



RESEARCH AND EVALUATION NETWORK

6.10.15 at London Funders

Participants

Nicola Schiedefeld	BBC Children in Need
Craig Tomlinson	BBC Children in Need (Chair)
Greg Woolley	CAN Invest
Shehnaaz Latif	Charities Evaluation Services (Presenter)
Katie Taylor	Charity Bank
Stacey Clarke	Charity For Civil Servants
Peter Argall	Comic Relief
Shemain Wahab	Esmee Fairbairn Foundation
Emma Geidt	Kensington And Chelsea Foundation
Jeremy Yung	Local Trust
Lisa Charalambous	London Borough of Camden
Áine Hayes	London Borough of Hounslow
Bryony Livesey	London Marathon Charitable Trust
Maddie Dinwoodie	Media Trust
Phil Sital-Singh	Media Trust
Sarah Handley	New Philanthropy Capital
Kirsty Gillan-Thomas	Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Amber Hill	Peabody
Kathryn Berry	sported
Jessica Cordingly	The LankellyChase Foundation
Sara Masters	The Mercers' Company
Miriam Furze	The Social Innovation Partnership
Chris Gorst	The Social Innovation Partnership (Presenter)
Sioned Churchill	Trust for London (Presenter)
Nick Wilsdon	Youth Music

In attendance

Becky	Green	London Funders
David	Warner	London Funders

Notes of the previous meeting on 4 June 2015 were accepted as an accurate record.

Craig welcomed everyone and reflected on the previous meeting. Craig introduced this session as a good opportunity to consider your current practices and how best to support grantees.

Charities Evaluation Service (CES) ([presentation available here](#))

Over the last 25 years, CES has worked with thousands of organisations to help them to better demonstrate the difference their work makes, learn and improve their work.

Shehnaaz Latif, Senior Consultant at Charities Evaluation Service outlined CES experience in supporting grantees and commissioned organisations to develop their outcome and impact assessment systems so that they can better report to funders and commissioners. In addition,



CES have worked directly with funders to develop their own capacity in outcomes and impact assessment so that they too can demonstrate the extent to which their money has made a difference. Shehnaaz outlines some of their learning and where it may help funders to think through their processes.

Feedback from the front line

- Timing - It's positive to be open with grantees and to discuss what your expectations will be, and when, so that they can plan their reporting and be aware of when they will be getting information and will be required to pass it on.
- Jargon - It is important that funders begin to try to get a level of consistency and clarity in language e.g. impact and outcomes can mean different things to different funders, and therefore require different responses from grantees.
- Burden - The burden can currently be both ways, for funders and grantees.

Other points also emerged, which are important to consider:

- Despite its importance, monitoring will always feel like something done to satisfy your funders
- Consider when sophisticated data collection is appropriate and when to respect that the organisation knows their clients and know when work is making a difference
- Consider the frequency of reporting and whether you are asking the right things
- Do organisations have to say the same thing in different ways to different people? Could there be a better way to share this information rather than demand duplication?

Solutions

Shehnaaz talked through different approaches to grantee support with varying time/ financial costs:

- DIY
- Subsidised/free training
- Bank of support/ a menu of options for grantee support
- Consultancy support
- Develop in house expertise
- Commission an external evaluation

In conclusion, Shehnaaz asked whether members of this network would be happy to be contacted by Charities Evaluation Service on the benefits of outcomes based funding and commissioning (to discuss how it works in reality – challenges etc). If you are happy to be involved then contact Shehnaaz directly to discuss - Shehnaaz.Latif@ncvo.org.uk

Questions and discussion

- Comic Relief commented that they had initially looked to increase data quality through their work with grantees, however have found various other benefits e.g. networking



opportunities for grantees. It has also been helpful internally to broaden training expertise for Grant Officers within Comic Relief.

- TSIP have found through their work with an arts consort, that organisations appreciate the opportunity for collaborative learning and peer learning. Strength in number give them confidence to talk to funders about their experiences and give honest feedback. London Borough of Hounslow has also found that group training sessions have been positive, encouraging learning from each other and talking/ sharing.
- Some commented that it's important for the organisations to see the data and evaluation as for them as much as it is for the funders.
- Several attendees agreed that it's important for funders to coordinate more and to do more collectively.
- Where a funder fund capital builds, however are also interested in the longer term outcomes once the buildings are being used, it can be helpful to build relationships with those giving revenue funding and look to share that information between funders rather than expect grantees to provide it twice, for an activity not included in your grant.

Trust for London and TSIP/ Project Oracle ([presentation available here](#))

Project Oracle/The Social Innovation Partnership were commissioned on a 2 year project by Trust for London to provide bespoke evaluation support to 5 community organisations piloting new approaches to addressing issues affecting young people. The support was provided throughout the duration of the grant, and included: training in Theory of Change and evaluation planning; research placements to provide practical support in data collection; insight sessions to share learning with others; and drop in sessions and one-to-one support.

Chris Gorst, Chief Operating Officer at TSIP, outlined the project and gave details on the organisations who received the support. He noted that the support had very positive impact on the organisations involved, however accepted that this level of intervention would not be possible on a larger scale. An intervention is needed which brings the benefits of this approach while being more scalable.

The key learnings were:

- Innovative projects are volatile/risky
- Only turn to impact evaluation when a project has a (relatively) stable model
- Flexible support package needed where interventions vary
- More bespoke and one-to-one support than planned
- Self evaluation requires significant investment of time from grantees and funders
- Clarify requirements up front before investing
- Grantee's capacity and appetite for evaluation critical to success
- More capable organisations better able to determine their own support
- Evaluation support can facilitate programme model development and act as early warning system



Open discussion

- It would be helpful to have open conversations with grantholders and show them good examples of what they have done. It's important to develop a more open and honest relationships so that grant holders are happy to talk about things that went wrong and reflect on this.
- Shehnaaz commented that there are some resources to look at common terminology
 - <http://www.jargonbusters.org.uk/>
 - <http://inspiringimpact.org/>
- It is important to make use of secondary data – both internal and external, including from the world of academia.
- Keep proportionality in mind when planning reporting processes, and can help groups to be in the right mind set and to see it as a helpful process rather than a daunting task.

Craig thanked the group for their open and discussions, and encouraged funders to continue these discussions. There is an important agenda going on and we need to look at sharing data and bringing information together in order to reduce duplication.