

Impact orientation – showing what we achieve

Authors: Maja Graf and Fanni Dahinden, vitamin B

Why is impact orientation also important for associations?

Many associations are financed through membership fees, but also through donations and/or funding institutions such as foundations or the public sector. If support is granted, the success of the association's work – i.e. its impact – usually needs to be measured and proven. The instrument for this is an impact analysis.

You can use an impact analysis to measure whether the association's objectives are being achieved. At the same time, you can check whether your (limited) resources are being used efficiently and which activities will have the best positive impact. You can see where and how you can improve your work, where challenges lie and how to meet them. At the same time, you receive data and stories you can use to report on your work and support your fundraising. You can convince potential supporters by highlighting the positive impact of your organisation or project.

With an impact analysis, you also show stakeholders, donors and supporters the added value that results from the association's offerings and services. Furthermore, you show them that you are actively analysing the results achieved and reporting transparently on impact.

How do you measure the performance of an association?

The impact analysis identifies the activities/services of the association (output) and shows their impacts on both the target groups (outcome) and the social environment (impact). The impact analysis attempts to show whether and to what extent an impact has been achieved. It consists of these steps:

Input: Resources used

How many or which of the association's resources flow into the offering? → Working hours, benefits in kind, finances

Output: Measurable results

What services does the association provide and which target groups are reached?
→ Offers, projects, programmes

Outcome: Immediate benefit

What changes are occurring in the target group and to what extent?
→ Evaluations, surveys

Impact: Social added value

To which social developments does the association's offering contribute?
→ Reflections, assumptions

Example: An association helps young people to find an apprenticeship

Input:	How many training rooms and trainers and how much learning material does the association provide each year?
Output:	How many tutoring sessions and how much job application training does the association run each year? How many young people take part?
Outcomes:	Young people will be able to independently prepare high-quality application documents, leave school with a good qualification and find an apprenticeship. How many graduated successfully or started a job each year? How satisfied were the young people with the services offered by the association?
Impact:	Reduction of youth unemployment (e.g. in a city district, a municipality). Are there any figures on this?

How do you measure impact?

Impact is measured through monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring is used to collect information on a regular basis, e.g. number and duration of events, visitor numbers and statistics. Monitoring is particularly suitable for recording input and output.

Outcome and, in particular, impact are more difficult to record using statistical means. Evaluations, i.e. surveys (oral, written, online) and reflections are suitable for making statements about direct and social benefits. Statements on impact often also include assumptions.

How do you create an impact analysis?

1. *Definition of objectives:* Define the objectives of the association. Formulate clearly what you want to achieve and what positive change you want to make.
2. *Identification of impact indicators:* Identify measurable indicators that reflect the success or impact of the organisation’s activities. These indicators should be directly linked to the objectives and help to measure progress.
3. *Data collection:* Determine what data you need to measure your impact indicators. This can be quantitative data such as figures, statistics or survey results, but also qualitative data such as success stories or feedback from those involved.
4. *Data analysis:* Analyse the collected data to evaluate the progress and impact of your activities. Compare the results with the indicators and interpret the data to gain insights into the impact achieved.
5. *Evaluation and reporting:* Evaluate the results of your impact analysis and reflect on whether your activities have had the desired impact. Create a report that summarises the key findings and makes recommendations for future improvements.
6. *Continuous improvement:* Use the insights gained to adapt and continuously improve your strategies and offerings.

Impact analysis should be adapted to the respective capacities and objectives of the association. Even smaller associations with limited resources can carry out impact analysis to improve their work and review, and if necessary, improve, their impact if they focus on two to three important issues.

Further links and documents

- Impact Guide Migros Pioneer Fund: <https://engagement.migros.ch/dam/jcr:53c6b41c-3bc4-47b6-81bd-64eca4500de1/1.0-IMPACT-GUIDE-deutsch.pdf>
- www.projekte-mit-wirkung.ch
- Werkstatt Wirkung (Further education programme of the Mercator Foundation Switzerland: <https://www.stiftung-mercator.ch/journal/werkstatt-wirkung>)