

BRISTOL GOOD FOOD 2030

EXPLORING **IMPACT** & TELLING THE STORY OF YOUR GROWING SPACE

A simple guide to
understanding and
sharing your impact



Introduction

This resource was created following a peer-learning session for the Community Growers Network in Bristol on 'Exploring Impact'. The content has been shaped by those conversations, with valuable contributions from Redcatch Community Garden, Alive Activities and feedback from attendees.

It's designed with community growers and small projects in mind – especially those who are just beginning to navigate the world of impact measurement. While written for growing spaces, the ideas and tools here can be applied across many community-based sectors.

How to use this resource?

This resource is designed to support you as you start thinking about impact in a way that feels realistic and useful for your project.

You can work through it step by step, or dip into the sections that feel most relevant to you. It's intended to be flexible and supportive, offering guidance and examples that you can adapt as your project develops. It also provides plenty of space for your own reflections and notes.

What's in this resource?

- What do we mean by "impact"
- Start Small: a step-by-step guide to creating a simple impact pathway
- Impact pathway template
- Tips for collecting impact
- How to use impact
- Examples of impact reports
- A note on frameworks
- Where to begin
- Notes and reflections
- Glossary of terms and resources
- Acknowledgements



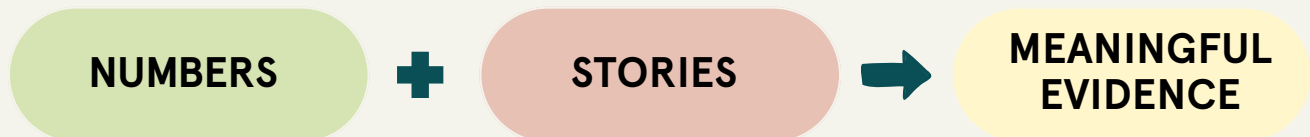
What do we mean by “impact”?

When we talk about **impact**, we simply mean the difference your growing space, project, or activity makes – for people, for nature and for your wider community.

Impact isn't about complex systems or getting everything perfect. It's about:

- Noticing what's changing
- Learning from what you see
- Telling the story of why your work matters

Good impact evidence usually combines two things:



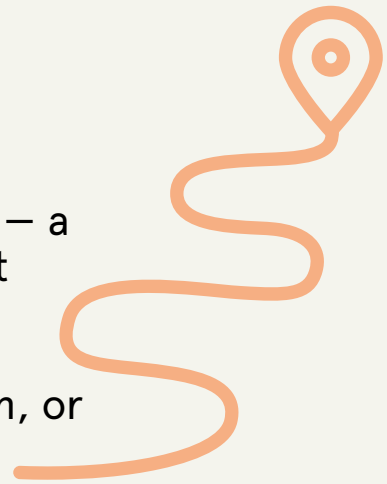
Numbers can show patterns or scale. Stories add context, depth and human experience. Used together, they help you understand your work better – and explain it clearly to funders, partners and your community.

This guide is designed to help you start small, keep things manageable, and focus on what's genuinely useful when thinking about your impact.

Start Small: a simple impact pathway for community growers

The process below introduces a simple impact pathway – a practical way to notice change, record it and check that what you’re capturing is genuinely useful.

You can use this pathway across your whole organisation, or apply it to a specific project, activity, or even a single growing session.



STEP 1 – Clarify your purpose

Your purpose describes the **long-term change** you’re working towards for people and place – the lasting, wider difference your organisation contributes to over time, even when it isn’t fully within your control.

Examples:

- Reduce loneliness
- Connect communities
- Grow food
- Upskill volunteers

Our purpose is (the long-term change we want to contribute to):

STEP 2 – Pick one to three medium term outcomes

Outcomes are the changes you hope to see as a result of your work.

Specifically here we are focusing on **medium-term outcomes** – the meaningful changes you expect to see over weeks or months.

These might be changes in people's skills, confidence, behaviours, or circumstances, and in the places or systems they interact with. They are the changes that come about as a result of your activities, and that your organisation can realistically influence and evidence.

What **medium-term changes** do you expect to see as a result of your activity/ project?

Examples

- People outcomes (e.g. increased confidence, wellbeing, skills...)
- Place outcomes (e.g. soil improvements, more diverse biodiversity, food production...)

Outcomes or Outputs

This is a really common sticking point, and something lots of people find confusing. It's very common for people to list outputs instead of outcomes, because outputs are more concrete and easier to spot and name. Taking the extra step to identify the outcomes they lead to helps make your impact much clearer and more meaningful.

Example:

Outputs (what you do)	Outcomes (what changes)
Ran 12 growing sessions	Participants feel more confident taking part in growing
Prepared 6 new growing beds	The site becomes more productive and easier to maintain

STEP 3 – Activities/Outputs

Activities or outputs are the things you actually deliver – the actions, sessions and improvements that lead to the outcomes you've identified.

This is the most familiar part for most projects, because it's what you already spend your time doing. The key is simply to be clear about which activities connect to which outcomes, and find a way to record it.

Activities can include both people-focused and place-focused work.

Examples of people-focused activities

- Workshops or skill-sharing sessions
- Regular growing sessions
- Volunteer sessions or training
- Community meals

Examples of place-focused activities

- Soil preparation (e.g. mulching, composting, bed prep)
- Seed sowing, planting, and maintenance

Make a list of some of the activities or actions you already deliver – these are your outputs:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

STEP 4 – Identify “signs of change” – traditionally called indicators

Once you’ve chosen your outcomes and identified your outputs, the next step is to decide how you’ll know those outcomes are starting to happen.

Traditionally these are called indicators, but “signs of change” can be a more useful way to think about them.

Ask yourself: If this outcome was happening, what would we actually notice?

1. Example signs of change for people outcomes:

- Someone chatting more or greeting others
- Someone staying longer or attending more regularly
- Increased confidence, relaxation, or engagement
- Changes in skills, behaviour, or willingness to participate

These are often observations, stories and small shifts over time, and could be captured through: brief notes, reflections after session, quotes, short stories.

2. Example signs of change for place outcomes:

- Beds prepared, planted and maintained
- Healthier plants or improved crop survival
- Increased pollinators or wildlife observed
- Paths clearer, space more accessible, site feeling cared for

For physical spaces and nature, signs of change are often more visible or ecological, and could be captured through: photos, simple checks, seasonal observations, basic counts.

And that’s it – a simple impact pathway for noticing and capturing the difference your work makes.

You may find it helpful to record this in a table (like the example on the next page) to support your thinking, reflection and light-touch record-keeping.



Impact Pathway template



Big Purpose	Outcome	Activities/Outputs	Indicators
Example: To create a welcoming community space for growing food	For people: People feel safe and comfortable spending time on the site For place: The site becomes physically accessible, tidy, and easy to navigate	For people: Host weekly volunteer or community sessions For place: Improve site layout: paths, signage, tool storage	For people: People staying longer on site, chatting more, and moving around the site confidently and independently (observations, simple check in pre and post session) For place: Clear paths and walking routes (observations/ before and after photos)
Now time to start your own...			

Tips for collecting the impact

Now that you're clear about your goals and the change you hope to make, the next step is thinking about how to capture this in practice.

Below are some easy, realistic ways to do this, drawn from the peer learning session. They cover capturing numbers (quantitative) and the stories (qualitative).

Qualitative (stories and observations)

1. Simple check-ins pre and post session:

- How are you feeling right now?
- What went well today?
- What did you enjoy or learn?

These can be recorded as short notes, or captured informally using a mood board, or voice recordings.

2. Observations during sessions:

- Are people chatting more?
- Are they more confident or relaxed?
- Are they trying new tasks or helping others?

Make a quick note, send yourself a voice note, or jot something down afterwards.

3. Case studies:

Ask if someone would be willing to sit down with you for 10 minutes at the end of a session to talk about their experience.

4. Describing physical changes in place:

- Improvements in soil condition
- Changes in how the site looks or feels
- Wildlife returning
- How the space is used differently over time

Quantitative (numbers and counts)

Number of sessions delivered

Number of volunteer hours

Number of growing beds created or maintained

Number of volunteers or participants involved

Surveys

Surveys can be a really useful tool because they allow you to capture both qualitative and quantitative data in one place. They can help you gather quick numbers about people's experiences by using simple scales – for example:

How did you find today's session? (1–5)

How confident do you feel doing this task? (1–5)

How connected do you feel to others here? (1–5)

These scales give you easy-to-track data over time. Surveys can also include open questions, great for case studies.

One of the main challenges with surveys is that they can be difficult to get people to complete. A few ways to make this easier include:

- using paper copies that people can fill in quickly
- offering to help people complete the survey on their phone
- keeping surveys short (3–5 questions is usually enough)
- explaining why you're asking, and how the feedback will be used

How to use impact

Impact reports

Impact reports don't need to be long or formal. They are not the same as annual reports. A short, clear snapshot often works best:

- photos
- quotes
- a few simple graphs or numbers
- one or two short stories

Think of it as a way to show the difference you're making, not to drown people in detail.

Funding applications

This is often where impact work really starts to pay off. Once you have a few case studies, quotes, observations, and simple numbers, you can use them throughout funding applications.

Funders can sometimes use formal language, but their questions usually boil down to a few key things:

Reach → How many people do you work with, and how often?

Outcomes → What difference does your work make?

Evidence of need → Why does this work matter? What challenges people or communities are facing, and why this project is relevant.

Learning → How do you know things are working, and how do you improve?

Sustainability → Can this work continue? This doesn't just mean finances. It can include strong volunteers, partnerships, community ownership, or growing confidence and skills over time.

You don't need fancy evaluation tools to do this well. A few well-chosen numbers, plus some short stories, quotes and things you've noticed along the way, are more than enough.

You've probably got most of what you need already – it's just about noticing it, and letting those small, real moments speak.



How to use impact continued...

Blogs and stories

Talk about your impact! You don't need to present everything perfectly – if you're proud of something, share it.

Options include:

- a simple blog channel
- updates in your newsletter
- posts on social media
- short "impact moments" or photo highlights

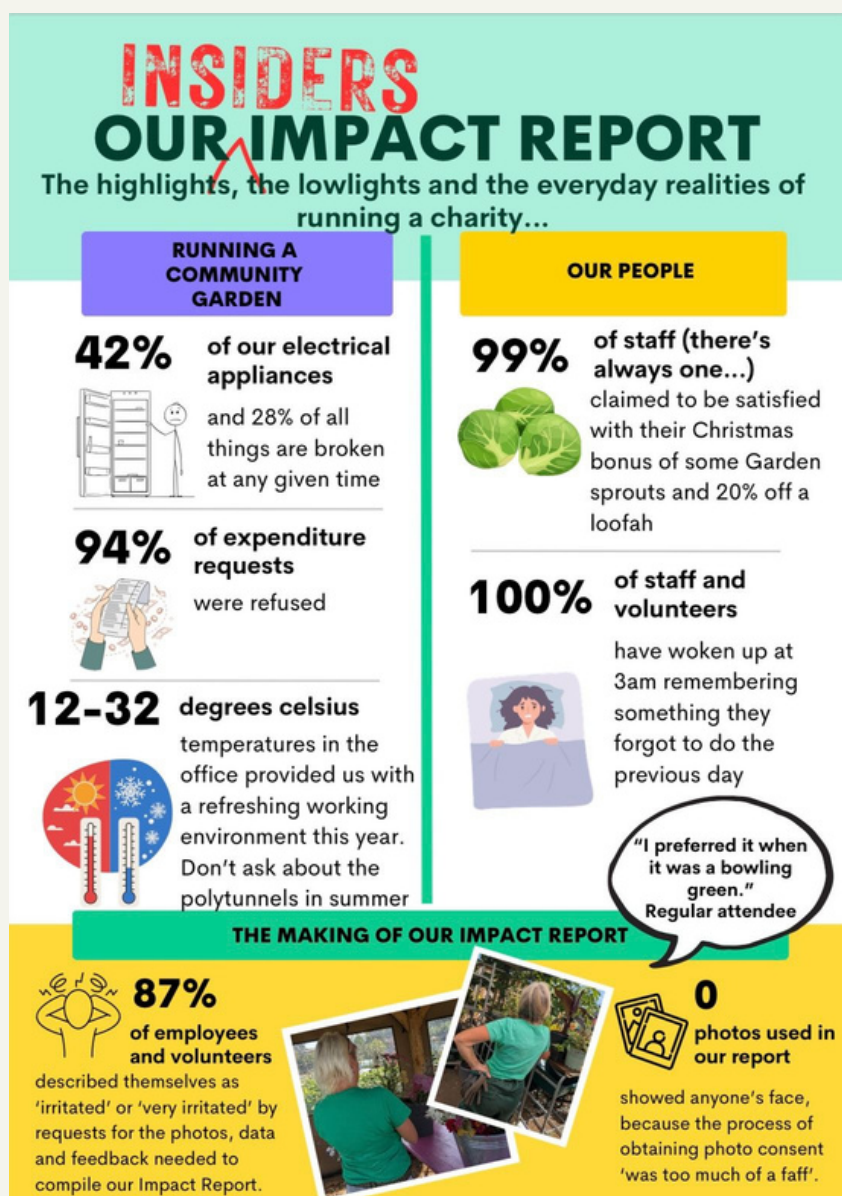
Small, regular sharing helps your community understand the value of what you do.

Insiders impact report

Redcatch Community Garden produce an 'Insiders Impact Report' – a fun, honest mix of:

- lowlights
- boring facts
- funny facts
- unexpected wins
- behind-the-scenes moments

It's a great way to bring staff and volunteers together and celebrate the whole picture – not just the polished bits.



Example impact reports

WoRD IN 2025



**Growing & Building:
Constructions, Connections, Communities.**

In 2025, our team worked hard on all aspects of WoRD, stepping up the organisation. We focused on improving our capacity, strategy, systems, volunteer programme and workshop formats, so that our small team could make a BIG impact. We built our own undercover workshop space in the Garden of Earthly Delights, We developed our workshops and teaching materials, delivered bespoke commissions, and forged new relationships. We're very proud of what we've achieved.

In 2025 we...

- Raised **£4,000** to build **The Woodshop** (our biggest build yet!)
- Used that to run **30 workshops** and **28 Volunteer/build days**
- Salvaged & processed **3.7 tonnes of timber** for **600 people**
- And grew our community through **Over 350 hours of volunteer action & learning**
- Built **135 things** with **14 partners** and people

These workshops were evaluated in 2025 with support from NORTH LONDON WASTE AUTHORITY

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT



Tackling Waste & Greening The City - Together.

In 2023, the UK produced 4.5 million tonnes of waste wood, contributing to the ongoing global environmental crisis. Solutions are possible, but WoRD sees a lack of awareness, skills, and tools for repurposing waste timber, which prevents the potential for creative, sustainable solutions.

6,000 hours of behaviour change through learning and volunteering

Our workshops equip people with the skills and knowledge they need to capture and repurpose timber and other waste, turning it into amazing and useful creations. Attendees reported significant increases in both confidence with tools and awareness of the waste cycle and what can be done about it.

Participants also reported high levels of pride in what they made, increased understanding of their carbon impact, and stronger community connections. Nearly all expressed interest using reclaimed materials in the future.

Over 150 new growing structures for green spaces created

By creating raised beds and planters directly for community projects, and equipping people with the know-how to create even more, we help to create spaces that are not only the heart of communities, but the lungs of the city, where nature and biodiversity can thrive.

20,000kg of waste timber rescued and repurposed

Through our work WoRD directly captures timber that would otherwise go into the waste stream, keeping it in use, offsetting CO2 emissions, and raising awareness of the value of this amazing and abundant resource

Evolve Year 3 Key Achievements

Evolve is a collaborative partnership between Linklaters, UBS, Societe Generale and the Societe Generale UK Foundation. It aims to build the capacity of community organisations across Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Haringey.

IMPACT ON ORGANISATIONS

% of participants that are confident that the actions generated from the workshop will help their organisation:

- 95%** Improve management systems
- 90%** Improve existing, provide new services
- 86%** Employ more staff
- 76%** Increase business knowledge

*from 21 responses

IMPACT ON VOLUNTEERS

- 167 volunteers engaged
- 1200+ hours volunteered
- 95%** Would recommend this experience to other volunteers
- 90%** Were able to learn more about challenges that third sector orgs face
- 88%** Were able to draw on professional skills

*from 55 responses

IMPACT ON INDIVIDUALS

- 115 individuals reached
- 88%** Feel more confident in addressing their particular challenge(s)
- 85%** Have grown knowledge, skills with regards to addressing their particular challenge(s)

*from 46 responses

9 types of activities
22 sessions delivered

For more information on the Impact across all activities, please refer to the full Evolve Impact Report 2023.

ELBA

These examples show different approaches to impact reporting, each strong for different reasons.

The top two examples from **The Woodshop of Recycled Delights** demonstrate:

- clear use of short, sharp impact numbers
- strong use of photos
- evidence of need
- effective storytelling

The example on the left, from the **East London Business Alliance**, is aimed more at a corporate audience. It shows how impact depth and reach can be communicated clearly through strong visual design.

A quick note on frameworks – why they can be useful

You may hear people talk about frameworks when discussing impact. Put simply, a framework is just a way of organising your thinking.

A framework can help because it:

- Helps you name things clearly
- Makes it easier for funders and partners to recognise and understand your work

Frameworks give you shared language. They help others see how your work fits into wider conversations about wellbeing, nature, food, or community – without you having to explain everything from scratch

Examples of frameworks

☀ Five Ways to Wellbeing

A simple, widely used framework for thinking about mental wellbeing.

☀ Theory of Change

A framework that is unique to your organisation. It maps how your specific activities lead to outcomes and long-term change – essentially a roadmap from what you do, to the difference it makes.

☀ COM-B model

A framework for understanding behaviour change (Capability, Opportunity, Motivation → Behaviour).

☀ UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

A globally recognised set of goals focused on improving wellbeing, reducing inequality, and protecting the planet.

Some frameworks are globally recognised (like the UN SDGs) and others are completely unique to your organisation (like a Theory of Change).

If this all feels like too much...

If you haven't heard of any of these frameworks, don't have time to think about them, or have no desire to wade through reading about them – **don't panic!**

You do not need a framework to start demonstrating your impact. They are helpful tools, not essential requirements.

Where to begin

You don't need to do everything at once.

Your next step is simply to try one small thing.

You could:

1. Start working through your individual impact pathway with the template provided
2. Take 3 minutes after a session to reflect on what you noticed
3. Capture one quote, photo, or observation
4. Have a short "what changed today?" conversation

And that's it. Small, regular habits add up surprisingly quickly!

A final reminder

You don't need perfect systems, professional tools, or lots of data.

If you can:

- notice change
- reflect on it
- and tell the story honestly

...you are already doing impact work!

**You can come back to
this resource whenever
you need – to clarify, to
reflect, or to take the
next small step.**

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Glossary

Impact – the difference your project makes – for people, for nature, and for your community

Evidence – Anything that helps show the change your project is creating. This can be numbers, quotes, stories, photos, observations, or simple records

Outcomes – The changes you hope to see as a result of your work

Long term outcomes/change – The lasting, wider change in people's lives and the places or systems they are part of, which your organisation contributes to over the long term and is not solely under your control

Medium term outcomes/change – The meaningful changes in people's skills, behaviours, or circumstances, and in the places or systems they interact with, that result from your activities within a timeframe your organisation can directly influence and evidence

Activities or Outputs – The things you deliver – sessions, workshops, hours volunteered, beds built, plants sown.

Indicators – Specific signs that show your outcomes are happening

Theory of Change – A simple map linking what you do (activities) to the difference it makes (outcomes and long-term impact). Often unique to an organisation. When you're doing lots of activities across multiple projects it can be a useful tool for bringing everything together. It's not necessary for small organisations

Framework – A structured way of organising impact (like the Five Ways to Wellbeing or People-Place-Practice). They can be useful, but you don't need one to get started

Data – Any information you collect – numbers, quotes, photos, stories, attendance sheets

Case Study – A short story about a real person, group, or place showing the impact of the project

Resources

Examples of impact reports:

- [Redcatch Community Garden](#)
- [The Woodshop of Recycled Delights](#)
- [Alive Activities](#)

Other resources:

- [NCVO](#) – help and guidance pages
- [VOSCURE](#) – impact measurement the basics

Acknowledgements

This resource was developed by



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