UNLEASH THE POWER OF EVALUATION

Annual Review 2021/2022

Evaluation Support Scotland

WELCOME TO OUR 2021-22 ANNUAL REVIEW

Evaluation Support Scotland was set up in 2005 to do away with meaningless monitoring and make evaluation about celebration, improvement and giving a voice to the people we work with. In these challenging times our mission is even more important. Evaluation must be useful. It must be about telling a story to influence positive change.

This annual review summarises some of our work last year to do just that. This year we will be developing our new strategic plan and promoting our Principles for Good Evaluation. Please get in touch if you have ideas about what we can do to make evaluation even more meaningful and useful.

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@EvalSupScot

Check out our website and sign up to our newsletter

HEADLINES FROM OUR YEAR

USING EVALUATION TO SHAPE RECOVERY

Helped organisations evaluate the work they delivered during the pandemic and use that learning to shape their future services.

SUPPORTING EVALUATION LEADERS

Provided advice and peer support for people with lead responsibility for evaluation.

DEMYSTIFYING EVALUATION

Delivered and improved our popular core support and training to build organisations' evaluation skills and confidence.

BUILDING FUNDERS AND FUNDED RELATIONSHIPS

Brought funders and funded together to share learning from and about evaluation. We worked with funders so that the third sector got free support.

EVALUATING "WHAT WORKS"

Helped organisations measure and share how they tackle tough problems such as homelessness or health inequalities.

652 ORGS IN 365 DAYS

In total we worked with **652 organisations** (more than ever before) based in every local authority area in Scotland.

SPLENDID BLENDED DELIVERY

We drew on our own evaluation to develop new **blended delivery model** (a mix of online and in person support). This included new mini workshops for small organisations.

OUR CORE TRAINING AND TAILORED SUPPORT

WE RAN 31 LET'S EVALUATE! WORKSHOPS FOR 320 PARTICIPANTS

48 participants (27%) responded to our follow up survey and 45 said we'd helped them improve their evaluation. Almost all said they'd improved their evaluation knowledge three months later. Our pie chart summarises feedback (some said more than one thing):

- 18% General improvement in self-evaluation practice
- 18% Methods in place
- 16% Embedding evaluation across the organisation
- 14% Clearer outcomes & indicators
- 13% Better analysis & reporting
- 12% Implemented new evaluation plan
- 9% Other

> "This was SO much better than I expected. I have done quality management and evaluation training before that was too complex to feel confident using in real life. This has been amazing."

Children's charity

> "I have developed a monitoring and evaluation plan from what I learnt at the workshops ... It also taught me not to over complicate outcomes, sometimes less is more"

Carers charity

WE PROVIDED TAILORED SUPPORT TO 76 ORGANISATIONS

Helping with bespoke plans, methods and analysis. Two examples:

"Our service has implemented multiple tools we discussed such as the fun ways to support the children to be involved in the evaluation process. Incorporating the work we already do into everyday practice as evidence of indicators our outcomes such as registration forms and attendance records."

Childcare organisation

"[ESS] immensely helped us understand how to measure long term impact and how to better capture data from referrers. They helped us develop an outcomes framework and reviewed the tools we were already using and made many very useful suggestion on how we can improve the way we collate data. We have already used some of these suggestions in practice and it worked really well."

Family support charity

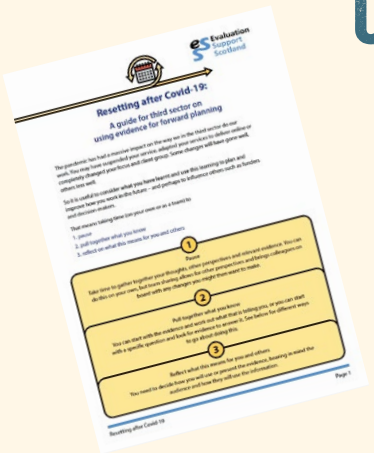
WE PUBLISHED LOTS OF NEW FREE RESOURCES

Including a toolkit for evaluation leaders and Not Just A Story - a workbook on using stories as evidence

Our Thrive Learning Programme (with Actify) provided planning and evaluation training for 41 people in the sport and physical activity sector.

"Excellent delivery, informative and good discussions, really enjoyable training."

OUR SPECIAL PROGRAMMES



CRISIS TO RECOVERY

Our **Crisis to Recovery** programme supported organisations to use Covid-19 evaluation to make decisions about future services. We created resources and videos to help others do the same.

> "… We were also able to use the reflections and learning to make a successful [funding] application .... We started last week! The [Crisis to Recovery] sessions were really helpful because not only did it mean that I protected time to reflect and plan which when delivering a service can be really difficult but also the logical approach provided excellent tools for building a robust strategy forward and the discussion with other organisation were really inspiring and provided a great deal of mutual support at a very difficult time"

Crisis to Recovery participant 6 months later

WORKING TOGETHER BETTER

Our *Working Together Better* programme helped **partnerships** evaluate their joint work during Covid-19.

TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES

Recognising our Rich Tapestry is our programme to support the third sector evaluate its contribution to **tackling health inequalities**. This year we ran workshops for practitioners and community link workers.

We also published a scoping report on how commissioners can use third sector evidence.

> "The impact of your training has been positive and helped us recognise and acknowledge how our work with children and families contributes to health and the importance of measuring / reporting this to funders and for ourselves."

Children's disability charity

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

We continued our **preventing homelessness learning** programme for lottery-funded projects to come together with funding officers and generate shared learning. Projects said it is valuable to reflect alongside others.

COMMUNITY-LED HEALTH

We rolled out a new outcomes framework for community-led projects funded by Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). This shifted the reporting focus from numbers to meaningful outcomes. The evidence provided made the case for more HSCP investment. Senior managers responded positively to the shift to more qualitative data.

Image Credit: Sytyke ry

WORKING WITH FUNDERS TO SUPPORT THE THIRD SECTOR

EVALUATION SUPPORT CONTRACTS

We ran evaluation support contracts with six funders, ensuring hundreds of organisations got **free** evaluation support.

Our National Lottery Community Fund contract finished in September 2021. Across four years we worked with 151 grantholders. Each set a goal for what they wanted us to help them with and at the end of the contract the position was as follows:

Goal achieved	**101** (67%)
Goal partially achieved	**26** (17%)
Goal probably achieved but no clear evidence or too soon	**19** (13%)
Used support but goal not achieved	**5** (3%)

> "it has greatly improved our understanding of, and focus on, appropriate outcomes and indicators, allowing us to write online forms that elicit genuinely useful and relevant feedback (sometimes including negative feedback we can learn from!) and more of it - our original problem was that no-one responded, now we have a 15-20% success rate for our survey."

Grantholder

LESSONS LEARNED REPORT

We also published a lessons learned report on how funders can best support grantholder evaluation.

WORK WITH CORRA FOUNDATION

We worked with Corra Foundation to develop practical resources on how **Corra as a funder uses evidence**, including community stories.

FUNDING AND RELATIONSHIPS WORKSHOP

We ran our Scottish Government Funding and Relationships workshop for officials with funding responsibilities.

> "I thought it was one of the best workshop/ courses I have been on in Scottish Government. It was very practical and I will be able to implement this into my own work"

EMBEDDING OUTCOME GOOD PRACTICE

We supported officials to embed outcome good practice in the new **Victim Centred Approach Fund**. The lead official said:

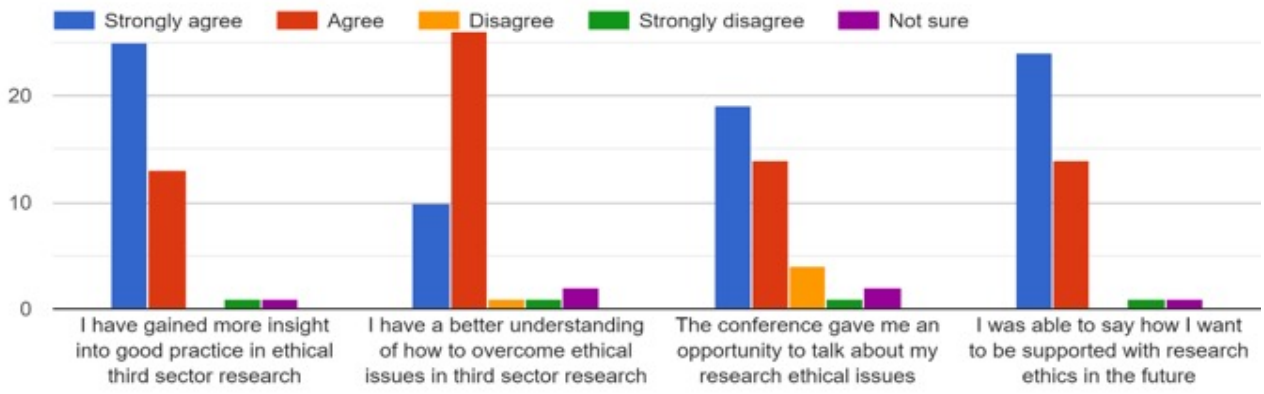
> "From my perspective I found ESS input really useful in helping us design the fund. Your input and feedback as the guidance developed was invaluable, especially on issues such as defining priorities and outcomes and thinking about what level of detail it was fair to expect applicants to be able to provide. ESS input gave us a different perspective, from an applicant's point of view, that we wouldn't have had within SG."

VALUING THIRD SECTOR RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE

We ran meetings of the Third Sector Research Forum (TSRF), promoted third sector research, ran joint events with Policy Scotland (Glasgow University) and launched our research ethics guide.

78 people attended our **Talking Ethics** conference. The conference report is on our website. Extract below

1. Thinking about the whole conference please rate the following statements:



We published a new guide: "Learning from Evaluation – What works in your third sector organisations"

We shared third sector evidence with **Scottish Government** and joined the SG evaluation and research group for Covid recovery.

OUR LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

1. The review of our National Lottery evaluation support contract showed that our support was successful because we built strong relationships and learning cultures alongside technical evaluation skills. We need to continue to **encourage funders** to help grantholders to access evaluation support in ways that work for them.

2. Peer learning events and "advanced" workshops work best for people with existing evaluation knowledge. We need to work even harder to direct people to the **right level of support** at booking.

3. We got really helpful feedback from our own participants this year to improve the **equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)** of our own provision. In the coming year we also will respond to the increasing interest in EDI within third sector evaluation.

4. **Crisis to Recovery**: We made meaningful, long-term impact on participating organisations. ESS support was timely and relevant during the Covid-19 crisis. We can build on this to promote other ways of using **evaluation for a purpose** in future.

5. From regular evaluations we know that the Third Sector Research Forum and events make a positive difference. However, feedback shows a need for more practical support and networking for **third sector researchers** than is possible through our current activities. We have commissioned an independent review to find a better way of supporting third sector research and researchers.

FINANCIALS

Income: £360,865

Expenditure: £341,452

Our Annual Report and Financial Statement for 2021/22 is on our website.

Evaluation Support Scotland works with the third sector and funders so that they can measure and report on their impact and use learning to improve practice and inform policy.

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