

Helping you Share your Learning



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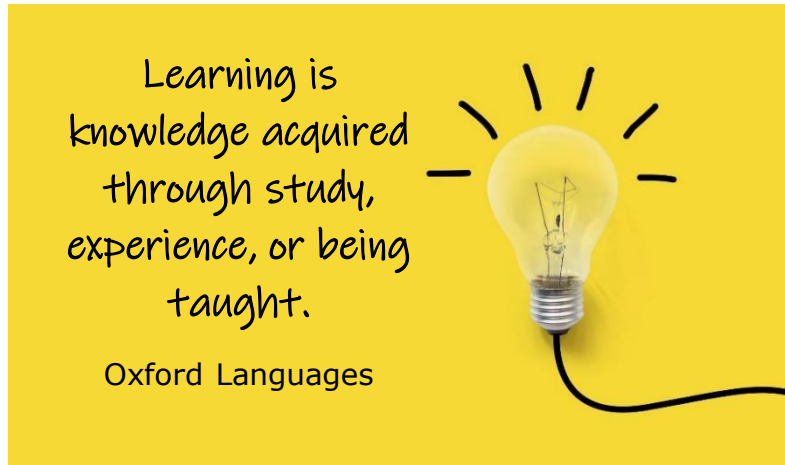
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If you have
knowledge, let
others light
their candle in it.

Margaret Fuller



What do we mean by “learning”?



Delivering and evaluating your services will inevitably generate learning. Learning doesn't have to be big or complicated. It might be as simple as discovering that the thing that really helps people engage with your project is making time for a cup of tea. You are likely to learn about lots of different things including:

- What works
- For whom
- In what circumstances

Unless you regularly set aside time to stop and think, it's easy not to see learning as “learning” – you will just tweak and improve your practice automatically as you go along. This workbook gives you a structure to help you make the most of your learning by sharing it more consciously with others who can also benefit from it.



Why use this workbook?

ESS has other resources that can help you identify¹ and capture² your learning. These are free to download from the [resources section](#) of our website. This workbook is an editable PDF. You can type in the boxes, save, edit and share the document with colleagues. It can help you with:

- pinpointing **what** learning you have that it would be **helpful to share**
- considering **who** to share it with (inside and/or outside your organisation)
- working out what you want to **achieve** by sharing
- thinking through **how best** to do it.

¹ [Learning from evaluation: What works in your third sector organisation](#)

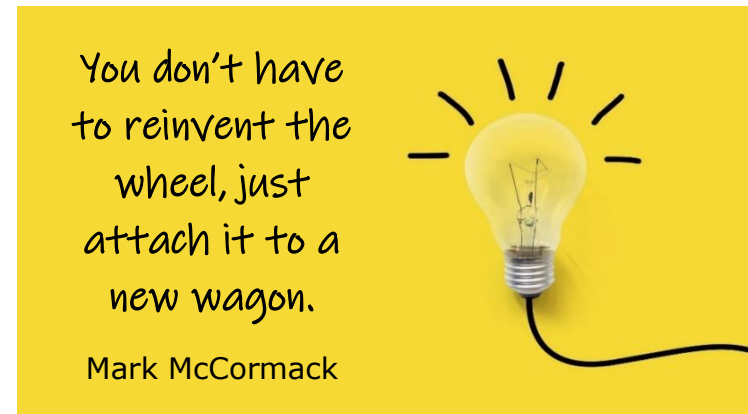
² [Change Record Template](#)

Why share your learning?

The third sector is all about making a difference (achieving outcomes). Charities, social enterprises, and voluntary groups are set up in response to an identified need in society.

For many such organisations, ultimate success would mean the problem they were set up to address has been solved and so they are no longer required – the need doesn't exist anymore.

Society's ever-changing complexities mean this is unlikely to happen very often, but we can all **make more of a difference more quickly** if we all make sure others can benefit from what we learn.



Sharing learning links closely to two of Evaluation Support Scotland's [*Principles for Good Evaluation*](#):



Four ways to approach sharing learning

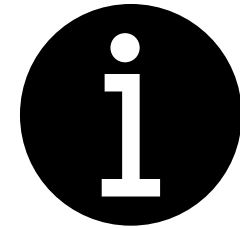
There are at least four different aspects to thinking through sharing your learning. It's a good idea to think about **all** of them when planning what learning to share and how, but we suggest you **start** from the one that instinctively **feels most relevant**. Often, but not always, this will be [what information you have to share](#). Wherever you start, considering some or all of the other areas can help you finalise your sharing plan.



What information you have to share

Do you already have some information which is (almost) ready to share more widely? For example, you might have:

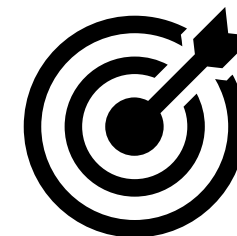
- written a **case study** for a funder report that shows the difference your service often makes (outcomes – ie what works for whom in what circumstances)
- analysed **stakeholder survey responses** to inform your strategic plan
- collected some **quotes from referrers** to use on promotional materials
- created a **slideshow** for a conference
- pulled together **top tips from your pilot project** to share with other branches of your organisation
- identified little **gems of best practice** over time (obvious to you, but not necessarily to others)



What's bubbling up for you?

List any information you have that is (almost) ready to share more widely:

What you want to achieve by sharing



Why are you thinking about sharing learning? What is motivating you? Tick the relevant box/es below and add further details that will help you pin down what you want to achieve. If you find you have selected lots of reasons, we recommend you identify your top one or two to start with.

We want to:

<input type="checkbox"/> Inform local / national policy development ³	Which policy area/s?
<input type="checkbox"/> Enable other projects to do similar work	What kind of work?
<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid others having to reinvent the wheel	Who would benefit?
<input type="checkbox"/> Help people understand the value of our service	Which people?

³ [Evidence for Success guide](#) – A resource to help organisations use their evidence to influence policy and practice.

<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage commissioners / funders to invest in this type of work	What type of work? Which commissioners / funders?
<input type="checkbox"/> Celebrate the great work we've done	Who needs to celebrate?
<input type="checkbox"/> Help our organisation think about how to do things even better	What aspects of your work do you want to improve?
<input type="checkbox"/> Meet funder / statutory requirements	What are the requirements?
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	

NB: If you were drawn to **start** here, it might be that you have more work to do to identify and pull your learning together into a format that can easily be shared. Your responses to this section may have a strong link to your thoughts about [who might be interested](#) – or at least, who you **hope** might be interested!

Who might be interested

Your responses to this section will be related to [what information you have to share](#). They might or might not also link strongly to [what you want to achieve by sharing](#) your learning. But if you have some learning ready to use for one purpose, it's worth thinking about **who else** might be interested.

For example, you might have written a case study for a funder report, but your volunteers and board might also like to read it to find out more about the difference your service makes for people in the longer term.



Who (else) could use what you've learned?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Participants | <input type="checkbox"/> Health & Social Care Partnerships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Families / carers | <input type="checkbox"/> Other local organisations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteers | <input type="checkbox"/> Others working in the same field |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staff | <input type="checkbox"/> Other organisations doing similar work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Managers | <input type="checkbox"/> Local policy makers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your wider organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> National policy makers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your board | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Referrers | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Partner organisations | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Funders | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The media | |

Who (else) might be interested in your learning?

Why might they be interested?

Do you already have contact with them, or will you need to reach out?

What methods you have available



This section links very closely to [who might be interested](#) and [who you can reach](#). Different ways of communicating are likely to reach different (types of) audiences.

For example, if you have realised that your board and volunteers might also be interested in reading the case study you wrote for a funder, you simply need to think about the easiest way to share it with them. How do you already typically communicate with these audiences? Is it appropriate to use that method to share the case study?

Sometimes, thinking about the different methods you have available may help you identify another possible audience for your learning.

Alternatively, if there is something specific you want to achieve by sharing your learning, you might decide you need to use (and even invest in) a new method that will be more effective than those you typically use.

Who can each of these methods reach?

Which of these means of communication do you already use?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletters | <input type="checkbox"/> Presentations at conferences and events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Website | <input type="checkbox"/> Discussions / conversations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blogs | <input type="checkbox"/> Posters / flyers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Training courses | <input type="checkbox"/> Press releases |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social media | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internal / external reports | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meetings with funders / partners | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |

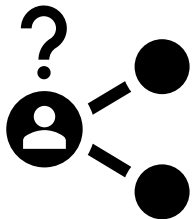
How much time and resource are required to use this method?

How important is it to use this method for this purpose?

Other Considerations

Once you have thought about these four aspects of sharing your learning, you may find it helpful to consider these additional questions:

- **Who holds the knowledge?** Who was most directly involved in the activities that generated this learning? Who initially did the learning? Can you ask them to review the messages you plan to share to ensure the learning hasn't been lost in translation?



- Given what you want to achieve by sharing your learning and who you want to share it with, **who is the right person to do the sharing?** For example, it may work best in your organisation if your Fundraiser shares what you've learned with funders, frontline workers share it with your clients, and your Chief Executive shares it with policymakers.

- How will you know if you have been **successful in sharing your learning**? What will it look like if you have reached the people you wanted to reach? What would happen? For example, you might: receive more appropriate referrals, notice other projects adjusting their practice, or be invited to contribute to a policy consultation.

The degree to which you want to measure your success will depend on [What you want to achieve by sharing](#) your learning and how important this is to your project. ESS has some guides that can help you think about how to evaluate **communications**⁴ as well as **policy influencing work**⁵⁶⁷.



⁴ [Evaluating publications – a short guide](#)

⁵ [Evaluating Policy Influence](#)

⁶ [Charting the Waters – a guide for the third sector on how to evaluate policy influencing work](#)

⁷ [Walking the talk: A guide for funders on how we evaluate our policy and practice influencing work](#)

Your Sharing Learning Plan

You might find it helpful to use a template like this to bring all your answers from previous sections together. This can help you prioritise which bit of learning you want to share first and who with.

What learning do we want to share?	Who knows most about this learning?	Who do we want to share the learning with?	Why might they be interested in this learning?	How do we want to share it?	When will this happen?	Who is responsible for doing the sharing?	What will success look like?

Project / Organisation:

Plan completed by:

Date:

The best part of
learning is sharing
what you know.

Vaughn K Lauer

