

Evaluation: why, what and how?

Laura Venning



DWP
Department for
Work and Pensions



Why evaluate?



"I can honestly say that not a day goes by when we don't use those evaluations in one way or another."

Why evaluate?

Be accountable

- About justifying funding
- Assesses value, effectiveness and measures success against stated outcomes

Generate knowledge

- About 'what works' – which ways of working are most effective in achieving objectives
- Can be of value to wider stakeholders e.g. other practitioners or decision makers

Enable improvement

- About strengthening and building organisational capacity and insight
- Gives a realistic reflection of a service and its challenges and recommends improvements

What is evaluation?

- “an objective process of understanding how a policy or other intervention was implemented, what effects it had, for whom, how and why” (Government Magenta Book)
- “the systematic assessment of the design, implementation or results of an initiative for the purposes of learning, improving or decision-making” (The National Lottery Community Fund)

We have someone external swing by every few years to give us inconclusive evidence of our impact.

How do you evaluate?

You know, the usual.



Utilization focused evaluation

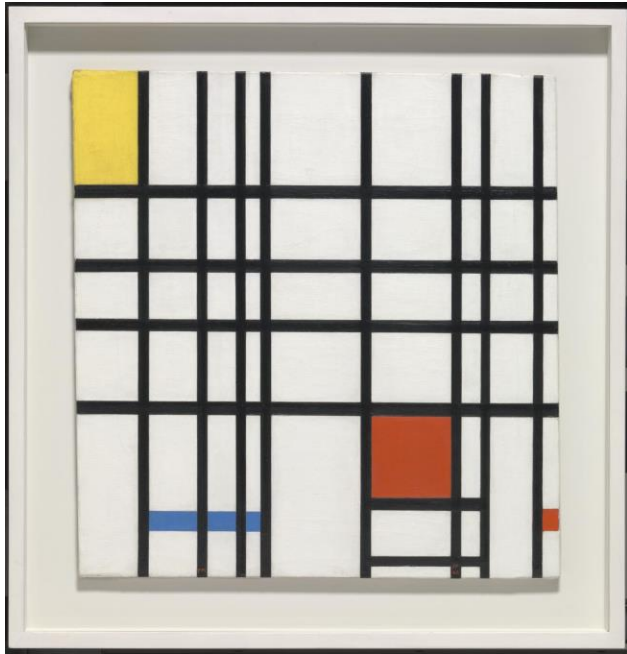
1. Why, who and what

- Why evaluate? (uses)
- For whom? (users)
- What? (key evaluation questions)
- *Also consider – what do we already know?*

2. How

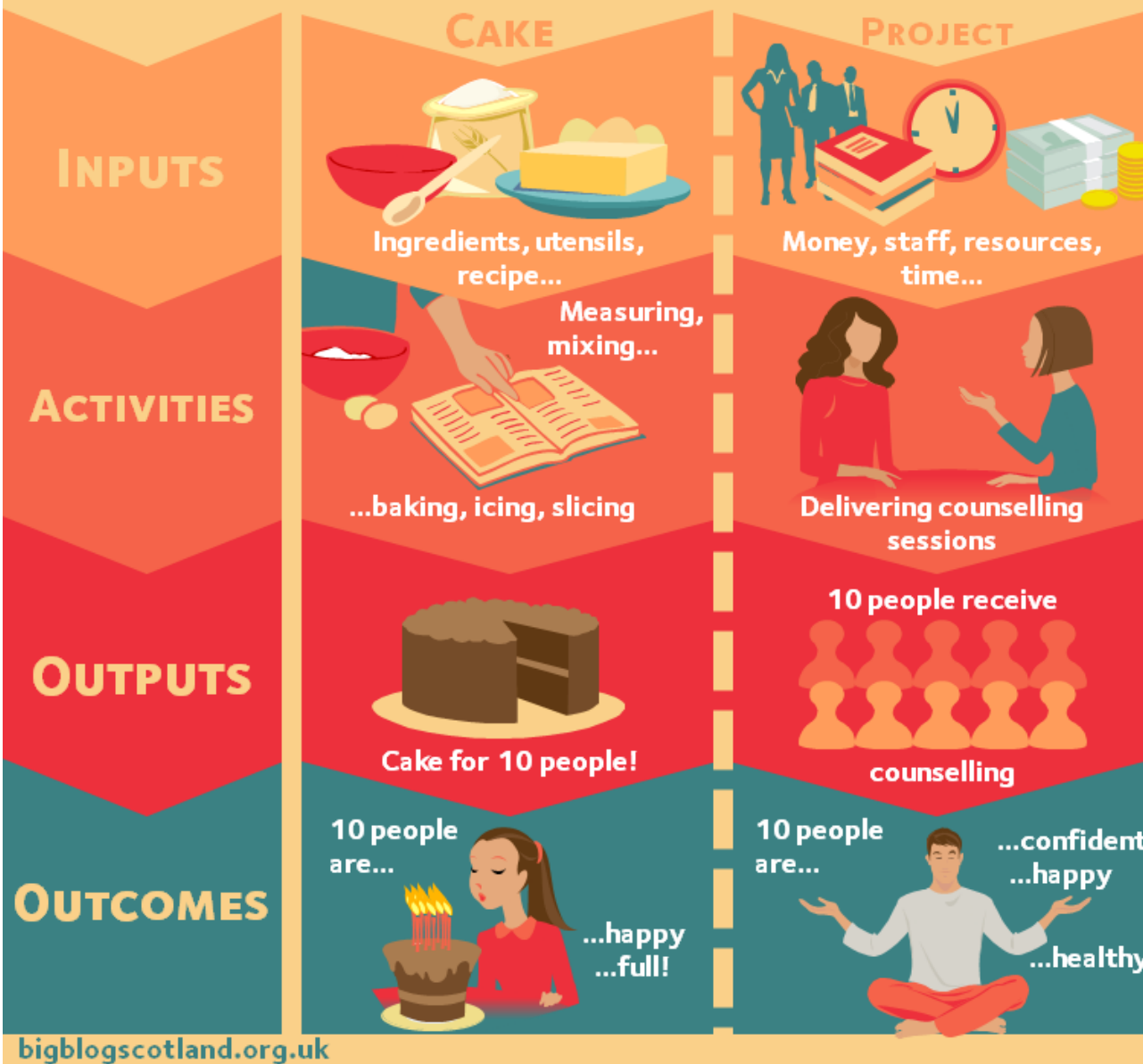
- What evaluation approach is most appropriate?
- What resources, skills and experience do we need?
- Who will be responsible for what?
- What needs to happen when?

The real world is messy...



...evaluation needs to recognise complexity

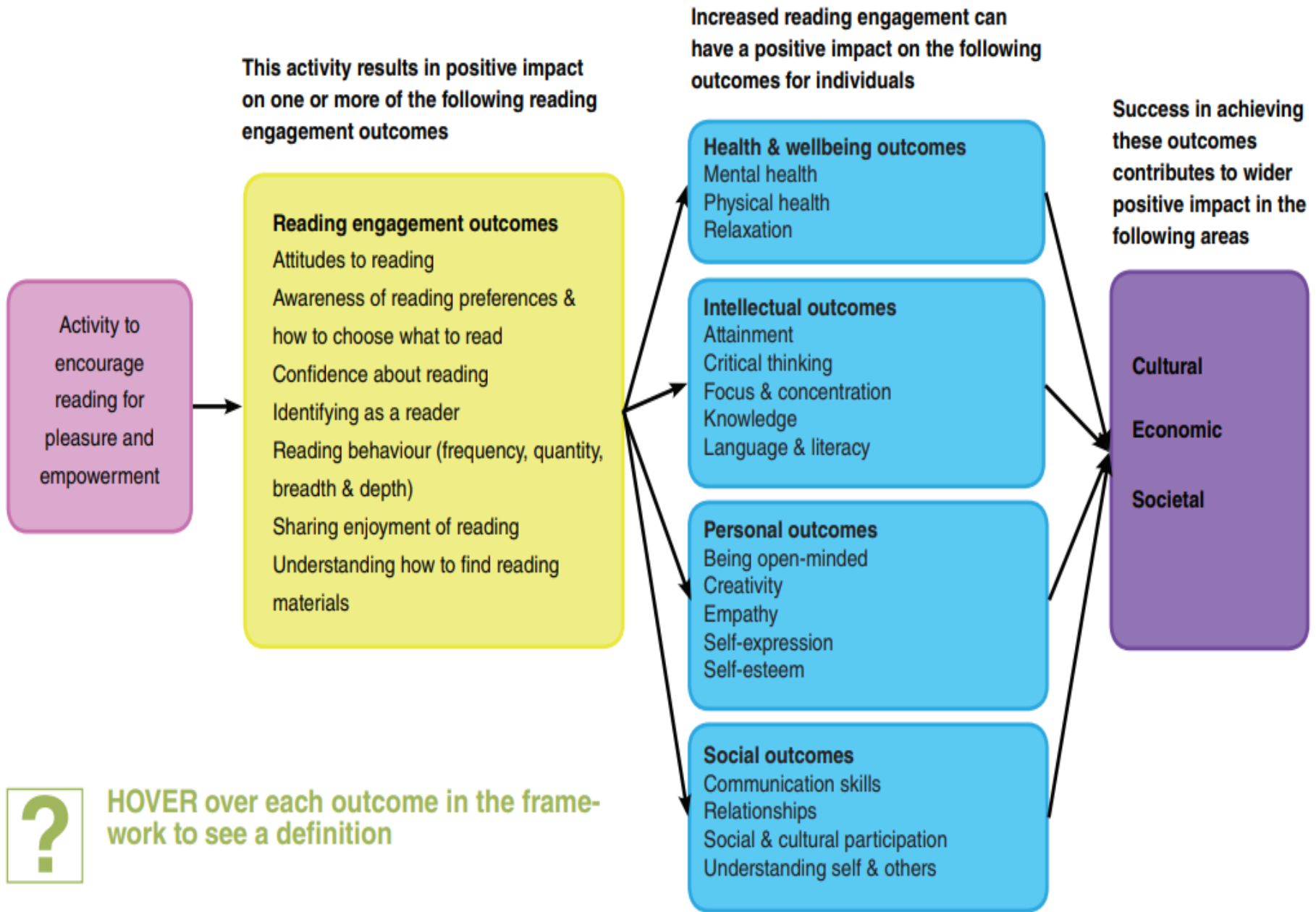
OUTCOMES ARE A PIECE OF CAKE!



Reading Outcomes Framework



- Developed by the Reading Agency, it maps the wider outcomes of reading for pleasure based on existing literature: health and wellbeing; intellectual; personal; and social
- It identifies questions that can be used to measure these outcomes
- Provides guidance about how you might carry out evaluation, especially how to design a survey to measure these outcomes



Considerations

- Ethics: informed consent, at child and parent level learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1504/research-ethics-committee-guidance-applicants.pdf
- Data protection/GDPR ico.org.uk
- Working with families
 - Use interactive methods
 - Appropriate questions/accessibility
 - Co-production <https://www.invo.org.uk/>
 - Carefully consider level of data collection

Resources

- Inspiring Impact: inspiringimpact.org
- NCVO: knowhow.ncvo.org.uk
- Better Evaluation: betterevaluation.org
- CECAN: cecan.ac.uk
- SRA: the-sra.org.uk
- UKES: evaluation.org.uk
- Arts Council England guidance: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/measuring-outcomes>
- Reading Outcomes Framework: <http://readingoutcomes.readingagency.org.uk/outcomes-framework/>
- Theory of change: thinknpc.org/resource-hub/creating-your-theory-of-change-npcs-practical-guide/
- Charities Evaluation Working group: join via linkedin
- laura.venning@tnlcommunityfund.org.uk

Questions?

