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economics as if people
and the planet mattered

Co-production Self-assessment Framework

a working reflection tool for practitioners

Overview

"Co-production means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change".[1]

Our involvement with people putting co-production into practice in a wide range of settings has given us some insight into the key ingredients of co-production activities. This tool helps practitioners to review their own practice in relation to the following key components of co-production:

1. **Assets**: transforming the perception of people from passive recipients of services and burdens on the system into one where they are equal partners in designing and delivering services.

2. **Capacity**: altering the delivery model of public services from a deficit approach to one that recognises and grow people's capabilities and actively supports them to put them to use at an individual and community level.

3. **Mutuality**: offering people a range of incentives to engage which enable us to work in reciprocal relationships with professionals and with each other, where there are mutual responsibilities and expectations.

4. **Networks**: engaging peer and personal networks alongside professionals as the best way of transferring knowledge inside and outside of 'services'.

5. **Shared roles:** removing tightly defined boundaries between professionals and recipients, and between producers and consumers of services, by reconfiguring the way services are developed and delivered.

6. **Catalysts**: enabling public service agencies to become facilitators of action rather than central providers themselves.

What is immediately clear is how much these definitions overlap with each other. Many of our questions could relate to more than one category, or even all of them. But that is simply a sign that co-production is one unifying idea, rather than a bundle of separate ones. Co-production in practice will involve alignment with all of these features, rather than only some components.

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[1] Boyle, D and Harris, H (2009: 11) *The Challenge of Co-production: how equal partnerships between professionals and the public are crucial to improving public services*, nef/NESTA; London, UK.

The framework has been set up to enable an individual to plot their own practice, how a current service or project works, and the way the broader organisation operates. This is a useful distinction because our experience is that sometimes individuals are putting co-production into action despite the prevailing culture of the programme or organization that they work for. Also barriers to and enablers of co-production can exist at all three levels, which can impact on how you make sense of what is working well, what needs to improve and where changes must be made in order to mainstream co-production. The tool can also be used as a checking point when new activities are being planned.

Completing the framework

The framework should take approximately 15 minutes for an individual to complete, although this will be longer if completed in conversation with colleagues or people who use services.

1. Identifying your score

For each of the six questions consider which of the statements most closely corresponds to your approach, your projects and your organization. Underneath, we have left room for you to insert practical examples from your experience (ideally your own work) to help make the framework more personal. For each principle, provide at least one practical example based on activities within your service. From our research, we learnt that examples help professionals to be more accurate in their assessment. Try to avoid generic examples. If you cannot think of a practical example that reflects the position you have identified, then we recommend reconsidering your ranking.

2. Reflecting on your score

Having completed the questions, these scores should be transferred to the diagram to give a visual illustration of your performance across the co-production elements. Plot where you sit for each of the 6 elements. This visual is designed to act as an ongoing reminder of the current state of co-production. You may want to have one visual for personal performance, one for your project and one for your organization. We recommend printing out the completed visual and displaying it somewhere that you will be able to see it regularly.

Depending on your results, you may want to think about what you can do to improve for next time. Alternatively, you may wish to share your success so other services within your organisation can learn from your good practice.

We recommend performance is reviewed every six months to continually improve activity. At this stage make sure you don't loose any earlier versions are they are valuable in tracking progress and monitoring any unintended consequences of changes to service infrastructure, design or personnel that might adversely impact the capacity for people to co-produce the service. The framework should also be used as a conversation guide with people who access services to understand how they experience your work.

3. Proving and improving the framework

Each time you use the framework, there is scope for adapting it or applying it to suit your service setting. Some examples of how you might go about this include:

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▶ Personalise the language in 'examples of culture and practice' and 'practical examples' for your own organisation. This way, all professionals using the audit across your project or organisation will be able to self-assess based on practical examples that are recognisable to them.

▶ Ask people who are engaged in the service to complete the framework. This can provide a check for your own assessment as well as opportunities for open, yet focused discussions on how things can be improved.

▶ Apply the framework to your recruitment process. nef research has identified that the values and personal characteristics of staff are critical to making co-production work in practice. You could ask potential staff members to reflect on times when they have demonstrated aspects of co-production in their previous work.

▶ Use the framework to audit new ideas and programmes. The framework could act as a reference point for you to review if new activities are embedding co-production.

This tool is still in development. Early development has been a collaboration between nef Holy Cross Community Trust (www.hcct.org.uk) and Professor Edgar Cahn at Timebanks USA (http://www.timebanks.org/founder.htm) .

We'd like to hear how you find using the tool.

To share your experiences and for further information on nef's work on co-production please contact Lucie Stephens at nef (lucie.stephens@neweconomics.org)

Assets

	Not there yet	Basic	Making progress	Excellent
Reflections of culture and practice	People are seen as students, users, victims, perpetrators, problems to be solved.	Service providers recognise and value the contribution people make to achieving outcomes, such as managing their condition, maintaining their health or contributing to their community.	People are asked what they like to do and what they are good at. Staff support people to put their skills or experience to use within the service. Peoples contributions are sometimes recorded as additional capacity within services.	People (and their families/ carers) direct experiences, skills and aspirations are integral to all services. All service design and delivery seeks to build on and grow individual and community assets. Progress against this is tracked.
Your examples				
Your score				
Your project				
Your organisation				

Capabilities

	Not there yet	Basic	Making progress	Excellent
Reflections of culture and practice	Professional skills, qualifications and expertise have status. Specialist knowledge is delivered/ transferred to 'client'. Strategy and policy documents restrict people to consumers, clients or service users.	Contribution is restricted due to regulations and institutional risk management. Staff recruit people and train them to perform volunteer roles within services.	Peoples practical contribution is fostered through tailored approaches, coaching or individual development programmes. The practical contribution that people make to the service is primarily determined by what roles the service needs.	People's contributions are vital to success. The activity and work required within the project is shaped to fit the skills and responsibilities of everyone involved. Personal development is a common expectation for everyone involved.
Your examples				
Your score				
Your project				
Your organisation				

Mutuality

	Not there yet	Basic	Making progress	Excellent
Reflections of culture and practice	Assumption (implicit) that this is what professionals are paid to do and therefore wouldn't be expected to need or to ask for help – nor should community be expected to provide it.	Whilst people are listened to, staff are responsible for securing funds and delivering services. Clear distinctions are maintained between roles and responsibilities of paid staff and service users. Some informal give and take occurs as a result of staff values/ ways of working.	People's ideas help to shape the way that services are designed. Their skills are sometimes built into 'services' where professionals feel it is appropriate. People know when they get involved that it will be recognised and rewarded.	People have an active part in initiating, running, evaluating, directing and delivering projects. They work alongside professionals and their skills and opinions have equal weighting. People are able to identify rewards that are valuable to them (not just money).
Your examples				
Your score				
Your project				
Your organisation				

Networks

	Not there yet	Basic	Making progress	Excellent
Reflections of culture and practice	Friends, family and peer networks seen as marginal, or negative influences on 'service users'. Generation of social networks and strengthening of both individual and community networks regarded as outside the remit of service provider.	Organisational codes of conduct don't prevent or undermine people's opportunities to support one another within services. Staff appreciate the practical and emotional value of people informally supporting one another but infrastructure does not make this easy to achieve.	Informal mentoring or buddying takes place by people connected to projects. People are encouraged to invite others (their friends and families) to come along to activities. The development of new friendships is encouraged although networks are primarily valued when they directly support the service.	Supporting peer networks that enable transfer of knowledge and skills within projects is seen as core work and is invested in. Staff and people engage in activities that connect to local networks and activities beyond the remit of the service. Growing networks outside the 'project' is seen as a core activity.
Your examples				
Your score				
Your project				
Your organisation				

Blur roles

	Not there yet	Basic	Making progress	Excellent
Reflections of culture and practice	Professionals seen as 'authoritative voice' by both paid staff and community. Generally one way transactions from professional/ expert to lay person/ community member	People are encouraged to volunteer informally around or within services. Usually training is required to ensure they understand the service and increase familiarity with professionals knowledge.	'Expert by experience' roles exist for people within services. Reciprocity is encouraged between staff and people within the service, beginning to share the activities of delivering services. The 'experience' recognised as valuable is directly related to the service being delivered.	People and staff know that it is their project. They each have an equal responsibility for it to run well. Explicitly asking for and providing help from others is seen as positive and expected of staff and people. Expectations of mutuality are discussed when people become involved. A wide range of skills and experiences are valued.
Your examples				
Your score				
Your project				
Your organisation				

Catalysts

|	Not there yet	Basic	Making progress	Excellent
Reflections of culture and practice	'Contract' between professionals and community members is implicit with community members required to comply with services/ ideas set out by professionals.	Staff invite people to play a practical role by contributing time or ideas, then seek to develop appropriate 'services' to meet these needs. Primarily the focus is what service do you want or need.	Organisations beginning to develop opportunities for people to play leadership and delivery roles within the provision of services. Services are co-designed and co-delivered but their reach is restricted by the objectives of the organisation.	The purpose of interactions is supporting people to live a good life. Staff roles focus on connecting people to networks and resources to do this, removing barriers where necessary and developing skills and confidence.
Your examples				
Your score				
Your project				
Your organisation				

Scoring

'not there yet' = blank
'basic = inner segment
'making progress' = middle segment
'excellent '= outer segment
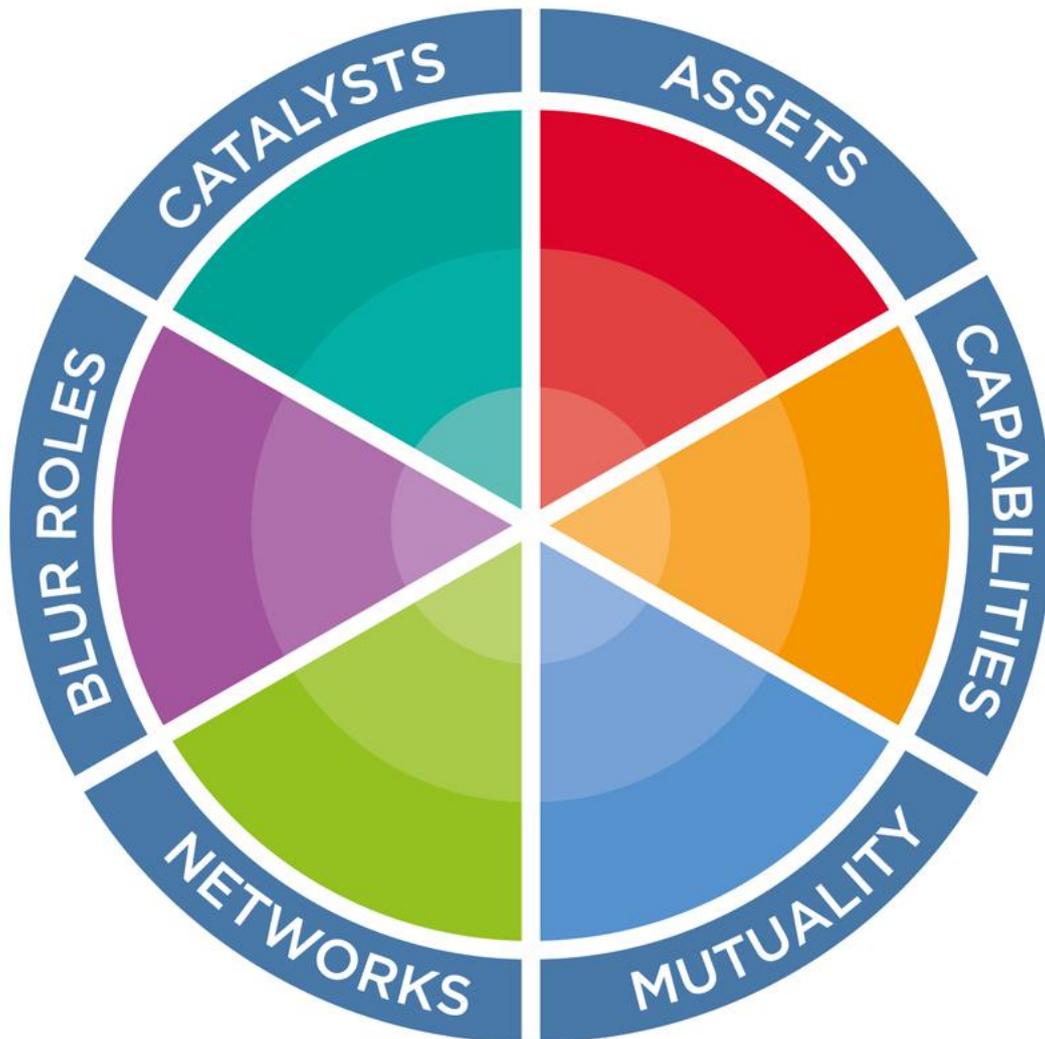
Endnotes

Boyle, D and Harris, H (2009) *The Challenge of Co-production: how equal partnerships between professionals and the public are crucial to improving public services*, nef/NESTA; London, UK.