



Evaluation Support Scotland works with voluntary organisations and funders so that they can measure their impact, report on the difference they make and improve their services.



Annual Review
07/08

Building voluntary organisations' evaluation skills

What did we do?

- We provided evaluation support to **303** organisations in total - up **33%** on last year.
- We ran **44** workshops for 394 people from **184** organisations.
- **102** organisations got tailored support to develop monitoring and evaluation systems.
- We worked with **21** public or charitable funders and **11** councils to improve evaluation requirements or to support their funded organisations.
- We launched a **new website** packed with tools and examples of learning from evaluation.

What difference did we make?

We helped organisations agree their outcomes and focus on the right activities

"We developed outcomes and indicators following the [ESS] training day. We've developed a new evaluation report we use for all our groups / individuals based on these outcomes and indicators – so it really was a useful day!" offenders charity

We worked with organisations to identify the right way to collect information

More than half of the organisations we worked with developed new ways to gather evaluation information. They improved stakeholder surveys, created observation schedules or used visual techniques to get feedback from service users. Some organisations even involved users in doing the evaluation.

"Meeting with ESS clarified in my mind what I should be measuring. It helped me structure the way in which I collected the information ... The support particularly helped me measure soft outcomes, like social cohesion" environmental charity

We helped organisations report on the impact of their work

About 1 in 5 organisations used us to help them report on their impact and to share learning about what does and does not work.

“Remembering the ‘so what?’ question also helps to stay more on track and ensure that I am analysing the most appropriate information.” disability charity

We worked in partnership with funders to support evaluation

Laidlaw Youth Trust pays for funded charities to have a “bank” of evaluation support time with ESS. This helps them. We supported 29 charities to evidence the difference they are making with the Laidlaw funding, and learn for the future.

In summary more than 9 out of 10 of the organisations we worked with are clearer about the outcomes of their work and have better evaluation systems.



Case study – improving reporting

We provided support for children’s workers funded by the Scottish Government. This helped them report on the outcomes of their work with children experiencing domestic violence which in turn contributed to Ministers’ decision to continue the funding.



Case study - involving volunteers in evaluation

We worked with the Scouts East Region Training team to help them pilot a more effective way to evaluate the impact of their training on group leaders. This developed into a pilot observation schedule for use in observing how new group leaders are using the skills and knowledge to make scouting better for young people.



Case study - collecting the right information

The Tulloch Trust runs activities and developmental projects for 8 – 18 years olds to build their self-confidence and increase their ability to make informed life choices. ESS worked with project staff to set outcomes and indicators, improve information collection and assist reporting to funders. Trudy from Tulloch said:

“It was good to get the perspective of someone ‘looking in’. We realised that by us being so close there were points you could see, which were missed by us. You raised our awareness of duplicated evaluation, this led to reduced paperwork; we collected support information from schools and college, again your suggestion. You further clarified the use of case studies, and your suggestion on how to split the information gathering between the team was a real time saver. We have also added information which we discovered was omitted following our talks with yourself.”

Building a culture of evaluation and learning

Helping funders to evaluate themselves

We worked with the Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland's Partnership Drugs Initiative (PDI) to aggregate the learning from individual funded projects to create an overall report of the difference made through their funding. This helped build understanding about the outcomes of substance misuse work. PDI also identified practical ways to improve communication with funded projects and their own information systems.

Harmonising monitoring and evaluation requirements

Last year we worked with the Scotland Funders' Forum to produce the Evaluation Declaration which sets out 5 statements that describe why evaluation, monitoring and reporting are important and what they should achieve. This year we created a health check tool to help funders think about the extent to which they meet the Evaluation Declaration. 11 funders completed the tool and we gave them each a personalised evaluation health report with suggestions about how to make their monitoring and evaluation practice even better. Funders said the tool was straightforward and useful and our reports were helpful. The health check tool is now on our website.

This project also generated examples of good practice and a list of common areas for improvement which we shared with funders and at the Funders' Forum conference.

We also supported the Funders Forum Frontline to create a standard presentation on monitoring and evaluation. And we took part in research by New Philanthropy Capital on how charities with multiple funders can create a standard report.

Using evaluation for learning and policy

With support from Health Scotland we worked with 7 community-led health projects to look at ways to measure and report on the impact on people's lives of community-led health work using qualitative information. We produced a report that showcased methods and approaches for measuring community-led health work and creating robust and meaningful evidence. The next stage is to work with Health Scotland and others to share our learning with local authorities and health boards to assist in the planning and commissioning for health improvement.

Other work:

- We worked with SCVO to design a framework which in time will build understanding of the impact of councils for voluntary service.
- We ran a learning set on measuring what matters in regeneration. This built the skills of individual practitioners and helped feed into the future of the Scottish Centre for Regeneration.
- Our conference in August was very successful. Nearly 100 delegates heard what we had learned about evaluation support and gave us ideas for our future work.

What was less successful – and what did we learn?

Only 9% of organisations that attend workshops go on to access tailored support from us. For some, our training hits the spot! But that's not true for everyone so we will be reviewing our systems for training follow up over the next year.

Some organisations need support to commission external evaluations but we found our workshop was not the best way to help. So instead we have developed a free online course which is now on our website.

Other information we'd like you to know

Money

We received £249,394 and we spent £192,603.

We got grants from the Scottish Government, the Big Lottery Fund and Access to Work. We got support in kind from the Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland. Other income included contracts with the Scottish Centre for Regeneration, Health Scotland, and the Laidlaw Youth Trust.

Please contact us if you'd like a copy of our full report and financial statements for 2007/08.

Our auditors are Geoghegans and Co.



Trustees and Company Directors:

Fraser Falconer (Convenor), Professor Linda McKie (Treasurer to January 2008), Rev Jayne Scott (Treasurer from January 2008), John Arthur, Mary Craig, Martin Crewe, Dr Sam Gardner (from November 2007), Marion Lacey, Ewan Malcolm (from October 2007), Maureen McGinn (until October 2007), Dr Nicola Richards, Fiona Rogan, Dr Sue Warner (from October 2007), Dr Erica Wimbush (until October 2007)

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