

RESOURCE 11:

EVIDENCE

Evidence is proof of something happening or having happened. It may be **quantitative**, which is numerical, dealing with issues such as *how much, how many or how often*. It may also be **qualitative** which addresses factors such as *how good, how effective, how well, or how confident*.

Some terminology:

- A **source** of evidence is where you get it, such as observation, documents, feedback, but is not evidence in itself.
- **Quantitative evidence** indicates values such as: *how many?, how much?, or how often?* Examples of sources of this form of evidence are attendance and retention figures, the number of participants gaining an award or a qualification, or the number of literacies learners achieving their intended learning goals.
- **Qualitative evidence** includes values such as: *how well?, how skilled?, how competent?, how supported?, how motivated?, or how included?* Sources of such evidence include feedback from participants, committee minutes, observation of group interaction and participant's behaviour.
- Quantitative evidence can differ from qualitative evidence in that the former tends to be numerical and so easier to process and interpret. For example, ten learners attending out of a group of ten is 100%, or a 40% increase in the number of young people gaining the Duke of Edinburgh's Award within a twelve month period. Both of these examples are clear and unambiguous.
- Qualitative evidence can seem less precise and more open to diverse interpretations, unless approached systematically, using a framework such as HGIOCLD2.

Always try to obtain evidence from more than one source. This makes it more robust and more likely to be reliable.

Ideally you should try to **triangulate** your evidence, which is to use three mutually supportive pieces of evidence.

An example of this would be if you were conducting a self evaluation of a creative writing project, and you had verbal feedback from the tutor that the participants were rapidly improving their writing skills whilst thoroughly enjoying the creative process. In order to triangulate evidence for this claim, you could gather a) a recording of an observation of participants participating in a group, b) some examples of their own work showing their progress, and c) a record of participant feedback.

Having obtained the evidence, it must be analysed so that it can **inform judgements** on future action, whether to continue as before, or to take action to **improve performance**.

Quality of evidence is vital – it's not easy, but look for that one piece that will 'prove' your self-evaluation, rather than huge piles of documentation.

For example, for evidencing impact, and many other aspects of provision, there is little that you can produce that is more powerful than direct quotes from a self-evaluation focus group with stakeholders, or a recording or DVD of provision.

Some examples of sources of evidence include:

- self-evaluation stakeholder focus group recordings

- visual or sound recordings of provision / impact on participants
- project attendance records
- participant evaluations of provision
- letters or emails
- thank you cards
- art work / poems / stories etc that show participant or project progress
- newspaper cuttings
- adverts / posters
- written records of telephone or face-to-face conversations
- course materials
- LEAP or other project plans
- minutes of meetings
- service or partner plans or reports showing your role or actions