

7 Goals and Goal Attainment

Learning objectives

- 1 Understand the logic and limitations of a goal-attainment approach to evaluation.
- 2 Be able to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of goal-free evaluation.
- 3 Know the meaning of 'externalities' and how evaluators can deal with them.
- 4 Be able to develop service specifications (i.e., The 'service blueprint') from a detailed work plan.
- 5 Understand the importance of task analysis and work clusters, as they relate to teamwork and evaluation.
- 6 Learn goal attainment and evaluation lessons from the evaluation systems called the Event Compass.
- 7 Be able to use an evaluation system for continuous improvement.
- 8 Understand the importance of encouraging the use of standard methods and measures so that a database can be created for comparisons, benchmarking and meta-analysis.

7.1 Introduction

For systematic evaluation and strategic planning, and for complex evaluation problems, the approach recommended in this book, and reflected in the Event Compass, is a goal-attainment model. So we need to define some terms here.

Goal: desired result or outcome; intended end-point

Long-term goals are associated with vision and strategy, while short-term goals pertain to the kind of outputs that are more easily and quickly attainable, such as the target attendance and revenue to be raised for an event. Long-term goals might relate in general to achieving the vision or sustaining success, but can also specify desired impacts (or outcomes) that imply changes in society or the economy. In a tourism context long-term goals might be tied to the management of portfolios of events and their desired/predicted cumulative impacts.

One event cannot usually be expected to have outcome/impact goals that imply long-term, permanent changes in systems. Perhaps mega-events can aim that

high, but system change is more in the realm of event portfolios and tourism in general, being permanent and major components of city and destination strategies.

Goals are expressed in general terms and usually require the accompaniment of performance measures. These can be called *objectives*, the attainment of which can be measured. The terms 'goal' and 'objective' are technically synonymous and therefore confusion can result, so in this book we use indicators and KPIs instead of 'measurable objectives'.

7.2 Goal-free evaluation

What if an event or tourism causes changes or impacts that are beyond the scope of its goals? Unanticipated effects, and 'externalities' are common occurrences, so if the evaluator only looks at goal attainment some problems might be missed.

Externality: an impact that occurs as a consequence of events or tourism, the cost of which is borne by others (i.e., externalities are not part of the event's accounts).

There are many examples, ranging from pollution (who cleans up if water is contaminated? what long-term impact does the carbon emitted from event tourism cause?) to social and cultural impacts such as inflation, displacement of the poor from affordable housing or crime and amenity loss. These things are seldom if ever incorporated into the planning and evaluation of events, and that represents a major problem for achieving sustainability goals.

In goal-free evaluation (attributed to Scriven, 1991b), a systems approach is taken by external, impartial evaluators. They do not start with the stated goals of the organisation; they start with identification of what was done and proceed to identify the outputs and, if possible, the longer term outcomes or impacts. Actual costs and benefits to stakeholders are considered.

This approach can uncover externalities and generate recommendations for how to deal with them. It can also avoid a potential pitfall of goal-attainment models: if you look for something, you will find it! So if the goal is to create a positive destination image through event tourism, an evaluation might go to great lengths to find evidence of success. The feedback from goal-free evaluation can inform strategy and lead to a better alignment of strategy, goals and actual effects.

Goal-free evaluation is not easy to do and will require experts, time and money to do properly, hence it is not all that common. That is why it is best thought of as a mind-set, or guiding principle when evaluations are done. The evaluator using a goal-attainment model should not fall into the trap of 'tunnel vision', being a narrow focus on goals, to the exclusion of searching for side effects or externalities.

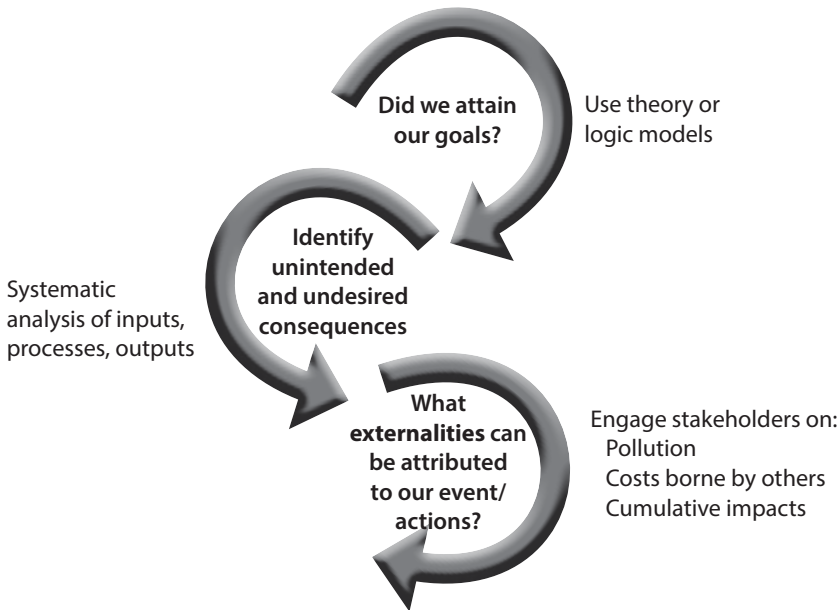
How is that to be done? Through the participation of 'downstream' stakeholders, including residents. They will see things differently and inform a more complete evaluation. 'Upstream stakeholders' are the ones sponsoring the event or tourism and their input will be part of the evaluator's mandate, however they

can be biased towards producing a favourable evaluation. The downstream stakeholders are the ones actually impacted by an event and by tourism.

7.2.1 Overcoming tunnel vision

To avoid tunnel vision the evaluator must think systematically and ask questions that go well beyond “did we attain our goals?” More importantly, the organisation’s evaluation system has to reflect TBL and balanced scorecard thinking, as embodied in the Event Compass. Here is a diagram to keep in mind.

Figure 7.1: Overcoming tunnel vision



7.3 Task analysis and the work plan

If you know in advance what exactly is to be done by everyone involved in the event, in the form of a complete work plan, then evaluation becomes much simpler. Any deviation from the work plan becomes an issue to examine: why did it happen? was it important? should we do things differently? Looking back, in post-event evaluation, the work plan will provide clues about the causes of problems. For example, if customers were dissatisfied by having to wait a long time to enter a facility, was that due to the required staff numbers not being present on time (as planned) or to another, unanticipated reason?

The work plan is all too often not specified, just as service specifications (the blueprint) are often unwritten, and that leads to problems. On the other hand, the detail required is potentially enormous, and therefore it is wise to use project management software.