# How to Measure and Evaluate Success

## What is Equal?

The Equal Programme is a European Social Fund (ESF) initiative which operates across all of the European Union. The Programme aims to develop and test new ways of challenging discrimination and inequalities in the labour market, both for those in work and for those seeking work.

Equal has acted as a learning platform, developing innovative ways of tackling existing labour market problems. It has presented evidence based outcomes which could be adopted by policy makers and delivery agents at local, regional, national and European levels.

The partnership approach in Equal is based around a model of Development Partnerships (DPs), consisting of organisations with common interests and different expertise, working collaboratively to deliver shared aims and objectives.

**www.equal.ecotec.co.uk**

**www.equal-works.com**

**www.esf.gov.uk**

There is a long tradition of evaluation in European-funded programmes, and the structural funds have been designed and adapted according to evaluation results.

Under Equal, evaluation has been a structured process for understanding and learning from experience and has enabled DPs to make assessments of their successes.

## Key Messages

- Most evaluations tend to focus on outputs – what was achieved by the DP and whether this represents success or failure. As Equal DPs are often testing new methodologies and models, it is very important that evaluation also covers the process and identifies the learning points from the overall approach
- The Equal programme recognised that DPs may achieve soft outcomes as well as hard outcomes in relation to particular target groups. Soft outcomes are outcomes from training, support or guidance which are unlike traditional outcomes, for instance, qualifications and jobs which can not be measured directly or tangibly. Potential soft outcomes need to be identified from the start and consideration given to how to measure, record and evaluate them
- Forward-planning in evaluation is essential. An evaluation model should be tailored to the project's requirements from the start. An interim evaluation should be used to check progress and inform the future direction of a project
- It is essential that evaluation is credible. Ad hoc research should be undertaken, focusing on issues important to the project. These may also include assessments of socio-economic changes in the programme environment and changes in Community, national or regional priorities
- Evaluation is a tool to help project implementation, not a burden imposed by the funder

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