

Evaluation Strategies – Working with Disadvantaged Youth

The Evaluation of the Pilot of Positive Futures Program in Queensland

Liz Upham and Miriam Martin
2007

What is “Positive Futures”?

- Very successful engagement program for disadvantaged young people
- Run in the UK since 2000
- Now conducted in over 115 local areas in England and Wales, involving over 110,000 young people
- Being picked up by government agencies all over the world and adapted
- Begun as a Drug Prevention strategy but has been so successful that many other government departments are providing partnership funding
- Evaluation has been a critical ongoing component and the program has evolved

Positive Futures – a Relationship Strategy

- Young People are more likely to re-engage with education, employment, families & communities where they develop positive relationships with adults
- Not a traditional youth program where the activity is the outcome
- Aims to build relationships using sport, recreation, art & cultural activities as a vehicle to build trust and respect
- Creates new opportunities for alternative life pathways
- It's about “widening horizons”, “raising aspirations” and “providing pathways” for young people

Positive Futures Pilot in Queensland

- 18 services funded across Qld by Office of Youth – all VERY different
- Purpose of the Evaluation
 - To see whether it works in Qld communities considering the differences between the UK and QLD
 - Discern what changes have to be made to the program to suit the Qld environment
 - To make recommendations re the future of the program in Qld

DVD: Mareeba

Our Evaluation Methodology

- Keys points in design
 - Non-intimidating
 - Flexible – in terms of delivery, techniques, locations and target groups
 - Appropriate mechanisms/ tools for staff, key partners and young people to ensure engagement in a variety of spaces and projects
 - Easy for service providers
 - Visual

Methodology

- Setting the Evaluation Criteria – 4 Critical success factors
 - Relationships
 - Engagement
 - Flexible, culturally attuned programs and
 - Opportunities for social inclusion
- Introductory visit
 - Targeted staff – emphasis on program not project
 - Outline process, introduce to tools and to address the fear of process and extra workload
- The newsletter
 - Networking tool and peer support

Methodology (cont)

- Midterm visit
 - Intensive consultation with staff, key partners and over 120 young people
- Managers meeting
 - Gave the “big picture” feedback and confirmed findings to date
- Case studies
- Mid term report
- Final visit
- Final report and presentation to the Department

Developing Evaluation Tools

- The Challenges
 - Developing tools which could give both quantitative and qualitative information
 - Tools had to be usable in a variety of settings i.e. at football matches, arts exhibitions, MacDonald's or Dreaming Festival
 - Consistency - Each tool had to be suitable for evaluating a wide variety of projects eg a dance workshop, canoe building or a camp with elders
 - The variety of young people – all marginalised, many with low literacy rates, many were indigenous young people in remote areas.
 - Distance across Qld

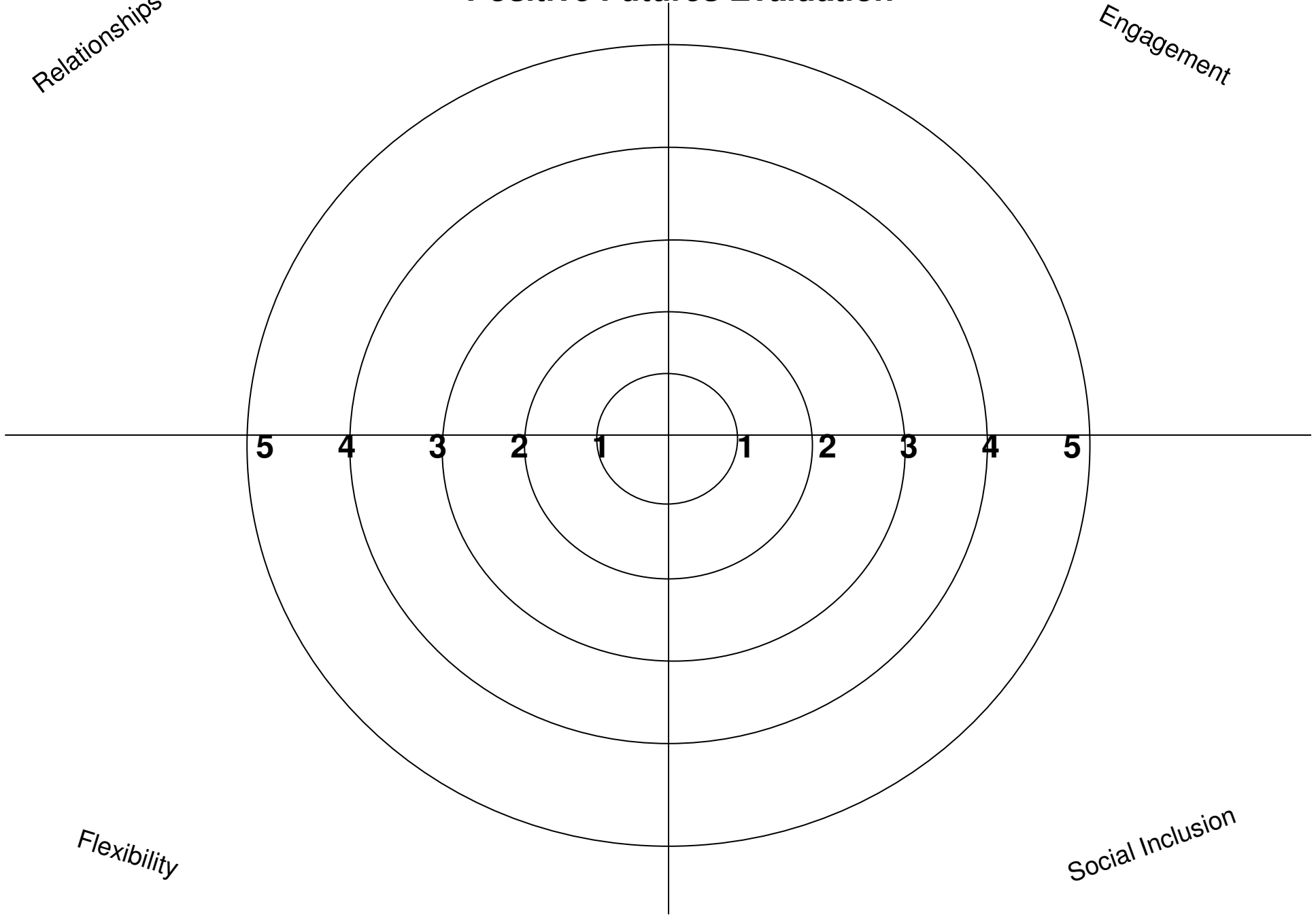
The Evaluation Tools

- Staff tools
 - The Wheel – both qualitative and quantitative feedback
 - Group Interviews onsite
 - Feedback loop
- Partner tools
 - Group or individual interviews either onsite or at their location

Positive Futures Evaluation

Relationships

Engagement



5

4

3

2

1

1

2

3

4

5

Flexibility

Social Inclusion



Young people tools

Focus Groups:

- Portable – conducted onsite or at an appropriate venue eg a cafe
- 4 success criteria in simple language
- Butchers paper and the “dots” – allowed young people to have a say without necessarily speaking
- Gave both qualitative and quantitative evidence
- Encouraged discussion as to why they rated as they did
- Photos and/or videos of activities

Young People Tools

Case Studies

Kym aged 19: “ A smile will always brighten the darkness.”

Chip aged 16: “I can’t wait to tell my Mum. She thinks I’m @\$% and this will prove that I’m not”.

Evaluation Learnings

Processes and tools need to be

- Non-threatening
- Non invasive
- Quick
- Portable
- Inclusive
- Comprehensive
- Flexible
- Visual

Future Challenges

- Different start and finish times of projects
- Comparing apples and oranges
- Need for more in-depth information from young people involved
- No opportunity to engage with young people not involved with the program

Questions?

Thanks for your
participation!

Liz Upham:

lizupham@mail.com

0414728986

Miriam Martin:

mim123@bigblue.net.au

0419120460

lucid:
CONSULTING