

## Embedding evaluation – Harnessing the enthusiasm of staff to make evaluation stick

**This case study is about taking a whole organisational approach to embedding evaluation.**

**Read it** if your organisation wants to understand the impact of what it does.

**It will tell you** about the approach that Royal Society of Edinburgh took, and give you ideas about what to try and what to avoid.

**November 2017**

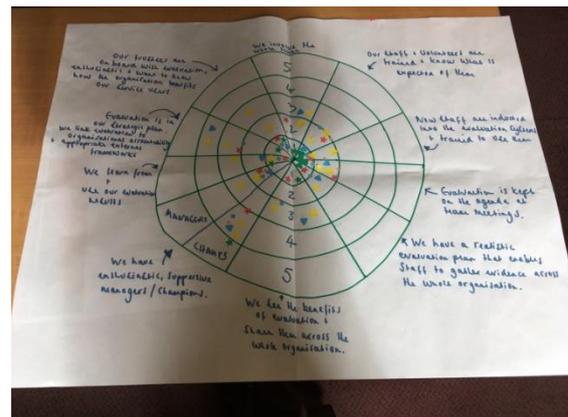
### Introduction

The RSE is an educational charity. We utilise the expertise and experience of our 1600 Fellows – distinguished individuals elected in recognition of their achievements in academia and beyond - to provide public benefit initiatives. Our main activities include funding for research in Scotland and overseas; policy advice papers which provide independent evidence to inform public policy decisions; free public lectures and events; and various international activities with our stakeholders abroad. This broad range of activities, only made possible through the scope of the expertise of the Fellowship, is a unique strength of the RSE, however we were finding it difficult to assess the impact of our daily activities given their broad reach.

In January 2017, the RSE made a commitment to try to better understand the impact we make as an organisation and to improve our internal evaluation procedures and measurement practices. We were keen to embed impact practice into our daily working processes, so that it became less of an additional task thought about after the activity had taken place, and more of a planned process included during the activity planning stage.

### What we did

The role of RSE’s Impact Officer was to facilitate this change. Initially, it involved a lot of learning; attending [Evaluation Support Scotland workshops](#), speaking to other evaluators in similar organisations, and talking to colleagues about how they record and use, or would like to record and use, impact evidence. Working with the various teams, an **evaluation plan** for the organisation was created, along with tools to record information in an easy and accessible format. In addition, during the RSE’s annual Away Day, staff participated in a workshop hosted by Evaluation Support Scotland which offered an opportunity to discuss ideas as a whole team.



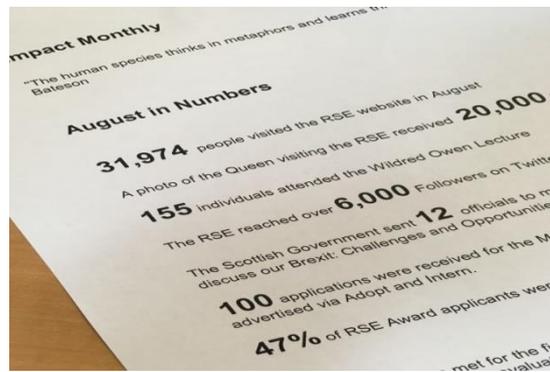
We established an internal Impact Champions Group which meets every six weeks to discuss ideas and share experiences in an informal setting. We used **Making It Stick** – an ESS resource about embedding evaluation. This provided tips

and ideas for generating discussion. Going forward, we plan to discuss one topic per session, based on the simple **diagnostic wheel** which we used to map where we were in terms of evaluation as an organisation. At the first meeting, we agreed that the Impact Group would create an internal, monthly Impact Bulletin, which is circulated to all staff, to communicate ideas and to continue to generate a culture of sharing evidence. (See photograph on right).

**Challenges and successes:** One of the key challenges over the past ten months has been engaging staff – particularly those who work ‘behind the scenes’ – to collect impact evidence on a regular basis and to understand their role in the process. The first step to improving this issue was to identify some allies. Monitoring impact activity can be a huge and daunting task, but having a network of people within the organisation, who have a mutual understanding of what we are trying to achieve, really helps.

### **The difference we made**

Over the past couple of months, people are increasingly eager to discuss evaluation or the impact of their activities, either during team meetings or on a 1-to-1 basis. The impact officer is more frequently copied into ‘good news’ emails, demonstrating that a culture of sharing impact information is growing. Furthermore, staff are utilising the feedback we receive – such as following a public event – both to report on the success of an activity, and to think about improvements for the future. Their continuing commitment is also demonstrated by the representation we have at the Impact Group; there are 10 people who regularly attend, which is almost 25% of the RSE team.



### **What we learnt**

- We needed enthusiastic staff to help spread the word.
- We had to be consultative and willing to adapt to bring all staff on board.
- We had to find a way of continuing the conversation and communication.

**Looking to the future** we are continuing to communicate monthly with staff to keep them up to date with progress.

The RSE also became a **National Impact Champion**, part of Inspiring Impact’s UK-wide movement which aims to promote good impact practice across the sector.

### **If you are thinking of doing something similar we suggest you**

1. Identify your allies and create your own network of support.
2. Get to know your colleagues, their preferred methods of working, and create effortless ways for information to be recorded in a way that best suits them.
3. Communicate - similarly to the above, learn peoples preferred methods of communication
4. Keep the momentum going – don’t give up however tempting!
5. Join the network of like-minded people to provide some impartial advice.

### **Contact details**

If you want ESS’s support please contact [Evaluation Support Scotland](#)

See ESS’s publication ‘[Making it stick](#)’ for more ideas about embedding evaluation