Evaluation Toolkit

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Welsh version available

Making Sense of Media

Welcome

Welcome to Ofcom's evaluation toolkit, aimed at supporting organisations delivering media literacy initiatives. This guidance is particularly aimed at those starting out with evaluation; you might be a small charity with a project that addresses issues around health misinformation, or a library that is running classes on basic digital skills for older people. However, the tools that we provide are also designed to be of use and benefit to those working across the media literacy sector.

We have developed this toolkit as part of our [Making Sense of Media (MSOM)](#) programme of work to help improve the online skills, knowledge and understanding of UK adults and children.

We believe that having effective evaluation is critical to the success of media literacy initiatives. This toolkit is designed as a practical guide, to make it as straightforward as possible to build evaluation into your media literacy work. Our aim is for evaluation to be an integral part of media literacy initiatives, with the evidence and lessons learned shared with others in an accessible way.

We know that evaluation can seem complex and costly. We know too that people delivering media literacy initiatives have varied levels of experience and knowledge when it comes to evaluation - from those doing it for the first time with limited time and budgets, to organisations with more experience and available resources that are looking to deepen their evaluative approach. Our guidance sets out a practical approach distilled into simplified distinct steps, enabling you to pick and choose the elements that work best for you.

Contents

Overview

What do we mean by evaluation?

There are many ways of defining evaluation, ranging from the broad – see, for example, the definition used by [Better Evaluation](#): "*Any systematic process to judge merit, worth or significance by combining evidence and values*" to the specific, from the [Reading Outcomes Framework](#): "*To understand, demonstrate and improve the **impact** of your activity*".

You could be evaluating to:

- spot opportunities for improvement in the delivery process;
- understand the cost-effectiveness of the initiative for its intended purpose; or
- understand the impact that the initiative has had on those taking part.

These are all important factors. However, impact is of particular focus in this guidance.

Definition: Impact
The term 'impact' is commonly used in relation to the reporting of media literacy projects and is sometimes used to refer to reach (for example, the number of participants who engaged with the material). For the purposes of this guidance, when we talk about impact, we mean change at an individual or societal level that can be attributed to an intervention.

We think it is important that wherever possible, evaluation is integrated into the development of any project from the very beginning and is woven into its design. There are two main reasons for this:

- Many of the techniques employed as part of the evaluation planning process – such as mapping out what you think the overall impact of your initiative will be – will help you develop a deeper understanding of how the project is intended to work.
- By laying the groundwork for evaluation from the beginning, you are making the process easier. For example, planning data collection into the design of your project can be a good way of ensuring you have the right content to analyse later in the project.

Why should I evaluate?

It is important to understand what works when it comes to media literacy, and evaluation plays a vital part in this. A 2021 Ofcom report found that embedding evaluation into media literacy curricula would help the people delivering initiatives to clearly identify the impact these initiatives have on audiences' knowledge, attitudes and understanding [1].

> **Definition: Outcome**
>
> An outcome is the result of an intervention, ideally a benefit received by the target audience. It is usually finite and measurable.
>
> For example, for a media literacy project, this could be:
>
> - an increase in participants' knowledge,
> - participants gaining a new skill,
> - a change in attitude among participants

In its 2021 Online Media Literacy Strategy [2], the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport identified a lack of robust evaluation in the sector as one of six challenges that needed to be addressed in order to improve media literacy **outcomes** for users.

Evaluation is about measuring and understanding change. It has a range of benefits and should not be a 'pass or fail' judgement at the end of the project. It can:

- help you learn about your project, apply that learning, make changes to improve the project and make further progress towards your goals;
- tell you how effective your intervention was and give you confidence to roll out your approach more widely in the future;
- help you discover outcomes from your project that you weren't expecting to see.

By sharing the results of your evaluation, you can help others working on similar projects strengthen their approaches, particularly if your project is breaking new ground or covering themes or topics that have not been previously evaluated. Sharing evaluation evidence is vital to helping the media literacy sector to become more effective, in that:

- your organisation and others with similar aims will be able to make a stronger case for the value of your projects;
- those planning future initiatives will have more information as to what works, and what doesn't, and will be able to deliver better interventions as a result; and
- funders will feel more confident about directing funds to media literacy organisations if they have evidence that media literacy projects are making a difference.

We know that sharing can be challenging (especially if something didn't work as planned) but by making your findings available to others who are carrying out similar media literacy interventions, you are enabling them to apply your learnings to their own work. By working together, and pooling knowledge, you can help the sector as a whole move in a positive direction.

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[1] Edwards, L. Stoilova, M., Anstead, N., Fry, A., El-Halaby, G. and Smith M. (2021) Rapid Evidence Assessment on Online Misinformation and Media Literacy: Final Report for Ofcom.

[2] Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. (2021). *Online Media Literacy Strategy*.

How this guidance works

The three steps are set out in the following chapters:

Preparing

Planning your approach and creating your framework

Doing

Gathering and analysing your data

Learning and sharing

Using, reporting and communicating your findings

Preparing

This section is divided into five stages:

- **Planning the process**
- **Writing your theory of change**
- **Designing your key evaluation questions**
- **Prioritising your outcomes and setting your outcome indicators**
- **Completing your evaluation framework**

Planning the process

We recommend that you start thinking about your evaluation while your intervention or project is being designed. At this point there are a series of decisions you can make which will shape the kind of evaluation you end up doing. This thinking should be done in consultation with as many people involved in the project (**stakeholders**) as possible.

At whichever point you start planning your evaluation, there are six things we recommend you consider before you start, and revisit while you work through the preparing stages in this section:

> **Definition: Stakeholder**
>
> Project stakeholders can include anyone involved in the project, including project funders or sponsors, other members of the team, or for larger projects, other teams.
>
> Stakeholders can also include anyone who might be affected by the intervention, such as target audiences.

1. **What are the overall objectives of my project?**
   These will vary from project to project, as each will have specific goals related to the work of your organisation. It is useful to be clear from the outset about what you want to achieve, as that thinking will map into your evaluation plans. To help you finalise your objectives, you can create a theory of change.
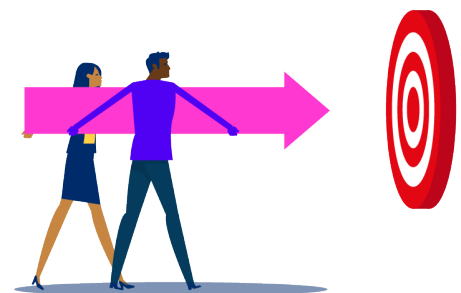
2. **What kind of evaluation do I need to do?**
   Many evaluations are focused on how well the project was delivered (for example, what went well, what didn't, and how participants felt about it). These are often called **process evaluations,** as they assess the process behind the workshops or materials themselves, and their effectiveness.

> **Definition: Process evaluation**
>
> Process evaluations will focus on asking you to consider how you delivered your project, and how far the way in which the project was delivered affected the final outcomes.

Impact evaluations focus on asking you to consider what the project achieved in terms of change for the target audience and/or wider society, and how well you met your objectives. They are often requested by funders, particularly governments, trusts or foundations.

Evaluations that work out whether a project was value for money are called **economic evaluations.**

Different types of evaluation ask different types of Key Evaluation Questions. Evaluations can include all the elements above and will be different for every initiative, depending on your theory of change and the evaluation framework, as explained in the next section.

3. **What resources are available to carry out an evaluation, and who will be responsible for it?** Some evaluations will require fewer resources than others (ranging from something the project manager can do alongside the project delivery, all the way up to a dedicated evaluation team) and this will depend on the type of evaluation you want to carry out. The skills that an evaluation might require range from project design to data management to report writing, but in all cases it is important to consider this before you start. There are pros and cons for doing the evaluation yourself or using an external evaluator.

   o **Internal.** Doing it yourself might mean building skills and experience of evaluation inside your organisation. It also means you will have the expertise in place to ensure that evaluation can be built into the initiative's design and will enable you to learn and adapt more quickly to any findings. It is usually more cost-effective than commissioning external evaluation, but the number of indicators you set and how much data you gather might be limited by staff availability.

   o **External.** Commissioning an external evaluation is useful if you don't have the internal expertise or available staff to do it yourself. You can work with a commercial social research company or employ an independent evaluator to work alongside you. By employing someone with no previous ties to the project you can ensure impartiality. Another option is to work with academics who research and specialise in the topic of your initiative. This won't necessarily be costly, as researchers sometimes have funding in place already.

4. **What existing evidence is there on the issue my intervention is trying to address?**

Baseline evidence is the starting point against which to measure change. For a media literacy project, this could be the participants' existing level of knowledge about a topic, or their existing level of skills. This is typically gathered from participants before the intervention begins. There are also external sources of evidence you can use. Having this understanding in place at the beginning, and knowing about any evidence that you can measure against, will be useful as you progress through the evaluation.

> *Definition: Baseline*
>
> A baseline is the starting point against which to measure change. For a media literacy project, this could be the participants' existing level of knowledge about a topic, or their existing level of skills. This could be established using a quiz, survey, interview or focus group carried out with the target audience before the intervention takes place, and/or could be informed by previous research on similar audiences.

This evidence can also help you think about where you could target your intervention, for example by highlighting particular demographics in need of support. To help get this evidence together there are bodies of research you can consult such as reports from Ofcom, the Lloyds Consumer Digital Index, Parent Zone and Internet Matters, and summaries or directories of research such as CO:RE and UKCIS (UK Council for Internet Safety). For links to these, and other research reports, you can search our library.

5. **Are there any other evaluations of similar interventions that I can learn from?**
It can be helpful to look for other evaluations before you start your own – these might well provide learning that can help you make your intervention even better. Also, proving impact is always difficult and if another organisation has spent money on an evaluation which demonstrates that projects like yours can have an impact, this is useful information to deploy.

6. **Who is going to read my evaluation report?** If the report is for your funders, check with them to see whether they have requirements around reporting, what kind of evaluation they expect to see, and if they would like you to measure specific outcomes. If it is for a wider audience, consider the types of findings that others in the sector might find useful to read, such as whether a certain delivery method worked for a specific target audience. If it is for internal use, you might want to include reflections about the evaluation process itself.

Writing your theory of change

A **theory of change** is a way of setting down the thinking (theory) behind the change that your initiative (or organisation) wants to achieve. This is popular among governments, third-sector organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Creating a theory of change is a process that gives you and your colleagues the opportunity to critically reflect on, share and discuss the problems you face and your proposed approach to addressing them. The process of setting down a theory of change requires you to describe your initiative in a logical way.

Having a theory of change also helps enormously when putting together a plan to evaluate your project. A theory of change will allow you to understand the journey from the start of the initiative to its completion and will identify the assumptions underpinning your work, which the evaluation will need to test.

Developing a theory of change for your initiative can range from an hour-long brainstorm with your colleagues to a week-long exercise – but thinking through these elements is an important element of understanding the impact of the project.

The phrase '**theory of change**' is sometimes used interchangeably with terms such as '**logic model**', '**outcomes framework**', 'chain of events' and 'results chain' when describing visual representations (often tables or flow charts) of the evaluation process of a project. There are some subtle distinctions between the terms, but for the purpose of your evaluation you can assume they achieve similar things. Simply put, there is no one right way to do this.

Definition: Logic model

A logic model explains the relationship between the inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes of your intervention.

Much of this information could also be contained in an evaluation framework.

Definition: Outcomes framework

An outcomes framework involves clearly defining the outcomes you want to achieve, and prioritising them. You might separate them into benefits for individuals vs the community, for example. It helps to focus your work on the outcomes that matter to you, to link your activities to the outcomes you want to see, and to communicate these more clearly.

Much of this information could also be contained in an evaluation framework.

The steps on the next page can be used to create a theory of change for your initiative.

For those with limited time, we recommend that you follow these steps below to write an overarching theory of change narrative. We have illustrated each part of the process with an example from our fictional initiative (Digital Sleuth Club).

For those with more time, it can help to first list out the different inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts to create a more logical, realistic, detailed outline of your project from which you then create a more rigorous theory of change narrative. You can use the theory of change template to do this.

Many organisations also visualise their theory of change as a diagram to neatly summarise and communicate the key elements and ideas behind their work to funders, the public and other stakeholders. There is no set template for this and you can find many examples online.

Fictional Example – Digital Sleuth Club

Digital Sleuth Club is a small charity dedicated to increasing media/news literacy skills in young people (age 10-18) in areas with higher levels of financial disadvantage across England, to increase young people's resilience to mis- and disinformation, and their trust in high quality information. The charity carries out several activities which it hopes will contribute to its goal. These include running in-person workshops at youth groups and at colleges, and in public libraries, providing downloadable resources on its website for youth groups to use on their own, and producing social media campaigns to try to reach audiences wherever they are, using short videos. The charity has a small staff of nine full-time employees but can call on freelancers when it has sufficient funding for specific projects.

Creating a theory of change for an existing project idea

In this section we go through the steps to creating a theory of change, as a narrative. Once you have done this we suggest you insert your narrative text in to the theory of change template. We have done this with the following example (from Digital Sleuth Club) and you can find the completed template at the end of this section on page 18. (If you are using this guide to create a theory of change for a new intervention from scratch, you may wish to consider steps three and four - what differences you intervention will make, and how could these differences contribute to wider societal change - before step two – what resources are needed.)

1 Define the PROBLEM:

Begin with a brief overview of the challenge your initiative is trying to address. For instance, this could be educational or skills-based, such as low levels of specific digital literacy skills. There are a range of ways you can build your evidence base including using research reports (see our research library) or learnings from a previous delivery of your own initiative.

At this point you could involve your service users by asking them what they want, or are expecting, from your initiative rather than deciding what the challenge is yourself. More information about the benefits of this approach can be found in Ofcom's *Making Sense of Media - Initiate* report.[3]

Fictional Example – Digital Sleuth Club

The target audience is vulnerable to mis- and disinformation, which has been demonstrated to adversely affect wellbeing and social cohesion. They have complex and evolving online habits: they are often the first to embrace new platforms, and are very competent in terms of digital skills, but research has shown that they often lack critical thinking skills in relation to their media use, and many actively avoid the news, with much higher levels of trust in their peers. They tend to believe that their media literacy skills are higher than they actually are. (Ofcom's *Children's Media Use and Attitudes report 2022*[4] showed that 74% of 12-17s had confidence in their ability to spot fake information, but less than one in ten demonstrated both confidence and ability in this type of critical understanding).

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[3] Ofcom MSOM Research Report- What works in delivering community programmes

[4] Ofcom Children's Media Use and Attitudes report 2022

2 What resources are needed? WHAT ARE YOU DOING about the problem and with whom?

Briefly summarise the resources that you need or are able to put into the project (inputs). This can include project staff, funding, data and expertise.

Then summarise the project activities you will deliver to address the problem(s) you've outlined and the people you will be working with. Your approach could be in-person workshops using a curriculum that covers specific topics for a specific audience, or engagement with stakeholders such as social media companies to improve their moderation methods.

Fictional Example – Digital Sleuth Club

Young people (age 10-18) in areas with higher levels of financial disadvantage across England in the intervention will take part in in-person workshops at youth groups, colleges and public libraries. They will: encounter examples of different types of information; hear about the tools to distinguish misleading online content, and paid-for content, from verified information; learn about how the digital media ecosystem works; be encouraged to reflect on their own habits and attitudes.

3 What DIFFERENCES will your intervention make?

IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES:
Participants have had their first interaction with your project; for example, by attending a workshop, receiving training or reading materials. Ideally, this interaction will have made a difference to the participants. You will be looking at how participants feel as a direct result of that interaction, or for specific measurable changes that your participants come away with as a result such as knowledge, awareness or other changes you can measure.

Fictional Example – Digital Sleuth Club

Participants will be better able to identify reliable content and identify advertising and be better able to discern which information they encounter online is reliable and which may be misleading, because they will have the knowledge and skills to reflect on its source, features and motivations, rather than accepting it at face value.

They will have increased awareness of mis- and disinformation as an ever-present threat, because they will understand how the different players in the online media ecosystem operate, and the motivations for creating and spreading false and misleading content.

MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES: This is where consideration is given to the impact of the intervention on participants once they are no longer engaging with your activities – what behaviour change has your intervention accomplished or contributed towards? This might include following up with participants after a certain period of time to explore whether the behaviour change has been sustained.

Fictional Example – Digital Sleuth Club

Participants will use reliable sources of information more often, and take a more considered approach to sharing stories and information online, because they will approach information with a more critical eye and will understand the dangers of sharing disinformation.

4 How could these differences CONTRIBUTE to wider societal change?

Your initiative, alongside many others, plays a part in improving the overall media literacy skills, behaviours and experiences of the population. Being clear about how your work fits into the wider societal context can form the foundation for a more comprehensive evaluation. It is worth noting that your intervention is only one thing that is happening in your participants' lives and there may be other things happening that have influenced whether things changed for them or stayed the same.

Fictional Example – Digital Sleuth Club

Participants will comprise part of a generation that is more resilient to online harms posed by mis- and disinformation, and have more trust in reliable sources of information. The intervention will have positive effects both on their wellbeing – because they will have fewer negative online experiences – and on wider societal cohesion.

5 What CONDITIONS need to be in place for your theory to work?

Your theory of change will be rooted in assumptions about the things that need to be in place for your theory of change to work, or about the causal links between the different elements of your theory of change (i.e. that one change will lead to another).

Identifying and recording these assumptions can help increase your chances of a successful initiative. This allows you to monitor them, to have mitigation plans ready if they turn out to be false, or, for more serious or riskier assumptions, to re-plan your initiative so they are no longer relevant.

Fictional Example – Digital Sleuth Club

Digital Sleuth Club assumes that young people will want to take part in the workshops and youth clubs will have free space in which they can deliver the workshops.

They also assume that two-hour workshops provide enough time for learners of different abilities to achieve the immediate workshop outcomes.

Digital Sleuth Club assumes that increased understanding of mis- and disinformation in the short-term leads to an increased ability to avoid it in practice, and that increased awareness will be sufficient motivation for people to change their habits and consume information from more reliable sources, rather than the ones they and their peers are used to (and might pressure them to use).

In the long-term, Digital Sleuth Club assumes that the ability to better discern whether information they encounter online is reliable is enough to protect people from ever more sophisticated ways of targeting and misleading people.

Designing your key evaluation questions

Key evaluation questions are high-level questions that your evaluation is designed to answer. There are two types: impact evaluation questions and process evaluation questions.

An impact evaluation question should:

- test an outcome which is directly attributable to the project ('what' changed - or the **causal effect**); and
- be framed, if possible, to establish the difference between the outcomes for those who participated in the project, against those who did not.

In effect, you are flipping your hypotheses as laid out in your theory of change (e.g. what you believe your initiative can do), to become a question, or questions, to focus the evaluation to ensure it is addressing the most relevant issues.

You do this by looking at the activities and outcomes in your theory of change, and the assumptions that need to be true in order to reach your stated impact, and re-framing this information as questions. (This is likely to be a long list, and it is often not practical to address every question).

A process evaluation question should explore the 'how' and 'why' behind any change you observe. Common process evaluation questions include 'what worked well?' and 'what worked less well or could be improved?'.

Causal effect

The causal effect of an intervention is the effect (change) that it is shown to have on its participants. It can be described as the difference between the outcomes for the participants who have taken part in an intervention, compared to those who have not, or the outcomes of participants after an intervention, as opposed to before it.

Fictional Example – Digital Sleuth Club

This is the first evaluation that Digital Sleuth Club has done of their activities. Their most recent round of workshops was funded by a national education charity, but this funding is coming to an end.

The funder is interested in whether they successfully engaged the number of young people experiencing higher levels of financial disadvantage that they put in their grant application and how well the workshops went. Digital Sleuth Club would like to maximise their chance of further funding, so they also want to evidence that the workshop improved these young people's media literacy skills.

The same funder likes Digital Sleuth Club's approach and wants to know whether the pilot is capable of being rolled out to other local authorities across the country, and what adaptations might need to be made. Digital Sleuth Club know that this 'roll out' might not happen though, and want to explore whether they can create a new income stream through delivering in after-school club settings, paid for by schools.

Their longlist of evaluation questions might be:

1. Did project staff successfully build workshop resources that were effective?
2. Did the specialist facilitators successfully deliver the workshops?
3. Were enough participants from the target group recruited for the workshops?
4. Did participants at the end of the workshop have an improved ability to detect misinformation?
5. Did participants at the end of the workshop have an increased comprehension of how the digital media ecosystem works?
6. Did participants at the end of the workshop understand how verified online content is produced, and know how to identify it online alongside advertising content?
7. Next steps for developing and delivering this project. Is the project sustainable?

Once you have your long list of evaluation questions, you should prioritise, in collaboration with your stakeholders, the most important evaluation questions to focus on. The following list can help you to prioritise your questions:

- How important is the evaluation question to staff and stakeholders (e.g. funders)?
- Does the question focus on key areas of your theory of change (e.g. areas that you are less sure of, which you might want to monitor to see whether change occurs as you expect)?
- Will the question provide useful information that can be acted on to improve your project?
- Can the question be answered using resources available to you and within the timeframe of the programme and its evaluation?

There is no 'right' number of key evaluation questions – it depends on how much time and money you can commit to evaluation. However, many sources recommend around five to seven key evaluation questions.

Fictional Example – Digital Sleuth Club

The demand for Digital Sleuth Club's workshops is very high so they have to prioritise delivery over answering all of their evaluation questions. The team discuss it with each other and decide that it is most important to:

- Evidence whether enough participants from the target group were recruited for the workshops, because this is part of their funding agreement (Q3)
- Understand and evidence whether the workshops have an impact on participants and their media literacy levels, because they want to ensure their workshops effectively support the young people they work with, report this to their current funder and use this evidence in future funding bids (Q4, Q5, Q6)
- Explore next steps for developing and delivering the project, because while they want to find a way to continue with their current funder, if they cannot, they need to find alternative sources of funding, e.g. activities they can deliver to schools (Q7)

They therefore choose not to explore how well the specialist facilitators deliver the workshop (Q2), partly because they have worked with the facilitators for several years on different projects and know they are reliable.

They also decide not to focus on whether the workshop resources were effective (Q1), instead focusing on understanding the overall impact of the workshops and resources together first.

Prioritising your outcomes and setting your outcome indicators

Prioritising your outcomes

You should also prioritise, again in collaboration with your stakeholders and in reference to your evaluation questions, the most important outcomes to measure.

Evaluation of a smaller number of outcomes can be a better use of resources (such as time and money), reduce the evaluation burden for participants and increase your confidence in your findings.

The following questions can help you prioritise which outcomes to measure:

- Which outcomes are you less confident will occur, or are less well-evidenced?
- Which immediate outcomes are critical to 'unlocking' other outcomes?
- Which outcomes are most important to you (for example: do they relate to your mission)?
- Which outcomes are most important to external stakeholders (for example, funders)?
- Which outcomes can you produce credible data for ethically and with the resources and time you have available?

Your final list of outcomes should be a mix of immediate outcomes (that you are responsible for bringing about) and medium-term outcomes (that you likely only contribute towards).

It can be challenging to gather information on medium-term outcomes as it requires a return to your target audience for more information after the intervention has finished. But it is important if you wish to demonstrate the wider impact of your programme.

If you do not have the resources to do this step yourself, it can be good practice to look for evaluations of similar interventions which have already demonstrated that achieving similar outcomes leads to the desired medium-term impacts. While this is not as compelling as producing your own data, it is better than not providing any evidence for why you think your outcomes will lead to a particular impact.

It is often not possible to measure long-term impacts. They are the hardest to evidence as it requires consideration of how the behaviour change demonstrated by participants will contribute to change at a societal level. For smaller projects, demonstrating long-term impact won't be desirable, given the numbers of participants involved. But it is important to think through how your project's objectives could contribute, alongside projects by other organisations, towards building a body of comparable results that make the case for media literacy.

Fictional Example – Digital Sleuth Club

Digital Sleuth Club has a list of 11 immediate, medium- and long-term outcomes that they could measure. They use their list of evaluation questions and the outcome prioritisation questions above to focus on measuring four outcomes:

1. 'Parents understand the value of online media literacy', because they acknowledge that parents are 'gatekeepers' that play a critical role in encouraging young people to attend their workshops. Without them understanding the value of the workshops, this might not happen.
2. 'Better understanding of how to spot verified online content, and how to spot advertising content online' (this outcome is of interest to the national education charity funder, and would be useful to demonstrate to interested schools).

3. 'Improvement in young people's ability to detect mis- and disinformation', because these are in their shortlist of evaluation questions (this outcome is of interest to the national education charity funder, and would be useful to demonstrate to interested schools).
4. 'Increased use of reliable sources of information', because they are less sure whether they are making a sustained difference to young people's behaviours due to the influence of peer pressure. It is important to Digital Sleuth Club to understand if this happening because, if not, they might need to do additional activities to achieve their goals

Setting your outcome indicators

Setting outcome indicators will help you decide what data to collect.

It is considered good practice to have at least two indicators to measure each outcome to get a better understanding of whether change has occurred or not.

Outcome indicators should be:

- expressed in neutral language (e.g. 'level of', rather than 'improved level of' etc.)
- a mixture of numbers (quantitative) and narrative descriptions (qualitative)
- a mixture of subjective (i.e. self-reported assessments or feelings, such as 'level of confidence') and objective (i.e. external assessment, such as 'percentage of people that passed a test')
- from different perspectives (e.g. the people you support as well as other people alongside them, such as parents or carers)

For example, for a media literacy project, an outcome indicator might be the score that participants achieve in a 'spotting misinformation' knowledge quiz, collected before and after the intervention.

Consistent, significant improvements in scores, especially if they are sustained over time, would indicate a positive outcome for the intervention.

It can feel hard to create indicators for some outcomes, especially outcomes about how people feel or think. For these outcomes you might need to also create 'proxy' indicators – observable changes in behaviour that indicate someone feels or thinks differently. For example, how often someone uses the internet to shop could be used as a proxy for self-rated confidence.

> **Definition: Indicators**
>
> Outcome indicators are the measurable pieces of evidence that allow you to track the change that has taken place as a result of your intervention.

Fictional Example – Digital Sleuth Club

Digital Sleuth Club decide to focus on outcomes two and three – both of which are related to measuring media literacy knowledge and behaviours – and put less emphasis on outcome one (related to parents' understanding and attitudes). They therefore set more outcome indicators related to outcomes two and three.

They also know from previous work that the young people they support sometimes tell them things that they believe will make them look good to others, and hide their true feelings or experiences (i.e. social desirability bias).

They therefore decide to set a mixture of subjective and objective indicators to understand if young people's confidence and ability has improved. They set an indicator for self-rated confidence, as well one that tracks young people's actual ability to identify mis- and disinformation (see the evaluation framework template here).

They also decide to set a qualitative indicator to understand the suitability of the sources young people use after the workshops.

Completing your evaluation framework

An evaluation framework outlines how impact will be evaluated.

Use the evaluation framework template to record the outcomes that you have prioritised for each measurement and the indicators you have set to help you decide what data to collect. The completed evaluation framework on page 19 (populated with details from our fictional initiative, Digital Sleuth Club) shows how the framework can be used.

You can complete the rest of the evaluation framework when you work through the 'Doing' section and decide what methods you will use to collect data, when this will take place and who will be responsible for data collection.

Further reading

For those who want to read more about how to develop a logic model, theory of change or evaluation framework, we find these sites useful:

Identify the difference you want to make | NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations)

Develop programme theory / theory of change | Better Evaluation

How to build a theory of change | (National Council for Voluntary Organisations

Digital Inclusion Evaluation Toolkit - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Resources - Evaluation Support Scotland

About | Reading Outcomes Framework Toolkit (readingagency.org.uk)

Theory of change in ten steps - NPC (thinknpc.org)

Specify the key evaluation questions | Better Evaluation

How to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework | (National Council for Voluntary Organisations

Theory of Change: Fictional example

Name of project:	Digital Sleuth Club

1 Define the 'problem'	2 What are you doing about the problem and with whom?	3 What differences will your intervention make?	4 How could these differences contribute to wider societal change?
The target audience is vulnerable to mis- and disinformation, which has been demonstrated to adversely affect wellbeing and social cohesion. They have complex and evolving online habits: they are often the first to embrace new platforms, and are very competent in terms of digital skills, but research has shown that they often lack critical thinking skills in relation to their media use, and many actively avoid the news, with much higher levels of trust in peers. They tend to believe that their media literacy skills are higher than they actually are.	Young people (age 10-18) in areas with higher levels of financial disadvantage; participants will take part in in-person workshops at youth groups, colleges and public libraries. They will: encounter examples of different types of information; hear about the tools to distinguish misleading online content, and paid-for content, from verified information; learn about the digital media ecosystem; be encouraged to reflect on their own habits and attitudes.	Participants will be better able to identify reliable content and identify advertising and better able to discern which information they encounter online is reliable and which may be misleading, because they will have the knowledge and skills to reflect on its source, features and motivations, rather than accepting it at face value. They will have increased awareness of mis- and disinformation as an ever-present threat, because they will understand how the different players in the online media ecosystem operate, and the motivations for creating and spreading false and misleading content. Participants will use reliable sources of information more often and take a more considered approach to sharing stories and information online, because they will approach information with a more critical eye and will understand the dangers of sharing disinformation.	Participants will comprise part of a generation that is more resilient to online harms posed by mis- and disinformation, and have more trust in reliable sources of information. The intervention will have positive effects both on their wellbeing – because they will have fewer negative online experiences – and on wider societal cohesion.

Evidence of the problem	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Immediate outcomes	Medium-term outcomes	Long-term impact
Ofcom's "Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes" reports found that: • 74% of young people said they were confident in identifying misinformation, but only 11% were able to identify a genuine post without making mistakes (2022) • A third of children aged 8-17 (32%) said that they believed all or most of what they saw on social media to be accurate and true (2023) • Over half of children aged 12- 15 (54%) believed that that news stories on websites or apps were always or mostly true or accurate (2023).	Project staff. Research conducted under a previous grant about the information consumption habits of this target group and their social media use. Partnership with youth club association. Funding from ABC Foundation.	Digital Sleuth Club will deliver a series of standalone two-hour workshops in youth clubs/centres and public libraries, in areas identified using indices of multiple deprivation. The project staff will: • Deliver workshops to parents; • Deliver workshops to young people; • Develop workshop resources; • Hire and train specialists to produce supporting campaign materials for social media; • Ensure programme sustainability by sharing resources or training youth leaders; • Use their partnership with the youth club association to secure workshop venues and to find participants for the workshops.	The number of workshops delivered. How many people attended each workshop. The number of downloads of each piece of material. The number of times the social campaign was viewed.	Parents understand the value of online media literacy. Parents encourage children to attend. Improvement in young people's ability to detect mis- and disinformation. Increased comprehension of how the digital media ecosystem works. Better understanding of how verified online content is produced Better understanding of how to spot verified online content and advertising content online.	Improved critical assessment of online information. Increased use of reliable sources of information. Taking a more considered approach to sharing stories and information online.	Increased resilience to mis- and disinformation. More attention given to reliable and authentic online content and less to false/misleading content. A better-informed public.

Assumptions	Young people want to take part in the workshops. Youth clubs have free space in which to deliver workshops.	Workshop series is enough time for participants with different learning abilities to achieve outcomes. Understanding leads to increased ability.	Increased awareness leads to changed attitudes and behaviours. Young people can cope with any peer pressure around media consumption.	Critical thinking outcomes keep pace with evolution in disinformation tactics.

Evaluation framework: Fictional example

Name of project: Digital Sleuth Club

A. What do you want to measure?	B. How will you track change?	C. What methods will you use to collect the data?	D. When will you collect data?	E. Who is responsible for collecting data?
Parents understand the value of online media literacy	Proportion of adults who agree that 'media literacy is an important skill for my child to develop'	Workshop registration form and feedback form - parents	On registration and after parent workshop	Dani (Project manager & parent workshop facilitator)
Better understanding of how to spot verified online content, and how to spot advertising content online	Proportion of young people who can name three ways to verify online content	Verifying online content workshop quiz – young people	During workshop	James (young people workshop facilitator)
Better understanding of how to spot verified online content, and how to spot advertising content online	Proportion of young people who can correctly identify three signs of scam advertisements	Verifying online content workshop quiz – young people	During workshop	James (young people workshop facilitator)
Improvement in young people's ability to detect mis- and disinformation	Level of confidence about identifying mis- and disinformation	Workshops survey – young people Discussion group – young people	End of workshop 3-months after project end	Dani (Project manager & parent workshop facilitator) Independent evaluator
Improvement in young people's ability to detect mis- and disinformation	Proportion of young people who can correctly identify fake news stories	Workshops survey – young people	End of workshop	James (young people workshop facilitator)
Increased use of reliable sources of information	Proportion of young people who only use websites they have used before	Discussion group – young people	3-months after project end	Independent evaluator
Increased use of reliable sources of information	Suitability of sources of information referenced	Discussion group – young people	3-months after project end	Independent evaluator

Doing

This section focuses on the main methods that are often used and some of the overarching considerations to bear in mind as you plan your data collection activities.

It is divided into four stages:

- **Research methods**
- **Who to include in your evaluation**
- **Analysing data**
- **Evidencing you have made the difference**

Research methods

Gathering your data

Carrying out an evaluation will involve gathering and analysing data about the **effect** that the intervention had on your target group, and/or about their experience of it. There are various methods that can be used, and there are some common concepts and practices to be aware of, which we outline below. The two main methods for gathering data are:

Surveys and quizzes: these can be useful for capturing facts and figures (**quantitative data**) to inform your evaluation. Questions are asked in a systematic way so that comparison between respondents is possible. Such questions may involve closed questions (i.e. ones with pre-designed answer codes). These result in quantitative data, which enables comparisons and trends over time to be made. Open survey questions, where respondents are invited to write answers in their own words, can yield useful qualitative data.

Definition: Surveys

Surveys consist of forms or lists of questions and can generate both quantitative and qualitative data, depending on the kind of questions asked.

For a media literacy intervention, you might want to survey your participants before and after the intervention, or straight after and then several months later.

The type of survey you create depends both on your target audience, and what you want to find out.

Definition: Quantitative data

Quantitative data is information that can be counted. For a media literacy intervention, this might include collating the responses to questions or statements with limited answers.

It is usually collected through surveys or questionnaires, and can include results from quizzes.

It can be used to understand what people think about something (from a limited range of options), and whether something has changed in their attitudes. Quantitative data can be gathered over time to produce longitudinal evidence which can add further proof of the effectiveness of your intervention.

It can be combined with qualitative data for deeper understanding.

Definition: Qualitative data

Qualitative data is about what people think or feel. It provides in-depth understanding of behaviours, perceptions and the underlying reasons for why and how things happen.

Interviews and **focus groups:** these can be useful for capturing the 'why' and the 'so what' (**qualitative data**). The approach is tailored to capture individual stories which can bring your evaluation to life. They tend to involve open questions (i.e. ones where the participant can answer using their own words). These result in qualitative data, including quotations that can be used to illustrate the impact of the intervention.

It is often recommended to capture and combine quantitative and qualitative data, known as 'mixed methods'. This draws on the benefits of both approaches and can give you a more complete picture than either approach used alone.

For more detailed information and resources, the Top Tips documents on our website provide an overview of the methods, the key issues, and an annotated example.

Definition: Interviews

Interviews are a research method that involve conversations between a researcher and a participant, often with questions or a discussion guide that is defined in advance. They allow you to ask detailed questions and gain a more in-depth understanding of how an intervention might have changed a participant's attitude and behaviour.

Definition: Focus groups

A focus group is a research method that involves bringing together a group of people with particular characteristics or experiences to discuss a topic. As a qualitative research method, this can be used to understand how and why people think or behave in a certain way.

In terms of media literacy initiatives, focus groups within your target audience could be used to help develop aspects of the intervention, or focus groups of participants could be used to determine what they have learnt and how it has changed their behaviour, or what they think could be improved about the project's activities.

Definition: Mixed methods

Mixed methods research collects, analyses and combines elements of quantitative research and qualitative research in order to answer your research question.

Legal, ethical and safeguarding considerations

Before starting any research, it is important to think carefully through the legal, ethical and safeguarding considerations. A good place to start is the Market Research Society Code of Conduct which sets out how a professional researcher should behave. For information about how data protection may be relevant to your research, you might want to look at the Information Commissioner's Office guidance on the UK General Data Protection Regulation. You may also want to consider seeking independent legal advice or expert advice on issues such as how to safeguard children or vulnerable adults from harm (if relevant to your project).

Don't forget the wellbeing of your own team when making plans and ensure that appropriate safeguards and escalation procedures are in place, especially if your intervention is focusing on sensitive topic areas.

Minimising bias

A challenge faced by all evaluators is how to understand potential bias and minimise or mitigate for it. We all want our projects to perform well, but if data capture and analysis are biased, the credibility of the evaluation will be undermined and the opportunity for learning will be lost.

Who to include in your evaluation

Depending on how many people participate in your project overall, you might not need to do research with all of them to get the information you need. Choosing a sample can reduce the burden on your team (in terms of data collection and analysis) and on your participants. But in general, a larger sample size is preferable and means you can be more confident that any small changes you observe are significant. You can read more about how to decide on the right sample size in this guide (pages 16 to 18).

One option to consider is using evaluation tools as part of the project delivery. For example, people like to see that they have made progress, so if a comparison of the before and after scores of a quiz or survey are built into the programme delivery this will be both useful for the evaluation and interesting for the participants.

If you can't ask everyone involved in your initiative for feedback, you should try to speak to a representative sample that reflects the range of characteristics of the overall group; for example, by generating a random sample, or by deliberately choosing people who are best placed to help with your specific evaluation questions. For example, if your **hypothesis** is that older people are particularly likely to prefer an intervention, you should ensure that you have older and younger people in your sample, so that you can compare them.

Definition: Sample

When conducting an evaluation, you might be able to collect some data only from a selection of participants: this would be your sample. The sample size in relation to the overall group is important, as the statistical significance of your findings (which allows you to conclude whether or not something actually made a difference) is partially dependent on the sample size.

Definition: Hypothesis

A hypothesis is a tentative statement or proposed explanation for a phenomenon or event, based on available evidence. It often predicts that there will be or won't be a correlation between two variables, one of which could be a media literacy intervention. A testable hypothesis is one which can be proved or disproved through experimentation. An evaluation should test whether or not a hypothesis seems to be true: for example, your hypothesis might be that your intervention will improve participants' knowledge or skills in a particular area, and your evaluation will determine whether it actually does.

Analysing data

How you analyse your data will depend on what you have collected. However, there are some rules of thumb that you should always follow:

- Refer back to your theory of change. The data you have collected should help you evidence each of the steps.
- For quantitative data (e.g. data collected through closed questions in surveys or quizzes) you can use statistics such as the number or percentage of people who performed better in a quiz after the intervention, or methods such as impacts compared with comparator group (see below on counterfactuals and RCTs).
- For qualitative data (e.g. interview or focus group data) it can be harder to decide what to include, and you can be at risk of 'cherry-picking' the best quotes to demonstrate success. It can be helpful to put all the qualitative data into a large grid with the analysis questions so you can identify the common themes. And challenge yourself to look for learnings you can use in the future, as this will add credibility to your reporting.

Evidencing you have made the difference

When assessing the impact of a specific intervention, it is important to be able to compare any change detected with what would have likely happened without the intervention: this is called the counterfactual. The counterfactual helps you to attribute any impact detected to your intervention, rather than something that might have happened anyway (e.g. someone getting better at a test over time, even without an intervention, if they can see their results straight away).

There is no way of directly observing what would have happened had you not carried out your intervention, so researchers use various approaches to estimate it. However, some of these approaches can be challenging and resource-intensive, especially for pilot or 'non-standardised' initiatives in the voluntary and community sector.

It is often enough to look for good evidence of causality, rather than scientific proof that more complex methods will give you.

You can create this through:

- having a robust theory of change (i.e. it clearly states what changes you think will occur and how they will lead to each other, as well as any critical assumptions)
- comparing participants' results at the end of an intervention against a baseline from the start (i.e., comparing skill or knowledge levels of your target audience before and after the intervention)
- supplementing this with open-ended questions to ask participants to reflect on why their scores have improved.

Larger organisations might want to consider the merits of creating a control group (an audience with similar characteristics to the target, without access to the intervention). You can find more information in this UK government resource, or from Unicef: quasi-experimental design and methods.

Further reading

For those who want to read more about issues relating to gathering and analysing data, we find these sites useful:

Code of Conduct | Market Research Society (mrs.org.uk)

Guide to the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) | ICO

Digital Inclusion Evaluation Toolkit (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Simple Random Sampling - Research-Methodology

Collect and/ or retrieve data - Rainbow Framework (betterevaluation.org)

Choosing your collection methods | NCVO

Learning and sharing

Reflecting and adapting

Evaluations help you to understand more about your activities, if you have achieved your outcomes and, if not, why. Using this learning to reflect on and, if needed, adapt how you approach your work is one of the main benefits of investing in evaluation.

You can do this reflection at the end of your initiative to document lessons learned, use them to inform future decisions about similar initiatives or with similar target groups, or share them with other stakeholders (see below).

You can also analyse and reflect on your data and lessons learned at key points during your delivery (e.g. at the midpoint). This will enable you to explore what is working well and what is not, adapt the delivery of your initiative to be more effective, and manage stakeholder expectations about what you might or might not achieve.

Things you might want to focus on at the midpoint include if you have reached your intended target groups, reflections on what participants like or could be improved about your activities, and any evidence of your immediate outcomes.

Sharing

Putting together a clear and compelling evaluation report for your stakeholders is the final stage of the process.

An evaluation report should not be seen as a way of demonstrating the worth of an initiative. The purpose of the report is to help you share findings and learn from them. By sharing your report more widely – for example, with Ofcom – you can also help others learn from your work.

You don't need to put all the data you collected into the report, but you must communicate the story accurately. By this we mean you shouldn't make your intervention look more successful than it was by being selective about data used, as doing so not only undermines your credibility but also means that other people may make the same mistakes and so the learning is lost.

Putting your evaluation report together

The evaluation report is where you bring together all the evidence you have collected to tell your story. Identify the key messages that you want to get across to the reader, and how to make those points in the most impactful way using the evidence to back them up. There are some standard things it is always helpful to include in an evaluation report. However, it is important to think about who your audience is and what they will be interested in. In most cases it is a good idea to produce a one- to two-page summary of the findings that will entice people to read the additional detail.

The following chapters are usually helpful to include:

- **Executive summary** (one to two pages which set out what the intervention was and what you learned in the evaluation).
- **Background to the project** (general introduction to the organisation and services being evaluated. Make sure you include a discussion of the inputs and activities in this section).
  - This can include the programme **theory of change** which will give the reader a good overview of what you planned.
- **Evaluation aims and scope** (including any specific evaluation questions and a high-level overview of the research methodology).
- **Description of the findings** (what the data shows, whether your intervention worked and why).
  - There are different ways to structure the findings depending on your audience. Options include:
    - Set out in order the evidence of outputs, the immediate outcomes, the medium-term outcomes and the impact.
    - Structure the report thematically around the different programme objectives. For example, first talk about the impact you had on participants' ability to scrutinise content, then about their ability to judge credible sources, etc. and how the outputs and outcomes contributed to these.
    - Have a chapter for each activity and the evidence for the impact it achieved.

- **Learning and next steps** (what went well and what can be improved next time / in future projects).
- **Appendix** (the key elements of these sections should be included in the main report, but it can be helpful to use an appendix to provide more detail).
  - **Details of your project delivery** (the more detail you include about the intervention, either here or in an annex, the easier it will be for other practitioners to learn from what you've done).
  - **Details of your data collection process** (when and how the research was conducted, with whom, any ethical considerations, etc.).

Visualising your data

There are a range of tools available to make the data you want to present easier to understand. By breaking up text, and numbers, with pictures, graphs, infographics or verbatim quotes from case studies, you can make your report more accessible. It is also an effective way of blending your quantitative (numbers) results with your qualitative (interviews and case studies) data to tell a wider story. The visualisation method you chose will depend on the points you want to make.
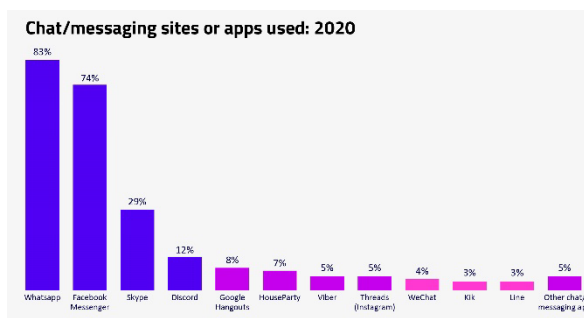
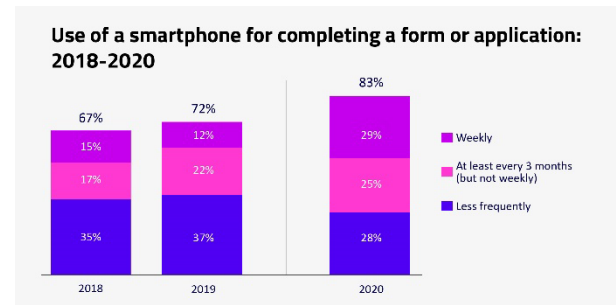**Line chart:** This is useful to visualise comparative data over time.
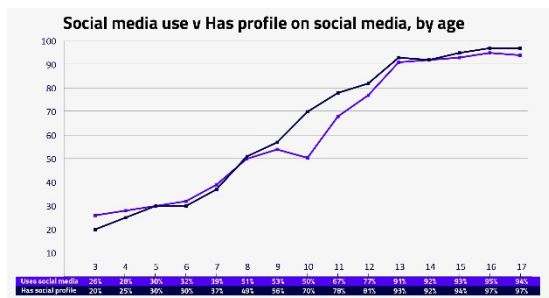
Pie chart: This is useful to show cohort responses (i.e. a third of respondents demonstrated understanding in a certain area) for a single period of time.
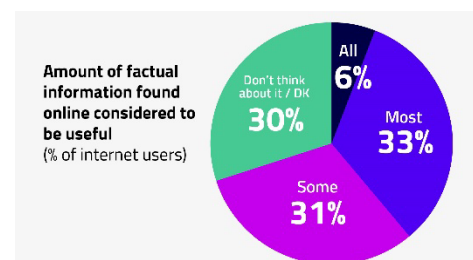
Bar or column chart: This is useful for comparative data between items.

Stacked chart: This is useful to show cohort responses over time.

Pull-out quotes: Use pull-out quotes from your qualitative data to highlight points you want to make.

You could make your charts in Excel or PowerPoint using the inbuilt templates or use Google Charts. For more resources we suggest sites such as Datawrapper or Tableau Public.

Throughout your report, make sure you say where your evidence came from. For survey or quiz data, remember to include information about the **base size** and question answered in each chart.

> **Base size**
>
> The base size is the number of people who were asked a specific question.

For quotes taken from groups or interviews, include the source of the quote. This doesn't mean that you need to name individuals (they might prefer to remain anonymous) but you can say whether they were a participant, involved in delivery, a funder or someone else, so that the reader knows what perspective they are coming from.

Sharing your evaluation report internally and externally

Now you have your evaluation report, share it! Evaluation is about moving forward and learning lessons. By reflecting on your evaluation report internally your organisation can use its findings to improve the work being done and think about how things might happen differently next time the intervention is run. You can go back to your evaluation framework at this stage and adapt your project activities based on these learnings.

Throughout this guide we've tried to explain why producing evaluations is helpful, not only to the team delivering an intervention but also to the wider media literacy sector. You may choose to develop different versions of the report for different audiences – for example, a funder might be primarily interested in activities and impact metrics while other practitioners might be more interested in what you did and how.

In addition to sharing the report with your stakeholders we encourage you to share it with us.

Further reading

For those who want to read more about issues relating to writing your evaluation report, we find these sites useful:

The Digital Inclusion Evaluation Toolkit Report Template (publishing.service.gov.uk)

How to write an evaluation report | NCVO

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES (altteaching.org)

Datawrapper: Create charts, maps, and tables

Tableau Public

Annex: Glossary

Many different terms are used when discussing media literacy evaluation. We have defined some of the most important here. It is important to note that there is sometimes overlap in the way that terms are used.

Assumptions

The assumptions in a theory of change/evaluation framework are the things which you can reasonably expect to be true, based on the available evidence.

Baseline

A baseline is the starting point against which to measure change. For a media literacy project, this could be the participants' existing level of knowledge about a topic, or their existing level of skills. This could be established using a quiz, survey, interview or focus group carried out with the target audience before the intervention takes place, and/or could be informed by previous research on similar audiences.

Base size

The base size is the number of people who were asked a specific question.

Causal effect

The causal effect of an intervention is the effect (change) that it is shown to have on its participants. It can be described as the difference between the outcomes for participants who have taken part in an intervention, compared to those who have not, or the outcomes for participants after an intervention, as opposed to before.

Counterfactual

When assessing the impact of a specific intervention, it is important to be able to compare any change detected with what would have probably happened without the intervention: this is the counterfactual scenario. This can be done by using a control group (an audience with similar characteristics to your target, without access to the intervention) or by using a baseline, i.e. comparing the skill or knowledge levels of your target audience before and after the intervention.

Data

Data refers to the information about your participants and their experience of your intervention that you gather during the research phase of your evaluation. It could be measurements, observations or feedback from participants. It can be qualitative (narrative) or quantitative (numerical). This data can be analysed and used to better understand the intervention, its outcome and its impact.

Data cleaning

Data cleaning refers to the process of removing or correcting data entries that are incomplete, incorrect or inconsistent. It is important to remove such errors in the data in order to avoid drawing inaccurate conclusions.

Effect size

The effect size measures the strength of the relationship between two variables. Although checking for statistical significance can tell you whether or not your intervention works, measuring effect size can give you an idea of the extent of the effect (or impact) of your intervention. A larger effect size indicates a stronger relationship.

Calculating the effect size of your intervention requires comparing numerical results from your treatment and control groups (or from the same group before and after intervention)

There are various methods that you can use to calculate effect size. For example, *Cohen's d* involves comparing the mean results from the two groups.

Economic evaluation

These evaluations will focus on asking you to consider the costs of your project relative to the benefits, asking questions such as "was the outcome worth the cost?" Or "could something else have delivered the same outcomes for less?"

Evaluation framework

An evaluation framework explains how the intervention will reach its goals: from the start of the initiative, beginning with resources available; to the end of the initiative, setting out the final and long-term impacts that the project is expected to achieve.

It sets out a logical and realistic outline of how inputs are used to develop project outputs, and how those outputs interact with participants' behaviour to achieve outcomes which lead to a lasting impact.

Focus groups

A focus group is a research method that involves bringing together a group of people with particular characteristics or experiences to discuss a topic. As a qualitative research method, this can be used to understand how and why people think or behave in a certain way.

In terms of media literacy initiatives, focus groups within your target audience could be used to help develop aspects of the intervention, while focus groups of participants could be used to determine what they have learnt and how it has changed their behaviour, or what they think could be improved about the project's activities.

Hypothesis

A hypothesis is a tentative statement or proposed explanation for a phenomenon or event, based on available evidence. It often predicts that there will be or won't be a correlation between two variables, one of which could be a media literacy intervention. A testable hypothesis is one which can be proved or disproved through experimentation. An evaluation should test whether or not a hypothesis seems to be true: for example, your hypothesis might be that your intervention will improve participants' knowledge or skills in a particular area, and your evaluation will determine whether it actually does.

Impact

Impact refers to longer-term change at an individual or societal level that can be attributed to the outcomes of an intervention. Impact is likely to be harder to measure than outcomes.

For example, the impact of a media literacy project could be:
- increased resilience to disinformation
- a change in the way that participants consume news
- an increase in the creativity of the audience regarding online media

Impact evaluation

Impact evaluation will focus on asking you to consider what the project achieved in terms of change for the target audience and/or wider society, and how well you met your objectives.

Indicators

Impact indicators and outcome indicators are the measurable pieces of evidence that allow you to track the changes that have taken place as a result of your intervention.

For example, for a media literacy project, an outcome indicator might be the change in score between a pre- and post-intervention knowledge quiz carried out by participants. Consistent, significant improvements in scores would indicate a positive outcome for the intervention.

Input

An input is something necessary to carry out an activity: it could be staff members, information/existing research evidence, or other resources.

For example, the inputs of a media literacy project could be:
- Two full-time staff members
- Research findings about the audience's key challenges in accessing information.

Interviews

Interviews are a research method that involve conversations between a researcher and a participant, often with questions or a discussion guide that is defined in advance. They allow you to ask detailed questions and gain a more in-depth understanding of how an intervention might have changed a participant's attitude and behaviour.

Likert scale

A Likert scale is a rating system typically used in questionnaires or surveys to assess people's attitudes, perceptions or opinions. Surveys will often ask their respondents to use a Likert scale of five (or seven) steps to rate the extent that they agree with a particular statement. These steps/options would likely be: 'strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree,' but could include further steps or a 'don't know' option instead of 'neutral.'

It is possible to code the results numerically (e.g. *strongly agree* could be 1, and *strongly disagree* could be 5) for purposes of data interpretation.

Logic model

A logic model explains the relationship between the inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes of your intervention.

Much of this information could also be contained in an evaluation framework.

Longitudinal data

In the context of media literacy, longitudinal data is evidence collected from the same participants over a period of time; for example, by asking the same questions. It allows you to track change over time.

Media literacy

Ofcom defines media literacy as "the ability to use, understand and create media and communications in a variety of contexts".

Outcome

An outcome is the result of an intervention, ideally a benefit received by the target audience. It is usually finite and measurable.

For example, for a media literacy project, outcomes could be:
- an increase in participants' knowledge,
- participants gaining a new skill; and
- a change in attitude among participants.

Outcomes framework

An outcomes framework involves clearly defining the outcomes you want to achieve, and prioritising them. You might separate them into benefits for individuals vs the community, for example. It helps to focus your work on the outcomes that matter to you, to link your activities to the outcomes you want to see, and to communicate these more clearly.

Much of this information could also be contained in an evaluation framework.

Output

An output refers to the deliverables of an intervention or activity. These could be products (resources produced, for example), or services (workshops or training sessions carried out).

For example, the outputs of a media literacy project could be:
- Ten workshops delivered, each attended by 14 participants.
- Ten lesson plans published, downloaded an average of 16 times.

Process evaluation

Process evaluations will focus on asking you to consider how you delivered your project, and the how far the way in which the project was delivered affected the final outcomes.

Qualitative data

Qualitative data is information that can't be counted: it is descriptive, and often for a media literacy initiative it will be narratives or quotes from participants.

It is usually collected through interviews, focus groups, observations, case studies or open-ended survey questions.

It 'gives voice to experience', and can be used to understand how people think or feel about something, and why they think or feel that way. Qualitative data that explains how a participant believes your intervention has changed their life is useful to provide to funders.

It can be combined with quantitative data for deeper understanding.

Quantitative data

Quantitative data is information that can be counted. For a media literacy intervention, this might include collating the responses to questions or statements with limited answers.

It is usually collected through surveys or questionnaires, and can include results from quizzes.

It can be used to understand what people think about something (from a limited range of options), and whether something has changed in their attitudes. Quantitative data can be gathered over time to produce longitudinal evidence which can add further proof of the effectiveness of your intervention.

It can be combined with qualitative data for deeper understanding.

Randomised control trial (RCT)

A randomised control trial involves a group of people with similar characteristics being randomly assigned to one of two groups: one which receives the intervention, one which doesn't. Carrying out the same evaluation methods on the two groups – surveys, quizzes, focus groups or interviews – helps you to assess whether your intervention made a difference or not. Randomly assigning eligible participants to the two groups helps to reduce the risk that other factors might explain a difference in results.

Sample

When conducting an evaluation, you might be able to collect some data from only a selection of participants: this is your sample. The sample size in relation to the overall group is important, as the statistical significance of your findings (which allows you to conclude whether or not something actually made a difference) is partially dependent on the sample size.

Stakeholder

Project stakeholders can include anyone involved in the project, including project funders or sponsors, other members of the team, or for larger projects, other teams.

Stakeholders can also include anyone who might be affected by the intervention, such as target audiences.

Statistical significance

Statistical significance refers to the likelihood that change observed is a result of an intervention rather than simply being by chance. It is calculated based on sample size compared to the total population, and variation within the population.

If your results are statistically significant, it means that they are very likely to be the result of your intervention, rather than random chance.

Statistical significance is usually described using a probability value, or p-value, which is always between 0 and 1. A smaller p-value indicates that it is more likely that your results are not due to chance. To calculate a p-value, you could use an online calculator.

Surveys

Surveys consist of forms or lists of questions and can generate both quantitative and qualitative data, depending on the kind of questions asked.

For a media literacy intervention, you might want to survey your participants before and after the intervention, or straight after and then several months later.

The type of survey you create depends both on your target audience, and what you want to find out.

Theory of change

A model which explains the problem you are trying to solve, how you are planning to do this, and what effect you expect it to have. It explains why you think change will result from your intervention and acknowledges the elements that you cannot control.

A theory of change provides a high-level narrative of the intervention and the theory behind it; it should be put together at the beginning of the project. Much of this information could also be contained in an evaluation framework.

Annex: Resources

There are a number of resources mentioned throughout this document which are available to assist you. To access a particular resource visit the URL links below:

- **Theory of Change Template** *(ODT):*
  https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/file/0022/271219/Theory-of-change-template.odt
- **Evaluation Framework Template** *(ODT):*
  https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/file/0024/252591/evaluation-framework-template.odt
- **Top Tips: Interviews and focus groups** *(PDF)*
  https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0025/252727/top-tips-interviews-and-focus-groups.pdf
- **Top Tips: Surveys and quizzes** *(PDF):*
  https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0026/252728/top-tips-surveys-and-quizzes.pdf
- **Ofcom's Media Literacy Research Library***:*
  https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/approach/evaluate/toolkit/research-library
- **Ofcom's Media Literacy Initiatives Library***:*
  https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/approach/evaluate/toolkit/initiatives-library