

LEAP

A manual for **Learning Evaluation and Planning**
in **Community Learning and Development**

Revised Edition

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The text of this revised LEAP manual was developed by the Scottish Community Development Centre.

We would like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the many practitioners and managers who offered advice and suggestions. Thank you for your time and insights.

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Preface

This manual revises the original “Learning, Evaluation and Planning” (LEAP) published in 1999. It sets LEAP in the context of current policy and practice. It is presented in three sections:

Section 1: Introducing LEAP

This section:

Considers:

- i. what is the LEAP framework?

Introduces:

- ii. the key steps in planning and evaluation.
- iii. the underpinning principles of the approach.

Explains:

- iv. why LEAP may be useful to community learning and development (CLD) practitioners and planners.
- v. the different levels at which LEAP can be applied.
- vi. the context of this revised edition.
- vii. the relationship between LEAP and other important CLD tools.

Section 2: Exploring the principles of LEAP

This section examines in more detail key principles that underpin both LEAP and CLD:

- i. being need led.
- ii. building on capacity and developing assets.
- iii. being change and outcome focused.
- iv. adopting a participatory approach and building partnerships.
- v. promoting continuous learning and improvement.

Section 3: Understanding the steps in the LEAP cycle

This section explores what is involved in each step in the LEAP cycle:

- i. agreeing outcomes – what difference do we want to make?
- ii. identifying indicators – how will we know we made a difference?
- iii. action planning – how will we go about making a difference?
- iv. monitoring – how will we make sure it is happening?
- v. evaluation – have we made a difference, what are the lessons we have learned?

Worked Examples: Applying LEAP to real-life situations

Alongside the manual, we've also published a separate document that provides five illustrative examples of LEAP in use. The examples are set in a fictitious place in Scotland but reflect experience of real examples.

The first three illustrations relate to project level practice in each of the three national priorities for CLD set out in "Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities"¹.

The fourth illustration focuses on operational development and management of a programme of CLD work.

The final example illustrates use of LEAP at strategic management and policy development level.

All the illustrations are written to a common format that reflects the key steps set out in section 3. Focus on the examples that relate most closely to the way that you might use LEAP.

The LEAP online learning materials

Learning materials that provide an interactive introduction to the LEAP model, its key steps and underlying principles, are now available online. They are illustrated with video clips from people who use LEAP. You can use them in conjunction with the manual for your own learning or when developing the use of LEAP with others. The materials can be accessed online at: <http://leap.scdc.org.uk>.

Using the LEAP Manual

This manual is designed to assist you to plan and evaluate practice in a participatory manner. How you use it will depend on the role you are playing and the level of experience you already have. This is a detailed exploration of the LEAP model. Shorter introductory explanations are available in 'LEAP – step by step' and in the online learning tool. These may be particularly useful for those coming to LEAP for the first time².

However the manual can be used flexibly and you can focus on sections which are most relevant to you at the moment, for example:

If you are completely new to the LEAP approach we suggest that you start by reading section 1 and think about how these ideas would apply to work you are doing. To understand better how it works, it may then be helpful to move straight to the case study in the Worked Examples document that illustrates using LEAP in the context most closely related to your own. (The first three case examples look at local practice in relation to the national CLD priorities: adult learning, youth work and capacity building respectively. If you focus on management or strategic development you will probably find cases 4 or 5 more relevant.) After considering an example it may then be helpful to return to section 2 to think in more depth about the underlying principles before you actually apply the model. For those that are new to LEAP the online learning materials will be particularly helpful in providing a 'home' tutorial that explains and illustrates the basics.

¹ 'Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities' (WALT) Scottish Executive Guidance on Community Learning and Development (2003)

² Details of how to get hold of these are online at <http://leap.scdc.org.uk>

If you are familiar with the principles of LEAP but using it for the first time you are likely to want guidance on how to develop your work at each stage. Here section 3 is of key importance and you should focus on the particular stage of your work. It may be helpful to compare what you are doing with the appropriate stage description in the most relevant Worked Example. The reality of applying the model will no doubt throw up challenges that relate to underlying principles, so use the material in section 2 for reference.

If you are already using LEAP the benefit of the revised manual will primarily lie in the fact that it explains LEAP in the context of current policy and other relevant self evaluation tools and frameworks. The relationship between these and LEAP is explained at the end of section 1 but you may find the case studies in the Worked Examples document particularly useful in illustrating practice in the context of current policy and related tools and frameworks. Even when you are experienced in using LEAP it can be useful to refer to particular parts of sections 2 and 3 to refresh your thinking about the principles and issues involved.

LEAP is commonly used in partnership with others. If you are introducing others to it, abstract the parts of the text that are most relevant to their experience and focus and use the online learning materials to introduce others to the steps and principles.

Section 1: Introducing LEAP

i. What is the LEAP framework?

LEAP stands for Learning, Evaluation and Planning.

It is a framework that supports us to plan more effectively; identify and evidence the changes that we hope to make; learn from our experiences and work in partnership with one another. LEAP is an approach to planning and evaluation that is outcome-focused, participatory and learning-based. It is a tool to aid more effective practice. By enabling clear analysis of needs, planning, implementation and review of action, it assists partners and participants to achieve the changes that they seek.

The framework was developed by the Scottish Community Development Centre and is designed to be a useful tool in all aspects of project, programme and policy development, planning and management. It can be used in different contexts and by people working in different sectors. It encourages us to ask critical questions about our work and to ensure that all those involved are working to the same agenda. The LEAP framework emphasises self-evaluation, encouraging a shared responsibility for planning and evaluation throughout a project or programme.

LEAP is equally applicable to all areas of CLD practice taking account of the interests of everyone who is involved. It seeks to support their personal and shared learning and empowerment, focusing attention on key questions that it is in everyone's interests to answer.

Here are the questions:

- What is the need?
- What difference do we want to make?
- How will we know we made a difference?
- How will we go about making the difference?
 - what resources will we use?
 - what methods will we use?
 - in what ways will we use them?
- How are we making sure it is happening?
- Have we made a difference?
- What are the lessons we have learned?
- What will we need to do now?

This logical sequence of questions, and how to get answers to them, is at the heart of LEAP and is used as the framework for each of the case examples in the Worked Examples document. In the LEAP process diagram (below) it is presented as a series of steps that respond to an identified need and develop into a continuous cycle of problem identification, planning, action, reflection, evaluation and learning.

The straightforward questions that LEAP poses should be a normal part of everyday practice. The answer to the question: 'what is LEAP?' is that it is a way of thinking that leads to better practice.

How you use this manual will depend on who you are and what you want to apply LEAP to. If you are using LEAP you will be involved in a logical set of steps, each of which requires attention to particular issues. The five step cycle is very straightforward and can be understood very quickly. Complexity lies not in the model but in the work that it is applied to. In other words answering the trigger questions that LEAP poses requires thoughtful reflection on the needs, circumstances, resources and methods of action that are open to you. To keep it as straightforward as possible focus on what you need to think about in the stage that you are involved with.

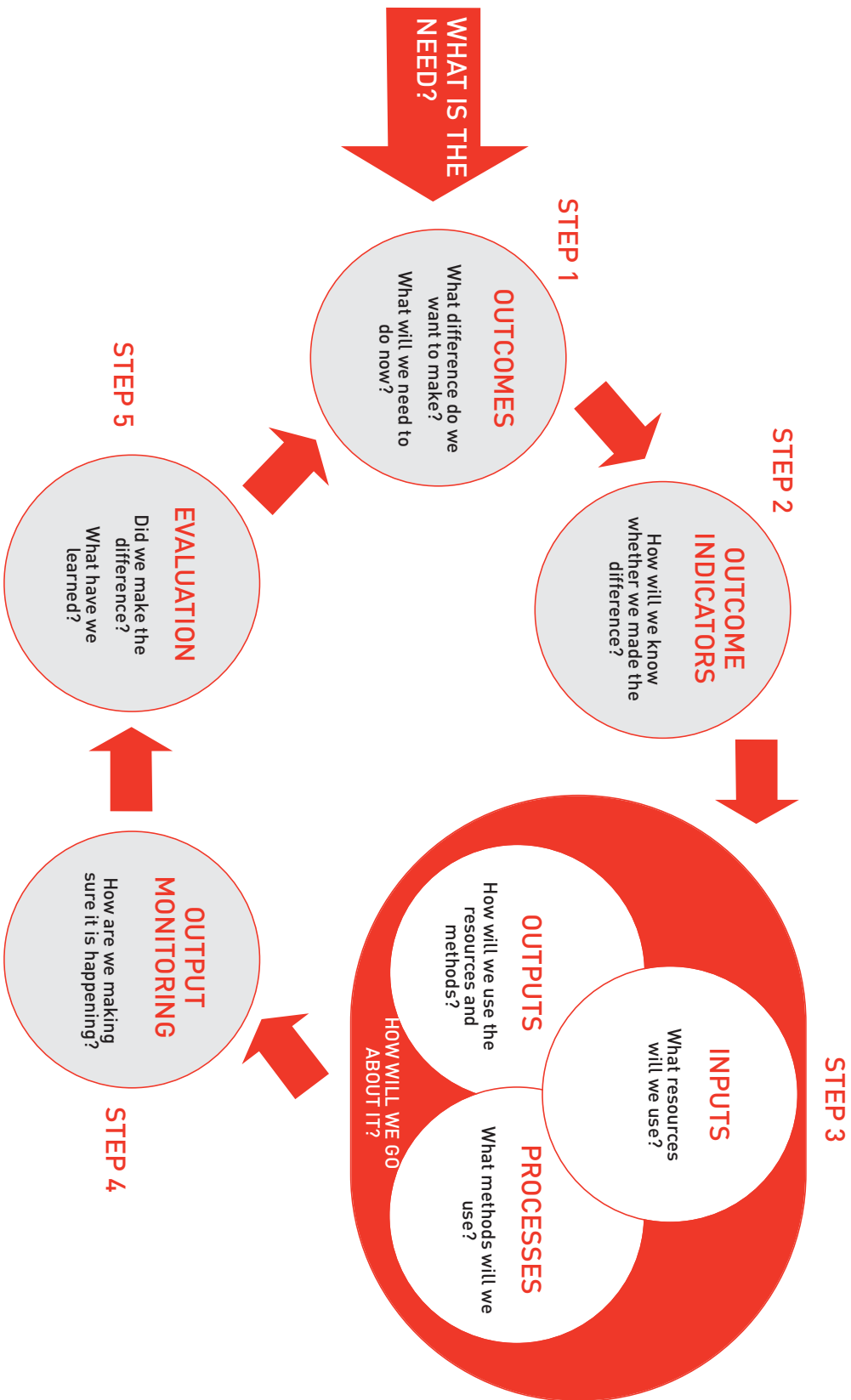
ii. Key steps in the LEAP approach

The cycle of learning steps that the LEAP diagram describes recognises that the approach can only be helpful if there is clarity about the focus of attention. 'What is the need?' is a question that has to be answered first. The answer has to be one that the participants recognise and want to address and one that is consistent with the purposes and principles of CLD.

Having defined and agreed what it is that is causing concern and having checked its compatibility with the principles and priorities, the five-step LEAP cycle can be applied.

- **Step 1: What difference do we want to make?:** To do something about the identified need we must have a clear view of the difference that we want to make. LEAP invites us to imagine or envision a different and better state of affairs. Often in community learning and development, the need is something that lots of people share in common, so they should all share in defining the vision of change in order to be satisfied by the results that are sought.
- **Step 2: How will we know we made a difference?:** Defining the need and knowing what difference it is intended to make might seem like all we need to have sorted out before we plan and take action, but there is another vital step that is often missed out. The question 'how will we know we made a difference?' is an essential one. As we take action we will need to collect evidence about what is happening. The evidence we will collect needs to enable us to later answer the question: 'are we making a difference?' So to make sure that we collect relevant evidence we need to have thought about what our criteria for success will be. Defining this at the start enables us to focus on collecting evidence that matters.

LEAP Process Diagram



- **Step 3: How will we go about making the difference?:** We are now ready to plan our action. To do that we need to know what is available to us to do so – the resources. These will be people, equipment, budgets, ideas, energy, motivation and many other things. The resources are the strengths that we and those we work with in communities bring to problem solving. To make use of resources we need to have skills and methods of practice that we can use well like: training, group work, negotiation, communication, research or guidance. We will need to make choices about what methods are likely to be most effective. But no method is effective if we lack the resources to put it into practice. The balance of methods and resources determines what we can actually do. So to answer the question ‘how will we go about making the difference?’ there are three related questions that have to be answered – what resources will we use, what methods will we use, and in what ways will we use them?
- **Step 4: How are we making sure it is happening?:** Action can now be taken, but the best laid plans can be undermined by poor implementation. An action plan needs to be clear about who will do what and when, and it needs to be monitored to see that everyone meets their commitments to do what they said they would do, when they said that they would do it. This is the reason for the question: ‘how will we make sure it is happening?’.
- **Step 5: Have we made a difference and what are the lessons we have learned?** If, by monitoring the action plan, we know that the plan has been implemented, we can then ask the question: ‘have we made a difference?’. The differences that we will be looking for are the ones that everyone who has an interest agreed on at the beginning. But we will only know if the differences have been made if we have some evidence. This is when having asked the question at step 2: ‘how will we know we have made a difference?’ becomes so valuable. By collecting evidence through the process of our action we are now able to use it to make a judgement and decide what the lessons are that have been learned. It is rare for everything that we set out to do to be achieved because there will be many obstacles to change. So, looking at the action and its results we will be likely to be asking ourselves what worked and why, what would we do again, and what would we do differently?
- **From step 5 back to step 1 – renewing the cycle: What will we need to do now?:** In Step 5 we will also be asking another set of questions. In the light of the difference that we have made, is the need met and no further action required, are there aspects of the need that still need to be addressed, have we identified new needs that we were not previously aware of? All of which enable us to answer the question: what do we need to do now? When we come to answer the question and begin to plan a new cycle of activity, we are better equipped because we are more knowledgeable about what works and what does not. Where we have been successful, we can be more confident about our skills and abilities, where we have not been successful we will know that we need to do things differently and will be better able to prepare ourselves for future action.

The steps and key questions summarised here are explored in depth in section 3.

iii. Principles underpinning LEAP

LEAP planning and evaluation framework is based on the principles and values that underpin a community learning and development approach to change. These emphasise: empowerment, participation, inclusion, self determination and partnership.³ From this basis the LEAP framework adopts an explicit set of principles that support good planning and evaluation practice:

- Planning should be a **need led** process – it should set out to respond to the experiences, ambitions and concerns of communities and target issues of inequality and social justice.
- Planning should seek to **build on the capacity and develop the assets** of individuals, groups and communities.
- Planning and evaluation should be **change or outcome focused** – it should aim to achieve real and measurable change in the quality of personal and community life.
- Planning and evaluation should be **participatory** – it should involve all those with an interest in the desired change, particularly communities and service users that are intended to benefit.
- Planning and evaluation should be concerned with **building partnerships** – it should build and develop relationships between agencies and with community stakeholders.
- Planning and evaluation should be concerned with **learning and continuous improvement** – it should promote understanding of change by capturing and reflecting on as much of the process as possible and using the lessons learned to guide future action. It should highlight the learning that results.

These key principles are explored in depth in section 2.

iv. Why LEAP may be useful

LEAP is not just a model for planning and evaluation but also a guide to best practice in CLD. By ensuring that planning, implementation, evaluation and reflection are conducted well it provides a framework for delivering best practice in all three national priorities for CLD.

- In relation to work with young people, LEAP supports “Moving Forward: a strategy for improving young people’s chance through youth work”, which states that providers of youth work must work by: “listening to and responding to, what young people want from youth work” and goes on to say that it is important that youth workers: “understand the importance of evaluation and outcome delivery and implement it in their work as a matter of course”.
- In the context of literacies and adult learning, LEAP provides a framework to respond to the HMIE report: Adult Literacy and Numeracy in Scotland (2005), which, referring to local authority literacies work, comments: “There was insufficient consultation with learners about future programme planning and they were unsure about their role in evaluation and consultation”.

³ ‘Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities’ (WALT) Scottish Executive Guidance on Community Learning and Development (2003)

- In the context of capacity building, LEAP provides a model to respond to the call in “Working and Learning Together” for “any public agency with an interest in building community capacity to join the Community Learning and Development Partnership at strategic level and invest in local action planning and delivery”.

In all three contexts, LEAP will help us to:

- focus our work clearly;
- ensure that our work is purposeful and relevant to participants;
- work with other stakeholders;
- develop action plans that match resources, methods and actions to our purposes;
- monitor the implementation of our plans;
- learn what works and what does not;
- address issues of inclusion and targeting by identifying clearly who benefits from our work;
- build evidence collection into our ongoing practice; and
- build a body of evidence on which we can draw for the purpose of self-evaluation at individual, team, agency or partnership levels.

As a consequence of all of these things:

- Our work and the work of our agency will be more:
 - efficient
 - effective
 - fair.
- We will be better able to explain:
 - what we do
 - how we do it
 - why we do it
 - what benefits arise from it.
- We will be able to do so in the confidence that:
 - the focus of our work relates to relevant and evidenced needs
 - the evaluation of our work has been conducted with the participants and our partners
 - the lessons from action inform priorities and approaches to the development of our practice.

Overall we will have established a way of working that is securely based in the principles of CLD because LEAP is a framework that both reflects the principles that underpin CLD and supports the process of building them into practice. This is vital in itself, but the evidence of delivery of high quality, need-led services will provide evidence to meet the requirements of quality assurance processes including HMIE inspections and Best Value reviews.

v. Applying LEAP at different levels

LEAP can be applied at different levels of complexity. This can be looked at in three ways:

- *The number of people that we are working with.*
We might apply the cycle to work that a single worker does with just one person or with a group of people or, at more complex levels, we might apply it to the work of a team or a whole organisation or a partnership of organisations.
- *The dimensions of the need that we are setting out to tackle.*
We might want to apply LEAP to something relatively straightforward like finding a suitable meeting place for a group of adult learners or we might be trying to address something highly complicated like the breakdown of social cohesion in a community.
- *The level of operation we are engaging with.*
Our focus might be on direct work with young people, adult learners or community members at local project/practice level. It might relate to the way that a range of different actions are conducted to meet the needs of many individuals, groups or communities at the *programme/operational management* level. Or it might focus on the overall strategy for supporting projects and programmes and focus at the *policy/strategic planning* level.⁴

Exactly the same steps and questions apply whatever the level of complexity at which LEAP is applied. At all levels it is necessary to keep sight of the basic, core questions that need to be answered at each step. This is demonstrated in the case studies in the Worked Examples document that illustrate work with individuals, groups, communities, organisations and partnerships.

Describing different levels of complexity also indicates that the time period over which a LEAP cycle might run is variable. It may be from a matter of a few weeks to several years.

⁴ The LEAP web site contains some case studies of work at each of these levels, for example:
Project: East End Health Action: <http://leap.scdc.org.uk/case-studies/East%20End%20Health%20Action/>
Programme: Volunteer Centres: http://leap.scdc.org.uk/uploads/vds_leap_case_study.doc
Policy: National Standards for Community Engagement: http://leap.scdc.org.uk/uploads/a_20case_20study_20__20developing_20the_20national_20standards_20for_20community_20engagement.pdf

Differences in complexity mean that the way we use LEAP varies. For many tasks, for example organising a meeting, it may simply involve the mental process of applying the key questions. Though not written up into formal statements of the outcomes we are looking for, the indicators to assess them or the resource, methods and actions to be used, the way of thinking will assist purposeful and reflective practice. On the other hand, where the task is longer term, more complex and involves a range of participants, it becomes more necessary to produce formal plans and records.

To describe the LEAP cycle in the previous section we focused on responding to just one need. In reality even at the level of the individual worker, let alone that of a team or an agency, different pieces of work are being conducted simultaneously. Each will have different demands and timescales yet the LEAP framework can be applied to them all. There is likely to be a number of different strategic initiatives that are underway. These will have different time scales and characteristics. Within such strategies there will be many components. Both the whole and the parts can be planned and evaluated using the LEAP framework. Within an agency, therefore, the LEAP framework will potentially be in use at many different levels by individual workers, groups and teams and those they engage with.

This table illustrates types of work that might simultaneously be drawing on LEAP at project, programme and policy levels and across the three national CLD priorities.

Level/Priority	Young people	Adult learners	Communities
Project	Developing a drop in centre for young people.	Establishing an individual learning plan.	Organising a community conference on a regeneration outcome agreement.
Programme	Enabling the voices of young people to be heard in community planning.	Planning a literacies partnership programme.	Planning and delivering a capacity building programme for community leaders.
Policy	Conducting a consultation on national youth strategy.	Establishing a literacies policy using a social practices model.	Developing and disseminating national community engagement standards.

vi. Context of the revised LEAP

LEAP was first published in 1999 as a participatory planning and evaluation tool for community learning and development. It was seen as relevant to anyone adopting this approach in any context. This revised version builds on the original and on extensive experience of applying it, not only in CLD, but also across a range of other related fields. It reasserts principles that have consistently underpinned community learning and development but recognises that these have been advanced and developed in policy and guidance such as “Working and Learning Together”⁵ and “How Good is Our Community Learning and Development? 2”⁶. Both of these recognise that CLD is a way of working that is adopted in many sectors and frequently through working in partnership. In particular the new LEAP encourages integrated use of the outcomes of CLD that have been highlighted in Learning Connections publication: “Delivering Change”⁷.

⁵ WALT: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/01/16208/17068>

⁶ HGOCLD2: <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/cldfull.pdf>

⁷ Delivering Change: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/learningconnections>
http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/lccs_017262.pdf

The new LEAP is therefore presented with:

- reference to contemporary policy and practice
- attention to the lessons learned from experience
- commitment to enabling it to be used in conjunction with other guidance and frameworks.

The new LEAP for CLD takes account of the development and application of the framework in related practice disciplines including health, volunteering, green-space and as a tool in partnership working including community planning. It refers to common core LEAP materials covering all disciplines, including an e-learning package (available online at <http://leap.scdc.org.uk>). It also takes full account of other tools that have been developed to support best practice in CLD.

vii. LEAP and other CLD tools

The text cross-refers to 3 other significant tools that have been designed and developed to support best practice in CLD. These are:

- “How Good is our Community Learning and Development? 2”
- “Delivering Change – understanding the outcomes of community learning and development”
- “National Standards for Community Engagement”

People often ask:

- Why do we have these different tools?
- Are they compatible?
- Which should we be using for what?
- Are we expected to use them all?

The diagram below sets LEAP alongside these other tools. It illustrates that in the context of CLD all of them relate to a common purpose, achieving effective practice, and a common core of policy that is set out in the “Working and Learning Together” (WALT) guidance.⁸ The guidance sets out the national priorities for CLD as:

- Achievement through learning for adults.
- Achievement through learning for young people.
- Achievement through building community capacity.

⁸ In the case of the National Standards this is not the only relevant policy to which the tool relates. It provides guidance on all aspects of public policy in which community engagement is central. These are brought together, particularly, in the contexts of community planning, community regeneration and health improvement. Nonetheless, the WALT guidance emphasises a key role for CLD in supporting community engagement.

All of the tools address the achievement of these priorities by supporting those involved in CLD to plan and evaluate in a way that involves the people they aim to support and that provides them with evidence of what is working well and what is not. They build on commitment in the WALT guidance that states:

“Quality assurance and improvement depend on thorough and organised self-evaluation of the quality and outcomes of the main areas of work. Effective self-evaluation by partners should be an ongoing process.”

WALT is based on a commitment to:

- “ensuring the engagement of communities and a wide range of agencies in the development of CLD strategies and plans”.
- “enable communities to have a real influence over the planning, delivery and quality of mainstream services, as well as specific initiatives such as those aimed at achieving community regeneration and social inclusion”.

In this context, each of the tools performs a distinct but related function:

How Good is our CLD? 2 (HGIOCLD? 2)

This is simultaneously an organisational self evaluation framework and the framework for inspection of CLD by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education (HMIE). Increasingly inspection relates to partnership-based practice involving both statutory and voluntary sector contributors. It describes evaluation as being dependent on:

“shared understanding within and across service providers and stakeholders of what constitute high quality outcomes and processes”.

HGIOCLD? 2 invites assessment against 6 levels of performance (unsatisfactory to excellent) in relation to six ‘high-level questions’:

- What key outcomes have we achieved?
- What impact have we had in meeting the needs of our stakeholders?
- How good is our delivery of key processes?
- How good is our management?
- How good is our leadership?
- What is our capacity for improvement?

HGIOCLD? 2 refers directly to the contributory role of LEAP. To answer the searching questions posed in HGIOCLD? 2, good planning and effective evaluation, which produces quality evidence is essential. Good evidence comes from practice that involves all stakeholders in deciding what constitutes success and how it should be measured. HGIOCLD? 2 states:

“LEAP was developed to assist partners in CLD to plan and evaluate their work. When embedded in the planning process LEAP will provide evidence to support self-evaluation and external evaluation... this publication can be used within CLD partnerships particularly if they are using the LEAP model”.

The most important overlap between HGIOCLD? 2 and LEAP relates to their shared concern with ensuring that practice positively impacts on individuals and communities that are the focus of CLD activity. In this respect, key areas 2.1 and 4.1 under the heading: 'How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders' are especially relevant.

Key area 2.1 focuses on impact on the participants and looks for:

'Quantitative and qualitative data that demonstrates the extent to which learners are:

- Included and participating
- Achieving and attaining
- Progressing

Extent to which participants report that their educational experiences enable them to become:

- Successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors
- Safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving, active, respected and responsible, and included'

Key area 4.1 focuses on impact on the local community and looks for:

'Quantitative and qualitative data, together with reports from community groups, that demonstrates the extent to which community groups have:

- Confident skilled and active community members
- Active and influential roles in local and wider decision making
- Developed local services, where appropriate, in response to priority needs
- Effective planning, management and evaluation arrangements
- Ensured that they are inclusive and value social and cultural diversity
- Productive networks and relationships with other agencies and organisations'

Using LEAP will provide sources of evidence in relation to these criteria for assessing impact. The Worked Examples document illustrates that practice can draw directly on these statements when setting outcomes.

Whilst LEAP should be seen as a way of working that enables evidence to be gathered that informs self-evaluation and inspection, it is equally important to recognise that the capacity to implement LEAP plans that address personal and community needs reflects the quality of what HGIOCLD? 2 terms: delivery of key processes, management and leadership. In other words an organisation or partnership that evaluates itself, or is externally inspected, and is at the weaker end of the scale will be much less likely to use LEAP effectively than one at the stronger end. In other words the quality of organisational performance is a strong indicator of potential to use LEAP well.

Delivering change – understanding the outcomes of community learning and development

This is published by Learning Connections. It provides a menu of outcomes relating to the national CLD priorities that have been tested with CLD participants and practitioners. It states:

“We can’t talk about outcomes in this field without recognising that ultimately it’s the outcomes that participants want to achieve that are most important.”

It provides outcomes statements that can be used to measure performance and which can be readily used in the LEAP model. Referring to the example outcomes provided in the previous version of LEAP for CLD it states:

“Our framework aims to more comprehensively set out those outcomes. This would give someone who is using LEAP a quick and easy list of outcomes that might result.”

In setting out CLD outcomes, Delivering Change adopts the same approach as the original LEAP. Outcomes are identified for two core areas of practice:

- personal development
- community capacity building.

The framework, which has built on the original LEAP and other sources, has been subject to wide consultation with CLD workers and participants. They have endorsed its accuracy in reflecting realities of practice. These outcome statements have therefore been adopted in place of those in the original LEAP material. However it is important to be clear that the relevance of any statement of potential outcomes needs to be considered in relation to realities of practice and adapted and developed accordingly.

In addition Delivering Change has identified what are termed ‘wider outcomes’ of CLD. These correspond closely to the broader quality of life outcomes identified in the original LEAP. The new LEAP recommends application of the ‘wider outcome’ statements.

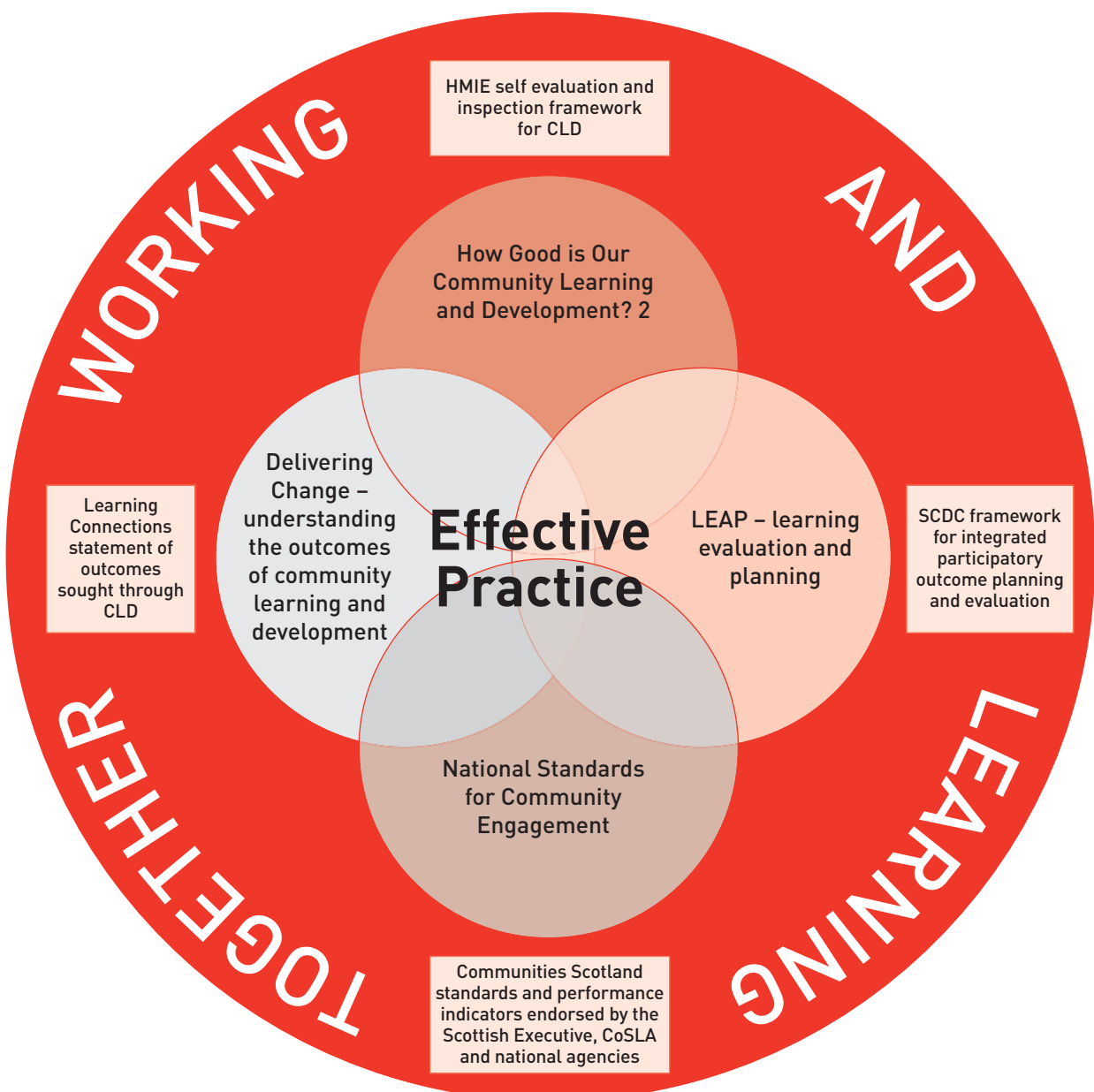
The listing of personal development, community capacity building and wider outcomes from Delivering Change is presented as appendix 1. The Worked Examples document draws on them:

The National Standards for Community Engagement (2005)

The National Standards and their associated support materials promote best practice in engaging communities and include standards both for planning and evaluation that commit users to: “monitor and evaluate whether the engagement achieves its purposes”. Community engagement is an important aspect of CLD work highlighted in the WALT guidance particularly as a key contribution to the wider processes of community planning. The standards illuminate what is involved in achieving effective community involvement in community planning as required under section 15.1 of the Local Government Scotland Act

(2003). There are ten standards and each is accompanied by a set of performance indicators that can be used within the LEAP framework in relation to this aspect of CLD process. A guidance note on the relationship between LEAP and the National Standards for Community Engagement is available at: [www.http://leap.scdc.org.uk/resources-downloads/Download%20documents/](http://leap.scdc.org.uk/resources-downloads/Download%20documents/)

In addition to the three other tools that are specifically designed to be relevant to CLD, LEAP can also be used alongside a range of other planning and evaluation tools such as the Big Picture (<http://www.thebigpic.org.uk/>), EFQM or Balanced Scorecard (http://www.q-excellence.de/default_e.htm?gclid=C1qju5L0oIkCFUxrMAodr1uzQA). A guidance note on the relationship of LEAP to these and other tools is available at: [www.http://leap.scdc.org.uk/resources-downloads/Download%20documents/](http://leap.scdc.org.uk/resources-downloads/Download%20documents/)



Section 2: Exploring the principles of LEAP

Introducing section 2:

You should now have a broad idea of what LEAP is, what it can be used for, how this might benefit you and how it relates to other CLD tools. In this section we look at the key underlying principles:

- being need led;
- building on capacity and developing assets;
- being change and outcome focused;
- adopting a participatory approach and building partnerships; and
- promoting continuous learning and improvement.

i. A need-led approach

In section 1, we summarised the need led approach. In this section we explore it in more depth.

It is vital that we are clear about the needs we are trying to tackle:

- to provide the focus for planning change.
- to ensure that we know what we will measure progress against.

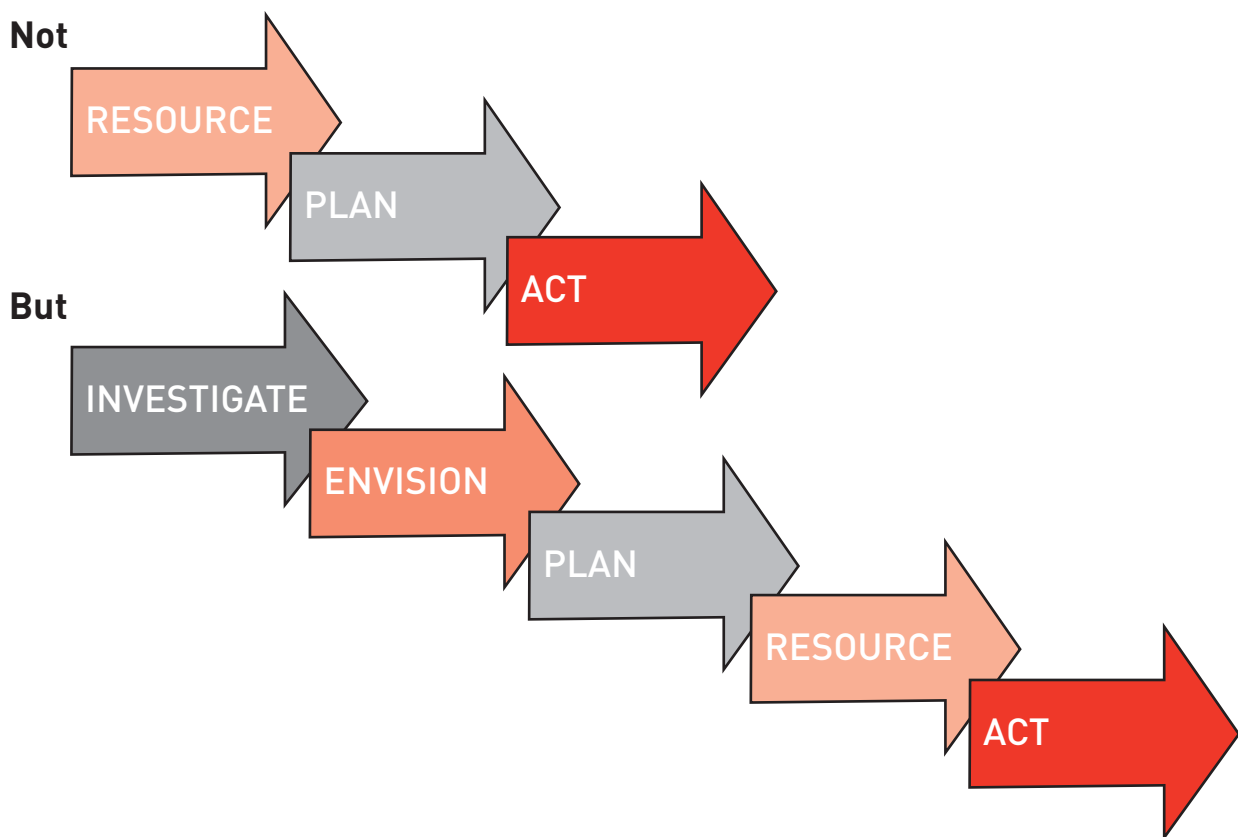
In CLD, as each of the Worked Examples illustrates, before we start to do anything, we have to ask ourselves what is the need (or needs) that we are trying to tackle? These could relate to any age or social group and any aspect of community life (e.g. health, housing, safety, learning, environment, leisure, culture).

It sounds logical and obvious – where else would anyone start except by identifying what it is they want to make a difference to? But what seems obvious is not always what people do. Particularly when organisations are planning, they often start by thinking about what they have available to them, like: staff, buildings, equipment or knowledge, and what they can do with them. We call this *resource-led planning*.

Because they have invested in these resources, they think about making sure they are used without necessarily asking whether this would be a relevant and valuable thing to do. This is about as logical as saying: 'because I own a passport I am going abroad'. Of course if you want to go abroad a passport would be essential but you wouldn't use its existence as your reason for going!

LEAP challenges this way of thinking. It is not saying resources are not important, they are essential. It is saying that resources are only useful in terms of their capacity to do something about needs that people really experience and want to do something about.

So the LEAP approach rejects planning which starts with what resources are available, develops a plan to use them and then takes action to implement it. LEAP promotes need led practice that first investigates what the issues are, then envisions what successful changes would look like, develops plans to achieve them, identifies resources that are needed to implement the plan and then takes action.



This is the basic principle, but need led planning is a bit more complicated than this. We need to:

- Clarify exactly what the need is.
- Be clear about whose needs are being addressed.
- Recognise that there is more than one way of thinking about what a need is.
- Consider all the dimensions of what the need is about.

Clarifying the needs

All of us sometimes feel uneasy, unhappy or even angry but we are not necessarily clear what it is that makes us feel this way. Until we have worked that out we can't focus any energy we may have for positive purposes. Feeling a need for change but lacking focus and, as a result, any outlet for that energy, tends to make us frustrated and depressed rather than energetic and active. We are much more likely to be motivated to take action when we are clear what needs to change and why. Any effort to achieve change therefore requires clarity about the needs or issues to be tackled.

Being need led emphasises the importance of an analytical approach. No assumptions are made about what is going on and what is important to people. Rather the process starts with systematic investigation.

Whose needs?

In CLD we are committed to working with people, groups or communities who experience a need – they are our primary stakeholders. But, as the WALT guidance makes clear, in CLD we are also committed to principles of equity and social justice and therefore need to target our resources. If we are going to be need led we have to think about whose needs we are going to pay attention to and why. In doing so we often have to take account not just of local but also regional or national priorities. We have to be sure that the way we use our resources would promote fairness and justice.

It is for this reason that we have to be concerned with different levels of intervention. Whilst at project level we will focus on the experience of particular individuals, groups or communities, we have to be confident that what we set out to do with them is consistent with a wider analysis of need that informs overall programmes and determines the overriding policy priorities. Best practice in using LEAP requires consistency between all three levels. If the LEAP approach informs the CLD strategy, CLD plans and local project action, this can be achieved.

Different ways of thinking about needs

People are motivated to act on things that matter to them but this may not be in the interests of others. What people feel is a need is important and we have to help people to express their concerns. But, it will be obvious that just responding to what people tell us they feel is not a satisfactory way of working. We also need to think about what the implications of responding to their views would be. This is when we make use of other ways of thinking about needs. In particular how do the concerns of this person, group or community compare with those of others? Should they be seen as a priority? When we look at the needs people express we may also want to take account of agreed standards, or norms, that have been set (for example for literacy levels, housing conditions, an adequate diet, or environmental protection). We will want to address those needs that illustrate shortfalls against such standards.

So, while the starting point for participants is what they tell us they feel, we must be equally concerned with comparison with others and agreed standards. The latter will be primary influences in formulating CLD strategies. A need led approach involves thinking about all three types of approach.

The dimensions of the need

Understanding what a need really involves requires thought not only about the circumstances that are immediately apparent but also what lies behind them. It also requires consideration of the attitudes of other people towards the need.

For example, if we identify a lack of adequate after-school child care provision as a need, we should immediately start to think about the character of the need itself and the attitudes of those people and institutions that might be relevant to it. In other words the need is not just lack of child care but all the factors that have led to and sustained this need. It is not just the people who experience the need that we should think about but it is also the people who can support activity to bring about change, those who might work in partnership with them and equally those who might actively resist attempts to achieve change.⁹ Building a picture of the dimensions of the need will be crucial to working effectively on step 1 – defining the difference we want to make. Each of the Worked Examples considers the dimensions of the need on which it is focused.

ii. Building on strengths of the participants

Sometimes a need led approach is criticised because it is thought that it creates a negative label. We look at what is wrong, not what is right in a community. Building on the latter is often called an asset-based approach. Though LEAP starts by saying we have to investigate what the needs are that require action, it equally recognises that achieving change depends on building on and using people's strengths and abilities.

Need led and asset-based approaches are necessary companions. As was suggested in the discussion of the dimension of needs, it is not just the people who experience the need that we should think about but also the people who can support activity to bring about change, those who might work in partnership with them and equally those who might actively resist attempts to achieve change.

The following framework can assist us and those we work with to think about the strengths and resources that might be available to address needs. Understanding strengths in relation to what we are trying to tackle helps us to be realistic and clear about what kind of difference we should aim for.

The framework invites us to think about the need in relation to three key factors:

- *Motivation* – this focuses on what may stimulate people enthusiastically to address the need.
- *Capacity* – this focuses on the ability that people have to address it.
- *Opportunity* – this focuses on the context of the need and factors that improve the chance of doing something about it.

The framework considers each of these areas from the perspective of four key groups of people that are likely, in CLD work, to be involved in addressing any need:

- *The worker and or his/her agency* – this is the person and/or organisation that supports and promotes action for change.
- *The community participant(s)* – this is the individual, group or community that is experiencing the need.

⁹ In the language of systems theory these are called the client, change agent, action and target systems.

- *Other potential partners* – this consists of all others who may be interested in, concerned about, and willing to be party to action relating to the need.
- *The targets for change* – these are the people/organisations that need to be influenced in order for the change to be achieved. It may contain several different groups of people.

We need to think not only about the motivation, capacity and opportunities of each of these groups but the interaction between them. This is necessary because, to achieve any change, the first three groups will need to work together to influence those in the fourth.

The framework is not comprehensive but suggests the sorts of things it may be helpful to think about in relation to each group. For the first three groups the focus is on what will encourage their involvement, but for the targets the focus is on why and how they might resist change and what might lead them to change their stance.

The following are particularly important influences under each heading:

Motivation:

- The degree to which a need or problem offends cherished values or is seen as having priority from a particular value stance.
- The policy and legislative framework that determines the focus of agencies and workers.
- The potential for wider benefits from being involved.

Capacity:

- Available human and material resources.
- Level of and ability to use power and authority.
- Belief in the potential for change (frequently influenced by past experience).
- Confidence and trust.

Opportunity:

- Events/crises that heighten perception of need for change.
- New resources.
- Recognition of mutual interest.
- Positive attitudes to build on.
- Weaknesses of the target system or willingness to consider change.

This table identifies the kinds of factors that may be important to look at for each of the interest groups in relation to their motivation, capacity and opportunity.

System Factor	Worker/Agency	Community Participant	Other potential partners	Targets for change
Motivation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Match with professional values and purposes 2. Match with policy priorities 3. Legal obligations 4. Importance relative to other opportunities 5. Match with personal interest and values 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Potential to achieve aspirations 2. Threat to values from outside group or community 3. Threat to values from within group or community 4. Desire to escape discomfort 5. Perception of possibility that a difference could be made 6. Cost/benefit assessment of value of potential change 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Match to values and purposes 2. Match with policy priorities 3. Meeting legal obligations 4. Potential benefits of collaboration 5. Achieving 'trade offs' 6. Cost/benefit of involvement 	<p>Not initially motivated or negatively motivated to resist change:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Different values 2. Different priorities/ purposes 3. Threat to power/ authority 4. Indifference/ ignorance
Capacity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Human resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge • Understanding • Skills • time • energy 2. Material resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • budgets • buildings • equipment 3. Power or authority 4. Belief in potential for change 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Human resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge • understanding • skills • time • energy 2. Material resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • budgets • buildings • equipment 3. Impact of previous experience on belief in potential for change including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self confidence • Confidence/trust in others 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Human resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge • understanding • skills • time • energy 2. Material resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • budgets • buildings • equipment 3. Power or authority 4. Belief in potential for change 	<p>Resistance capacity:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Human resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge • understanding • skills • time • energy 2. Material resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • budgets • buildings • equipment 3. Counter power or authority
Opportunity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Specific events or crises 2. New resources 3. Attitudes/abilities of community 4. Attitudes/abilities of other potential partners 5. Profile/acceptability of work or agency 6. Weakness or responsiveness of target for change 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Specific events or crises 2. New resources 3. Availability of and attitudes/ abilities of worker/agency 4. Attitudes/abilities of other potential partners 5. Weakness or responsiveness of target for change 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Availability of resources through partnership with lead agency and/or community 2. Pursuit of shared purposes with lead agency and/or community 3. Potential to achieve influence on partners 4. Potential to use partnership to achieve own purposes 	<p>From the standpoint of the other parties opportunities to be exploited include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Internal value contradictions 2. Weaknesses in power/authority base 3. Possibility of 'trade offs' 4. Openness to negotiation/ consideration of alternatives 5. Resource changes

The Worked Examples document provides illustrations of this framework in practice.

iii. Being change and outcome-focused¹⁰

As the three national priorities in the WALT guidance make clear, CLD is a change activity.

In other words it sets out to make a difference to things that cause concern to the people who are involved. LEAP is a framework that is designed to enable positive planned change to be made to the needs that have been identified. It has adopted an outcome focus because the primary purpose of CLD is to enable a real, measurable, difference to be made to the quality of personal and community lives.

Outcome-focused planning is driven by commitment to make a difference. The differences which are sought form the basis for action plans. Outcome focused evaluation is the process of assessing how successful the action plan has been in making a difference. A focus on outcomes is essentially a focus on results. It is about planning for change in response to an identified need or issue. For the purposes of reliable evaluation, the connection between the need identified, the action taken and the outcome achieved should always be clear. Following the LEAP steps, set out in section 3, enables you to do this. In LEAP the evaluation is asking what the effectiveness and efficiency was of a specific action plan in addressing need and achieving desirable outcomes.

Outcomes reflect the wider reasons why we promote community learning and development. They focus on the effects and benefits which it can have in people's lives. Without a vision of the outcomes CLD lacks purposeful direction. Achieving, with your partners, a shared vision of outcomes is therefore a precondition for planning good practice.

Equally it is essential for evaluation. Yet, ironically, a weakness of much planning is lack of clarity of vision and many so called evaluations simply describe the action that has been taken, rather than assessing the results. For example, if the identified need is to address inequalities in health, the action taken may be a community health fair. However this is not an end in itself but a means to an end – improved health. What the evaluation needs to address is whether this has made a contribution towards better health. The community health fair is run because it may enable people to think about and do things which may benefit the quality of individual or community life. For example they may become aware of the links between poverty and ill health, they may become interested in the development of a Healthy Living Centre, they may become more personally aware of issues surrounding drug misuse or motivated to form a community group to tackle drug problems in the community.

Such outcomes are the reason why a health fair may be organised. But there is no guarantee that people will participate or, if they do, that it will necessarily lead to the outcomes which were sought. In other words agencies and workers do not control outcomes and they may be different from their expectations. Nonetheless they need to know what the outcomes are because they cannot presume that the actions they take necessarily achieve what they want.

¹⁰ For further discussion see: 'Delivering Change – Understanding the outcomes of community learning and development' Learning Connections (2007)

The example also illustrates another important feature of outcomes. Whilst it may be stimulating to have utopian visions of change, in the real world the changes we seek have to be realistic, though not without ambition. Participants have to believe they can be achieved and they have to be achievable. However, horizons and capacity for change grow with achievement. The initial outcome of a health fair may simply be heightened awareness of health issues and inequalities. This is a desirable and worthwhile outcome but in turn needs to lead to further aspirations, for example to have a direct impact on risk factors in community health such as drug misuse.

In other words outcomes lead to identification of further potential outcomes, thus, over time, there may be chains of outcomes that have more and more impact on the identified need. However, the plans and actions that address these outcomes may involve new partners and may develop quite independently of the initial CLD activity. This is entirely positive but this 'ripple effect' is more and more difficult to evaluate in terms of the contribution of CLD practice as it becomes more remote and subject to more and more new influences.

The LEAP approach to outcome-focused planning and evaluation is also based on the understanding that the process of participatory outcome-focused planning and evaluation can be an important driver of change itself. The level of stakeholder deliberation and dialogue that is required to effectively vision and agree outcomes is necessarily a process of building relationships, sharing power, accommodating and valuing diversity, understanding different perspectives and reaching consensus. It frequently requires transparently conducted diplomacy and negotiation.

In the LEAP framework it follows then that outcome-focused evaluation must be a process of shared assessment that enables partners to celebrate mutual achievement and reflect on ways of addressing ineffective or inefficient practice. The approach set out in the LEAP framework describes evaluation as an important learning, development and empowerment tool.

Since LEAP was first published, commitment to outcome-focused planning has become a defining characteristic of policy for social justice, health equalities and regeneration. Funding is increasingly tied to outcome agreements, for example in the requirement for Regeneration Outcome Agreements or the Big Lottery Fund shift from grant-making to 'investing in outcomes'.

In the specific context of CLD, in response to the commitment of WALT to be 'able to assess more thoroughly the contribution of CLD to achieving outcomes', Learning Connections has developed a menu of potential outcomes of CLD in its publication: 'Delivering change – understanding the outcomes of community learning and development'. In common with LEAP this document defines outcomes as: 'the changes that come about as result of us taking actions'.

iv. A participatory and partnership approach

CLD is a participatory activity. The achievement of change (whether for individuals, groups or communities) involves people working together. As the discussion of needs has shown, different people have different roles and interests. Each has a stake in what happens either as contributor to, or beneficiary of, change.

LEAP describes these people as stakeholders. They are the people with an interest in what is being done. The active stakeholders will include:

- Participants – as individuals and groups.
- Workers and managers in CLD agencies.
- Partners in other agencies.

There will also be a wider set of people who have an interest. These include:

- The wider community that is affected by change.
- Agencies that provide resources.
- Policy makers.

Because CLD is about achieving change through working with people on the needs that they experience, the participants should be seen as the primary stakeholders. Involving community stakeholders must not be a token gesture. It should reflect an active commitment to principles of positive partnership and engagement. In applying the LEAP model we therefore draw attention to established principles of good practice and recommend their use – in particular, the *National Standards for Community Engagement*.¹¹

The standards were developed from the experience of communities and set out a simple guide to how to work in a participatory manner. They recognise that partners have different interests, motivations and perspectives and that there will therefore be need for negotiation over:

- priorities;
- commitment of resources;
- time scales; and
- methods of working.

¹¹ Available on the Communities Scotland website at:

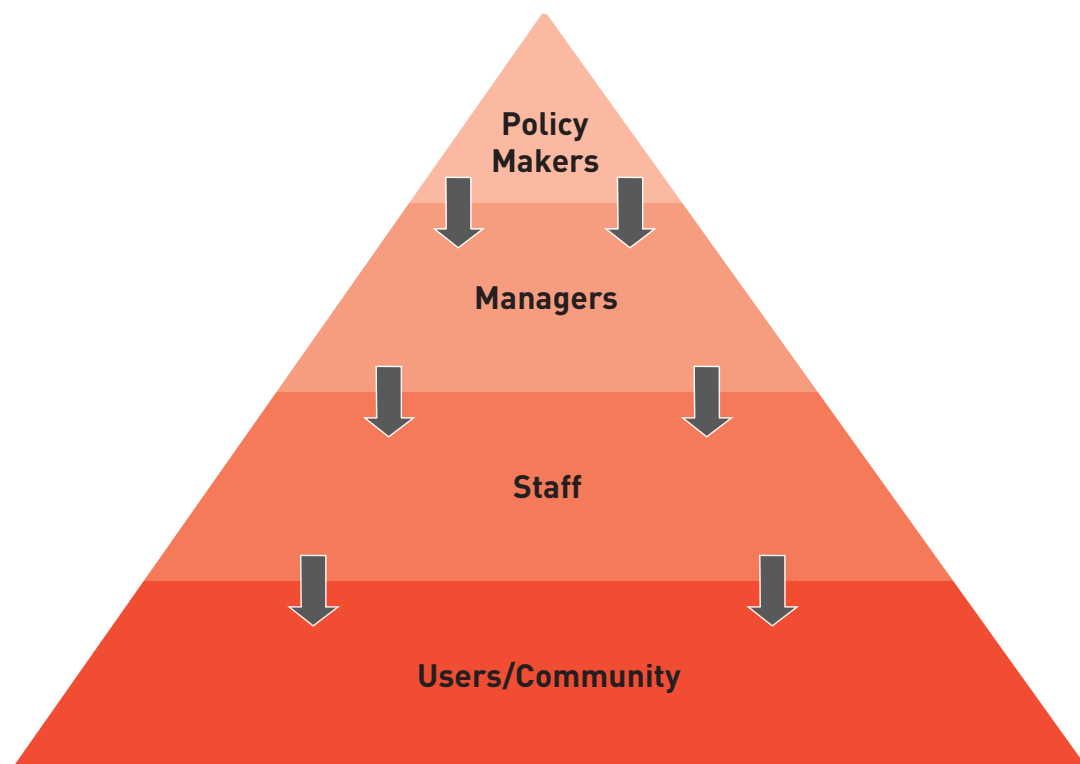
http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/lccs_008411.pdf

They also recognise and address differences in power and access to resources, in order to ensure equality of opportunity to contribute and influence. In particular they recognise that those who are members of excluded groups may have particular difficulties placed in the way of their participation – barriers of language, physical access or cost for example. The underlying commitment of CLD to a participatory approach should alert us to the need to invest in compensatory support to overcome such barriers.

As the discussion of need has shown, individual and community needs are the starting point but there are other factors that influence what CLD agencies and their partners will give attention to. In the light of this, if collaboration is to be a reality, those with an interest and who wish to do so, should work together to agree:

- What should be achieved.
- How it should be done.
- How it should be evaluated.

An organisation that is committed to participatory principles is not hierarchical with power invested in a small elite group that issues directives to operational staff who deliver a service that is not open to question or influence of those who use it. It does not look like this:



A participatory organisation looks more like this:



In this type of organisation there is still a commitment to a structure that ensures that there is authority to manage and direct resources but the processes by which policy is established reflects a continuing dialogue between stakeholders. Because this is a model which is need-led, the ultimate beneficiaries – the service users and community – are a primary source of intelligence. The response to their experience is designed around their need, formulated with their involvement and that of the staff who work with them, as well as their managers.

LEAP is designed to be used in this kind of relationship. It enables planning and evaluation that is genuinely participatory. LEAP is based on the understanding that a process of shared planning is the foundation for effective continuing partnership between agencies and between agencies and the communities they work with. For this to be the case stakeholders must be involved at all stages from visioning and agreeing outcomes to evaluating impact and reviewing lessons.

v. Promoting continuous learning and improvement

The combination of the words learning and development in the title of an occupation focused on community change is a description of its core characteristics. Development implies change, growth and improvement and the basis for its achievement is the acquisition of awareness, understanding, skills and knowledge for effective action. LEAP embraces learning and development. It promotes effective participatory, outcome-focused planning, action and evaluation in order to achieve purposeful change, but also recognises that it is essential to learn from the experience and to apply the lessons to future practice.

A learning-based approach to planning and evaluation is based on the understanding that planning and evaluation serve a particular function in learning about and working for change. If we prioritise learning, then planning becomes a process of understanding a current situation or issue in as complete a way as possible, understanding and learning about different perspectives and priorities to come to agreement about what needs to change and developing a plan of action to achieve that change.

Similarly evaluation becomes a process of learning about what success means from different perspectives, what is considered to be “evidence” and the value that is placed on different kinds of evidence and evaluation methods. To maximise learning the approach is necessarily one of collaborative self-evaluation between stakeholders.

Learning-based planning and evaluation must be outcome-focused (see principle 3). In order to maximise the learning we can gain from our work we must first be clear about what we are trying to achieve and about our criteria for success. We also need to have a clear understanding of why the action we take might lead to the intended changes (the outcomes). If we don't have this level of clarity we are limited in relation to what we can learn through evaluation.

Evaluation should explore the extent to which we have achieved the change we hoped to see and provide us with some understanding of whether change resulted from the action we took. If change did not occur we should be able to discern something about why not. If negative or positive outcomes resulted other than those we planned for it is equally important that we try to understand how these are connected to the actions we have taken. In terms of learning, the unexpected is often as interesting and important as what was planned. While it is not always possible to firmly establish cause and effect, we should always be able to learn from an evaluation and use that learning to inform what we do next.

The emphasis, then, is not just on learning but on continuous learning. It is for this reason that LEAP is presented as a cycle of steps in which the experience of one cycle of planning, action and evaluation feeds into new cycles of activity. Development is a continuous process and learning should constantly be feeding into it. The adoption of the LEAP approach enables this seamless relationship between learning and development to be accomplished.

The LEAP framework is based on the understanding that a commitment to learning is a key principle of good practice not just for individual practitioners but for the partnerships of stakeholders that address change and for the organisations that promote it. Hence LEAP is a model for the development of learning organisations and systems. In such settings learning is not restricted to the immediate participants in particular initiatives but shared for the potential benefit of everyone.

Attention therefore needs to be given to feeding back and sharing lessons. This will apply at group, team, organisational and partnership levels. By capturing the lessons of innovative practice, for example, through case studies and reports, it can contribute to the sum of practice wisdom well beyond the local context. If we are involved in planning and delivering change that has an impact for other people, we have a responsibility to act as reflective practitioners in learning organisations and systems. This can make sure that everyone benefits from attention to learning from action.

The LEAP framework sets out the key steps necessary for learning-based planning and evaluation. It raises key questions that we should consider in order to maximise shared learning that can be applied to more effective future practice.

Section 3: Understanding the steps in the LEAP cycle

Introduction

In this section each of the steps in the LEAP process, introduced in section 1, is reviewed to illuminate the character of the tasks involved. The five key steps address how we will respond to the need we have identified. Each step has a trigger question:

- **Step 1:** What difference do we want to make?
- **Step 2:** How will we know we made a difference?
- **Step 3:** How will we go about making the difference?
 - What resources will we use?
 - What methods will we use?
 - In what ways will we use them?
- **Step 4:** How are we making sure it is happening?
- **Step 5:** Have we made the difference?
 - What are the lessons we have learned?
 - What will we need to do now?

Throughout the steps the principles set out in the previous sections should be apparent in the manner in which each one is conducted:

- *Being need-led:* Before embarking on the cycle thorough analysis should have been conducted of the needs to be addressed and the interested stakeholders should have been engaged. These prior actions ensure that the principles of need led and participatory practice are in place. They need to be sustained throughout.
- *Being change and outcome-focused:* Once involved in the cycle, the focus on outcomes or differences to be achieved should constantly underpin practice.
- *Building on capacity and developing assets:* In considering what are achievable outcomes at the action plan stage, particular attention should be given to building on and maximising the capacities and assets of the participants.
- *Adopting a participatory approach and building partnerships:* At all stages attention needs to be given to ensuring that the stakeholders are party to the process of agreeing and delivering both the plan and the evaluation.
- *Promoting continuous learning and improvement:* Learning from action should be an explicit goal. Learning will ultimately depend on evidence. Setting criteria for judging progress and collecting good data are therefore essential ingredients for learning from action and need to be in place throughout.

Step 1: Agreeing outcomes – what difference do we want to make?

STEP 1



Summary of Step 1:

- **Identify community need/concerns.**
- **Assemble the stakeholders.**
- **Establish a vision of what needs to change.**
- **Describe the vision as a series of outcomes.**

Once an understanding of the nature and dimensions of the need or needs to be tackled has been established (see section 2, part i), the LEAP planning and evaluation cycle gets underway. Step 1 starts by giving attention not to the need but to what participants would like to see result from action for change. The cycle therefore begins from a positive perspective on what a better state of affairs would look like. In other words what should be the outcome or result of the work that will be done.

Step 1 is about what participants want to achieve. What is needed is a leap of imagination to the future in which they envision how different things should be. An important feature of this stage in terms of CLD is that the focus is on the differences that the participants want for themselves, their group, community or agency. At this stage they are not saying anything about what they might need to do to achieve that difference – that comes later.

We have already recognised that different stakeholders have different interests (see section 2, part ii). If they are to work effectively with one another all their interests have to be met. This will only be possible if their interests, and outcomes that they define in relation to them, are not mutually contradictory. In other words, as the stories in the Worked Examples illustrate, different stakeholders can collaborate and seek and value different outcomes provided that they are compatible.

The outcomes should be drawn from the aspirations of the participants. This is essential because it is doing something about their experience that may motivate them to get involved. In relation to needs that people are experiencing, the initial task of the CLD worker is to encourage people to imagine a future state of affairs that they believe would be worth pursuing.

In the context of CLD these outcomes will normally relate to personal development, community capacity and to the wider quality of life that people experience. As was noted in the discussion of LEAP and other tools (see section 1, part vii), to stimulate thinking about potential outcomes Learning Connections has produced “Delivering change – understanding the outcomes of community learning and development”. The outcomes from this document are reprinted in appendix 1 of the worked example booklet and it may be helpful to refer them to assist in identifying appropriate outcomes.

Similarly it may be helpful to refer to the qualitative indicators and indicative themes set out in HGIOCLD? 2 (especially key areas 2.1 and 4.1). However neither document should simply be treated as a ready made source of outcome statements. Rather they should be used as a means of stimulating discussion with the participants of the outcomes that they think are desirable, relevant and realistic in their particular circumstances.

It is important to remember that people who have had major and sustained problems to deal with in their lives tend to have lower expectations of what it will be possible to achieve. This is not a reflection of their ability or potential but a rational response to their experiences. It is important therefore that the vision of change is one that they believe is realistic and achievable. If it is not, the result may actually be that motivation is lost.

This sometimes means initially focusing on lower level changes than might ultimately be desirable. If the initial changes are successfully achieved, confidence and aspirations will grow and it will be possible to move onto higher levels, not because these are imposed by workers but because of growth in the confidence, aspirations and abilities of the participants. This is why the LEAP model presents a continuous cycle of learning and action.

Recognising the level of expectation of change is not only relevant for community participants but also for other stakeholders. For example moving into partnership working requires confidence and mutual trust to be built. Belief in the potential of partnerships can grow with learning from experience of the capabilities of other partners and the partnership as a whole.

Like LEAP, “Delivering Change” is clear that: ‘it’s the outcomes that participants want to achieve that are most important’. Looking at the outcomes suggested by the document for CLD practice it will be obvious to experienced practitioners that pursuing the outcomes identified by the participants will also enable the wider outcomes of CLD to be reached. The outcomes set out in the Worked Examples would also meet the requirements of key parts of the HGIOCLD? 2 framework, in particular key area 2: Impact on service users and key area 4: Impact on the community.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the kinds of outcomes that are sought by the participants tend to be different in nature from those that are identified by those that work with them. Participants will usually have a more specific vision of the difference that they want to see because their motivation relates to resolving a need that they directly experience.

Those that work with them will be more interested in changes in capacity that occur in the process of achieving the specific resolution because these will increase the likelihood of self-sustaining ability for effective action that can be transferred in the future to new needs. Commonly participants identify what are termed end outcomes and those that work with them identify process outcomes.

It is important not only to acknowledge that different participants will potentially seek different outcomes but also to be clear about which outcomes will be commonly agreed as the criteria for measuring success. In step 2 this will be relevant to identifying an appropriate range of indicators that will become the focus for collecting evidence in steps 3 and 4.

It is also worth noting that some participants may wish to assess outcomes which are peculiar to their particular interests and not agreed as the common basis for judging success. If they wish to do so it is their responsibility to go on to identify indicators and collect relevant evidence (for further discussion of outcome-based practice see section 2, part iii).

Step 2: Identifying Indicators – how will we know we made a difference?

STEP 2



Summary of Step 2:

- **Together with other stakeholders, identify potential indicators that will provide evidence for measuring whether outcomes are achieved.**
- **Agree which indicators will be adopted.**
- **Think about how to build the process of collecting evidence into practice and procedures.**

Step 2 is one that often gets forgotten. It somehow seems illogical to ask how we will know we have made a difference before we have actually done anything. Unfortunately it is often only when it is too late that the reason becomes clear. We get to the end of a piece of work and realise that, because we did not establish the criteria for success, we have not been collecting any evidence to tell us whether what we have been doing has been worthwhile and what has changed relative to conditions when we started our work.

As a result we find it very difficult to learn any useful lessons from our experience. Without good evidence and clear baselines, retrospective attempts to make sense of what happened are highly unreliable, potentially misleading and therefore dangerous. (See section 2, part v for further discussion of continuous learning and improvement.)

So, before deciding what to do to achieve the outcomes set in step 1, we need to pause and reflect on how we will judge success. At the end of the process we will not just be interested in whether the outcomes occurred but, because we are trying to evaluate the benefits and impact of our actions, we will want to know if it is these actions that have influenced them.

It is sometimes difficult to prove conclusively that actions we take are the cause of changes we seek. This is because many other things could be going on that would potentially also have an effect. For example, an improvement in the level of drug dealing in a community could be the result of a wide variety of influences. So what we will want to know is whether the actions we have taken with other participants have been influential in any positive changes that occur.

To do this, ideally we would have some measures that could show direct effects that were caused by the actions of the participants. More often we will need to rely on criteria that suggest that there may be a causal connection. We call these indicators. To be confident that any changes are related to our actions we will usually need to collect evidence in relation to several indicators.

We want to make this task as easy as possible so that it does not distract us from effort to achieve the change. On the other hand we do want to know whether what we have done has been effective or not. Since this will improve our later performance, the time taken to set criteria and collect evidence should be seen as an investment in effectiveness, not a cost.

Two further questions therefore need to be addressed:

- what sorts of indicators could we use; and
- how will we collect useful evidence efficiently as part of our work?

Suitable indicators

Because the way in which activity develops is often unpredictable we will need to think broadly about the kind of information that will provide convincing evidence that outcomes are being achieved. It is important to take this broad view rather than commit ourselves in advance to specific indicators which might turn out not to be relevant. For example, in literacies work, an outcome like improved skills in English could be illustrated in a variety of different ways depending on the contexts in which it was set. So, what we need to have done is consider the sorts of things that could provide evidence of this outcome. This approach is adopted in the Worked Examples.

Many of the outcomes of CLD that focus on personal development and community capacity will be identifiable in the way that people behave. For instance, in relation to personal development both HGIOCLD? 2 and Delivering Change refer to greater confidence as an outcome. In advance it may sometimes be possible to identify specific circumstances in which the outcome may be tested, for example, in speaking in a public context. Where there is such specificity the circumstances in which an indicator will be applied can be planned in advance.

However more commonly the opportunities to demonstrate the outcome may not be predictable. We must therefore be open to using indicators of such an outcome in many potential circumstances. The strength of our conviction of achievement will be reinforced by consistent evidence of the same outcome in several different contexts.

Collecting useful evidence

What we are interested in is evidence of change and progress. We can only know if something has changed if we knew where we were to start with. All evidence that is used needs to be assessed against a baseline which records the situation as it is before action is taken. This is why so much attention has been given to discussion of a need-led approach.

The baseline information should look at two things:

- what the need is; and
- assessment of the potential for change.

This is because what has to be changed is not just the need itself but the capacity of those involved to do something about it. **We can't use the LEAP approach unless we have recorded the baseline in both these ways.** As the previous section illustrated, indicators will relate to both.

Once the baseline is established and activity commences, evidence will start to become available. For CLD workers the evidence will generally emerge in the process of the work that they and the other stakeholders are doing. They will be observing and recording changes through their participation in the change effort and drawing on the observations and records that are kept by others. HGIOCLD? 2¹² describes four main sources of evidence which apply equally to LEAP. These are:

- performance data;
- relevant documentation;
- stakeholders views and feedback; and
- direct observations of practice.

¹² HGIOCLD? 2 page 5 – 6.

The evidence needs to be recorded and verified, but many indicators do not require any special investigation to identify evidence. Simply maintaining and using good records of what happens, will supply what is required. For example:

- Minutes of meetings.
- Reports of events (e.g. a community conference).
- Personal learning plans.
- Diary records.
- Applications for funding.
- Crime statistics.
- Examination performance records.
- Newsletters.
- Web pages.

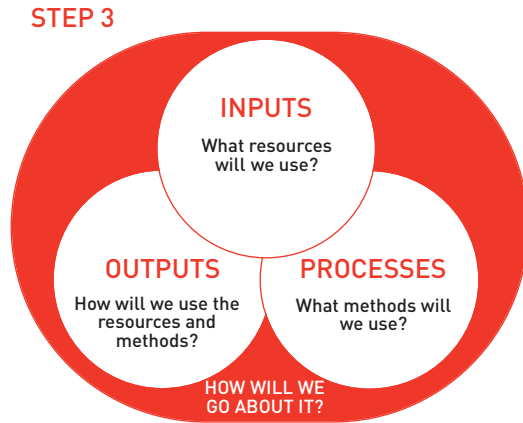
In a participatory model like LEAP, records have to be publicly available to be used for evaluative purposes. The indications of change that they suggest should also be corroborated from other sources. The more sources providing evidence of the same outcomes the stronger the case will be.

Whilst some outcomes will be self evident (for example, whether there is an increase in a specified skill, such as book keeping, or not) others will be more open to challenge. For example, a common outcome that is sought is a growth in self-confidence. Single instances might suggest a change of this kind but it would be the cumulative evidence of more confident behaviours in a range of settings that would provide convincing evidence of this change.

Evidence of some changes will require some special enquiry. For example it might be necessary to conduct a survey of opinion about the perceptions that people have of safety in a community and whether it is improving. But it is worth remembering that perception can be misleading, we may feel safer but not be safer. So how perceptions match up with more objective evidence, for example from crime statistics, is important.

The main message, then, is that evidence arises from the process of the work. LEAP is not about turning CLD workers or participants into researchers but encouraging them to make use of the direct insights their activity gives them and to build up, over time, evidence about what is happening. We need to plan how all those involved in the action will collect and record the evidence. This takes us on to the action planning step into which the process of data collection will need to be integrated.

Step 3: Action planning – how will we go about making the difference?



Summary of Step 3

- Remind yourself of what you are trying to achieve.
- Identify the resource you will need.
- Identify the methods you will use.
- Identify who will deliver what specific outputs where and when.
- Make sure you have the resources that you need.
- Make sure your actions match the principles of the methods you have chosen.
- Check that your actions are likely to succeed in achieving your desired outcomes and reconsider if necessary.
- Check that you have built the means of collecting evidence in to your action plan.

We now know what we are trying to achieve and we have a good idea of the sort of indicators we need to collect evidence about. But we still have to work out exactly how, with the participation of all the relevant stakeholders, we are going to achieve the change (for further discussion of partnership and participation see section 2, part iv). The starting point for an effective action plan is a review of the intended outcomes. In relation to these, quite simply, we need to think about:

- what will need to be done;
- by whom;
- when;
- in what way; and
- what we need to have available to be able to do it.

To work this out we need to involve all the active participants in answering three key questions:

- What resources will we use? – the inputs.
- What methods will we use? – the processes.
- In what ways will we use them? – the actions or outputs.

It doesn't really matter which of these questions we start with but in the end the answers to all three must complement each other. For example it would be no use deciding to use methods that we didn't have the time, funds, equipment or skills for. Similarly it would be of no benefit to identify lots of resources that were not relevant to the activities we planned.

1. Inputs/resources

When we think about resources we are thinking about the ingredients that we will need to use to take effective action. These are the capacities and assets on which we need to build. We call them inputs because they are literally the things that we put in to the process of change.

So what sorts of things are we talking about?

- Money/budgets.
- Facilities, e.g. meeting rooms, conference venues, sports grounds, catering.
- Equipment, e.g. video camera, transport, display boards, computer.
- Learning resources, e.g. audio-visual presentations, books, training packs, 'how to' guides.
- People with:
 - Time;
 - Energy, commitment and motivation;
 - Relevant skills;
 - Relevant knowledge;
 - Relevant experience;
 - Ideas and imagination; and
 - Authority to take action.
- Policies and guidance that enable the action we want to take.

We not only need to think about what resources we may need but where they will come from. As we are talking about a participatory and partnership based approach to planning and evaluation (see section 2, part iv) the resources might come from any of the stakeholders including:

- The community participants – young people, adults, community groups and organisations.
- The CLD agency and its staff.
- Other active partner agencies.
- External agencies, e.g. funders or policy makers.

The range and level of resources that may be needed to take action to achieve an outcome will depend on:

- how complex the desired outcome is; and
- how we want to go about it.

It is not possible to simply answer the resources question and move neatly on to methods and actions. In practice what happens is that as we start to think about these other questions we refine our idea about what resources we really need. So we will inevitably return to the resources question.

2. Processes/methods

It is important to think in broad terms about the style or types of action that we will take. In this question we are not interested in exactly who will do what or when but in thinking through the sort of approach that is likely to be most effective and most efficient. In choosing the methods we draw on the theories of change in CLD that reflect its underlying values of inclusive participation, equalities, empowerment and partnership. Methods relate to things like:

- Training.
- Network development.
- Community organising.
- Action research.
- Marketing.
- Information provision.
- Advocacy.
- Campaigning.
- Visioning.

Within these broad headings there will be specific techniques that might be appropriate for example:

- Planning for Real.
- Future Search.
- World Café.
- Community Appraisal.
- Open Space.
- Participatory Drama.

Such methods are reviewed in publications such as the Scottish Centre for Regeneration's 'Community Engagement: How to' guide.¹³

Achieving complex outcomes is likely to require the use of a range of methods and specific techniques.

Identifying the kinds of methods that might be most suitable does not necessarily mean that we can use them – we need to be sure that the motivation, capacity and opportunity would be available to allow us to use them (for further discussion see section 2, part ii).

3. Output and actions

Action plans commonly fall down because we are not precise about who will be committed to doing what, when and where. Having looked at methods and techniques, we may have a good idea of how we will go about things but the devil is often in the detail.

It may seem self evident but it is vital that the action plan actually sets out:

- the actions that will be taken;
- precisely who is responsible for taking them; and
- when and where they should happen.

Of course it will only be possible to take these actions if we have the resources to do so. If we don't have the resources we either need to find them or adopt a different plan of action. Carrying on regardless is a recipe for disaster.

Similarly, we may have identified actions to be taken but we need to be sure that these actions will enable us to apply the methods that we think are appropriate. How we go about things is not accidental but designed to deliver benefits.

¹³ http://www.ce.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/scrcs_006693.hcsp

In CLD we use participatory methods because the theory of our practice, derived from evidence, tells us that establishing agreement rather than imposing solutions is more likely lead to valued and sustainable change (see section 2, parts iv and v). We need to check that the actions we will take will reflect the methods and underlying principles of CLD set out, for example, in the Working and Learning Together guidance as: empowerment, participation, inclusion and equal opportunity, self-determination and partnership (see section 1, part iii).

Sometimes action plans may present fine words about using methods that reflect the values of CLD but, in practice, corners are cut and lip service is paid to them.

4. Will it work? – from Step 3 back to Step 1

The action plan has to be capable of delivering the change we set out to achieve. The sum of all the actions needs to be assessed to see whether it is likely to do this. In other words will the outputs that we will deliver achieve the outcomes that we have set?

Of course no-one can be certain that their plans will work, even the best laid plans can be derailed by unforeseen or unforeseeable circumstances. But the stakeholders do need to have confidence in what they intend to do. Doubts will undermine motivation and commitment. It is therefore wise to ask the question: what could go wrong? The approach can be strengthened to cover weak areas and it is possible to put in place contingency plans that could be brought into operation if anticipated difficulties actually arose.

But there is another possibility that needs to be considered. Have we been over-ambitious? Do we really have the capacity to achieve the outcome that we set? Vision needs to be tempered by realism. By all means be ambitious but don't set unachievable targets.

If the conclusion is that the outcomes cannot be achieved we should go back to Step 1. This is prudent and mature, not defeatist. Ultimately the intended outcome may be achievable but there may be a series of interim outcomes that need to be addressed first. The journey starts with the first step!

5. Collecting the evidence

In Step 2 we identified the sorts of indicators that would tell us if the outcomes were being achieved and recognised that we would have to have records to provide evidence. We noted that these could well be things that we would need to do anyway (like writing up conference reports, or preparing and reviewing learning plans). In Step 3, as a final part of the action plan, we should review it to see:

- What sorts of records will be produced in the process of the work that will be likely to offer evidence that illuminates indicators of change.
- Whether these records will be adequate or need to be supplemented in some way.

Step 4: Monitoring – how are we making sure it is happening?

STEP 4



Summary of Step 4.

- **Agree who is responsible for monitoring.**
- **Agree how all contributors will be held to account for delivering their contribution.**
- **Agree what evidence will convince you that the plan is being implemented.**
- **Record evidence of action and its impact.**
- **Chase progress as necessary.**

As the saying goes: 'the road to ruin is paved with good intentions'. Action plans are only useful if they are implemented.

Because CLD is complex implementation usually involves many people working together. All the parts of the plan have to be in place for it to be successful. So we need to know whether everyone is meeting the commitments that they have made, at the time they agreed and in the way that they agreed to do them. Monitoring the implementation of the action plan involves checking these things:

- Whether the specified actions are being taken.
- Whether the resources are in place that are needed to support these actions.
- Whether the resources are adequate for the task.
- Whether the sum of the methods of practice adopted amount to a coherent whole, enabling everything necessary to be addressed.

Each of these points is in the present tense. This is because monitoring is about what should be happening and responding if it is not.

However, the task of output monitoring is not just about whether things have been done, it is also about:

- how well they have been done; and
- recording evidence of impact they may have had.

It is not sufficient, therefore, to rely on simple reports that activities have taken place. We need to know if the experience of these actions was positive or not. This is where the indicators come in. We need to record evidence of the kind that we identified in Step 2.

Recording needs to address the following questions:

- Are we doing what we said we would do?
 - This should be quite straightforward. The plan will have set out what should happen and when. Those responsible for delivery should ensure that brief reports indicating completion of the tasks and any issues that have arisen are supplied to the monitoring co-ordinator.
- Are we getting the stakeholders involved?
 - Reports of actions taken should record who has participated and whether there are any stakeholders who were expected to be involved who did not participate. Absence of expected participants needs to be followed up.
- Are the stakeholders able to participate well?
 - In relation to events it will be normal to use brief questionnaires to assess satisfaction with what has been done. Records of feedback from the stakeholders about their experience can be used to monitor the quality of implementation. Observations of the lead party can also be recorded for events and for other actions involved in implementing the plan.
- Is the engagement system working well?
 - Observation is an important source of understanding but should be corroborated by comment from all those directly involved. It should be normal practice to keep asking questions which provide insight into satisfaction with the overall process of the implementation of the plan. For example, are participants satisfied that they are fully informed about what is going on and that they have had opportunity to contribute as fully as they would wish?
- Are we learning as we go along?
 - Learning requires shared reflection between the participants. It is important to record what is being learned from different activities as we go along, as this can enable adjustments to direction. This is called formative assessment of evaluation. Evidence gathered in this way can ultimately contribute to the overall evaluation of the action once complete – this is called summative evaluation.

Here is a simple example of what might be recorded in a monitoring process. A group of young people are becoming involved in a youth forum and have confidence building sessions to help them to talk to councillors and officials. Monitoring questions would be:

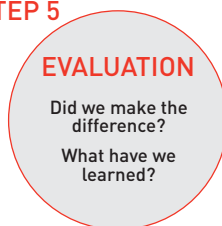
- Was this done?
- Did it prepare them properly?
- Do observations and views of participants about subsequent actions provide evidence of greater confidence?

Monitoring therefore has to capture the perceptions that participants have of how well the action has been taken and whether it is contributing to achieving the desired outcomes. The insights gained from effective monitoring of quality enable necessary adjustments and changes to be made to the action plan. Ultimately the records provide the basis for the work in Step 5.

Step 4 is probably the simplest to describe but implementing it is usually the most extended part of the process because it is actually about seeing the action through and this is likely to be over months or, potentially, years.

Step 5: Evaluation – have we made a difference, what are the lessons we have learned?

STEP 5



- **Bring all the evidence together.**
- **Analyse it.**
- **Involve the stakeholders in judging the meaning of the evidence.**
- **Ask these questions:**
 - **How far have we achieved the outcomes we set?**
 - **Have there been any other outcomes?**
 - **What are the lessons we have learned?**
 - **What will we need to do now?**
- **If further action is needed, return to step one.**

Step 5 completes the LEAP cycle. It is about ensuring that we are learning from what we are doing (see section 2, part v.)

It takes place once the action plan has been fully implemented. It is the point at which we make judgements about what we have been doing and whether it has been beneficial. To complete Step 5 satisfactorily all other steps must have been completed.

We need to be clear what it was we were trying to achieve (Step 1). We need to have identified indicators that we can use to judge progress (Step 2). We need to have developed an appropriate action plan (Step 3) and to know we have implemented it (Step 4). Within the action plan we need to have established how we will collect evidence about progress and to have built this into our monitoring.

Step 5 begins by pulling together the evidence. Whilst this should have been recorded as part of the monitoring procedure it is worth checking with all the stakeholders whether they have any additional evidence relating to indicators of the intended outcomes. Once this evidence is assembled we need to make sense of it. What does it tell us about progress that has been made?

But we would make a big mistake if we only asked whether the outcomes we set had been achieved – there are invariably other outcomes that result from actions we take. These can be positive or negative. The stakeholders need to identify what these are because they will provide important lessons for future action.

It is also important to remind ourselves that the outcomes set at Step 1 are often not measurable in absolute terms. For example if we say we are looking for increased confidence or self-esteem there is no absolute measure of what this looks like. Our evaluation is often therefore focused on progress made or distance travelled. It is often helpful to think in terms of whether there has been sufficient progress to enable the participants to do the things that they need to do.

Different stakeholders may have different views about what has been achieved. This may be because they prioritise different outcomes or because they make different judgements about the same outcomes. Clearly this can present difficulties in moving forward but open exploration of differences is healthy.



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