

Hackney CVS

DELIVERING CHANGE

Evaluation report
Year one

compiled by Peter Kent-Stoll
August 2016

hackneyCVS



Acknowledgments

It is important to acknowledge the time and care taken by Delivering Change programme participants for sharing their knowledge and experiences. Without them generously sitting down with the author of this evaluation, this report would not have been possible. It is also important to thank Marika Mason for her guidance on how to plan and implement the evaluation process and Dave Brown for providing feedback on how to format the piece. Many thanks are also offered to Kishore Kanani, who helped make sure information about Hackney CVS and the Delivering Change programme is accurately represented in this report.

Evaluator Information

Through a contact of Kishore Kanani at Queen Mary University it was made possible for an opportunity to arise to secure a student from Vanderbilt University in the United States. Dave Brown of Vanderbilt University enabled the opportunity to be made open to a number of students of which Peter responded. Peter Kent-Stoll is in the second year of his Master's degree in the Social Foundations of Health at Center for Medicine, Health, and Society, Vanderbilt University. He felt that he may be able to make a positive contribution to developing this piece of work and thus has come to the UK and to work within Hackney CVS on the Delivering Change programme evaluation year one. Peter's research interests focus on analyzing how social movements and community organisations leverage various resources at the local and national level and how this process impacts political and cultural institutions. His evaluation of the Delivering Change programme aims to analyze what might be the most effective ways to help build sustainability among grassroots organisations in Hackney.

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Introduction

Hackney CVS “believe that Hackney can and should be a fairer society”. To achieve this vision, they “believe strongly that local people and communities should be empowered to lead the solutions to the problems they face” (Hackney CVS, 2016).

The strategic aims of Hackney CVS are:

“Aim 1

Local communities and residents will have a stronger voice to influence local services as a result of the opportunities we will provide for dialogue and social action across all sectors.

Aim 2

The local voluntary and community sector will be better able to find new and improved ways of accessing funding, resources, and support.

Aim 3

Hackney CVS becomes a stronger ‘catalyst of change’ which results in more local VCS organisations delivering user-led projects which meet the needs of residents” (Hackney CVS, 2016).

The purpose of this work is to report on the findings of an evaluation conducted in order to assess the effectiveness of Year 1 of the Delivering Change Programme. This report seeks to answer the following questions:

- What types of interventions are most effective for sustainability of small, under 50k turnover charities based in Hackney?
- What are the greatest strengths of the Delivering Change Programme?
- What needs to be improved within the Delivering Change Programme?

In order to address the questions this report will:

- Discuss the significance of the Delivering Change Programme

- Report on and analyzing findings from 11 interviews conducted among organisational leaders who participated in the programme

About the Delivering Change Programme

The primary aim of the Delivering Change Programme is to increase the confidence and skills (capabilities) of Front Line Organisation to monitor, evaluate, and report on impact and manage their finances.

More specifically, Delivering Change aims to:

- Increase the skills and knowledge required to monitor and evaluate services
- Raise awareness and increase the use of impact reporting by organisations
- Enable organisations to have better financial skills in order to manage their finances effectively
- Improve the awareness amongst public sector commissioners of the capabilities and needs of FLOs.

Outline of Support includes access to:

- One to One surgeries
- Training
- Onsite support
- Action Learning Sets
- OD Health Check & Financial Health Check

By taking part in the project, participants will:

- Increase their technical skills and ability to design and implement monitoring and evaluation systems

- Recognise the role of monitoring and evaluation in learning and improving performance
- Implement an outcomes approach to better demonstrate their social impact

Recruitment

Groups were recruited through advertising on website and leaflets promoting the programme. Groups elected to become part of the programme through completing an application form followed by attending an interview which was assessed against specific markers to check eligibility. The programme is also working in partnership with The London Borough of Hackney who are allowed to nominate five groups that they cited as being the most in need to take part within the programme. 23 local voluntary and community groups were enrolled in Year 1 of the programme.

Need for Project

The need identified by Hackney CVS for the Delivery Change programme was articulated as follows:

"Hackney's frontline organisations (FLOs) play a key role in providing services to marginalised, poorer communities. Surveys and consultations identify infrastructure needs to meeting the quality and legal requirements for grant funding and commissioning. Only a few have a quality assurance system in place and many are unaware of impact reporting. Survey findings: 100% reported needing support with fundraising and writing funding applications; 72% needed help with managing their finances. Other priorities identified to stabilise their organisations: financial management skills; meeting monitoring requirements; and demonstrating and reporting the effectiveness, quality and impact of their work."

The Delivering Change programme also specifically targets Black and Ethnic minority organisations. In recent years scholars and policy planners in the third sector have been reporting on the need to track the progress of Black and Ethnic minority organisations due to concerns that they may experience structural disadvantages related to austerity cuts (Ware, 2013)

Demographics

The programme targeted organisations that are led primarily by and serve black and ethnic minorities (BME). 70% of participants in the programme identified as BME. This is a strong representation, considering that 64% of residents of Hackney identify as BME (LB Hackney Policy Team, 2016). Additionally, 70% of participants in the programme identified as female and 26% as male.

Figure 1: Self Identified Race & Ethnicity of Participants

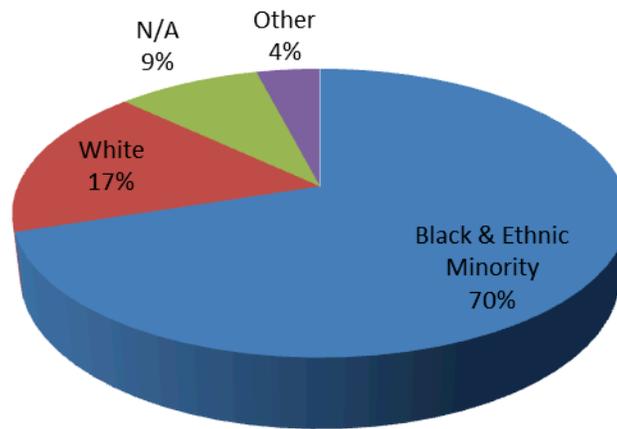
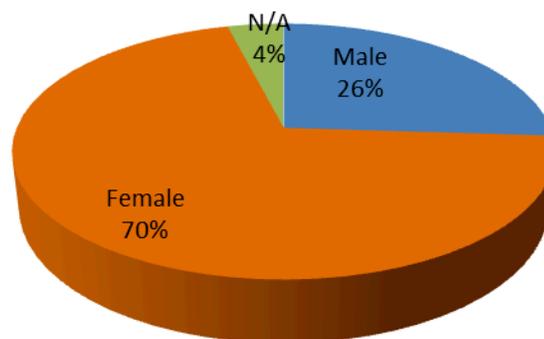


Figure 2: Self Identified Gender of Participants



Methods

The evaluator contacted organisational leaders who completed the full programme or were in consistent contact with the Delivery Change programme leader about why they could not attend certain programmes and about the progress of their work. If leaders were not willing or able to meet in person for an interview, they were contacted for an interview over the phone. 14 organisations were contacted. One organisational leader said she left the programme early due to other obligations and could not comment on the programme because of this. One other was unable to be reached by phone or email. One other was preoccupied with obligations and could not find time to be interviewed. The rest of the eleven were interviewed, 2 by phone and 9 in in person.

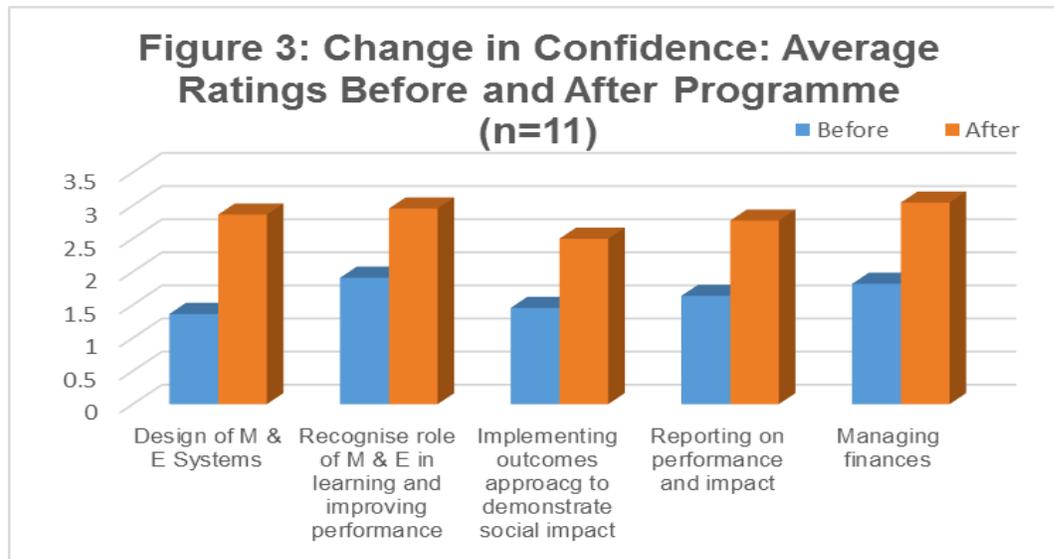
Interviews focused on assessing leader self-rated progress of organisations and how Delivering Change may have helped with this progress and what it could have done to help more in these areas.

The evaluator received permission from interviewees for their names and the names of their organisations to be shared.

No ethics approval was needed since this report is not for generalizable knowledge, but rather for the improvement of the delivery of services related to Delivering Change.

Findings

Participants' responses varied, but each of the five areas that were assessed all saw an average improvement in confidence (for assessment tool used to measure confidence, see Appendix A).



Summary of Key Findings:

- There was an average increase in confidence for all five categories assessed.
- "Ability to design and implement monitoring and evaluation systems" and "Ability to manage finances more effectively and efficiently" saw the highest average increases in confidence.
- There was no reporting of a decrease in confidence in any area.
- In addition to the five major areas assessed, participants also discussed Delivering Change's role in facilitating professional networking.
- In addition to the five major areas assessed, participants discussed the challenge of maintaining significant attendance levels.
- In addition to the five major areas discussed, participants offered advice on how to ensure sustainability after the year-long training ends.

1. Ability to Design and Implement Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

91% of participants reported an increase of confidence in this area.

Participants learned directly from the session leaders and also from other participants who shared of their own experience. Participants also emphasized how new knowledge was gained, but more time is needed in order to track outcomes.

What leaders said:

"Now, we are trying to look at monitoring and evaluation as a whole." -- Nat Mady, Cordwainers Grow

"It really reinforced what I already knew." – Rosemary Jawara, Beersheba Living Well

"We've just developed a system, but we've yet to find out if it's working for us." – Mei Ling, Sebright Family Forum

"My understanding is clear...need to do a lot of testing on it still." – Mei-Ling Luong, Sebright Family Forum

"So organized and very empowering." – Janet Murungi, Rise Community Action

"It was good for us because...we didn't have anything properly in place because we're a new organisation. We took from Delivering Change and set up our monitoring."-- Amanda Innis, The Amity Project

2. Ability to recognise the role of monitoring and evaluation in learning and improving performance

82% of participants reported an increase of confidence in this area.

In general, leaders cited the monitoring and evaluation sessions as an important resource and emphasized how the knowledge and tools disseminated helped develop new knowledge or build upon previous knowledge.

What leaders said:

"I think we realized that we were not monitoring effectively." – Nicolette Nixon, Gascoyne and Morningside Youth Clubs

"We can better improve to record what we are doing." – Nicolette Nixon, Gascoyne and Morningside Youth Clubs

"How can we set up evaluation forms and questionnaires -- I understand that a lot better." – Nerene O'Connor, Beyond Feelings

3. Ability to implement an outcomes approach to better demonstrate social impact

82% of participants reported an increase of confidence in this area.

Participants discussed the importance of an outcomes approach in helping to articulate exactly what their organisations do and to collect evidence in order to demonstrate their successes, subsequently making themselves more appealing to funders and professional networks.

What leaders said:

"A lot of us do a lot of good work, but the challenge is showing what we do." – Janet Murungi, Rise Community Action

In follow up to this comment, Janet then emphasized that by participating in the next year of training (via representing a different organisation), she will get to the next level.

"Our chances are better now than they were before." – Nicolette Nixon, Gascoyne and Morningside Youth Clubs

"I think we've definitely put it into practice in terms of re-evaluating what some of our outcomes are." -- Nat Mady, Cordwainers Grow

"Through our meetings with Kishore...he was able to say 'this is what we're doing' ...and we we're able to raise funding." – Amanda Innis, The Amity Project, Friends of Woodberry Down

"We got a newsletter now... We've got pictures now. We've got a twitter account set up. We've got a domain for them [Friends of Woodberry Down]. We haven't got a website yet, but that's coming." -- Amanda Inniss, The Amity Project, Friends of Woodberry Down

"Was very good for me to be able to pitch my project." – Kome Owuas, African Community School

4. Ability to report on performance and impact

82% of participants reported an increase in confidence in this area.

What leaders said:

Marwyn with Childsparency described how his knowledge in this area has improved, but remains at "3" instead of "4" because he has not applied for funding. Nonetheless, he emphasized that Delivering Change could not have done more to help with this process.

"We now have the ability to understand our impact and have the right tools to record it." – Nicolette Nixon, Gascoyne and Morningside Youth Clubs

5. Ability to manage finances more effectively and efficiently

91% of participants reported an increase in confidence in this area.

What leaders said:

Overall, participants were satisfied with the finances training. Most spoke very highly of the finance workshops and the one-to-ones. However, one participant was pleased with the content of the finance sessions, but not the teaching style and explained that the teaching style should be more interactive and tailored to the financial needs of organisations. Compared to other categories assessed, participants seemed to be able to make rapid improvements based on advice they received.

What leaders said:

"I used to say 'I'm not good at finances'" – Rosemary Jawara, Beersheba Living Well

"I feel so much more confident now." – Rosemary Jawara, Beersheba Living Well

"I know so much more about the systems you need to have in place." – Nat Mady, Cordwainers Grow

"This [monitoring and evaluation and finances] training...if you are good in this area, I don't think a lot of funders will say no." – Janet Murungi, Rise Community Action

"One-to-one [finance] sessions have been very valuable." – Nat Mady, Cordwainers Grow

"We have the whole structure to do that in case we want to go down that road [of applying for funding]." –Antonio Moccia, The Love Project

"We have a bank account now, thanks to Kishore." – Antonio Moccia, The Love Project

"I was able to gain that knowledge of how to manage all the finances within the organisation." – Kome Owuasu

"Advice she [Cyndi] gave was awesome." – Yolanda, Hackney Care for Kids

"In order to get funding, your books need to be in order" -- Yolanda, Hackney Care for Kids

Additional Findings

In addition to the topics covered within the progress ratings, key themes emerged surrounding networking, the duration of the programme, and programme attendance.

1. Organisational Networks

Participants discussed the ways in which the Delivering Change meetings served as a forum for them to meet with other organisations and create new professional networks.

"We've already linked up with some of the groups we've met through training." –Nat Mady. Cordwainers Grow

"I was able to meet other organisations to share experiences with them." -- Kome Owuasu, African Community School

2. Programme Duration

Participants emphasized how important it is for small, grassroots organisations to have access to 12 months of training. For example, Marvyn with Childsparency said that 12 months is just long enough because anytime shorter than that would not be enough.

3. Programme Attendance

Programme Attendance was a concern among those interviewed. Ideas were suggested as to why attendance was low and how to improve it. Ideas ranged from suggesting that a small fee be applied if someone misses a session to changing the schedule of meetings in order to accommodate people's needs

"You get the most out of sessions if you attend." -- Nat Mady

"I think groups that came out [to events] really valued it and got a lot out of it." – Nat Mady

Recommendations

The below recommendations are provided and are intended to reflect the experiences and perspectives of participants who were interviewed as part of this evaluation.

1. Create an "exit strategy" for organisations participating in Delivering Change, such as following up with organisations once per month for four consecutive months after the programme ends.
2. Provide funding in order to increase staff on the Delivering Change programme who can provide additional support for the Delivering Change leader when he is to be absent at a session.
3. If possible, change regular training times from 10 am – 4 PM to 9 AM – 1 PM with lunch served afterwards. This time change would be intended to increase attendance and allow participants to not have to compromise their afternoon work schedules.

Conclusion

This report sought to answer the following questions:

- What types of interventions are most effective for the sustainability of small, under 50k turnover charities based in Hackney?
- What are the greatest strengths of the Delivering Change Programme?
- What needs to be improved within the Delivering Change Programme?

More time will be needed in order to assess these organisations' attractiveness to funders and to what extent they can implement monitoring and evaluation systems.

The finding of this piece of work suggests that tailored interventions, consisting of a consistent schedule can have an important and lasting impact on organisations. It should also be noted that despite the appeal of advances in technology which can increase the speed of communication, participants in general emphasized the importance of in person meetings held on a consistent basis such as lunches, training sessions, and surgeries. Attending these sessions offers a forum for organisational leaders to address concerns, learn from the successes of other organisations, and build coalitions with other organisations.

More time is needed to assess the extent of Delivering Change's impact on knowledge, implementation, and outcomes. For example, it was common for participants to emphasize that they have acquired some of the necessary methods for monitoring and evaluation, but still need more time to see what their impacts will be. It will be important to follow up with participants one year and two years from now in order to further assess how the tools and knowledge offered by Delivering Change has impacted their organisations.

The greatest strengths after year 1 of the programme appear to be the finance training and monitoring and evaluation training. The greatest area for improvement is that there is need to implement a strong follow up and transition process so that organisations can make a transition from working consistently with the Delivering Change programme to being on their own with the tools that were acquired.

"We're at this step now, if Delivering Change was still helping the Amity Project, we'd be another step up." – Tracey Boothe, The Amity Project

With the strengths and areas for improvement in mind, participants emphasized the importance of the programme for small charities:

"It's a good programme that I have to recommend, most especially for small organisations." --Kome Owuasu, African Community School

"If you want to see changes, if you want to make progress in your business, and keep building in your business, I could go on endlessly talking about how Delivering Change could help." – Tracey Boothe

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Appendix A

Assessment Tool to Rate Confidence (Progress Rating Sheet)

PROGRESS RATING				
Name of Group:				
Please rate your organisation's progress in the following areas (tick one box per area):				
1 being least confident and 4 being most confident			√ - Tick	
Area	1 √	2 √	3 √	4 √
Ability to design and implement monitoring and evaluation systems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ability to recognise the role of monitoring and evaluation in learning and improving performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ability to implement an outcomes approach to better demonstrate social impact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ability to report on performance and impact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ability to manage finances more effectively and efficiently	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>