**Evaluating your project**

Learning and increasing knowledge is a fundamental aspect of the KYN programme, and so we will be looking for opportunities to evaluate projects in great depth.

This section will explain:

* What we want to learn
* Who will be involved in evaluating your project
* How you can support the evaluation
* The types of evaluation method that could be used

**What do we want to learn?**

The KYN programme has been designed to help increase what is currently known about which projects works, why they work, and who they work for, in relation to these themes:

* Increasing participation in regular volunteering
* Reducing chronic loneliness
* Increasing pride in the local area
* Improving wellbeing, skills and confidence

These improvements could be made:

* Within individuals
* Within and across places
* Within and across organisations

We also want to know:

* If/ how projects can continue after KYN funding ends
* Whether a project that works well in one area will work as well in another area
* Whether a project that works well can be expanded so more people can benefit

**Who will be involved in evaluating your project?**

Firstly, and importantly, you will be well supported throughout the evaluation of your project. A lot of it will be carried out by a specialist organisation, referred to here as the ‘local evaluator’. They will be appointed by the Community Foundation once projects have been selected in their area.

The local evaluator will work with you to decide how to evaluate your project and they will carry out many of the tasks required for the evaluation. They will work closely with you and your project delivery team whilst you’re running your project.

The local evaluators (one in every area) will provide details of all the projects they have evaluated to [Forever Consulting](https://foreverconsulting.co.uk/). Forever Consulting will then take what has been learned from all the project evaluations and pull this together to produce reports about the combined difference projects are making.

These reports will be used by the national programme evaluator to carry out the evaluation across the whole KYN programme. The national evaluator is called [RSM UK Consulting LLP](https://www.rsmuk.com/), and they are working in partnership with the [National Centre for Social Research](https://natcen.ac.uk/) (NatCen).

Therefore, monitoring and evaluation information about your project will be shared with several organisations, including DCMS, UKCF, the local community foundation, RSM UK Consulting LLP, NatCen, Forever Consulting, and the local evaluator. You will be asked to sign a data sharing agreement and ensure information is provided at regular intervals.

**How you can support the evaluation**

The local evaluator will be responsible for carrying out a lot of the evaluation tasks. However, there are some tasks which you will be required to get involved in as part of the grant agreement. Therefore, you should ensure that sufficient time and resource have been factored into your plan, and that this is clearly explained in the application form.

The type of tasks you and your project delivery team will need to get involved in include:

Grant management information

* Monthly: Provide financial monitoring information to your Community Foundation. This is likely to involve completing an online form.

Local and national evaluation

* Quarterly: Provide information about the difference your project is making to your Community Foundation. This is likely to be quite light touch and involve completing an online form.
* 6-monthly: Provide additional information about the difference your project is making. This will involve the following:
  + Completing an online form with data about your project. You will be told in advance what information will be needed. It is likely to include: numbers of activities provided; number of participants involved (and some demographic details); the nature, frequency and duration of participants’ involvement.
  + Supporting the local evaluator to access the people taking part in your project so they can ask them how they are feeling about things like loneliness, wellbeing, skills, confidence and pride in place. The local evaluator will take your advice on the best way to do this; some examples include via a survey, focus group or interview. The local evaluator will ensure questions are asked in the same way by all projects.
* Once or twice during the time your project is running: Take part in interviews about how you are delivering your project and how that is contributing to the difference it’s making, as well as any challenges.
* Ongoing: Provide local evaluators with access to participants’ contact details (this will be covered in the data sharing agreement mentioned above).

Wider learning

* Once a year: Take part in a learning workshop with other local KYN-funded projects – these will be organised and led by the local evaluator.
* Ongoing: Identify examples of best practice that can be used as a case-study, and potentially, a ministerial visit.

**Types of evaluation methods**

As mentioned at the start of this section, we are looking for opportunities to evaluate projects in great depth.

Some in-depth evaluation approaches require projects to be designed and delivered in very specific ways. Therefore, some of the questions in the application form have been included to understand whether this will be possible for your project. As evaluation is a key decision-making factor, it is really important you answer all the questions as fully as possible, so the awards panel can make informed decisions.

We are very keen to understand if any changes to participants have been directly caused by your project. This can be explored using an ‘experimental’ evaluation approach. This approach needs the project to be designed in certain ways – this is explained in Table 1 below.

Not all projects will be suitable for an experimental approach. If this is the case, we will explore whether other in-depth methods are possible. Some examples could include:

* Contribution analysis
* Observations
* Action research

**More information about these evaluation approaches is explained in Table 1 below.**

**Please note, it isn’t necessary for you to have experience of these evaluation approaches – or even know much about them! Forever Consulting and your local evaluator will work with you to decide how to evaluate your project.**

Projects that can’t be evaluated using one of these approaches may still be funded – if they have demonstrated they will add to what is currently known about what works.

All projects, regardless of evaluation method, will be required to provide monitoring information, and support their local evaluator in the ways mentioned above.

**Table 1: About the in-depth evaluation methods**

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| --- |
| **Experimental approaches**  Experimental evaluation approaches aim to discover whether a project is directly responsible for any changes. This is measured by a specified set of indicators (i.e., the Common Minimum Dataset and Outcomes Measurement Dataset mentioned above).  Experimental approaches are often used in medicine. You may have heard of ‘randomised control trials’ (RCT) where some people take part in a project (e.g., they are given a drug) and others are not, or they are given a placebo. The ‘random’ element means that participants are randomly assigned which group they will be in, and they have no say or control in this.  If it is not possible to randomly assign participants to your project, other experimental approaches can be used – if there is another group (called a ‘control or comparison group’) they can be compared with. This is known as a ‘quasi-experimental design’ (QED).  Examples of a control or comparison groups could include:   * those on a waiting list to join the project; * or similar people your organisation is working with who are not taking part in the project.   These people would need to be willing to take part in the evaluation even if they are not taking part in the project at that moment in time. Therefore, you may need to consider incentivising the comparison group. Please note, that incentives do not need to be financial, and there may be other incentives relevant to your project, organisation and the people involved. When you are designing and costing your project, you should provide details about what may be needed here. (Although it will only be needed if your project is selected for evaluation in this way.)  In addition to a comparison group, other key features of projects that lend themselves to an experimental approach include:   * Large numbers of participants. * Frequent participation in the intervention. * Participation over an extended period (i.e., greater than 6 months).   **Contribution analysis**  Contribution analysis is an approach that can be used to discover whether a project is directly responsible for any changes where there isn’t a comparison group. It is used for assessing the contribution a project has made to any changes, as it increases understanding of why results have occurred (or haven’t) and the extent they can be linked to the project and/or something else.  **Observations**  This approach involves observing and recording behaviour of participants (including project delivery staff) whilst they are taking part in a project. It is usually carried out in conjunction with interviews of people within their usual environment (i.e., away from the project) to work out the difference the project is making to people’s day-to-day life.These types of interviews are different from more traditional interviews, as the interviewer would usually have shared time and built relationships and trust with the interviewees. This approach provides a deep understanding of an individual’s experience of a project.  **Action research**  Action research investigates and aims to solve an issue at the same time. This is because it identifies actions that should improve the issue being investigated. It is conducted in an ongoing way, and therefore requires higher levels of involvement from project delivery staff and participants than some other methods. This approach is particularly useful for projects aiming to make changes to the systems or processes within their own organisation, or in the way they work with others. |