



RESEARCH AND EVALUATION PROJECT GROUP MEETING

27.02.14 at London Funders

Participants

Matthew	Allgood	United St Saviour's Charity
Natalia	Cecot	Media Trust
Lisa	Charalambous	London Borough of Camden
Ellie	Francis-Brophy	London Borough of Hounslow
Premila	Gilligan	Peabody
Eleanor	Harrison	Global Giving (Presenter)
Samantha	Howe	Big Lottery Fund
Mary	Locke	Charity Bank
Douglas	Lonie	Youth Music (Presenter)
Marc	Maxson	Global Giving (Presenter)
Thelfa	Quick	London Community Foundation
Nissa	Ramsay	Comic Relief
Kerry	Russell	City of Westminster
Anne-Marie	Smith	City of Westminster
Craig	Tomlinson	BBC Children in Need (Chair)
Alex	Van Vilet	New Philanthropy Capital (Presenter)
Nick	Wilson-Young	London Borough of Camden
Andrew	Wright	Cripplegate Foundation

In attendance

Becky	Green	London Funders
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Apologies for absence were received from Kate Smith, Safer London Foundation, Anya Stern, London Community Foundation and Maddie Dinwoodie, Media Trust.

Notes of the previous meeting on 21 November 2013 were accepted as an accurate record. Craig welcomed everyone to the meeting. Participants introduced themselves and their organisations.

Funder Impact Measurement

Alex Van Vliet, NPC

Alex's slides are available [here](#).

Alex began by introducing [NPC](#), and their aim to make charities and funders more successful through rigorous analysis, practical advice and innovative thinking to make money and energy go further. They do this by working in the nexus between charities and funders, as a consultancy and think tank. All funders are focusing more on impact and Alex outlined the focus of NPC's recent research, [Making an Impact](#), which offers the first representative picture of the charity sector's response to the challenge of impact measurement. There were a lot of positive findings, as the majority of those surveyed stated that both charities and funders became more effective as a result of impact measurement, and gained greater insight and learning. The direction of travel was also positive, as 82% of those surveyed said there were plans to increase impact measurement in the next 3 years. The drivers behind the funders' decisions to focus on impact measurement showed that funders were getting involved for the right reasons, such as 'to ensure that we are making the most of our resources' and to 'improve understanding of the different

funding is making' and 'help us learn from what we do'.

Alex outlined a diagram to demonstrate the cycle of using the evidence of impact measurement, from planning (using past experience) to doing (supporting grantee measuring in some way) to assessing (evaluating a funding stream) to reviewing (using evidence to inform public debate). Currently only 1 third of those surveyed use evidence to inform public debate and funders described the most common barrier to completing this stage as the quality of information received from grantees. The funders surveyed suggested there were issues with the grantee ability to measure their impact.

Measuring impact can be done in various ways, and the report found that 79% of funders were attempting to measure their impact at some level, whether that is looking at the difference they make to the charity, the beneficiary or aggregate all impact to find out their impact on a social problem. What you can and should measure depends a lot on what model of funding is used:

- Responsive funding where you are more flexible and loosely defined funding. These funders should focus on looking at the impact of the funding approach on the organisations
- Targeted funding where clear social needs are funded should focus on the impact of the funding on beneficiaries
- Single goal orientated funding where you are working towards goals in clearly defined areas can focus on the aggregate impact of funding on a social problem.

Clearly, impact measurement will look different for each organisation and depending on your funding model there will be a different focus. Funders should develop new approaches, use existing approaches and share learning. In order to improve impact measurement practice though, there are common steps that need to be carried out, such as providing more support to charities, (whether financial or an improvement of their internal capacity e.g. training or IT systems), guidance to service providers and signposting to resources and external sources of support.

Q & A

Do most funders provide specific funding for evaluation?

Whereas 75% of funders surveyed said that they gave specific funds to charities to cover evaluation, 64% of charities said that the funders didn't pay for the evaluation. So there was a disparity between these results.

Is it easier to measure the impact of targeted funding?

Some attendees commented how it can be very difficult to show the outcomes from targeted funding, especially the work is preventative. Alex emphasized that rather than the impact measurement being 'easier', it is more that it is easier to apply traditional methods when you know what you want to achieve in a specific area.

Are there any easily adapted methods for very responsive initiatives?

It is clearly much more difficult to measure your impact where there is no traditional planning model to evaluate. You can of course change and adapt your outcomes over time, as the project changes and adapts.

Terminology

Several attendees discussed the terminology used in impact measurement and whether the concept was completely understood by all in the charities. The service providers do know their beneficiaries and many are carrying out a theory of change, even if they don't call it that; the use of language can make it sound more unfamiliar than it needs to. Alex did note though that this is not something that came across during the survey, and the training does establish a basic level of understanding.

Varying funder requirements

The group discussed how when smaller charities may have information in stories and case studies, funders instead want data. Charities can have various different funders with different requirements and asking for different information, which is often very time consuming and allows little opportunity for learning. Funders should take the initiative and be quite critical as charities are being expected to do a lot of work, whereas if there were a common reporting framework or consensus of 'shared measurement' to align the funding requirements, this could be a better method. Also, grants should include segregated money for measurement.

To conclude, Craig noted how it may be easy to put a reporting system in place, but it's more difficult to do something meaningful with it, and use the information for reviewing and influencing policy. There should be more emphasis placed on supporting grantees and looking at the current expectations.

Evaluation, Learning and Impact

Douglas Lonie, Youth Music

Dougie's slides are available [here](#).

Dougie began with an introduction of the [National Foundation of Youth Music](#) and how their grants, online community and evaluation help them to achieve their priorities of identifying solutions to address musical need in England, securing future investment and being a catalyst for change. Youth Music is a national grant giving organisation with 400 active grants for music projects working with children and young people with acute problems. Youth Music try to use their information and knowledge to influence and secure further investment in the sector.

Youth Music has become increasingly evidence based and this is now very ingrained in the culture of Youth Music, needing clear definitions and explanations to explain this to grantees:

- The need – why do we do what we do?
- The practice – how do we do what we do?
- The impact – What difference does what we do make?
- The development – How do we do it better and support better practice in the sector?

THE CES outcomes approach is also a useful visual tool to explain impact measurement.

Dougie described the journey Youth Music has taken to embed evaluation into its processes and create a more consistent outcomes project, involving coming up with 10 key outcomes over across the organisation. Youth Music worked with many organisations and spoke to grantees directly about the process.

Youth Music now use a very outcomes/ evaluation focused application system, and then use Nvivo (a qualitative data analysis computer software package) to code and analyse the data, before giving statistical summaries. Dougie explained how the data needs to be filtered, and possibly only half of the information they receive can actually be used as evidence. Youth Music look at the information and statistics and redistribute the funds where they are needed regionally. Youth Music can now be a lot more accurate, honest and confident in expressing their impact. Grantees are encouraged to be as honest about what's going wrong as possible, and that it's all part of the process. Evidence should be used in a complementary way, showing trends and interpreting the results. Dougie emphasized the importance of internal commitment; if an 'expert' is commissioned, this will only be useful where there is internal commitment, responsibility and understanding. Expectations should also be realistic in terms of what you can expect from grantees.

Youth Music provide an online network to provide resources and information to grantees. The Evaluation Builder provides evaluation scales, and methods to present qualitative findings. Results can be complex, and this should be embraced. With some support and freedom, the quality of the results and evaluations can improve dramatically.

The next challenge for Youth Music is to ensure that grantees are engaged with the work and find time to bring grantees together. This will improve the quality of the evidence and make the results more meaningful.

Q&A

What process did you use to find your '10 outcomes'

Dougie explained how the team looked at all previous work from the ground up, and assessed where they could have the biggest impact. It was a negotiation between what Youth Music wanted to do, and what people wanted to see, including looking at the current situation.

How did the start of the process work?

It is an ongoing training process. Youth Music worked with many organisations and spoke to grantees directly about the process. It's very important to be realistic when working with grantees and this takes learning, adaptation and patience.

Storytelling programme

Marc Maxson and Eleanor Harrison, Global Giving UK

Marc's slides are available [here](#).

[Global Giving UK](#) is an online marketplace that connects donors with grassroots projects in the developing world and has developed a storytelling tool that enables collection and analysis of community feedback with requiring significant technical skills. This Storytelling Project is an experiment in collecting community feedback and Global Giving UK has started by recording thousands of stories told by people from areas where their partners work.

In 2014 GlobalGiving UK want to collect 10,000 stories in the UK within the contexts of youth, life transitions and other community-based projects, and are looking for organisations to be part of this framework. They are also interested in feedback and in learning with funders so that the evidence that is collected can contribute to the conversations taking place in the sector.

Charities can apply to participate in this programme or find out more [here](#) and are encouraged to contact Rachel Smith at rsmith@globalgiving.co.uk for more information or to get involved in the project.

Next meeting

The next meeting will take place on 5th June, 2014