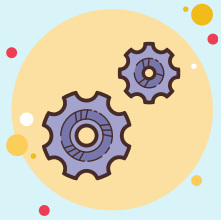
OUR LEARNING THIS YEAR

ESS LEARNING PRIORITIES

In our Strategic Plan 2019-23 we have set out 8 priorities about what we want to learn. We thought we'd update you on our progress after one year.

WHAT IS 'ADVANCED' SUPPORT?

We found this is hard to pin down because "advanced" means different things for different organisations. For some it may mean 'more sophisticated' whilst to others it means 'they want to be better' depending on their current evaluation practice. Our learning: We have developed resources about complex evaluation challenges, and we have also improved our diagnosis to support our clients to be clearer about what they need.

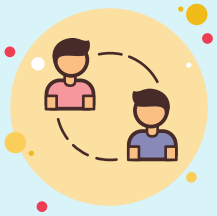


HOW TO EMBED EVALUATION

Embedding means evaluation is part of everyday work. We've learned about how to help organisations take simple embedding steps. We've added a webinar on "getting unstuck", an infographic on getting others on board and created and used messages from grantholders for grantholders.

HOW TO HELP ORGANISATIONS DETERMINE IF THEIR EVIDENCE IS GOOD ENOUGH

We've learned that the key to good enough evidence is driven by the question "what do you need you evidence for?" and so is it good enough for that purpose? We will be testing out a new resource in the coming year.



HOW DOES PEER LEARNING SUPPORT EVALUATION?

We've concluded that peer learning works well with an adaptive challenge topic and helps people work through their issue, reassures that they are not alone with a problem, and generates practical solutions.

HOW TO WORK WITH FUNDERS AND FUNDED TOGETHER TO SHARE LEARNING AND USE EVIDENCE and HOW TO CREATE AND SUPPORT SITUATIONS FOR PEOPLE TO BE MORE HONEST ABOUT WHAT DOESN'T WORK.

We've developed an effective "learning event" model for projects with something in common, that generates strong impact and learning evidence and reduces the sense of competition. In relation to sharing what didn't work, one insight is that it is easier to share a problem after you have fixed it.

HOW TO INVOLVE SERVICE USERS IN EVALUATION

We need to keep reminding organisations that involving service users goes beyond asking for their feedback. Where organisations have the confidence to give control to service users to design evaluation it works well. We have case study examples of involving young people at every stage in the pathway.

THE ROLE OF TRUSTEES AND VOLUNTEERS IN EVALUATION

As a way of testing, we are involving our own trustees in developing the Annual Trustees Report and we are planning to launch a trustees' webpage in Trustees Week in November 2020.