



DEVELOPING A SIMPLE
GUIDEBOOK FOR LOCAL
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS
TO FOLLOW WHEN EVALUATING
COMMUNITY PROJECTS

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF PLANNING

APRIL 8, 2013

Brittney Samson
Bachelor of Community Design
Honours Urban Design
brittneysamson@dal.ca
B00506092

Dr. Jill Grant
School of Planning
Dalhousie University
5410 Spring Garden Rd.
Halifax, NS. B3J 2X4
Jill.Grant@dal.ca
1(902) 494-6586

Paul Shakotko
Director, Strategies & Partnerships
United Way Halifax
48 Portland St, 7th floor.
Dartmouth, NS. B2Y 1H4
P.Shakotko@unitedwayhalifax.ca
1(902) 461-3086



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my gratitude to every person who has supported and uplifted me throughout my project. I am truly indebted to Dr. Jill Grant, who through her wise and conscientious demeanor, kept me grounded, calm, and sparked with imagination. To Dr. Patricia Manuel for teaching me that sometimes, you just need to step back and take a deep breath. To Paul Shakotko at United Way Halifax, for teaching me the values of community, and for giving me the confidence to work within it. To Roseanna Cleveland & Allana Loh from the Take Action Society, who taught me how truly committed people can be to their communities.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to my supportive family who always made a point to tell me they believed in me, especially my fiancé Jeremy and our Great Dane, Norah, who were always there with a hug, open ears, a tail wag, and a warm cup of tea.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Community organizations consistently invest in community projects such as playground equipment and community gardens, although post evaluations of these projects are rarely conducted or are inconclusive when they are conducted. Scarcity of post evaluations is often due to a lack of easy-to-follow evaluation guidelines and limited resources (P. Shakotko; Dr. J. Grant, per. comm., Nov 2012).

Community organizations are especially susceptible to limitations with their evaluations. Without proper evaluations, they do not know if their projects are being used to their predicted expectations. Proper evaluations can help community organizations better understand the impacts of their projects on communities (HCF, 2002).

The HRM is no exception to the infrequent post evaluations of community projects. United Way Halifax is a major funding contributor for many local community

projects. They recognize that the post evaluations that would help them better understand the impacts of the projects, are not being done. I conducted the following project to develop a simple guidebook for local organizations to use that assists them in evaluating their community projects, and also to provide United Way Halifax with a better understanding of how projects impact communities.

A simple guidebook for community organizations to follow does not appear in government or community organization literature. The literature outlines evaluation methods and tools used in the past, but not on a community level. A simple, easy-to-follow guidebook has the potential to bridge the gap in proper evaluation, especially for local community organizations.

I initiated the project with background literature and consultation research. From the research, I was able to complete a four-step drafting process for the evaluation guidebook

that prepared it for testing by a local community organization. Throughout the drafting process I refined the guidebook's content and design to properly cater to local community organization's needs.

The local community organization tested the fourth draft of the guidebook and responded that it was is an excellent tool that made things much easier for them, and would encourage them to conduct evaluations in the future. I made final revisions to the guidebook based on the community organization's feedback to complete the project.

The guidebook provides local community organizations with a tool that will help them evaluate their projects. These organizations can use their guidebook evaluation results to learn more about the strengths and weaknesses of their projects, identify ways to improve them, plan for future projects based on what they learned from their past projects, and even share what they learned from their project with other community

organizations. United Way can use the local community organization's evaluation results to better understand the impacts of community projects.

The positive guidebook feedback from the local community organization was a substantial implication of this project; their willingness to learn and share from their evaluation speaks volumes for the guidebook's potential now and in the future.



CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Project Purpose & Objectives	3
2.1 Purpose	3
2.2 Objectives	3
3.0 Background Research	4
3.1 Community Infrastructure	4
3.2 Importance of Investments in Community Infrastructure	4
3.3 Existing Community Investment Evaluation Methods	5
3.4 Existing Community Investment Evaluation Tools	7
3.5 Issues of Evaluation	8
3.6 Importance of Proper Evaluation	9
4.0 Project Process	10
4.1 Step One: Conducted background research to find existing evaluation methods and tools & analyzed them based on strengths and weaknesses	10
4.2 Step Two: Consulted a local community organization for insight on local evaluation methods and tools	11
4.3 Step Three: Researched and analyzed workbooks about community project planning for insight on guidebook format and language	12
4.4 Step Four: Established evaluation guidelines (indicators, criteria, and questions) from research and analysis	14
4.5 Step Five: Drafted guidebook (four drafts)	15
4.6 Step Six: Tested and revised guidebook for final edition	16
5.0 Reflection, Conclusion & Future Recommendations	19
5.1 Reflection & Conclusion	19
5.2 Future Recommendations	20
6.0 Sources	21

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Evaluation Method Analysis	23
Appendix B: Evaluation Tool Analysis	25
Appendix C: Project-Planning Workbook Analysis	27
Appendix D: Workbook References	29
Appendix E: Guidebook Test Results	30
Appendix F: Evaluation Guidebook	34

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Government and community organizations across North America consistently invest in community infrastructure projects such as benches, playground equipment, and community gardens. These projects are commonly referred to under the term ‘community projects’ by community organizations (P. Shakotko; Dr. J. Grant, personal communications, Nov 2012).

Unfortunately, post evaluations of these projects are rarely conducted or are often inconclusive. The scarcity of post project evaluations may reflect a lack of easy-to-follow evaluation guidelines and limited resources (P. Shakotko; Dr. J. Grant, per. comm., Nov 2012). Without proper evaluations of projects, organizations do not know if the projects they invest in are fulfilling the expectations they originally project. Properly conducted evaluations of community projects can provide knowledge to organizations about what types of community infrastructure are best suited to neighborhoods and what designs facilitate optimal use (Goncalves & Peuckert, 2011). Most

importantly, evaluations provide knowledge of the impacts community projects have on communities (Hamilton Community Foundation, 2002).

The Halifax Regional Municipality is no exception to the problem of infrequent and inconclusive post evaluations of community projects. United Way Halifax plays a strong role in funding and working alongside local community organizations seeking to improve communities in the Halifax Regional Municipality. Local community organizations use United Way’s funding to invest in community projects (United Way Halifax, 2013). United Way Halifax is seeking evaluation information to assist them in better understanding the types of community infrastructure investments that positively impact communities.

Thesis statement:
Develop a guidebook for local community organizations to follow when evaluating community projects.

This project seeks to fulfill the need for an evaluation resource for local communities, as well as United Way's need to better understand the impacts of community projects. To fulfill the need, I created a simple guidebook for local organizations to follow when evaluating their projects. The guidebook is an outcome-goal based evaluation tool that aids organizations in discovering if their project outcomes met their project goals.

I had a local community organization test the guidebook on a recent project in the community of North Dartmouth to ensure the guidebook's usefulness. Members from the "Take Action Society" of North Dartmouth filled out a copy of the guidebook, performing an evaluation on their project funded with help from United Way Halifax. Their feedback provided the guidebook with a vital local community perspective for the final draft. The test ensured that the language and context of the guidebook appropriately cater to community organizations so they are able to confidently use it for future evaluations.

Organizations can use their guidebook evaluation results to learn more about the strengths and weaknesses of their projects,

identify ways to improve them, plan for future projects based on what they learned from their past projects, and even share what they learned from their project with other community organizations. With proper evaluations, local organizations can better understand the impacts of their projects, and, in turn, United Way can too.

The following document will introduce the process I took when creating the evaluation guidebook. A background of current theory on community project evaluations and methods and tools of evaluation will provide a context for the guidebook process. A reflection and future recommendation section will conclude. This document is useful for large and small organizations interested in better understanding the impacts of community projects based on evaluation practices.

2.0 PROJECT PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

2.1 PURPOSE

The primary intent for my project was to provide local community organizations with a simple, easy-to-follow tool that they can refer to when performing evaluations of community projects. The evaluation guidebook not only provides a resource for local community organizations that will help them evaluate their community projects, but also provides United Way Halifax with a better understanding the types of community infrastructure investments that positively affect communities.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

1. Assess the existing strategies of community infrastructure evaluations used by community and government organizations.
2. Identify options for evaluation guidelines that could be followed by local community organizations when conducting evaluations.
3. Determine the best evaluation guidelines based on the strengths and weaknesses of existing evaluation methods and tools.

3.0 BACKGROUND RESEARCH

3.1 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

The Ontario Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal defines community infrastructure as “lands, buildings, and structures that support the quality of life for people and communities by providing public services for health, education, recreation, socio-cultural activities, security and safety, and affordable housing” (OMPIR, 2006, pg. 41).

The Canada-wide community organization, United Way, defines the ‘lands, buildings, and structures’ to include examples of small-scale community assets, such as benches, children’s playground equipment, public art displays, and community squares (United Way Halifax, 2012).

Clutterbuck and Novick (2003) categorize community infrastructure into “weak” and “strong” types. Their work explains that “strong” infrastructure integrates social and physical infrastructure, while “weak” infrastructure does not. They refer to

social infrastructure as the voices and values of the people in communities, and to physical infrastructure as the facilities that support the voices and values of the people. Their work concludes that municipalities and/or organizations that invest adequately in both social and physical infrastructure develop “strong” infrastructure, while those municipalities and/or organizations that do not adequately invest will hamper the physical and social development that communities require (Clutterbuck & Novick, 2003).

3.2 IMPORTANCE OF INVESTMENTS IN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Rothman (2005) argues that community infrastructure plays an important role as a building block of vibrant and strong neighborhoods. Effective community infrastructure investments include education, libraries, employment, affordable living, recreation, and social surroundings. She states that effective community infrastructure investments made by organizations help neighborhoods build assets for long-term community success. She concludes that investments in community infrastructure are

important in fostering social inclusion through neighborhood-based recreation and cultural activities, as well as in helping communities provide formal learning opportunities to youth (Rothman, 2005).

The Hamilton Community Foundation of Ontario experienced similar findings with the results of the communities' small grant program "Growing Roots, Strengthening Neighborhoods". The GRSN program's mission was to work in partnership with other organizations to help build a healthy community through the implementation of neighborhood based activities for residents to improve the quality of their lives and neighborhoods. They concluded that strengthened community infrastructure plays a major role in influencing the quality of neighborhood (Hamilton Community Foundation, 2002).

Infrastructure Canada reported findings that community infrastructure improved the overall quality of community. These findings resulted upon the completion of a First Nations community project they invested in across Canada in 2007. They concluded that the overall health and safety of the community

residents was improved and that community members became more engaged in community events (Infrastructure Canada, 2010).

Nancy Duxbury, the director of research and education for the Creative City Network of Canada in 2004, connected investments in community infrastructure to vibrant neighborhoods, although from the perspective of the "creative city". Duxbury reported on Landry's innovation of "creative cities", explaining that the "creative city" approach to planning is to involve art, culture, and history in the future planning and visions of communities. Duxbury concluded that these economic renewal practices occur with the help of investments in community infrastructure (Duxbury, 2004).

3.3 EXISTING COMMUNITY PROJECT EVALUATION METHODS

Infrastructure Canada conducted an evaluation program in 2007 that provided funding to First Nations communities across Canada with the intention of enhancing the quality of each community's environment. Infrastructure Canada aimed to promote long-term economic growth and enhance

community infrastructure in each of the First Nations communities (Infrastructure Canada, 2010). The evaluation program measured the project's qualitative (social) success and progress of the immediate and intermediate outcomes, as well as the project's quantitative (cost-effective) success: whether the project was run under the most efficient practices, and how on-target with costing the project was while achieving the expected outcomes (Infrastructure Canada, 2010).

Duxbury reported on similar evaluation methods as Infrastructure Canada, although she evaluated public art investments. Duxbury explained that two of Canada's major creative cities, Toronto and Ottawa, follow a set of measures that are reported annually in order to indicate their progress, providing immediate and intermediate reporting (Duxbury, 2004).

The Human Services Division of Hamilton Community Services in Ontario published a report in 2010 outlining a framework of community infrastructure for their city. The report summarized the community infrastructure analysis approach methods used in other communities for the purpose of a final analysis of Hamilton's social

and community infrastructure. The report introduces the accessibility approach, population distribution approach, supply and demand approach, performance measurement method, asset mapping method, and profiling method.

The accessibility approach measures whether services and facilities are within reach of users, while the population distribution approach analyzes the proximity of services and facilities to the community residents who most need them. The supply and demand approach works to determine the existing needs of community residents, and the adequacy of current community infrastructure in meeting needs. The performance measurement method works to establish standards for social infrastructure based on case studies. The asset mapping method works to describe the state of community infrastructure in defined geographical areas. Finally, the profiling method provides a number and range of types of social infrastructure found in a community (Hamilton Community Services, 2010).

3.4 EXISTING COMMUNITY PROJECT EVALUATION TOOLS

Infrastructure Canada's First Nations project evaluation conducted in 2007 used an evaluation matrix to carry out the evaluation. The matrix included questions asked to the First Nations communities by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. The matrix also included indicators, data sources and data collection methods to help community members answer the evaluation questions (Infrastructure Canada, 2010).

To manage the evaluation data collection, Infrastructure Canada developed the national Shared Information Management System (SIMSI), and set up a 1-800 number to assist First Nations communities to carry out their evaluations. However, Infrastructure Canada found that the information obtained by SIMSI was inaccurate and incomplete due to INAC's deficiency in delivering the evaluation as intended, and an overall lack of cooperation from many First Nations communities. INAC attributed its problems to a lack of human and financial resources (Infrastructure Canada, 2010).

The Research and Analysis Division of Infrastructure Canada reported on community infrastructure and non-renewable resource development in the Northwest Territories in 2005. The report refers to short-term and long-term planning tools that can be used for sustainable community infrastructure planning. The short-term planning tool, 'community strategic planning', involves a combination of visioning, goal setting, detailed action planning, and implementation. Community strategic planning is usually based on a three to five year outlook. The long-term planning tool, 'community official plans', involve a long-range outlook that is based usually on 15 to 20 years, but sometimes up to a 50 to 100 year horizon for considering sustainability (Infrastructure Canada, 2005).

The New Zealand Ministry for the Environment established an urban amenity project in 1999 in the hopes of developing a standard set of indicators for urban amenities to measure changes over time. They were unable to develop a standard set of indicators, although they did develop a ten-step framework for evaluating urban amenities (NZMOE, 2012).

The Human Services Division of Hamilton Community Services 2010 report summarizes the accessibility approach, population distribution approach, supply and demand approach, performance measurement method, asset mapping method, and profiling method, and provides a recommendation chart tool. The recommendation chart, in the form of a table, provides a framework of possible research questions to consider and the required input elements for each of the summarized methods, as illustrated in Fig. 2. The tool was established to assist the Hamilton Human Services in selecting appropriate methodologies to use while developing their approach to assess existing community infrastructure (Hamilton Community Services, 2010).

3.5 ISSUES OF EVALUATION

Infrastructure Canada's evaluation program in 2007 on First Nations infrastructure funding experienced difficulty in conducting the analysis of the program's cost-effectiveness due to SIMSI's scarcity of data

regarding the program's costs. The findings of the program were based largely on quantitative (numeric) information rather than qualitative (social) information (Infrastructure Canada, 2010).

Duxbury reported that the evaluation methods for creative cities developed by Canadian cities resulted in difficulty. In producing evaluation strategies for creative cities the greatest challenge had been to develop meaningful indicators for success and frameworks of progress. Because "meaningful indicators" are subject to different meaning in different places, developing them was a lengthy and subjective process (Duxbury, 2004).

The New Zealand Ministry for the Environment also found difficulty in creating evaluation measures for changes in urban amenity. They concluded that it was simply impossible as "urban amenity" is a subjective term and meant different things in different communities (NZMOE, 2012).

The Human Services Division of Hamilton Community Services outlines drawbacks of many of the evaluation methods they considered. Their report states that a

population distribution method may not be well suited to evaluate service/facility projects that users do not require in the neighborhood where they live, while the supply and demand method may not adequately capture the qualitative aspects of communities' service needs and accessibility. Problems with the accessibility method arose as well; it measures barriers with respect to access to services/facilities for target users, leaving out consideration for server utilization rates (Hamilton Community Foundation, 2002).

communities, and provide knowledge of the ways to improve existing community infrastructure and the best designs for future projects (Goncalves & Peuckert, 2011).

Working toward achieving proper evaluations of investments in community infrastructure is important. Proper evaluations lead to strengthened community infrastructure- and strengthened community infrastructure plays a major role in influencing a better quality of neighborhood and community (Hamilton Community Foundation, 2002).

3.6 IMPORTANCE OF PROPER EVALUATION

Goncalves and Peuckert's work on measuring the impacts of quality of infrastructure explains that accurate evaluations of infrastructure play an important role in the performance of the social, economic, and environmental factors of communities. Their research further explains that proper evaluations identify the ranges of positive and negative effects of infrastructure on communities, advise policy makers of how projects can be facilitated, raise awareness of community infrastructure to people of

4.0 PROJECT PROCESS

4.1 STEP ONE

Conducted background research to find existing evaluation methods and tools & analyzed them based on strengths and weaknesses.

HOW I DID IT

Developing a guidebook that assisted local community organizations in evaluating community projects first required a study of current literature on the topic. I explored the existing evaluation methods and tools throughout government and community literature. I analyzed the findings from the background research and displayed my findings in a chart based on the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation methods and tools. The analysis chart for evaluation methods is located in Appendix A, while the analysis chart for evaluation tools is located in Appendix B.

WHAT I FOUND


The analysis of evaluation methods revealed that the immediate and intermediate evaluation method used by Infrastructure Canada in 2007 and the cities of Toronto and Ottawa as noted in Duxbury's work in 2004, was the strongest.

The analysis of evaluation tools revealed that none of the existing tools were strong enough to cater to local community organizations. Language and complexity of the tools were the major weaknesses.

Analysis findings also revealed that government organizations more frequently document and publish their community project evaluation methods and tools.

WHAT IT MEANT

Evaluation method and tool literature findings made the under-represented community side of evaluations evident. All of the literature I discovered was published by government sources, and although their evaluation methods exhibited prospects for the



method used for the guidebook, the evaluation tool findings did not represent the community level of evaluations. I needed to further explore the methods and tools used by community organizations.

HOW I TRANSLATED IT INTO THE GUIDEBOOK

I chose the immediate and intermediate evaluation method to serve as the evaluation method for the guidebook. The method was appropriate for the guidebook as it suited its simple mandate. The intermediate and immediate outcomes fit over two pages, a length thought suitable for the guide.

4.2 STEP TWO

Consulted a local community organization for insight on local evaluation methods and tools.

HOW I DID IT

To accurately represent evaluation methods and tools used and available to local community organizations, a personal consultation with a local community

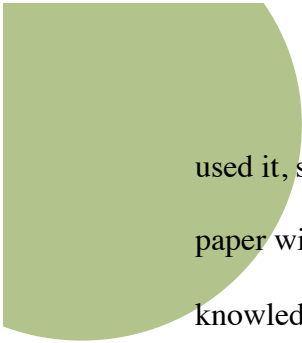
organization was vital. I met with the Take Action Society of North Dartmouth on January 25, 2013, at their location on 25 Alfred Street with two of the organization's leaders.

WHAT I FOUND

The meeting revealed that evaluations were rarely used in the local 'community organization' community. Therefore, these local community organizations did not have a set of evaluation methods to follow, and no evaluation tools to refer to for guidance.

The Take Action Society leaders clarified that many local community organization leaders are simply concerned citizens who step forward to help their neighborhoods. They come from different education levels, many with a grade nine education or lower. The need for an easy-to-use evaluation tool became evident.

One leader explained that had the community organization leaders had an evaluation tool to refer to, they would have



used it, stating that “staring at blank piece of paper with a pencil and no evaluation knowledge, doesn’t get the evaluation done, but that having a tool to fill in and guide [them] will” (Organization leader, per. comm. January 25, 2013).

The leaders stated how thrilled the organization would be to not only have a tool to refer to, but to have it to share with other community organizations, claiming that they would have appreciated the help an evaluation tool would have provided when they first started out with Take Action.

WHAT IT MEANT

Consultation with the Take Action Society played an important role in allowing community organizations to have a voice in their evaluation methodology, as they often lack the resources to publish their work. This ensured that the evaluation guidelines chosen for the guidebook accurately catered to local community organizations.

HOW I TRANSLATED IT INTO THE GUIDEBOOK

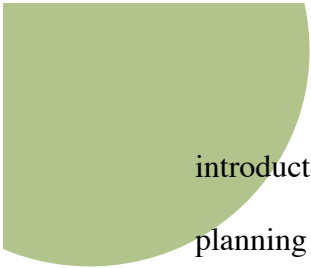
The need for an easy-to-follow evaluation tool was clear from consultation with the Take Action Society. I chose a guidebook as the type of tool to develop because it easily guides the user (in this case, users who may have not had opportunities for higher education) through the intended process. A guidebook is also a legacy tool; it is a tool that I could produce and make accessible for a user to use without them needing assistance.

4.3 STEP THREE

Researched and analyzed workbooks about community project planning for insight on guidebook format and language.

HOW I DID IT

Project Planning is an important process that I needed to consider when creating the guidebook. I conducted research and analysis of project planning workbooks to build a foundation for the guidebook evaluation criteria and questions and



introductory guidebook material. The project planning workbooks catered to community organizations and used appropriate language and format that was easy to follow. I analyzed the workbooks' language use and format to identify reoccurring language and format traits. I displayed the reoccurring traits in a chart located in Appendix C. I also analyzed the workbooks for aspects of projects that were important to project planning. This analysis is displayed in the chart in Appendix C as well.

WHAT I FOUND

The workbooks outlined many important aspects of projects including funding, target population, users, and issues, as well as useful language and formatting traits.

The following criteria for appropriate language and format came from the analysis:

- Address the audience.
- Develop a simple step-by-step process.
- Simplify questions.
- Tailor the language to the reading level of

the user.

- Use positive wording.
- Use the 5 W's (Who, what, when, where, why & how).
- Use a question and answer format when introducing the subject matter.

I discovered references for creating good questions and developing data collection instruments that were useful when editing the guidebook. These references are located in Appendix D.

WHAT IT MEANT

Although the workbooks did not involve project evaluation, they provided valuable insight toward language and formatting for the community level and uncovered important aspects of projects that were useful to understand the parts of community projects that need evaluating. These findings played a role in my decisions for language use and format for the guidebook.

HOW I TRANSLATED IT INTO THE GUIDEBOOK

I incorporated the language and format criteria that I discovered into many parts of the guidebook. I incorporated step-by-step formatting, positive wording (using short term and long term “achievements” instead of “outcomes”), the 5 W’s, question and answer formatting on the introduction page, and also simplification and tailoring of questions to the reading level of the users. I made each of these language and format criteria choices to ensure the guidebook is easy to use.

I also incorporated the important aspects of projects (such as target population and funding) into the guidebook as evaluation criteria (the parts of the project to evaluate).

4.4 STEP FOUR

Established evaluation guidelines (indicators, criteria, and questions) from research and analysis.

HOW I DID IT

I developed the evaluation guidelines from my analysis of published literature and

consultation, as well as my project planning workbook research and analysis. I used the guidelines to format the guidebook. They are intended to guide the user through the parts of the project to evaluate.

WHAT I FOUND

From literature, consultation, and planning workbook research findings, I found that the creation of an evaluation guidebook required a set of guidelines to establish a simple format. I needed to integrate guidelines to format the steps of the guidebook, outline the parts of the projects for the user to follow and direct the user to the exact parts of the project to evaluate.

From the literature research I found that the immediate and intermediate method helped with evaluating indicators. The consultation and planning workbook findings had potential as the evaluation criteria, and the language, formatting and references in the workbooks had potential for the questions.

WHAT IT MEANT

Establishing the guidelines provided the guidebook with a framework, and allowed me to begin the drafting process.

HOW I TRANSLATED IT INTO THE GUIDEBOOK

I developed the guidelines to consist of indicators, criteria, and questions. The indicators I developed include the main headings that direct the activity on the page (goals, objectives, outcomes). I derived them from the strong evaluation methods and tools in the literature.

The criteria I developed include the headings of the items to evaluate (target population, target message, etc., [referred to as who, what, when, etc. on the final draft]). I derived them from literature, consultation, and project planning workbook research.

I developed questions from literature, consultation, and project planning workbooks, and located them beneath the criteria. The questions guide the user through the evaluation process and generate answers.

I revised the criteria titles and questions throughout the drafting process to cater more appropriately to future users of the

guidebook.

4.5 STEP FIVE

Drafted guidebook (four drafts).

HOW I DID IT

I drafted the guidebook in four phases to ensure it catered to local community organizations. Throughout the four drafts, the overall format of the guidebook remained standard: I designed it to be a brief document to ensure simplicity. I set an eight-page format. These eight pages were designed to include a cover page, an introductory page to inform the reader why and how to use the guidebook, a goals section, an objectives section, a short-term achievement section, a long-term achievement section, and a two-page reflection section at the end to help the user understand their project evaluation conclusions.

Each draft was reviewed by Dr. Jill Grant and Paul Shakotko from United Way Halifax. They provided feedback and potential improvements for each draft that I incorporated into the subsequent drafts.

WHAT I FOUND

Throughout the four-step drafting process, I found that language and format required refinement as the language and format I began with did not properly cater to community organizations. The guidebook required three further drafts to more accurately meet the needs of community organizations.

WHAT IT MEANT

The four-step drafting process for the evaluation guidebook prepared the guidebook for testing by local community organization, the Take Action Society of North Dartmouth. Each draft enhanced the guidebook's simplicity, more accurately meeting the needs of community organizations.

HOW I TRANSLATED IT INTO THE GUIDEBOOK

I derived the language from literature published by government sources due to availability. Although the methodology presented in the literature was useful, the language was complicated. The first

guidebook draft incorporated some of this language. Subsequently, I focused on language refinement in the following drafts to prepare it for testing by the Take Action Society.

I often referred to two tools during drafting that I found in a project planning workbook published by the World Health Organization titled, "Tips for developing your data collection instruments" and "Writing Good Questions: a checklist for quick reference" (WHO, 2000, pg. 40-41).

4.6 STEP SIX

Tested and revised guidebook for final edition.

HOW I DID IT

I presented the fourth draft of the guidebook to the Take Action Society of North Dartmouth for the organization to test the guidebook's viability on their recent community project.

The Take Action Society of North Dartmouth was established in 2009 by two concerned and dedicated mothers. They stepped forward and took action on the

neighborhood to change the circumstances that their children were growing up amongst.

The neighborhood of North Dartmouth is an area of lower-income and has seen many incidents of crime and vandalism over the years (Davenport, 2013). The Take Action Society provided children with the tools they need to be leaders in the neighborhood and has made an impact on turning around the negative stigma attached to the neighborhood (Davenport, 2013).

Together with help from United Way, the organization moved forward with their community project. They repainted an old outdoor rink for a more appealing place for children to play, and created an outdoor classroom and community garden for children and community members to have a place to be closer to nature (Image 1) (HRSB, 2012). In January 2013, the Take Action Society went a step further with the project. They gathered volunteers from the community and created a large outdoor rink for the children and residents of the neighborhood (Image 2).

The outdoor rink served as an excellent location to test the viability of the evaluation guidebook. With cooperation from the Take



Image 1. The Harbourview community garden (HRSB, 2012).



Image 2. Community members enjoying a skate at the rink (Take Action, 2013).

Action Society, the guidebook was tested to evaluate the outcomes of the outdoor rink project based on the organization's original projection.

This evaluation helped to reveal improvements needed for the guidebook. I used the feedback from the community volunteers to refine the final edition of the guidebook.

WHAT I FOUND

The Take Action Society leaders tested the evaluation guidebook on their recent skating rink project and forwarded their results via email (Appendix E). They wished they had the tool earlier on, and expressed excitement for the final guidebook to be completed as they host events and projects in their community often. They also expressed interest in sharing their results with other community organizations.

The evaluation taught them useful information about their project. It helped them understand what parts of the rink project to fix for the next winter. Their feedback explained that the guidebook was easy to use, although the space available to fill in their answers was insufficient, and there was no space to fill in the project title. They found the “who, what, when, where, why, and how” format particularly helpful.

WHAT IT MEANT

Having a local community organization test the guidebook on a recent project played an important role in validating the usefulness and accuracy of the guidebook. I created the guidebook for local community organizations, so having one test it provided me with the direct client feedback that I required to more appropriately cater to them.

HOW I TRANSLATED IT INTO THE GUIDEBOOK

I implemented the suggestions for improvement from the Take Action Society into the final revision of the guidebook, which included additional space for writing and project title. The final revision concluded my project.

United Way has posted a PDF version of the guidebook on their website, (www.unitedwayhalifax.ca) that is accessible to the public to download and print. The guidebook is also available on Dr. Jill Grant's student research website.

5.0 REFLECTION, CONCLUSION & FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 REFLECTION & CONCLUSION

Literature and consultation findings made it evident that evaluation tools catering to local community organizations are hard or impossible to find. In consequence, evaluations of community organization's projects were rarely conducted. Consultation revealed that had community organizations had an evaluation tool to reference, they would have referred to it without hesitation.

It was clear that the creation of a simple project evaluation guidebook would be beneficial for local community organizations immediately and for the future.

The background literature research was an important first step in creating the guidebook, although the community organization consultation provided me with insight into the reality of the local project evaluation situation. The planning workbook

research was a valuable resource that I referred to often when drafting the guidebook, particularly when I was refining language.

Testing the guidebook with a local community organization was made possible by Paul Shakotko from United Way, who contacted and introduced me to the Take Action Society. Having a local community organization test the guidebook and provide feedback played a substantial role in validating the guidebook's usefulness. The organization's willingness to learn and share from their evaluation speaks volumes for the guidebook's potential.

The guidebook has implications for both local community organizations and United Way Halifax. Local community organizations can use their guidebook evaluation results to learn more about the strengths and weaknesses of their projects to identify ways to improve them, and share what they have learned with other community organizations. United Way can use the local community organization's

evaluation results to better understand the impacts of community projects.

An organization's implementation of a community project without a proper evaluation hampers the progress of future projects. The evaluation guidebook proposes a solution to the lack of evaluations. It is a resource that local community organizations can easily access and use. Finally, it represents promise for improved local projects in the future.

5.1 FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

The guidebook drafting and testing process prepared the guidebook to be as accurately catered to community organizations as possible given the time restraint of the project. If I had a longer time allowance with the project I would have tested it with more than one community organization. Having a number of local community organizations use and provide feedback on the guidebook would strengthen its effectiveness.

Due to the time restraints of the

project, I recommend that United Way Halifax gather more results from local community organizations that are using the guidebook to evaluate their projects. As United Way receives feedback from these organizations, I recommend they revisit and revise the guidebook. Much of the information throughout this document will aid United Way Halifax with the revision process.

A strengthened guidebook will result in strengthened project evaluations, and in return, strengthened community projects.

7.0 SOURCES

- Clutterbuck, P. & Novick, M. (2003). "Building Inclusive Communities: Cross-Canada Perspectives and Strategies". Federation of Canadian Municipalities, & Laidlaw Foundation: Ontario, Canada. Retrieved from: http://www.urbancenter.utoronto.ca/pdfs/curp/Clutterbuck_Novick_Inclusiv.pdf
- Corporate Citizenship. (2009). "Making a Difference: Corporate Community Investment : A whole programme approach to measuring results". Corporate Citizenship: London, Ontario. Retrieved from: http://www.lbg-online.net/media/13256/making_a_difference_management_report.pdf
- Duxbury, N. (2004). "Creative Cities: Principals and Practices". Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc: Ottawa, Ontario. Retrieved from: http://cprn.org/documents/31347_fr.pdf
- Ellis, J. (2005). "Simple Steps: A Workbook to help you plan a Community Literacy Project". Yukon Literacy Coalition: Yukon. Retrieved from: <http://www.engagestrategies.ca/wp-content/uploads/Simple-Steps-web-version1.pdf>
- Enviro Solutions New Zealand Ltd, & Glasson Potts Fowler Ltd. (2001) "The Quality of Our Built Environments: An Urban Amenity Guide." New Zealand Ministry for the Environment: New Zealand. Retrieved from: <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/rma/live-work-play-jun02/resources/pdf/environment.pdf>
- Goncalves, J. & Peuckert, J. (2011). "Measuring the Impacts of Quality Infrastructure". Physikalisch Technische Bunde
- Halifax Regional Schoolboard. (2012). "Recent Events in the HRSB". HRSB: Halifax, NS. Retrieved from: <http://www.hrsb.ns.ca/content/id/1047.html>
- Hamilton Community Foundation. (2002). "Growing Roots-- Strengthening Neighborhoods". Hamilton Community Foundation: Hamilton, Ontario. Retrieved from: <http://hcf.on.ca/initiatives/growing-rootsstrengthening-neighbourhoods>.
- Hamilton Community Services. (2010). "Community Infrastructure Study Part 1". Hamilton Community Services, Human Services Planning division: Hamilton, Ontario. Retrieved from: http://www.hamilton.ca/NR/rdonlyres/D2BB8B04-E2C6-4936-AE70-C235BCAAC932/0/HSP_TechReport_4.pdf
- Infrastructure Canada. (2005). "Planning for a Soft Landing: Non-renewable resource development and community infrastructure in the Northwest Territories". Infrastructure Canada, Research and Analysis Division: Northwest Territories.
- Infrastructure Canada. (2010). "Summarative Evaluation Report- Infrastructure Canada Program First Nations Component". Retrieved from: <http://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/pd-dp/eval/ser-res-2010/ser-res-2010-03-eng.html>
- New Zealand Ministry of the Environment. (2012). "What is Urban Amenity" NZMOE: New Zealand. Retrieved from:

- <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/rma/live-work-play-jun02/information/>
- Nunavut Literacy Council. (n.d). "Tools for Community Building: A guide to help people plan projects in their community". Nunavut Literacy Council: Cambridge Bay; Rankin Inlet, Nunavut.
- Ontario Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. (2006). "Places to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe" OMPIR: Ontario, Canada. Retrieved from: <http://www.gta-west.com/pdf/Growth%20Plan.pdf>
- Rothman, R. (2005). "Strong Neighborhoods Task Force Research Product Two: The Role of Community Infrastructure in Building Strong Neighborhoods". Family Service Association of Toronto: Toronto, Canada. Retrieved via Novanet: <http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/sntf/rp2.pdf>
- United Way Halifax. (2012). Electronic References. Retrieved from: <http://www.unitedwayhalifax.ca/>
- World Health Organization. (2000). "Workbook 1: Planning Evaluations". World Health Organization. Retrieved from: http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/attachements.cfm/att_5863_EN_1_planning_evaluations.pdf

Evaluation Method Findings.

Organization/ Source	Community Project/ Planning Approach	Evaluation Method	Strong/ Weak	Reason
Hamilton Community Services, 2010.	Implemented a community infrastructure study of their city as part of a Human Services Planning Initiative (HSPI) and established a framework for different evaluation methods to use to evaluate the condition of their cities infrastructure.	Accessibility approach, population distribution approach, supply and demand approach, performance measurement method, asset mapping method, and profiling method.	Weak.	The methods that arose from their community infrastructure study were not tested. They were used as a context to a recommendation chart that they created as a tool to assist their departments to select appropriate methodology depending on research questions and areas of infrastructure interest.
Infrastructure Canada, 2010.	97 First Nations Community Funding Projects, including cultural, recreational (including parks, playgrounds, indoor rinks, after-school programming, and community centres), and tourism facilities, local transportation infrastructure, affordable housing projects and wastewater improvement.	Immediate outcomes and intermediate outcomes.	Strong.	Although the SIMSI programming failed to collect accurate data, and INAC failed to deliver the evaluation to the communities due to a lack of human and financial resources, the immediate and intermediate outcome evaluation method proved to be a strong evaluation method to use in circumstances where evaluation programming is more successfully run.

Nancy Duxbury, Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2004.	The Cities of Toronto and Ottawa invested in creativity in their cities as part of a “creative city” approach to city planning. Toronto implemented a “Culture Plan” that focused on arts, culture and heritage in the city that developed partnerships among business, culture and local community organizations, while Ottawa developed an “Arts and Heritage Plan” that focuses on sustaining Ottawa’s artists, creative people, cultural organizations and creative industries.	Immediate outcomes and intermediate outcome reported annually in Ottawa and every two years in Toronto, based on a set of indicators for success.	Strong.	The cities experienced difficulty in establishing indicators for evaluation and so it was suggested that the development of indicator templates was necessary for future evaluation. The immediate and intermediate outcome approach did not require change.
Organization/ Source	Community Project/ Planning Approach	Evaluation Method	Strong/ Weak	Reason

Evaluation Tool Findings.

Organization/ Source	Community Project/ Planning Approach	Evaluation Tool	Strong/ Weak	Reason
Infrastructure Canada, 2010.	97 First Nations Community Funding Projects, including cultural, recreational (including parks, playgrounds, indoor rinks, after-school programming, and community centres), and tourism facilities, local transportation infrastructure, affordable housing projects and wastewater improvement.	Evaluation Matrix.	Weak.	Although the matrix was made up of questions to be asked to the First Nations communities under control of Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC), as well as indicators, data sources and data collection methods to help community members answer the evaluation questions, the language and complicated questions were not received well by members of the communities. The evaluation matrix did not accurately cater to the members of the community, and did not achieve the evaluation input it was designed to.
Infrastructure Canada, 2005.	Reported on community infrastructure and non-renewable resource development in the Northwest Territories in 2005 as “communities in the NWT are in a unique position to take advantage of the opportunities presented by increased resource exploration and development”. Studies suggested that small remote communities in the NWT have a lack of expertise in project planning. Infrastructure Canada provided a recommendation of tools for communities to use in their report.	Short-term tool: “Community strategic planning” (visioning, goal-setting, detailed action planning, and implementation. Based on a 3 to 5 year outlook.) Long-term tool: “Community official plans” (long-range outlook and forecasting based on 15-20 year horizon)	Weak	Infrastructure Canada continues to report that these tools require experience of the industry to further inform community infrastructure planning and development.

Hamilton Community Services, 2010.	Implemented a community infrastructure study of their city as part of a Human Services Planning Initiative (HSPI) and established a recommendation chart from the evaluation methodology they researched. The recommendation chart provides possible research questions to consider for evaluation of Hamilton's infrastructure and the required input elements.	Recommendation Chart.	Weak	The recommendation chart focuses on accessibility, population distribution, supply and demand, performance measurement, asset mapping, and profiling methods of evaluation, although a number of these methods have drawbacks of inaccurately representing the evaluation information they are trying to calculate.
New Zealand Ministry for the Environment, 1999.	Established an urban amenity project in 1999 in the hopes of developing a standard set of indicators for urban amenities to measure the changes in urban amenity over time. They were unable to develop a standard set of indicators, although they did develop a ten-step framework to be considered in evaluating urban amenities.	Ten step guide to evaluating urban amenities.	Weak	The ten-step framework outlines steps to consider when conducting an evaluation of urban amenities, including a step to define the urban amenity project, one to identify the options for managing urban amenity, and one to develop a monitoring strategy, etc. The drawback of the framework is that the framework is separated into one-after-another steps for ease of explanation. In practice, the user may need to go back and forth between steps, as there are not always clear boundaries between them (Enviro Solutions New Zealand Ltd. & Glasson Potts Fowler Ltd., 2001).
Organization/ Source	Community Project/ Planning Approach	Evaluation Tool	Strong/ Weak	Reason

Project-Planning Workbook Findings.

Organization/ Source	Title of Workbook, Type of Workbook & Audience	Important Aspects of Projects	Language Use/ Important Guidebook Traits to Incorporate
Nunavut Literacy Council, n.d.	“Tools for Community Building: A Guide to Help People Plan Projects in their Community”. Project planning workbook created for members of communities across Nunavut.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding (important to plan for proper funding). - Issues (important to understand what issue in the community that a project will work to solve). - Users (important to factor how many people will need to use the project to make it worth it). - Project activities (planning activities for your project can enhance users). 	<p>“Who is this workbook for?” (pg. 3).</p> <p>“How can I use this workbook?” (pg. 4).</p> <p>“Words to know” (pg. 8).</p> <p>“Step 1, Step 2, etc” (pg. 25).</p> <p>“State your goals and objectives” (pg.34, 125).</p> <p>“Why is project evaluation important?” (pg.47).</p> <p>“What things do you want or need to learn more about?” (pg. 53).</p> <p>“target audience” (pg.129).</p>
World Health Organization, 2000.	“Workbook 1: Planning Evaluations”. Part one of a series of workbooks created to educate programme/ project planners, managers, staff, and other decision-makers about the evaluation of services for the treatment of substance use disorders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding (internal and external funding possibilities). - Target Population (important to plan a target population to use the project). 	<p>“Step 1, Step 2, etc” (pg.8).</p> <p>“Immediate program outcomes” (pg. 15).</p> <p>“Long term program outcomes” (pg 15).</p> <p>“Evaluation Questions” (pg. 20).</p> <p>“Indicators are measurable pieces of information that indicate whether a program is achieving an objective” (pg. 23).</p> <p>“Having good indicators for our programme enhances our confidence in claims made about the program.</p> <p>“Set a time frame for data collection... You must consider what time of change you want to measure.” (pg. 43).</p> <p>“Tips for developing your data collection instruments” (pg. 40-41).</p> <p>“Writing Good Questions: a checklist for quick reference” (pg. 41).</p>

Ellis, J. For the Yukon Literacy Council, 2005.	“Simple Steps: A Workbook to help you plan a Community Literacy Project”. A project planning workbook created as a step-by-step guide for communities to plan and carry out family literacy projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issues/Needs (important to understand what issue in the community that a project will work to solve). - Funding (important to plan for proper funding). 	<p>“What is family literacy?” (pg. 2).</p> <p>“Why is family literacy important?” (pg.2).</p> <p>“Step 1, Step 2, etc” (pg. 10).</p> <p>“What are the [family literacy] needs of your community” (pg. 14).</p> <p>“Set your project goals” (pg. 16).</p> <p>“Define your objectives” (pg. 18).</p> <p>“Outcomes describe the change or impact on the project.” (pg. 31)</p> <p>“When should evaluation be done?:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During the program or project implementation. - At the end of the program or project” (pg. 30).
Organization/ Source	Title of Workbook, Type of Workbook & Audience	Important Aspects of Projects	Language Use/ Important Guidebook Traits to Incorporate

**“Tips for developing your data collection instruments”
(World Health Organization, 2000, pg. 40)**

- be sure that the question collects data on the measures needed for evaluation questions.
- use open ended questions sparingly since they require an extensive amount of time to interpret.
- avoid skip patterns (instructions to skip certain questions) because they lead to confusion.
- tailor the language used to the reading level of the respondents.
- make sure wording is sensitive to age, gender, ethnic and cultural differences in interpretation.
- keep data measurement as simple as possible

**“Writing Good Questions: a checklist for quick reference”
(World Health Organization, 2000, pg. 41)**

- “- Are the words simple, direct, and familiar to all?
- Is the question as clear and specific as possible?
- Is it a double question?
- Does the question have a double negative?
- Is the question too demanding?
- Are the questions leading or biased?
- Is the question applicable to all respondents?
- Is the question too objectionable?
- Will the answers be influenced by response styles?
- Have you exhausted the response alternatives?”



A Simple Five Step
Evaluation Guide for
Community Projects.

Community Project Evaluation Guidebook

A resource for local community organizations to use in planning and evaluating their community projects.

Evaluating
our project:

Dartmouth North Outdoor Community Ice Rink

What is project evaluation & why is it important?

Project evaluation is a process that helps community organizations understand the progress, success, and effectiveness of community projects so that they can create projects that work best for their communities.

Who is this guidebook for?

This guidebook is for you. As a member of a local community organization, you are involved with many community projects that work to better your community. The guidebook has been designed as an easy to follow tool that you can refer to when evaluating your projects. It will guide you through the process of evaluation, step by step, to help you understand the impacts of your community project. When you complete the guidebook you will have information that you can learn from, reflect on, and share.

Your project evaluation will not only help you better understand the impact of your project on your community, but can help other community organizations plan and improve on their projects from your experience.

How do you use this guidebook?

The sections and questions found in the guidebook have been designed to guide you through the evaluation process. Fill in your answers to each of the sections, following from step 1 to step 5.

- Step 1: Fill in your project goals (what you would like your project to achieve).
- Step 2: Fill in your project objectives (how you will achieve your goals).
- Step 3: Fill in your short term achievements (choose the time period that you will fill these in. For example, two months after the project began).
- Step 4: Fill in your long term achievements (choose the time period for when you will fill these in. For example, one year after the project began).
- Step 5: Reflect on your project and evaluation process.

If you are finding that the answers to the questions in the “short term achievements” section are “no”- do not be alarmed. If you find that in your “long term achievements” section you are answering “no”, do not be alarmed either. Although you may not be reaching your original goal, consider whether you may be making an impact on something else!

What can you do with your project evaluation results?

- You can use the results of this project evaluation to:
- Learn more about strengths and weaknesses of your project.
 - Identify ways to improve your project.
 - Plan for future projects based on what you learned from past projects.
 - Share what you learned with other community organizations.

You can also use the guidebook to re-evaluate your project years later.

GOALS. What would you like your project to achieve?

WHO

Step 1
Set Goals

Who are you creating your project for? For example: children, youth, elderly/ young families, single parents, etc.

Take Action members, children, youth and families of Dartmouth North, and students of Harbour View School.

How many people do you want to take part in your project? For example: tens, hundreds, thousands.

WHAT

What activities or programs will your project incorporate? For example: skating lessons in a skating rink project.

recreational skating and hockey.

WHEN

When do you want the project to be used? For example: after school, evenings, weekends, mornings, etc.

9am-9pm every day that ice conditions permit.

WHERE

Where are the people from that you want to use your project? For example: local, within neighborhood, outside neighborhood.

We want to attract residents of our community - Dartmouth North.

WHY

What issue in the community are you addressing with your project? For example: crime, diversity, lack of community engagement.

to promote a healthy active lifestyle for families in our community, to encourage families to play together, to encourage families to get outside, to have fun in the fresh air, to give the children in our community the opportunity to learn a new skill, to experience a new physical activity (skating).

What message would you like your project to send? For example: safety, fun, belonging.

Who would you like to send your message to? For example: community, media, families.

HOW

Who will fund your project? For example: fundraising, larger organizations, government.

Grant application to Dartmouth Community Health Board and a request for funding from the HRM District Councilor.

OBJECTIVES. How will you achieve your goals?

Step 2 Set Objectives

WHO

How will you get these people to use your project?

We will promote this as a "Take Action" project that further supports the children of our community. We will promote the project at Take Action group meetings and through Harbour View School and at Dartmouth North Association meetings. The use Facebook, kijiji and email distribution lists will help spread the word that we are "taking action" again in Dartmouth North.

How will you get the number of people that you want to take part in your project to do so?

WHAT

How will you make sure that you attract people to take part in your activities/programs?

We will talk face to face with members of the community at every opportunity. We will keep residents informed of our progress along the way. We will talk to parents and teachers on the school grounds. We'll let other community-minded organizations know our plans.

WHEN

How will you get the people to use/visit/take part in your project at the time(s) you would like them to?

By talking about the project with members of the community, we'll get their input into when they would use the rink. We'll talk to the school to explore opportunities for students to use the rink during school hours (part of gym class or a skating club perhaps).

WHERE

How will you attract people from these locations to use your project?

We've picked the ideal location for our project. Harbour View School and the surrounding green space and recreation areas are becoming a central gathering place for our community. Through our Take Action kids, we'll get to parents and siblings. Take Action kids will attract their friends and other community children too. Take Action projects are always delivered "FREE" to the community.

WHY

How will you address the issue through your project?

We will remove any barriers that will prevent a child from skating. We will provide the ice, the skates and the helmets. We will arrange for someone who can skate to help those who have never skated before. We will have a caring adult from Take Action on site whenever possible to encourage appropriate use of the community ice rink.

How will you send your message?

How will you make sure your message gets to the people you want to hear it?

HOW

How will you get your funding? For example: grant application, fundraising activities.

We will apply for a grant from the Dartmouth Community Health Board and we will talk to our councilor about accessing his district discretionary funds. We will advertise for donations of used skates and will contact the Police Department to obtain multi-purpose helmets for the kids who need them.

SHORT TERM ACHIEVEMENTS. What is happening so far? (after 2 weeks of operation)

WHO

Are the people you created your project for using it? Explain.

Yes! People were waiting for the ice rink to open. In fact, we had community volunteers put in some long hours to make the ice rink a success. Approximately 120 people used the ice rink on the first weekend of operation. Children from 13 months up to older teens enjoyed skating and playing hockey. Entire families came out to have some outdoor fun. New friendships have developed within the community.

Are the number of people using your project as many as you want? Explain.

WHAT

Are the activities and programs running and being used by the people you created them for? Explain.

Recreational skating and hockey is being done at the same time on the ice surface, without issue. People are excited to have an outdoor facility in their community that is free to use. A youth figure skater even offered to give basic skating lessons to help non-skaters and beginners gain confidence in themselves. She even performed jumps and spins for a group of children who cheered her on.

WHEN

Are people using your project at the time(s) you want them to? Explain.

We originally wanted to operate the rink every day from 9am-9pm, however, we adjusted our hours to 3pm-9pm Mon-Fri and 9am-9pm Sat, Sun and Holidays. This was done to prevent any unnecessary concerns caused by "strangers" near the school grounds when students may be outside during the school day. The community supported our decision to shorten the hours of operation.

WHERE

Are the people using your project from the locations that you wanted to attract? Explain.

The children and families from Dartmouth North were the users of the community ice rink. They were our target users and we hit that target!

WHY

Is the project affecting the issue that you want it to? Explain.

We are seeing the children of our community coming outside to play, with some of them bringing their families. Children are sledding next to the rink, and then skating, for hours at a time. Laughter and fun is the common theme at the rink. Everyone is respectful and cooperative. They are thrilled that the helmets and skates are theirs to keep and that they can exchange them next season for a bigger size. Adults are establishing friendships while their children are skating. Some people of this community are smiling and relaxed, enjoying community interaction for the first time. There's no pressure and no expectations placed on them. And Take Action leaders have successfully led conversations and encouragement.

Is your message being sent to the people you want it to? Explain.

HOW

Have you been able to get the funding that you want? Explain.

A generous donation of skates were received from individuals all across HRM. Our helmet requirements were met though the Halifax Regional Police. The Dartmouth Community Health Board and our HRM Councilor provided timely funding that allowed us to deliver this project to our community.

LONG TERM ACHIEVEMENTS. What are the final results of your project?
(at the end of the season)

WHO

Was your project used by the people you created it for? If not, did it benefit other people?

We successfully reached the residents of our community of Dartmouth North. While we had hoped to see the school utilize the ice rink during school hours, the logistics of this endeavor were not considered by the school. Our ability to open the rink immediately after school pleased parents and kids alike. Weather permitting, the rink was in use every hour it was open.

Was your project used by the number of people you wanted? If not, is the number still satisfactory?

WHAT

Did the activities and programs run their full schedule? Did the people you created them for use them? If not, did they benefit other people?

We checked the condition of the ice surface every day, and at times, several times each day, to open the rink as often as we could. There were only 6 full days (12 hours) and 3 half days (6 hours) of operation. The ice rink season was only 90 hours in total. This was extremely disappointing to us, as we had hoped to have several weeks of skating.

WHEN

Did the people use your project at the time(s) you wanted them to? If not, did they use them at other time(s)?

The community was disappointed whenever weather forced the closure of the rink. It was disappointing to the project team when we learned that the school chose not to use the rink.

WHERE

Was your project used by the people you wanted to attract to use it? If not, did people from other locations benefit from your project?

We did attract the people we wanted, with the exception of students and staff of the school, during school hours. It is understandable that the logistics would have been challenging (i.e. skates and helmets for all students), however, the school seemed closed to the idea right from the start of the project.

WHY

Did your project make an impact on the issue in the community that you wanted it to? If not, did it impact another issue?

Up to 60 people used the rink each day, with an average of 20 people on the rink at any point in time. (90 hours of ice time X 20 people on the ice on average = 1800 physical activity hours.) This "Take Action" project engaged the community in 1800 hours of outdoor physical activity that otherwise would not have occurred. This project gave people a direct connection between a fun, community activity and living a more positive, healthier lifestyle. We believe that people engaged in other outdoor winter fun (i.e. sledding at the school) as a direct result of this project. This project reinforced to the community that Take Action is determined to make positive change in the community of Dartmouth North. Not only did the community take part in skating, new community volunteers emerged. They helped construct the rink frame, lay the liner, fill the rink and then maintain it. They helped children lace up skates for the very first time, picked children up when they fell on the ice, and encouraged people to get involved in the community.

Did your project send out the message that you wanted it to? If not, did it send out another message?

Was your message sent to the people you wanted it to reach? If not, did it reach other people?

HOW

Did you get the funding that you wanted to get? If not, did you get funding from another source?

We were successful in securing the funding we needed and had pursued. We believe that we have shown contributors and donors that funds will be used to improve our community, that every investment will make a difference in the lives of the children of Dartmouth North.

What did you learn from the experience of your project?

We learned that it isn't near as cold outside when you are having fun and making a difference in the lives of people in your own community. We learned that you must stick to your plan. Every person has a different idea that may be better or worse than the others. Once you pick the plan, go with it to the end. Volunteers need defined roles to understand what is expected of them. And each person should try to recruit another volunteer – many hands make light work.

Which parts of your project worked well and did not work well? What did you learn about what did and did not work well?

Having caring adults on site to encourage people to try skating and to enjoy the physical activity in the outdoors worked well. Publicity we received was positive and extensive because we constantly promoted the project. Filling the rink was made easy by the Fire Department's willingness to provide the initial fill.

The rink base was uneven, so it was difficult to get water to the back corner and keep it there. The rink liner was damaged a lot from skate blades and shovel edges. Side boards of the rink frame should have been reinforced to prevent buckling. And more volunteers would have eased the burden on those responsible for nightly maintenance of the ice surface.

What questions do you have about your project? What things do you want or need to learn more about?

What re-designs are needed for next year?

Is there a way to better protect the liner?

Where will we go for funding next year?

How do we grow the number of volunteers?

Comments & thoughts on your
evaluation results.

The Dartmouth North Outdoor

Community Ice Rink Project was a great

success! We engaged our community in

living a healthier lifestyle through outdoor

physical activity. We encouraged family fun

in an outdoor setting. And we connected

members of the community by engaging

them in conversation and activity in an

open and comfortable environment.

On the cover: The Harbourview School
Community Garden established by the
Take Action Society of North Dartmouth.
56 Alfred St.
Dartmouth, NS.

Created by: Brittney Samson
Bachelors of Community Design
Honours Urban Design
Dalhousie University
School of Planning
brittneysamson@gmail.com
April 2013

In association with: United Way Halifax



A Simple Five Step
Evaluation Guide for
Community Projects.

Community Project Evaluation Guidebook

A resource for local community organizations to use in planning and evaluating their community projects.

Evaluating
our project:

What is project evaluation & why is it important?

Project evaluation is a process that helps community organizations understand the progress, success, and effectiveness of community projects so that they can create projects that work best for their communities.

Who is this guidebook for?

This guidebook is for you. As a member of a local community organization, you are involved with many community projects that work to better your community. The guidebook has been designed as an easy to follow tool that you can refer to when evaluating your projects. It will guide you through the process of evaluation, step by step, to help you understand the impacts of your community project. When you complete the guidebook you will have information that you can learn from, reflect on, and share.

Your project evaluation will not only help you better understand the impact of your project on your community, but can help other community organizations plan and improve on their projects from your experience.

How do you use this guidebook?

The sections and questions found in the guidebook have been designed to guide you through the evaluation process. Fill in your answers to each of the sections, following from step 1 to step 5.

- Step 1: Fill in your project goals (what you would like your project to achieve).
- Step 2: Fill in your project objectives (how you will achieve your goals).
- Step 3: Fill in your short term achievements (choose the time period that you will fill these in. For example, two months after the project began).
- Step 4: Fill in your long term achievements (choose the time period for when you will fill these in. For example, one year after the project began).
- Step 5: Reflect on your project and evaluation process.

If you are finding that the answers to the questions in the “short term achievements” section are “no”- do not be alarmed. If you find that in your “long term achievements” section you are answering “no”, do not be alarmed either. Although you may not be reaching your original goal, consider whether you may be making an impact on something else!

What can you do with your project evaluation results?

- You can use the results of this project evaluation to:
- Learn more about strengths and weaknesses of your project.
 - Identify ways to improve your project.
 - Plan for future projects based on what you learned from past projects.
 - Share what you learned with other community organizations.

You can also use the guidebook to re-evaluate your project years later.

GOALS. What would you like your project to achieve?

WHO

Step 1
Set Goals

Who are you creating your project for? For example: children, youth, elderly/ young families, single parents, etc.

How many people do you want to take part in your project? For example: tens, hundreds, thousands.

WHAT

What activities or programs will your project incorporate? For example: skating lessons in a skating rink project.

WHEN

When do you want the project to be used? For example: after school, evenings, weekends, mornings, etc.

WHERE

Where are the people from that you want to use your project? For example: local, within neighborhood, outside neighborhood.

WHY

What issue in the community are you addressing with your project? For example: crime, diversity, lack of community engagement.

What message would you like your project to send? For example: safety, fun, belonging.

Who would you like to send your message to? For example: community, media, families.

HOW

Who will fund your project? For example: fundraising, larger organizations, government.

OBJECTIVES. How will you achieve your goals?

WHO

How will you get these people to use your project?



How will you get the number of people that you want to take part in your project to do so?



WHAT

How will you make sure that you attract people to take part in your activities/programs?



WHEN

How will you get the people to use/visit/take part in your project at the time(s) you would like them to?



WHERE

How will you attract people from these locations to use your project?



WHY

How will you address the issue through your project?



How will you send your message?



How will you make sure your message gets to the people you want to hear it?



HOW

How will you get your funding? For example: grant application, fundraising activities.



SHORT TERM ACHIEVEMENTS. What is happening so far?

WHO

Are the people you created your project for using it? Explain.



Are the number of people using your project as many as you want? Explain.



WHAT

Are the activities and programs running and being used by the people you created them for? Explain.



WHEN

Are people using your project at the time(s) you want them to? Explain.



WHERE

Are the people using your project from the locations that you wanted to attract? Explain.



WHY

Is the project affecting the issue that you want it to? Explain.



Is the message you want your project to send the one that is being sent? Explain.



Is your message being sent to the people you want it to? Explain.



HOW

Have you been able to get the funding that you want? Explain.



LONG TERM ACHIEVEMENTS. What are the final results of your project?

WHO

Was your project used by the people you created it for? If not, did it benefit other people?

Was your project used by the number of people you wanted? If not, is the number still satisfactory?

WHAT

Did the activities and programs run their full schedule? Did the people you created them for use them? If not, did they benefit other people?

WHEN

Did the people use your project at the time(s) you wanted them to? If not, did they use them at other time(s)?

WHERE

Was your project used by the people you wanted to attract to use it? If not, did people from other locations benefit from your project?

WHY

Did your project make an impact on the issue in the community that you wanted it to? If not, did it impact another issue?

Did your project send out the message that you wanted it to? If not, did it send out another message?

Was your message sent to the people you wanted it to reach? If not, did it reach other people?

HOW

Did you get the funding that you wanted to get? If not, did you get funding from another source?

What did you learn from the experience of your project?

.....

Which parts of your project worked well and did not work well? What did you learn about what did and did not work well?

.....

What questions do you have about your project? What things do you want or need to learn more about?

.....

[illegible]

On the cover: The Harbourview School
Community Garden established by the
Take Action Society of North Dartmouth.
56 Alfred St.
Dartmouth, NS.

Created by: Brittney Samson
Bachelors of Community Design
Honours Urban Design
Dalhousie University
School of Planning
brittneysamson@gmail.com
April 2013

In association with: United Way Halifax

On the cover: The Harbourview School
Community Garden established by the
Take Action Society of North Dartmouth.
56 Alfred St.
Dartmouth, NS.

Created by: Brittney Samson
Bachelors of Community Design
Honours Urban Design
Dalhousie University
School of Planning
brittneysamson@gmail.com
April 2013

In association with: United Way Halifax

On the cover: The Harbourview School
Community Garden established by the
Take Action Society of North Dartmouth.
56 Alfred St.
Dartmouth, NS.

Created by: Brittney Samson
Bachelors of Community Design
Honours Urban Design
Dalhousie University
School of Planning
brittneysamson@gmail.com
April 2013

In association with: United Way Halifax