



LOCAL COP IMPACT
MEASUREMENT
MODEL

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE FOR HEALTHY LIFESTYLE



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LOCAL COP IMPACT MEASUREMENT MODEL

In this brief chapter of the report we focus on the model that was developed as part of the evaluation strategy: the local CoP impact measurement model. This model has been described as part of the strategy report as well. For purposes of clarity (as it is one of the main deliverables of work package 3) we briefly present it below as well.

Evaluation strategy - Initial approach

In line with the contract, we designed a strategy that contained summative and formative evaluation elements. Our first ideas around a framework for evaluation were based on elements typically drawn upon when evaluating CoPs (e.g. (McKellar, Pitzul, Yi, & Cole, 2014)). The basic idea was to use a model which identified: 1) input/structure; 2) process/activities; 3) short-term outcomes; and 4) longer-term impact (see figure below).

Input / structure	Process / activities	Short-term Outcomes	Longer-term impact
<p>What goes into the project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources to create COPs Time invested <p>Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The specific domain, community and practice 	<p>The things we do in this project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress of activities, e.g. steps towards establishment of local COPS Who is involved The way activities are carried out / contributions made 	<p>(knowledge)products and services that are the short-term result of activities, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we reach parents of children in areas with low SES How do you engage elderly people in becoming active 	<p>The longer-term impact of short-term results</p> <p>Individual, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % people who are member of a sports club Fitness level Nr of people who exercise ≥ 2 times/week <p>Organisational, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of organisations with a certain policy in place / taking a certain role

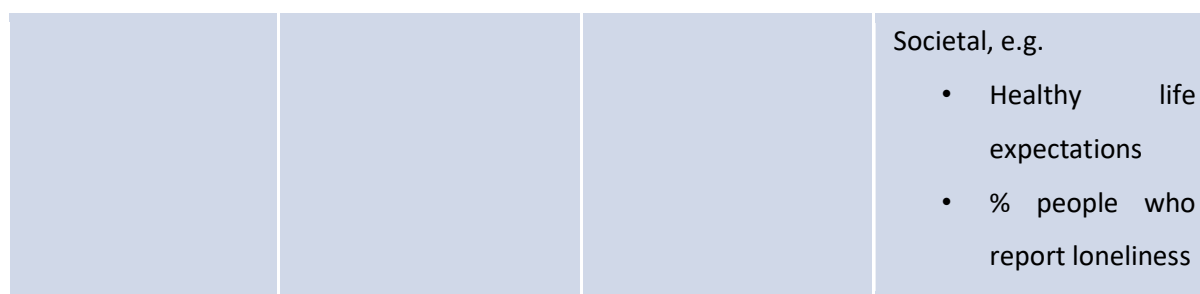


Figure 1. Initial version of the local COP impact measurement model

Early focus on outcomes/indicators

In a survey implemented in April 2018, we asked the CoPs to describe the aims of their networks, and what indicators they expected would be relevant to their networks. In the project plan, it was outlined that CoPs had until May to finish their needs analyses, and based on the results of their analyses, they would be able to determine their exact goals and indicators. We initially hoped to find an outcome measure (e.g. the internationally accepted and validated International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ)) that would fit all CoPs, so that we could compare effectiveness across the five CoPs.

Results of this first survey showed that the CoPs had different overall aims and selected different target populations. Often, the aims were very broad, like 'improving health in the population'. Some focused on the process, e.g. 'taking a holistic approach', 'develop a learning network' etc. Consequently, anticipated outcome indicators or outcome measures varied from 'the use of outdoor equipment' to 'improvement in physical fitness level' and 'quality of life'.

Following the survey, we conducted Skype meetings with CoPs (university leads) in order to clarify some answers they had provided and, more importantly, talk about the process they had followed so far.

Following our conversations, we realized a number of things

1. In the short time span between the survey and the skype meetings, some of the CoPs had changed their focus again. They were all very much in the process of building their networks, and searching for common ground and focus. So, it was naïve to assume that the CoPs would stick to the timeline, decide upon their aims (following the completion of their needs analyses) and not revise them later.
2. This also meant that it was too early to focus on mechanisms of action and indicators
3. All CoPs had different aims, so therefore it would be very difficult to find an outcome measure that would be suitable to all CoPs.

Lessons learned

For the researchers and many stakeholders in the COP4HL project, the logical step was to take the classic approach in relation to evaluation; i.e. define specific measurable outcomes, define the intervention and measure the cause-effect. However, our initial focus on outcomes didn't align very well with the emergent and explorative nature of the process of creating a community around a mission statement towards health lifestyle.

This is a process to engage stakeholders, to explore the common agenda and develop the necessary relations to start working towards their long-term goals. An early focus on discrete outcomes and summative evaluation neglects the complexity of the system, and may in fact, hamper innovation (Preskill & Beer, 2012b; Tsoukas, 2017)).

Shift in approach to evaluation

The realization that our initial actions were too much focused on the outcome end of the spectrum also meant that we needed an evaluation framework that would do better justice to the reality of the CoP forming and processes. Hence, we needed an approach with evaluation strategies that are flexible and responsive to complex environments and would help us better understand the mechanisms and the potential value of the CoP networks.

These points are elaborated in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Stronger focus on developmental evaluation

We then shifted priority to methods that would focus more on the process rather than the outcome. As the below figure points out, various strands of evaluation can be best applied in different situations.

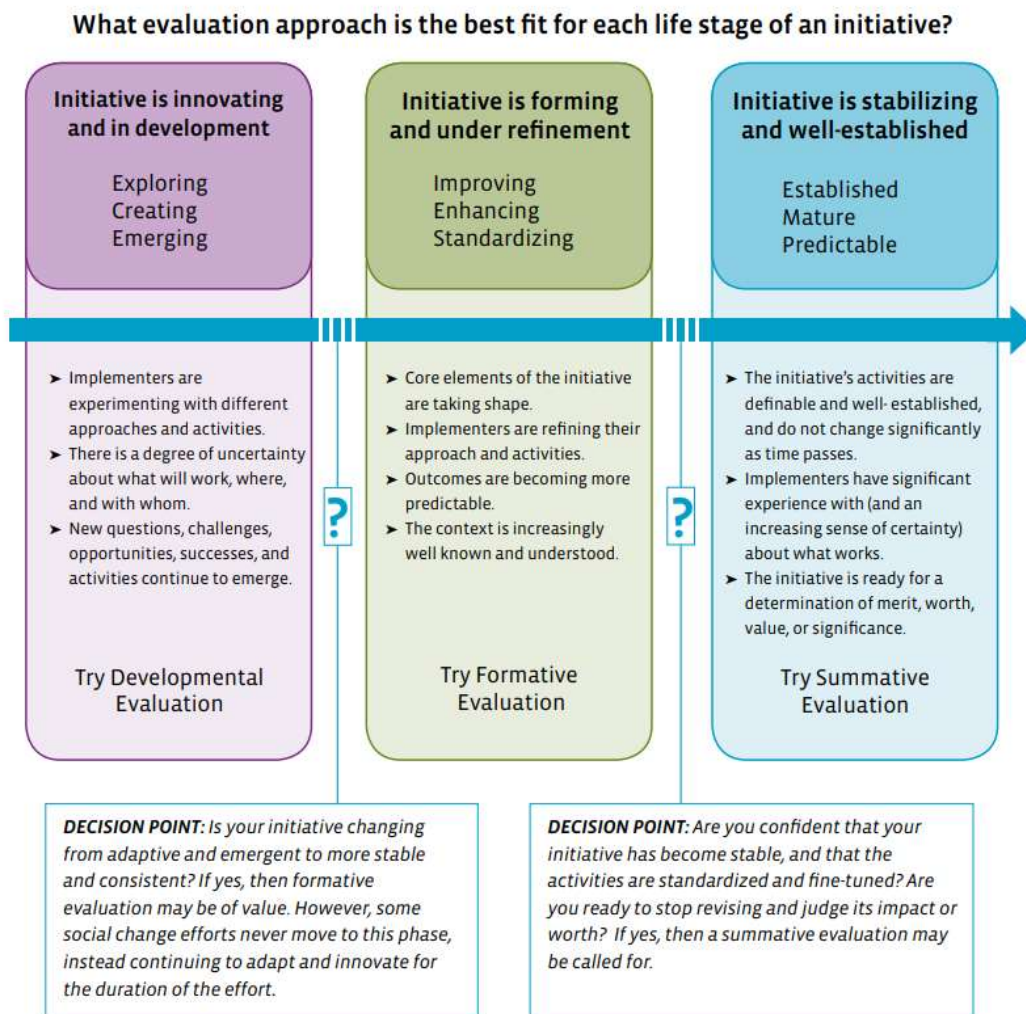


Figure 2. Suitable evaluation methods for various stages of development of initiatives (source: (Preskill & Beer, 2012a))

Developmental evaluation informs and supports innovative and adaptive development in complex dynamic environments. Developmental evaluation has five characteristics that distinguish it from other evaluation approaches. These include:

1. the focus of the evaluation,
2. the intentionality of learning throughout the evaluation,
3. the emergent and responsive nature of the evaluation design,
4. the role and position of the evaluator, and
5. the emphasis on using a systems lens for collecting and analysing data, as well as for generating insights.



Figure 3. In developmental evaluation, the evaluation itself is constantly informing actions (source: (Preskill & Beer, 2012a))

In essence, evaluative questions are continuously asked. The evaluative data is then used to support project, program, product, and/or organizational development with timely feedback (Patton, 2011). This means that the CoPs can use this information to develop and guide their next steps (collective agenda setting).

Evaluation Model: hybrid and dynamic

The change in our focus needed to be reflected in an update of our evaluation model. In February 2019, in a workshop in Groningen, following discussions with several workpackage-leaders on the above insights, a new version of our evaluation model was developed. The model is ‘hybrid’ in the sense that it combines a focus on development and process with a focus on formative and summative cause-effect relations. This second model therefore existed of two layers and is shown in the below Table.

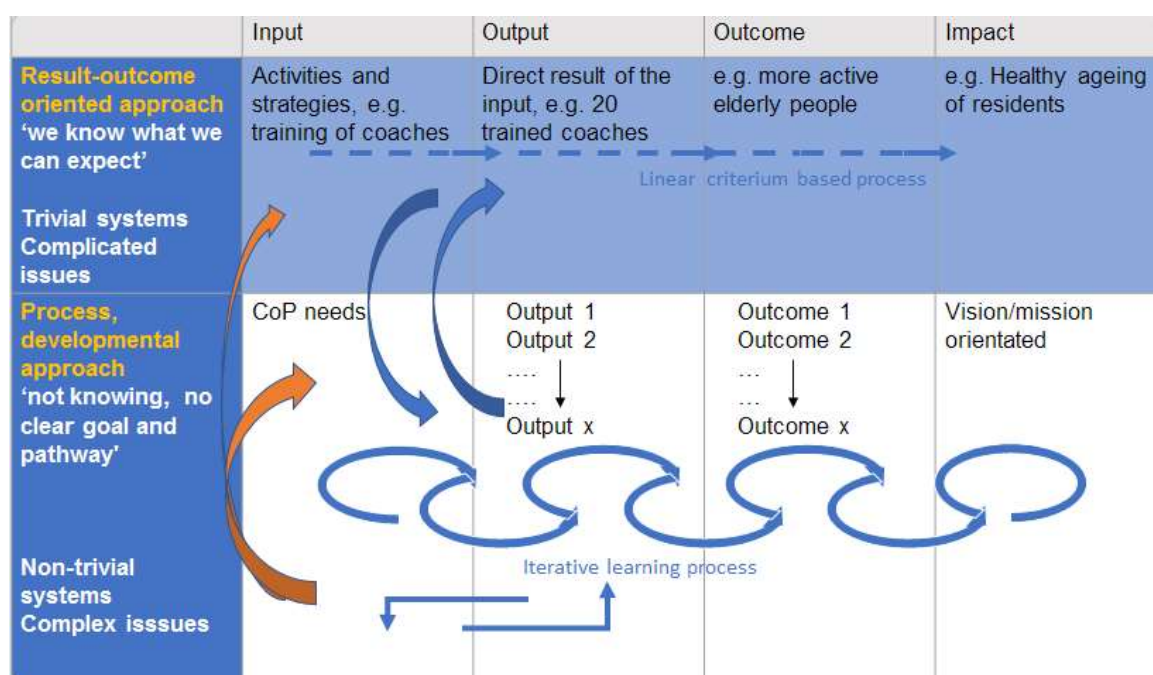


Figure 4. Second version of the local COP impact measurement model

The next few paragraphs explain how we saw the model work. At the start, CoPs are in a developmental phase, which is depicted in the lower layer of the hybrid evaluation model. In this layer, the focus is on the learning processes, i.e. to gain insight in the dynamic process of knowledge generation in co-creative manner. The learning process is an iterative process of doing-reflecting-adapting and is expected to guide decisions around how to progress as well as (changes in) the selection of output and outcomes.

At some point, the learning process may result in enough knowledge to identify a (linear) pattern that lends itself to assumptions regarding how to achieve an outcome-based goal (e.g. the certain determinant (such as self-efficacy) may need to be addressed in order to improve an outcome (e.g. use of training equipment)). At this point, the evaluation activities can move to the upper part of the hybrid evaluation model (e.g. formative and summative testing of cause-effect relations).

The results of this 'linear' process are then brought back into the process for sense-making with the stakeholders. For example, it may happen that that the expected relation between output and outcome was not so straightforward and that another process of doing-reflecting-adapting is needed, before another version of a linear model is ready for testing.

So, rather than being just a 'column in a linear process' (as was the case in the first version of our model), this second version of the model acknowledges the central role of 'process and learning focused evaluation' throughout the whole project. This was a big improvement of our model, which

also much better allowed for telling the stories of the development of all COPs, as well as what where the ‘effective elements’ in their success (lessons learned).

However, we realized another element was missing in this model, which led to the current version. In complex terrain such as COPs working towards innovations, it is important to anticipate and notice ‘emergence’; developments or outcomes which were not anticipated. COPs are complex social systems. Complexity is described as “a dynamic and constantly emerging set of processes and objects that not only interact with each other, but come to be defined by those interactions”. In fact, emergence is a key feature of complexity which means that -when thinking about effects and impact of COPs- it is critical to notice “the unexpected”, and to reflect collectively on what this emergence means for how the COP continuous with its actions. So, emergent results, like results which were derived in the top layer, need to be brought back into the process of reflection and decision-making (middle layer). The notion of constantly ‘moving between these layers’ is signified by the dotted lines between the layers.

The other component is constant alignment between the actions in the developmental layer and the shared ambitions. As the development of the innovation and/or innovative interventions progresses, it is important to regularly reflect on whether the activities and their results are still in line with the common goal that was formulated by the stakeholders.

These changes are reflected in the third, and current version of the local COP impact model.

Hybrid impact evaluation model of Communities of Practice; combining traditional and developmental evaluation methods

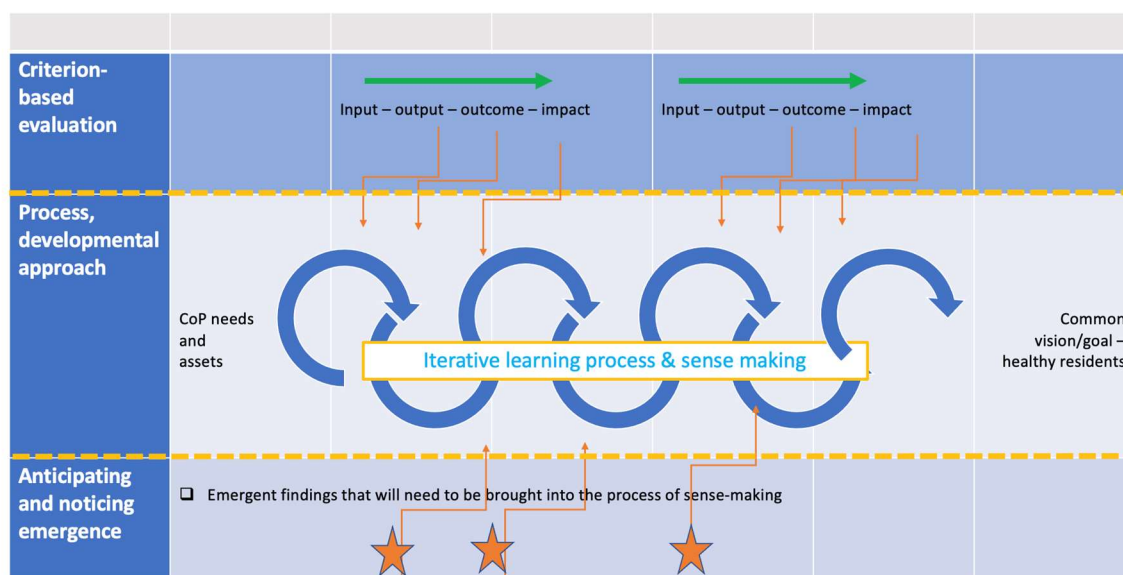


Figure 5. Current version of the local COP impact measurement model, combining traditional and developmental evaluation methods

Lessons learned

Successful developmental processes make use of constant evaluation to guide the development process. In doing so, it is important to create a learning system, in which data is being collected and then collectively reviewed for meaning (sense-making) and use. This way, data directly feeds back into the process and guides further actions. We view this process layer as the central component of our model. Data collected via criterion-based evaluation methods (top layer in our model) feeds into the process. Likewise, it is critical for the system to anticipate and notice emergent outcomes (bottom layer) and bring them into the sensemaking process as well.