



IcARUS

Policy Briefing

Implementing Evaluation Strategies in Urban Security Prevention Programmes





Evaluation in Urban Security

Understanding the Importance of Evaluation

The IcARUS *State of the Art Review* of research identified that a culture and practice of evaluation and lesson learning built into the design, delivery and routine operations of urban safety innovations, initiatives and strategies, remains uneven and embryonic at best. Most evaluations have been written by researchers, for other researchers, with little attention paid to context or organisational practice and learning. As a result, evaluation has been seen by policy professionals and practitioners as expensive, time consuming and detracting from the delivery of innovation. Additionally, a lack of evaluation expertise among many within urban security practitioner communities leaves many sceptical of the value of organisational learning through programme evaluation.

However, as the IcARUS project has demonstrated, evaluation enables iterative cycles of experimentation, learning and improvement to occur. The focus of evaluation should be constructive, not merely judgemental. This mindset is one of the biggest challenges for policy makers and practitioners to overcome. Evaluation does not mean identifying weaknesses, inadequacies or incompetencies but identifying where best practice is evident and where opportunities for development can be capitalised on. Organisational learning, therefore, should be at the heart of any evaluation process.

Foregrounding an evaluation strategy in this process of organisational learning, enables the active involvement of practitioners in the process, accommodating their different professional and organisational needs, whilst encouraging them to independently evaluate their own initiatives. Doing so provides the opportunity for practitioners to utilise evaluation processes for **accountability** (determining efficiency and effectiveness), **development** (delivering self-improvement) and **knowledge** (obtaining a deeper understanding of an issue or policy field).

A genuine culture of evaluation is one that is committed to using research and evaluation findings to inform (inter-)organisational decisions, policies, strategies and practices.

Undertaking an Evaluation

To undertake an evaluation and obtain broader learning about what works, where, for whom, and under which circumstances for practitioners and administrators, it is necessary to establish parameters of evaluation, distinguishing between and specifying clearly:

1. the nature of the problem to be addressed and the intended beneficiaries;
2. the initiative or mechanism and the theories of change that inform it;
3. the processes and dynamics of implementation of the initiative and end-user engagement;
4. the context – the characteristics and features that influence the circumstances within which implementation is embedded; and,
5. the outcomes of implementation – its effects and impacts.

Some of the specific evaluation questions for consideration include:

- Has the problem been solved?
- Did the initiative alter the size of the problem?
- How was the problem affected by the initiative?
- What else resulted from the initiative, as well as effects on the problem?
- How and where, and for whom, could the results be replicated?



- What more do we know at the end of the evaluation about the patterns of outcome effectiveness of the initiative, and what else do we need to know? Implementing an Evaluation

Evaluation as a process of organisational learning

Building sustainable processes of evaluation and self-reflection enables all stakeholders to develop and initiatives to maximise their potential.

Evaluation is a collaborative endeavour:

- Appoint an evaluation team from the beginning of initiative development who will be responsible for strategy, communication, methodological application, analysis and output throughout the lifespan of the project;
- Ensure all stakeholders co-produce the evaluation strategy and indicators. This will ensure individual needs, resources and structures are factored into decision-making and all partners understand and accept expectations;
- Collaborating across stakeholders will pool resource, knowledge and expertise, maximising potential output whilst minimising resource and additional workloads for partners.

Reframing evaluative language:

- Avoid using negatively charged language associated with blame, such as 'failure' or 'weakness' and instead advocate for 'opportunities for learning', 'future steps', 'adaptations to be made' to reinforce the value of evaluation as a learning process that offers scope for development, rather than judgemental outcomes.
- Evaluation should be inclusive in practice (including all stakeholders), in data collection and analysis (representative data from multiple sources), and in delivery (ensuring data is accurate and does not marginalise / stigmatise or silence)

Build in the needs of evaluation from the outset

Evaluation is a continuous process which should be built and implemented across the lifespan of the initiative.

Identify clear goals and ambitions from the initiative conception and design:

- Co-produce a set of aims and objectives with stakeholders, from the outset of initiative development, in order to establish clear priorities and goals;
- Identify key indicators for assessment, based on the aims and objectives of the initiative, to be 'measured' during development and delivery.

Build evaluation into the project lifespan:

- Identify key learning points within the initiatives lifespan to assess aims and objectives; this will enable reflexivity and responsiveness, using the evidence to adjust strategies, procedures and resources as appropriate, both during and after implementation;
- Co-produce a shared strategy between stakeholders which enables the continuous monitoring of agreed aims and objectives, such as how and when they will be measured, by whom, and who will be responsible for delivering these.

Where possible, minimise workload implications of data collection on stakeholders:

- Co-producing strategies for evaluation will ensure stakeholders understand their responsibilities and can clarify and agree, from the outset, their mutual expectations;
- Identify moments where data collection can be maximised through existing practices, structures and resources across stakeholder groups;
- Utilise data already held or collected by stakeholders to minimise additional processes and ethical procedures, and maximise the available data for collection.

The strategy outlined in this policy briefing provides a much-needed framework for policy makers and practitioners, along with the wider community of researchers and citizens actively involved in urban security strategies, to implement **robust, sustained** and **effective evaluation**.



IcARUS

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The IcARUS project (Innovative Approaches to Urban Security) aims to rethink, redesign and adapt existing tools and methods to help local security actors anticipate and better respond to urban security challenges. This factsheet is based on the IcARUS Review of Accumulated Learning and cross-analysis of urban security.



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