dr Robin Vincent

Overview

- Perceptions of Evaluation
- Balancing ‘accountability’ and ‘learning’
- Clarity around how engagement activities have an influence – ‘theory of change’
- Challenges of complexity - ‘attribution’ versus ‘contribution’
- Useful resources for evaluation of engagement

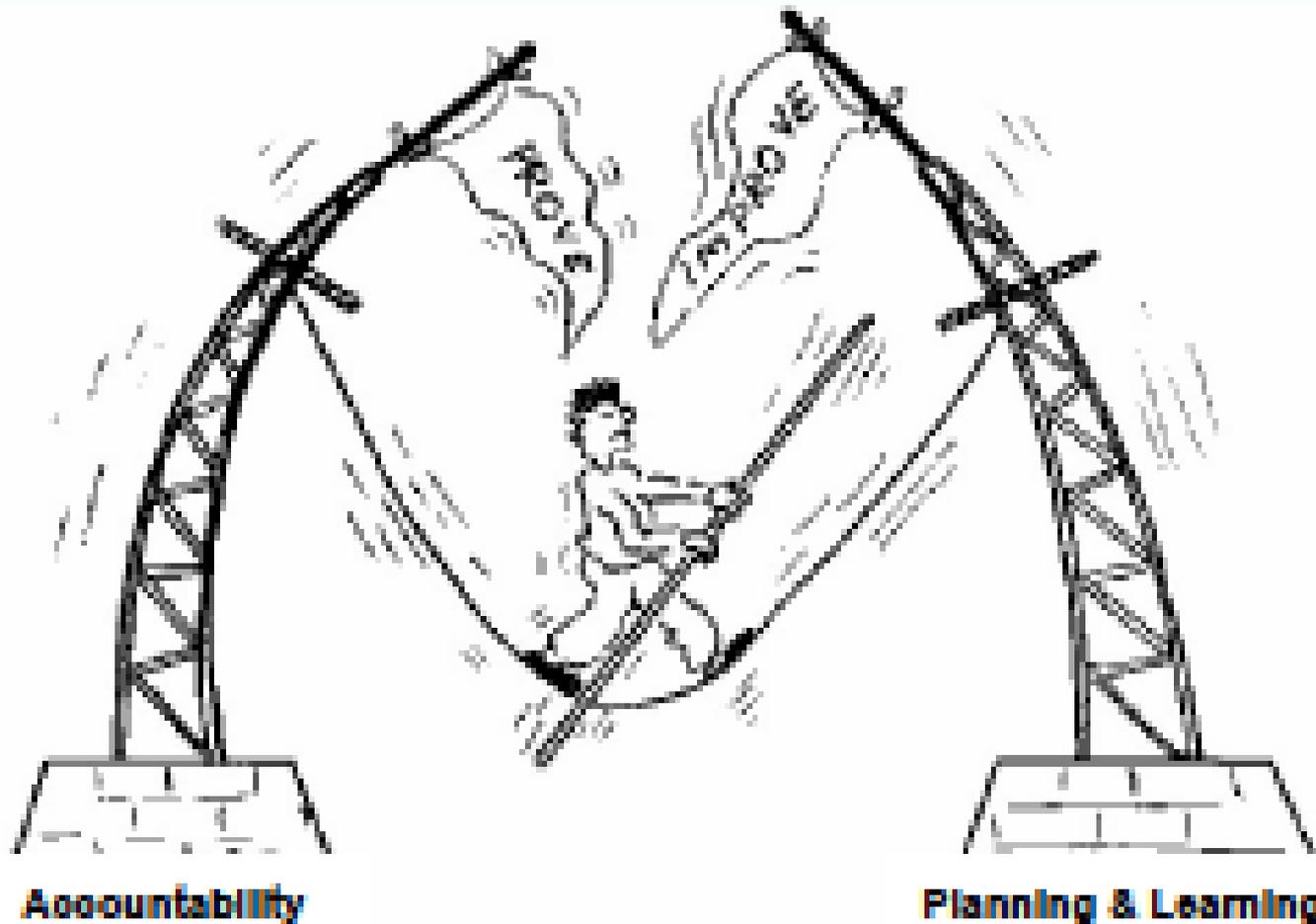
Perceptions of Evaluation

- The dreaded 'E' word
- Mystique around evaluation
- External judgements of success or failure
- Implications for funding and reputation
- Aversion
- An afterthought



Grant Evaluation Lifecycle

Accountability v Learning?



Accountability?

- **Accountability** – demonstrating impact, justify expenditure, usually accountability to funders
- ‘**Downwards**’ accountability to communities or beneficiaries increasingly important.

BUT?

- Honesty about challenges?
- **Indicators decided in advance** (before understand context and what is relevant?).
- Limits to traditional evaluation in settings that are complex and dynamic where **projects need to adapt**

Learning?

Learning – reflection on practice for improvement, ongoing, Why? How? hard to definitively prove.

- Informed by theories of education,
- action-learning, participatory methods
- organisational development

e**VALUE**ation – emphasis on what is seen as important, for who, by who and why.

BUT Impact?

Do Both?

- **Clarity** about expectations and **assumptions about how change happens**
- ‘**Theory of change**’ in evaluation jargon

“**Making clear the ‘theory of change’ for your engagement activities means it can be tested against evidence of what actually happened, with the potential to learn and further improve subsequent initiatives**”. ([Engaging with Impact](#) WT report)

- Current popularity of theory of change approaches
- Variety of sources of data and their **triangulation**

Attribution or contribution?

- **Attribution**

definitive about an intervention causing an observed outcome

- **Contribution**

Making a plausible case for the contribution made by an intervention to observed outcomes

- In complex social settings, showing contribution may be more realistic and ‘scientific’

Theory of change?

- Clarity about the purpose
- Who will do what as a result of your engagement?
- How will your activities contribute to the changes you expect to see?

Types of engagement

- Engagement with particular **communities**, including those affected by research
community better understands research and expresses independent perspectives
- Engaging **research participants**
research participants aware of rights and benefits
researchers have a greater understanding of reasons for participation/not
- Engaging **health service users**
greater mutual understanding between patients, researchers, health workers
- **Schools and Universities students** engagement
young people increased interest in and knowledge of science and scientific careers
- **Public** engagement events – exhibitions, lectures
public more knowledgeable about science and its role in society
researchers gains insights into public perceptions of science

Types of engagement

Work with engagement **intermediaries:**

- community engagement professionals
improved skills and more effective engagement activities
- front-line health workers
better communication between health workers and communities
- Journalists and media
more accurate and informed reporting of science to public
- local authorities
more aware of and engaged with ongoing research
- communication skills of researchers
researchers better communicate with public and media

Which theory of change?

How do the activities support change?

Theatre for engagement project:

Was the aim to support **dialogue and discussion**, airing of different understandings of a health issue?

OR

to **share information** and have the audience understand it?

Different uses of theatre for engagement and how activities are expected to bring about change – different theories of change.

Evaluation questions

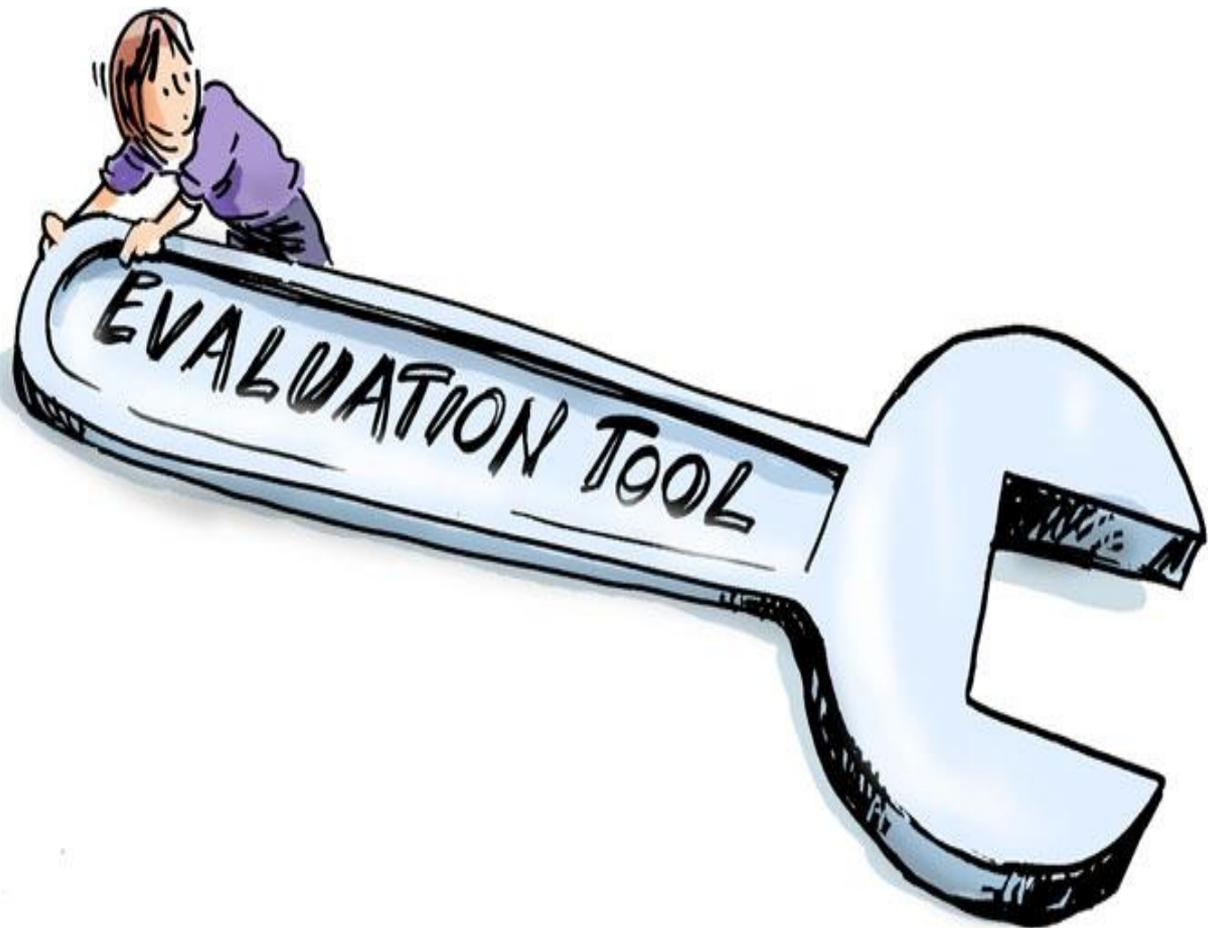
How will you know whether you have been 'successful' or understand how your activities worked?

Theatre example:

Dialogue? - diversity of participation in discussion.
How open are people about beliefs?

Information provision? - do people understand the information being shared?

- What data will help you answer your evaluation questions?



THERE'S A
PROBLEM
WITH THE
NUT...



Simon
KNEEBOOTS

Engagement and complexity

Engagement rationale:

- Engagement as **informing, consulting, collaborating** (NCCPE)
- **Appropriate evaluation** for the level of engagement activities and their complexity ([WT guide for evaluating events](#))

Complexity:

“Public and community engagement initiatives take place in settings with multiple stakeholders, contextual factors that may have an unforeseen influence, and dynamic circumstances that may lead to unexpected change.
([Engaging with Impact](#) WT report)

Practical challenges

- **Proportionality of effort** – depends on what you want to know
- **Resources and time** for evaluation (10% rule)
- **Planning evaluation** – at the start of your project
truism
- **Involving others** in the evaluation
- **Communicating** and **acting on the learning** from the evaluation (Utilisation Focused Evaluation. Patton 1997)

Useful resources for evaluation of engagement

MESH: <https://mesh.tghn.org/evaluation/>

eMOPS: <http://e-mops.ning.com/page/resources>