



REPORT

Understanding Intermediaries' Impact event

24th July 2017



Contents

Page 3	Background
	What we did
	What we concluded
Page 4	We propose doing three things
Page 5	What participants thought of the event
Page 6	Appendix 1: Key highlights of the report
Page 7	Appendix two: Challenges discussed by the tables
Page 10	Appendix three: Next steps discussion
Page 11	Approach and do's and don'ts
Page 12	Appendix four: What did people take away from this event?
	How would you like to be involved?

The purpose of this seminar was to share the findings of a scoping study by Evaluation Support Scotland and to get feedback on the next steps.

The event was attended by 39 people (excluding ESS staff). This included 7 Scottish Government officials and a wide range of third sector intermediary staff.

Background

ESS undertook this scoping study at Scottish government's request. We aimed to gauge appetite for work on how to understand, measure and report on the impact of national third sector intermediaries.

The long term aim would be for intermediary bodies and their stakeholders to be better able to tell the story of the intermediaries role and impact.

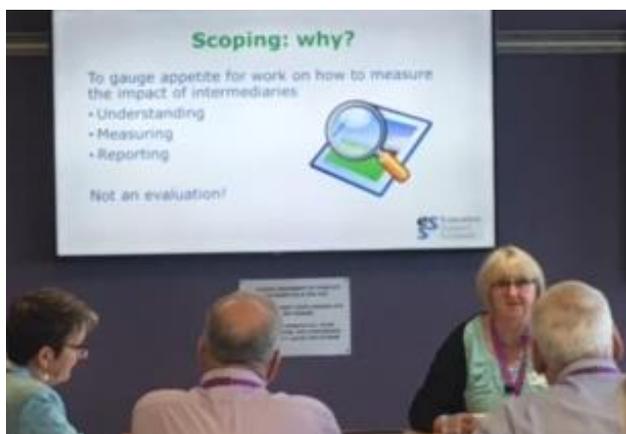
What we did

At the seminar we

- ran through the scoping report (see appendix one for highlights, go to www.evaluationsupportscotland for the full report)
- had table discussions about the measurement and stakeholder challenges (see appendix two)
- considered what should happen next -priorities and approach (see appendix three)

What we concluded

There is enthusiasm for taking this work forward and Intermediaries are keen to be involved and consulted. Because of practical constraints, not everyone can be involved in a working group.



*Very good
getting so
many orgs/ reps
together*

		<p>audience Hear from the same people all the time</p>	<p>Get better evidence from events Sample membership NCVO have a tool to assess organisational effectiveness https://www.scribd.com/lists/4311421/VIP-Tools https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2013/07/03/six-challenges-for-infrastructure-organisations/</p>
<p>Measuring and reporting on improved policy and practice</p>	<p>Two outcomes: Policy and practice, Policy is more difficult The way the public interacts with govt is changing. Implications for intermediaries? Providing channels rather than representing and creating a space for organisations to engage with policy.</p>	<p>If respond quickly don't have time to develop models and clear outcomes, models have to be flexible Attribution is an issue Whose voice, sometimes the intermediary has a view based on greater evidence</p>	<p>Good practice Using a quality standard helps Suggestions Put the focus on when you don't make a difference and what works when you do</p>
<p>Measuring and reporting on increased understanding of sector or peoples' needs</p>	<p>Yes, but only two tables looked at this issue Not always funded to do this work, do because gives govt better info to understand need/ demand</p>	<p>Need to look at issues in the broadest sense, other issues impact eg poverty, social security Identifying attribution Identifying needs of non-members Over reliance on members, evaluation fatigue Risk of intermediary being disconnected from the community it serves</p>	<p>Good practice Range of support to draw on, media, desk research, collaborators, members, broader connections and communities' of need</p>

<p>Measuring and reporting on improved collaboration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed responses from tables because some collaboration is easier to evaluate than others. • Intermediaries enable conversations to happen and sharing of perspectives • Spectrum of loose connections at one end to formal partnership at the other. Formal partnership is easier to evaluate, clearer purpose and expected outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration is both a process and an outcome. There is a 'so what?' about it, decided it should be an outcome because its beneficial in its own • You don't know what's going to lead to what? (both in terms of activity and outcomes) • It can take a long time to build connections? Therefore more difficult to measure. • What's good enough return on investment and how do you measure that? • How do you measure the risk of not being there? 	<p>Good practice Joint reports to Scottish Government work if right systems and processes in place. (no specific example given)</p> <p>Need time to build trust Bringing specialism together can really add value</p>
---	--	---	--

Appendix three: Next steps discussion

Participants were asked to say which of the following is the priority and to share the best approach

- 1. Identify the range of intermediary functions and outcomes**
- 2. Clarify with government what is needed and possible**
3. Explore or give specific support around specific issues: policy influence, collaboration, org effectiveness, other
4. Develop resources and guidance
5. Other?

The **first two** came out as being the top priority.

There was some appetite for sharing good practice and approaches across intermediaries, but a sense that we needed to clarify functions outcomes and expectations first.

It was suggested that it might be good to issue a good practice guide or set of principles for civil servants (and other funders), this might include:

- What is an intermediary (what they do, role, value bring)
- Intermediary outcomes
- What you can expect (the need to be flexible to allow intermediaries to respond to need/ changing context, etc)
- What you can't do (force things on their members, change their constitution, compromise their independence)
- Reporting arrangements: clarifying what is good enough evaluation and evidence, possibly an exploration of different funding models – e.g. reporting is different for a core function as opposed to a specific project.

It might also include tools for conversations between officials and intermediaries

Approach

The key theme here was that everyone should be consulted, but not everyone could realistically be involved in working group or learning set. The SCVO Intermediaries Network is a good starting point for sharing and consulting with people, but does not currently include all intermediaries.

Some groups felt that we already had the makings of a simple guide within the Scoping report. There might also be other work that we could draw upon for example previous work through the Intermediaries Network or relevant guides produced by ESS or others).

We will be guided by the following Do's and Don'ts identified in groups.

Do's



- Carry on being inclusive and co-designing
- Be clear that this is an area the intermediaries themselves see as important (it's not just for government).
- Consult all intermediaries: give plenty of notice and consider timing
- Link with Intermediaries Network (but also go beyond intermediaries network and those funded by SG)
- Consider how the environment affects activities and outcomes
- Keep it simple and concise (report commended for its simplicity)
- Consider different timescales: short and long term outcomes
- Recognise that one size does not fit all
- Take a menu approach: so people can mix and match to reflect their approaches and functions
- Be proportionate and realistic
- Be authoritative: so funders take it into account
- Scope what is already out there: e.g. charting the waters (policy influence) and previous work shared through the Intermediaries' Network
- Explore with SG what they are looking for
- Engage across govt and other funders on value/ role of the intermediary

Don'ts



- Create a single framework that everyone has to use
- Over promise and under deliver
- Create a cottage industry
- Expect miracles
- Expect technology to solve everything (E.G knowledge hub)
- Forget the context in which intermediaries are working (be proportionate)

Appendix four: *What did people take away from this event?*

Two key themes came out of this feedback:

Understanding the diversity of intermediaries

Recognising that there are common issues

"There are shared issues but a lot of differences"

"The difference in scale, resources and understanding of intermediaries."

"That this is a shared challenge. Not specific to a handful of organisations."

A number of people also said they had increased optimism and increased appetite to work together collaboratively.

"Appetite for sharing. Possibilities of better understanding of intermediary role."

"Optimistic that there will be a greater understanding of the role of intermediaries + a willingness to work together."

A couple of people mentioned specific bits of learning such as recognising that some people were already evaluating well and the value of membership.

"Reflection on our membership and the value they place upon us as an intermediary and the benefits + enablement our members bring."

How would you like to be involved?

Most participants expressed a desire to be kept informed and consulted. There was a spectrum, with some wanting more light touch involvement, some being happy to share their experiences, others expressing a desire to be part of any working group. Time and commitment seemed to be a key factor. A couple of people mentioned the SCVO Intermediaries Network as a forum for keeping them informed.