

The impact mapping exercise

The stages that make up an impact mapping exercise are reproduced in the rest of this section. These *Five Steps* are meant as prompts for someone who is leading a discussion whether on a one-to-one mentoring basis with an individual, or with a larger group of people.

To be truly effective the *Five Steps* should be undertaken in the spirit of a participative and transparent process (such as a workshop, or seminar) that is delivered with sufficient time and space to involve representatives from all potential groups of stakeholders. Choosing who should take part in the 'conversation' means undertaking a thorough and comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercise that identifies the people who will affect and who are affected by the activities of the organisation.

Once you have gathered the participants together, take them through the *Five Steps* of an impact mapping exercise as follows:

- Step One: Questions for the conversation
- Step Two: Building a Storyboard
- Step Three: Impact mapping – a defining moment
- Step Four: Ways of knowing – identifying indicators
- Step Five: Deciding what happens next?



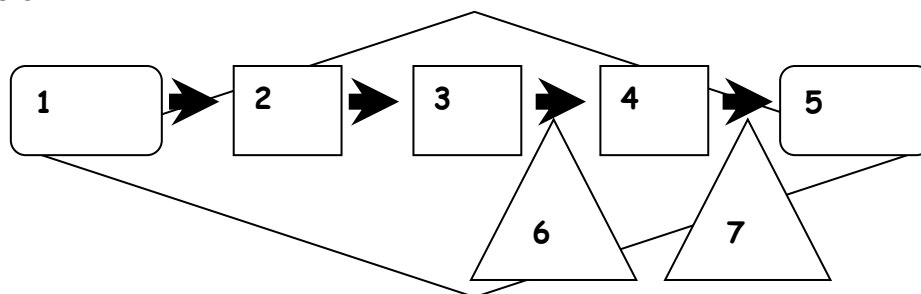
Step One: Questions for the conversation

Read through the following questions and think about the answers you would give for each one.

1. Describe the world in which you are working in terms of the local or wider need that your project is addressing.
2. What are you planning to do as part of this project?
3. What effects do you expect to see straight away?
4. What effects and changes do you expect to see in the future?
5. Where possible, describe the long-term changes for people, the environment or the economy that:
6. Your project will contribute to.
7. Your project will be wholly responsible for.
8. For every immediate effect you identified in 3 above, ask 'So what?' or 'Why is that important?' (Try and describe precisely how each of the *immediate effects* will lead to the *changes* in the future.)
9. For every *effect* and *change* you identified in 4 above, ask 'So what?' or 'Why is that important?' (Try and describe how the *changes* will lead to the *long-term changes* for people, the environment or the economy.)
10. What barriers do you foresee that could prevent any of this happening?

Step Two: Building a Storyboard

Prepare a large sheet of paper (A3 or larger depending on how many people are taking part in the conversation) by reproducing the blank flow chart diagram as in the picture below.



Once you have discussed each question in detail, summarise the answers that you come up with in each of the corresponding numbered boxes on the flow chat. You can do them in any order (start with the easy ones). Feel free to add extra comments to boxes as and when ideas occur to you during the conversation.

Step Three: Impact mapping – a defining moment

Now have a look at what you have written in each box, and think about *each comment* in terms of whether you would describe it as an Input, an Activity, an Output, an Outcome or an Impact.

The working definitions in Table 1 may help you decide which is which.

Table 1: Elements of the impact map

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
<p>The resources that you need to manage the project.</p> <p><i>For example, time, money, staff, other assets (such as a building), a clear vision and shared direction etc.</i></p>	<p>The things that you do to effect some sort of change in people, the community, or the environment.</p> <p><i>For example, providing a service, a programme, or a good to people.</i></p>	<p>The direct results and beneficiaries. Usually outputs show that certain people receive something, learn something, or take part in something as a result of what you do or how you do it.</p> <p><i>For example, easily countable things, like the number of people involved, or the number of hours of training delivered etc.</i></p>	<p>Longer-term change. Describe why that output is important, in terms of the implications for, and the effect it has on, a local area or a group of people.</p> <p><i>This is the theory that you will be testing – the link between what you do and the things you care passionately about.</i></p>	<p>When thinking about your vision, impacts are the big-picture change you are trying to create or the changes in the wider world that the work you are doing is contributing to.</p> <p>For example, this could be in terms of your vision for change in people’s lives, a community, the environment or the local economy.</p> <p>Otherwise a more precise definition of impacts is “the outcomes less what would have happened anyway”.</p> <p><i>For example, if you got ten people a job, how many would have got one anyway?</i></p>

Clarify which is which by listing each of the comments under one of the five headings. (We recommend that you draw up a blank version of the table onto a flipchart sheet and fill it in, column by column.)

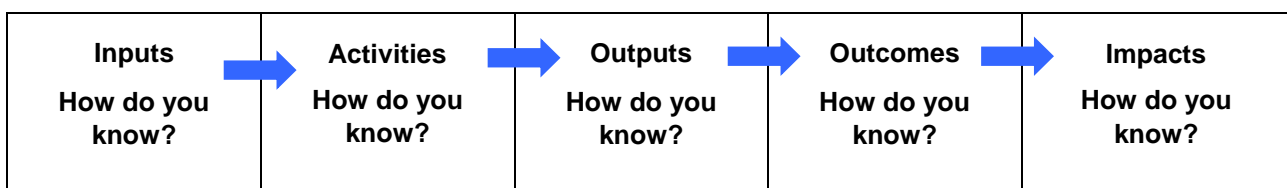
The impacts section can be used in two ways. If you are using the impact map to look forward and create a vision, use the impact column for thinking about your big-picture vision. Otherwise, use it to account more precisely for what you have

achieved by taking away from your impacts what would have happened anyway. For more details on this, see the Notes and Queries section at the end of this section.

For the comments in each column, decide roughly when they will happen (or when they need to have happened for the project to be a success) and label them NOW, SOON ‘now, soon and later’ in order to do this.

Step Four: Ways of knowing – identifying indicators

You should now have at least two large sheets of paper on display. One is showing the completed Storyboard, and the other with five columns listing *Inputs*, *Activities*, *Outputs*, *Outcomes* and *Impacts*.



As a first step to choosing and developing indicators (literally: ways of knowing that something has happened or changed) ask yourselves *how you will know* that a particular Input has been delivered, *how you will know* that an activity has successfully produced a particular Output, and *how you will know* that that Output has successfully brought about an Outcome and an Impact. Do this for each of the items you have listed in each of the columns.

On a third sheet of flipchart paper, make a long list of these ‘ways of knowing’. This will be the basis for a master list of the things you need to measure in order to be able to tell your story.

An example

Here’s a possible ‘story’. For a training session (Activity) to have been a success it needs to have been delivered (Output) with a certain number of people attending (Output) who gain a new skill (Output). They then may successfully apply for a job using their new skill (Outcome), or they may find that they are enjoying their current job more (Outcome).

This means that they stay in a particular job for longer (Outcome), and are able to take on more roles and responsibilities as their confidence grows (Outcome). In the long run if this happens for enough people in a neighbourhood there will be a higher proportion of people in employment able to achieve a better quality of life for themselves and their families (Impact).

So if we were to make a rough list of the ways we will know that the training has been a success, it might include:

- Training session delivered.
- Participants complete the training and gain a qualification.
- Participants successfully apply for a job.
- Participants happier in their current job.
- Participants still enjoying that job in 12 months' time.
- Participants talking on new roles and responsibilities in their jobs.
- Participants saying that their life is better.
- Participants' families saying that they have a better life.

Some will be easy to count, others will be extremely difficult, or impossible to measure or collect information on. At this stage, when compiling this long list, don't feel constrained by what you think you can measure. For many of them, you will find that you are collecting information on them already, but realistically you can't cover everything. When finalising your indicators you'll need to decide what you can feasibly do with the time and resources you have available.

Step Five: What happens next?

You have now completed a comprehensive impact mapping process, and you are now ready to plan the detail of how you will observe, capture and report the changes that you are hoping to see happen as a result of what your project or organisation is doing. You will now have a better sense of:

- A shared understanding of the hypothesis of how your organisation/initiative brings benefits to people, communities, the environment or the local economy.
- The important issues that need to be measured to demonstrate it.
- Ideas for specific indicators to be collected in order to prove it.

The other sections of this Toolkit provide overviews and signposting for a comprehensive range of ways to find out about, demonstrate, and measure impact. Some you can pick up and use for yourself, others will require some more research, training and support to deliver them. Having completed this impact mapping exercise will enable you to more effectively use the **Comparing Tools and Approaches** chart as well as the 10 Key Elements in the **Knowledge** section, giving you a better sense of the next steps you can take to prove and improve your organisation's quality and impact.