

IMPACT PRACTICE: THE BASICS

An overview of 'impact practice' and why it's important



What is 'impact practice'?

Simply put, your 'impact' is the difference you make. It is the broad and/or long-term effects of your activities. This can include the effects on direct users of your services, the effects on those who are not direct users (e.g. siblings, friends), and the effects on the wider community (e.g. governmental policy, public health).

Impact practice is the range of activities that a group carries out to focus on its impact. Or to put it another way, all the things you do to put your impact into practice. It is much broader than monitoring and evaluation and includes activities such as: designing the desired impact, planning how to measure it, collecting information about it, making sense of that information, communicating it and learning from it.

Why is impact practice important?

Embedding good impact practice will ensure that you are working toward your objectives, enable you to explain how and why your programmes are effective and allow your group to continually improve your services over time.

1. Demonstrate the difference you make to external stakeholders

More and more, groups are being asked to "prove" or demonstrate that they are making a difference. You might feel that the 'difference you make' is obvious, but funders will want you to be able to demonstrate how their money is being put to good use, or board members might want to know if you are being effective in delivering on your objectives. Unless you can present or articulate your evidence in a clear and concise way, external stakeholders may struggle to understand the breadth of your impact.
2. Improve your services and become more effective

Knowing how well you are doing and where you can do better ensures you're doing the best you can for the young people you work with and that you are working toward becoming a more sustainable and successful group. For example, good impact practice can help you to determine if an activity would be more successful if you ran it at a different time of day or with a different structure. Knowing this will help you to identify what works and where to allocate your limited resources.
3. 'Impact' is about getting back to why your group exists

Your group will have started with a purpose. This may have been to remove barriers to participation in sport for marginalised young people, to lower crime rates within your local area by providing an alternative, or to address health inequalities within your community. Developing good impact practice gives your group the opportunity for focus on this purpose - if you fully understand the change you are trying to achieve (your intended impact), and you know what works in bringing about that change, then you'll be most likely to fulfil your potential, deliver on your mission with increased success and have a greater impact on young lives in your local community. Simply put, your impact is important because it's the reason your group exists.

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What does 'good impact practice' look like?

Good Impact Practice is about more than monitoring and evaluation. There are four main areas of activity that make up the 'cycle' of good impact practice¹, shown in the cycle of good impact practice: Plan, Do, Assess and Review.

- Plan** Identify your desired impact. What change do you want to see? What is the long-term difference you want your work to have? How do you deliver this? How do you know that what you do will lead to this change? It is also important to think about how you could measure the impact -what information you need and how you can collect it.
- Do** Deliver your work and begin to collect data around your impact.
- Assess** Take the time to make sense of the information you've collected in order to allow yourself to draw conclusions about the impact and compare this to your original objectives. Are you doing better than you thought? Is your work having a positive impact on something you never even thought about? Are there barriers preventing you from having your desired impact?
- Review** This is where the cyclic nature of impact practice is really important. Learn from your findings and use them to improve your work. This will feed into the planning for the next programme, the next season, or even allow you share 'what works' with other groups in your area. Communicating information about your impact is really important and celebrating the impact your work is having on young people.

Where to start?

It might seem a little daunting, but breaking down the different actions associated with good impact practice can really help clarify where you might need to improve. Our Impact Journey is packed with lots of information and resources to help you embed good impact practice within your group and we have trained volunteers to support you at each step. Read more about the impact journey on [the Sported Hub](#).



[Get started with the Sported Impact Journey](#)

¹ Inspiring Impact: The Code of Good Impact Practice, June 2013

