The Code explores... evaluating STEM outreach

Series takeaway pack

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What is The Code explores...?

A fresh approach to delivering content for the Code community. Topics are explored more deeply through a series of different events over several weeks.

Each series features:

- ✓ a blend of live and pre-recorded content
- ✓ supporting comms with event summaries and links to recordings, slides, and relevant resources... plus, a dedicated webpage to revisit content whenever you choose
- ✓ opportunities to discuss topics in the Code LinkedIn group

The Code explores... is designed to be:

- **In-depth:** each series focuses on specific topics important to the Code community
- **Flexible:** a range of content formats so you can engage in a way that suits you
- **Community driven:** giving you the chance to connect with people from across the Code community, sharing ideas and gaining new perspectives

The Code explores... evaluating STEM outreach

This series looks at evaluating and sharing learnings from our STEM engagement activities

Episode 1 / Proportionate evaluation
A talk by Laura Fowler, Evaluation Manager at EngineeringUK, introducing proportionate evaluation-aligning the depth and methods of evaluation with the size, stage and purpose of your STEM outreach activities
→ See summary

Episode 2 / The Measures bank
A free evaluation tool enabling you to identify key outcomes, choose ready-made aligned questions, and collect meaningful feedback from young people, teachers and parents, making the process quicker and more consistent
→ See summary

Episode 3 / EngineeringUK evaluation highlights
Amanda Aldercotte, Head of Evaluation and Impact at EngineeringUK shares what we've learned from evaluating engagement activities like The Big Bang Fair, Energy Quest and the Climate Schools Programme – not just what works, but how to better understand impact
→ See summary

Helpful resources We've gathered all relevant resources from each episode of the series plus additional signposting.
→ Head to this section

Episode 1 **Proportionate evaluation**

→ Watch the recording (50 mins)
→ See the slides

Evaluation is essential. But how much is enough?

This webinar introduced proportionate evaluation – an approach that matches the scope, depth and methods of evaluation to the size, stage and purpose of your activity.

Led by Laura Fowler, Evaluation Manager at EngineeringUK, the session explored:

- What 'good' evaluation looks like
- The **different levels of evaluation**: from monitoring and feedback to trials
- **How to choose evaluation approaches** that are fit-for-purpose and genuinely useful

Proportionate evaluation

Key points from the session:

- **There's no one-size-fits-all approach**: Good evaluation is useful, credible, robust and proportionate, tailored to your programme and what you need to learn.
- **Match your evaluation to your stage:** From basic monitoring through to trials, different levels of evaluation require different effort, evidence and resource. Start small and build over time.
- **Be clear on purpose and resource:** A proportionate approach means choosing methods that are justified by the decisions you need to make, not doing more than you need to.
- **Start with your theory of change:** Defining what outcomes you want and how change happens helps you focus your evaluation and choose the right measures (download our slides about a theory of change).

Relevant resources

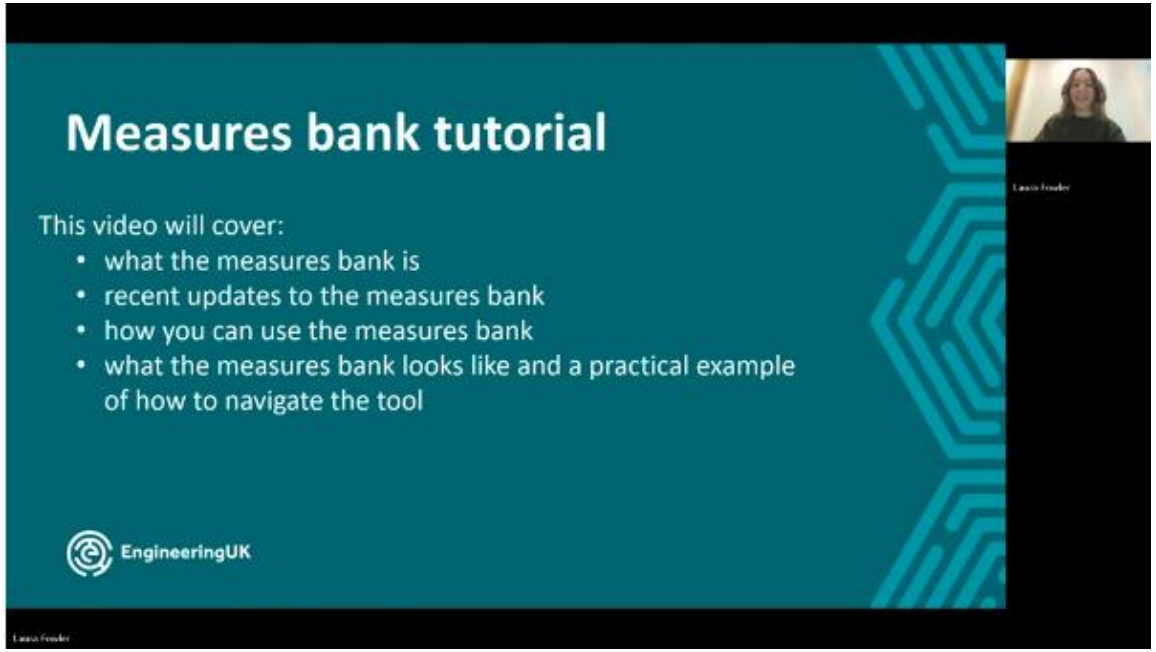
Building theory of changes

→ Theory of change slides
→ EngineeringUK's impact framework (mentions the COM-B model)
→ EngineeringUK's 2022 Theory of Change webinar
→ Theory of Change examples
→ TASO's Theory of change core template and enhanced template

Evaluation methods

→ EngineeringUK's evaluating using qualitative methods
→ EngineeringUK's evaluation approaches and causality

Episode 2: **FREE evaluation tool – EngineeringUK's measures bank**



→ Explore the tool

→ Watch short video tutorial on how to use the tool (10 minutes)

What is the measures bank?

The Measures Bank is designed to make evaluation quicker and more consistent by helping you:

- **Identify the outcomes** you want to measure
- **Select ready-made questions** aligned to those outcomes
- Gather meaningful feedback from **young people, teachers and parents**

It's a great starting point if you want to strengthen your evaluation without building everything from scratch!

Episode 3 **Highlights from EngineeringUK's 2024/25 impact evaluations**

→ Watch the video (15 minutes)

For our final ***Code explores… evaluating STEM outreach*** video, Amanda Aldercotte, Head of Evaluation and Impact at EngineeringUK, shared what we've learned from evaluating engagement activities like The Big Bang Fair, Energy Quest and Climate Schools – not just what works, but how to better understand impact.

We hope that this encourages you to reflect on and share learnings from your own evaluations too!

Highlights from EngineeringUK's 2024/25 impact evaluations

Climate SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

THE BIG BANG FAIR

Energy QUEST

THE BIG BANG AT SCHOOL

Read the full evaluation reports:

→ Energy Quest 2024/25
→ The Big Bang Fair 2025
→ Big Bang at School 2024/5
→ Climate Schools Programme 2024/25

Key takeaways

1. Context is everything
A key learning from the evaluation process is that results only make sense in context – who you reached, how the activity was delivered, and their starting point all matter. What looks like a small shift can be a big impact for less-engaged audiences.

2. Use a mix of methods to understand what's happening
Surveys alone don't tell the full story. Combining observations, interviews and open-ended feedback helped uncover why activities worked, and revealed insights that wouldn't show up in numbers alone.

3. Quality experiences drive engagement
Across observations and feedback, the most engaging activities were consistently hands-on, clearly explained concepts, included reflection, and featured relatable role models and visible diversity.

4. Make engineering real and relatable
Evaluation consistently shows that impact starts when young people can see what engineering and technology jobs actually involve. Moving from abstract ideas to real-world examples helps shift perceptions to "this could be for me."

5. Evaluation is about learning, not proving
Not every data point leads to a clear insight, and that's OK. The goal is to build understanding over time, using different sources of evidence to improve what you do.

Helpful resources

Building Theory of changes

→ Theory of change slides
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Evaluation methods

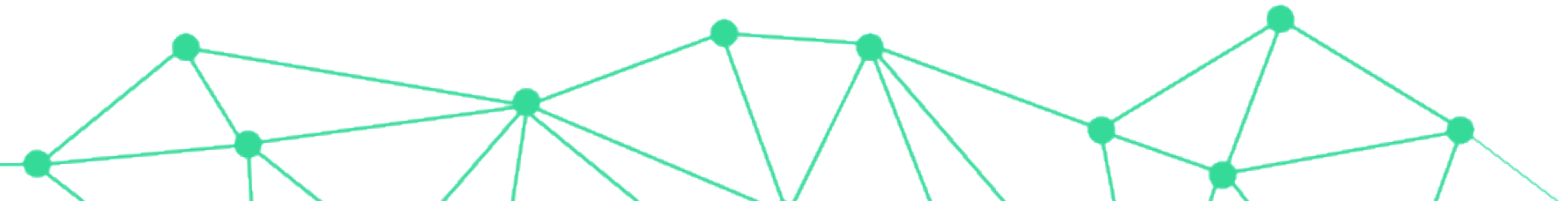
→ EngineeringUK's evaluating using qualitative methods
→ EngineeringUK's evaluation approaches and causality

Designing data collection tools

→ EngineeringUK's measures bank
→ EngineeringUK's Evaluating using surveys

EngineeringUK's 2024/25 evaluation reports

→ Energy Quest 2024/25
→ The Big Bang Fair 2025
→ Big Bang at School 2024/5
→ Climate Schools Programme



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Join the conversation!

Ready to share reflections or questions around evaluation with fellow Code members?

The Code community LinkedIn group is the perfect place to chat about **The Code explores... evaluating STEM outreach.** As a Code member, the group is open to all employees at your organisation, so why not send them the link today.

→ Join the LinkedIn group here

Invite your colleagues!

As a Code member, **The Code explores...** is open to all employees from your organisation. Do you know a colleague who'd be interested in accessing **Code explores...** content, plus updates and news of future explorations? Just send them the link to the mailing list registration form to receive our monthly newsletter and invites to our events.

→ Join The Code mailing list

The Code explores... on demand!

Find all the content from this series, plus past series, on our dedicated hub to access whenever you choose.

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