

## Monitoring and evaluation in the third sector

Findings of a survey to third sector organisations carried out by Charities Evaluation Services in May and June 2007

---

***Please do not quote or otherwise use these first summary findings without written consent from CES***

---

### 1. Who completed the survey?

1.1 We had 682 responses in total from third sector organisations across the UK, although response rates to different questions varied considerably.

#### 1.2 Funding

- Organisations had a wide mix of funding, with just over half (52%) in receipt of local authority funding, and 37% in receipt of central government funding.
- Exactly half of respondents were in receipt of funding from a trust or foundation and just over one-third from Lottery funders.
- Nearly one-third received income from fees, charges and sales.
- 12% had only one funder, but most organisations had more than one funding source.
- Nearly half the organisations (48%) had been commissioned, with a contract to deliver services, by a public sector agency.

#### 1.3 Organisational characteristics

- 40% of the responding organisations were established over 20 years ago, 26% 4-10 years ago, 19% 11-20 years ago and 14% three years ago or less.
- Organisations with 6-25 employees were the largest single group of respondents (42%). Nearly one-third of respondents were small organisations, either with no employees (6%) or with 1-5 employees (26%). The remaining responses were from larger organisations.
- 44% of organisations defined themselves as community organisations, 11% as BME organisations, 9% as refugee and 6% as faith organisations. 11% classified themselves as rural.
- Over half (59%) were recorded as providing services, such as care or counselling, and almost as many (57%) as providing advice, information or advocacy. 29% of the organisations were local infrastructure organisations and

8% acted as a national infrastructure organisation. 21% were campaigning organisations.

#### 1.4 Location and geographical remit

- Over half (53%) of organisations had a local remit, 43% a regional or national one, and 4% worked internationally.
- The organisations were located within the following countries and English regions as follows:

Country/ Region	Percentage of responses
London	33.6
North West	10.8
Yorkshire and the Humber	8.1
East of England	7.7
South West	7.5
East Midlands	4.9
West Midlands	3.7
North East	3.3
Wales	5.9
Scotland	5.1
N. Ireland	1.2

## 2. What sort of reporting is being done?

### 2.1 Nearly half the organisations produced self-evaluation reports. Over one-third had an external evaluation in the past.

20% were recorded as not carrying out either monitoring or evaluation. 94% said that funders required monitoring information or reports and 73% that funders required evaluation reports.

- 47% produced self-evaluation reports, often as well as, but distinct from a monitoring report<sup>1</sup>
- 38% of organisations had an external evaluation in the past
- 8% were currently having an external evaluation
- 13% had an external evaluation planned.

Respondents identifying themselves as projects rather than organisations were slightly less likely to produce self-evaluation reports (41%) and to have had an external evaluation in the past (28%). This may relate to the fact that they are more newly established and/or because they are smaller, or part of a larger organisation.

<sup>1</sup> CES would expect a self-evaluation report to contain a level of analysis and judgement in relation to evaluation questions or criteria as distinct from a presentation of collated data. Organisational understanding of 'self-evaluation' will be tested during follow-up interviews.

Those respondents established three years ago or less were less likely to produce self-evaluation reports (32%) or to have had an external evaluation (12%).

Organisations with no staff or with 1-5 staff less frequently reported having had an external evaluation (8% and 29% respectively).

By contrast, larger organisations were more likely to report having had an external evaluation, reflecting the greater complexity of the organisation and greater availability of resources (51% of those with 26-100 staff; 58% of those with 101-400 staff; 60% of those with 401-1000 staff).

## **2.2 Over three-quarters reported that different information was required by different funders.**

- Half of the respondents reported that different information was required by some of their funders.
- 30% reported that all their funders wanted different information.

## **2.3 Two-thirds of respondents reported that funders' monitoring and evaluation requirements had become more demanding over the last five years.**

## **2.4 The vast majority of respondents (83%) reported that they developed their monitoring and evaluation to meet their own requirements as well as those of their funders.**

- The percentage rose to 93% for organisations set up three years ago or less.

## **3. What monitoring and evaluation approaches and methods are used?**

### **3.1 A range of methodologies was reported by respondents.**

- Quantitative output monitoring was the most commonly reported (95%), but participant feedback forms and questionnaires or surveys were also frequently used (81% and 83% respectively).
- Case files and other record keeping and individual assessments were used by approximately two-thirds of respondents, and interviews and focus groups by just over half.
- Audio-visual methods were less frequently used, but nevertheless reported by 18% of respondents.

**3.2 In a significant minority of cases, users were proactively involved in the monitoring and evaluation process.**

- Only 7% said that users were not involved in any way in monitoring and evaluation. Most organisations collected feedback from users and 46% of organisations consulted them on findings.
- Users were also involved more proactively:
  - Helping to define outcomes and indicators 40%
  - Helping to decide what to monitoring and evaluate 20%
  - Collecting information 19%
  - Leading the evaluation 8%

**3.3 The largest number, 69% of respondents, identified evaluation of achievement of aims and objectives as an approach they used.**

- 10% were unable to identify any listed approaches and 20% were not sure what approaches were used.
- Apart from an aims and objectives model, other approaches identified were:

Type of approach	Percentage of responses
Case study enquiry	27
Logical framework	11
Social accounting	9
Balanced Scorecard	9
Theory of change	7
Appreciative enquiry	7

- Approaches were not used exclusively and frequently organisations referred to several approaches as being used within their organisation.
- There was no marked difference in the use of different approaches and models, whether respondents defined themselves primarily as using monitoring and evaluation to meet their own needs or doing what was necessary to meet funders' requirements.
- Those organisations unable to identify with any of the approaches listed were more likely to be smaller organisations.

**4. Monitoring and evaluation capacity and resources**

**4.1 60% of organisations felt that they were doing the right amount of monitoring and evaluation both for their size/capacity and in relation to their income.**

- However, 12% of respondents felt they were doing too much in relation to their size and capacity and 18% felt that they were doing too much in relation to their income.

- 29% of respondents felt that they were doing too little in relation to their size and capacity and 23% felt that they were doing too little in relation to their income.

#### **4.2 30% of organisations did not receive funding to cover monitoring and evaluation costs.**

- For 13% of respondents overall, the amount of funding to cover monitoring and evaluation costs had increased and for 6% the amount of funding had decreased. For others it had stayed the same or they were not sure.

#### **4.3 Management posts were most likely to be those posts that had monitoring and evaluation written in as a formal part of their job responsibilities.**

- In 10% of organisations, monitoring and evaluation were not a formal part of any job responsibilities.
- 16% had a specialist monitoring and evaluation post.

#### **4.4 Training courses were most frequently reported as a way that organisations got information about monitoring and evaluation (68%), although almost one-third had received no such training.**

- Publications and the internet were also significant ways of getting information (56%; 51% respectively).

Additional sources of information were as follows:

Sources of information	Percentage of responses
Funders	42
Consultants	24
Local infrastructure organisation	24
Local authority or government agency	24
National infrastructure organisation	21
Head office or network	14

- 5% did not identify any of the sources listed as providing information.
- 20% of respondent organisations provided information or support on monitoring and evaluation to other organisations. Those defining themselves as projects were a little more likely to provide this support (29%) as were organisations that started three years ago or less (33%).
- The 23 organisations without paid employees responding to this question drew on local infrastructure support in line with the mean (26%), but were less likely to have access to a national infrastructure organisation or head office (4% and 8%). They were also less likely to use the internet or consultants as a source of information and support.

- Organisations with 6-25 staff were most likely to access support from a national infrastructure organisation (27%).
- Generally, larger organisations had greater access to all forms of support than the smaller ones. The use of consultants was more likely to be found in these groups, as follows:
 

6-25 staff	21%
26-100 staff	31%
101-400 staff	38%
401-1000 staff	40%
1001 + staff	63%.
- BME organisations cited training courses more frequently than the mean (79%), but use of the internet less frequently (42%). Refugee organisations used the internet and publications least (37% and 43%) but accessed other types of support well. 27% of refugee organisations provided monitoring and evaluation support to others.
- Faith organisations (with 46 respondents) were least likely to rely on a local authority for information and support, possibly reflecting their source of funding.
- Those identifying themselves as community organisations drew rather more on local infrastructure organisations (34%).
- Rural organisations reported levels of access above the mean for all sources of support except consultancy (11%).

#### **4.5 Almost one-third of organisations had received no training in monitoring and evaluation.**

- 69% of organisations had received training in monitoring and evaluation.
- 31% had received no training.
- Introduction to monitoring and evaluation and assessing/managing outcomes were the most frequently reported training topics, with just over half covering the topics as specific courses. For the rest, the topics were covered as part of broader training.
- The following regions recorded training as a means of getting information less frequently, and below the mean:
 

East England	57%
South West	53%
South East	60%
Yorks and Humber	63%.
- West Midlands and North East recorded training as means of getting information considerably more frequently than the mean (84% and 88% respectively).

- A higher percentage of responses indicating that no training had been received was found for:
 

Those identifying as projects	41%
Local offices	37%
Organisations with no staff	57%
Organisations with 1-5 staff	34%
Started three years ago or less	38%.
- A relatively lower percentage of responses indicating that no training had been received was found for BME and refugee groups (20% and 13% respectively).

**4.6 The large majority of respondents (80%) used a combination of paper-based and IT-based systems.**

- 8% of respondents used a paper-based system only, while 12% used an IT-based system only. Of the 23 respondents with no staff, the percentage using a paper-based system only was highest (26%).
- A small percentage used quantitative packages other than Microsoft Office (6%).
- 2% used qualitative software packages.
- 37% used off-the-shelf IT systems.
- 36% used customised off-the-shelf systems.
- 27% had a system designed and built for them.

**5. Benefits of monitoring and evaluation**

**5.1 487 respondents described changes introduced as a result of monitoring and evaluation.**

Of these, the main changes introduced were as follows:

<b>Changes introduced</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
Changes to the way things are done	81
Changes to services or products	65
Changes to what they expected to achieve	51
Changes to the way they defined the beneficiary group	28
Changes to the policy and practice of other organisations	20

**5.2 Asked about the benefits of monitoring and evaluation, organisations were most likely to value being clear about the benefits of their organisation, learning about what was working well and improving the end result for beneficiaries.**

509 organisations answered a question describing the main benefits derived from monitoring and evaluation. The responses were as follows:

<b>Benefit described</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
Being clear about the benefits of what we do	57
Learning about what is working well/ effective practices	55
Improving the end result for beneficiaries	47
Better services/strategic planning	45
Improving the way we work	44
Telling others about our results	41
Competing for funding and resourcing	40
Improving reporting to funders	37
Focusing on shared aims and objectives	28
Improving our products and services	27
Providing information for quality assessments	21
Improving our record keeping	19

## 6. Difficulties in carrying out monitoring and evaluation

### 6.1 Three-quarters of the respondents identified insufficient time as causing difficulties.

- Other important practical organisational issues identified by just over one-third of respondents were having enough money (39%) and having the right skills (35%). 29% of respondents found difficulties with maintaining stakeholder participation.
- Those identifying as projects reported these difficulties slightly less frequently. 66% reported time as an issue, 33% money and 29% skills. 90% of local offices reported insufficient time as a problem. Organisations with no staff cited lack of money (60%) above the mean. For larger organisations, money and skills were less important, but time remained a major difficulty.
- Most frequently reported process difficulties were in finding appropriate or manageable information collection methods (42%) and getting responses back (48%). Those more frequently having difficulty with finding appropriate information collection methods were those identified as BME groups (50%) or refugee groups (50%).
- Over one-third (39%) of respondents overall reported identifying outcomes and impacts as a difficulty, 26% identifying indicators and 32% getting baseline information as problematic. 55% of local offices reported identifying outcomes and impacts as a difficulty. Larger organisations also registered difficulties with identifying outcomes and impacts above the mean (54% of those organisations with 101-400 staff and 47% of those with 401-1000 staff).

## Qualitative responses

Responses also provided a substantial amount of qualitative data, and this will require further analysis. This is a flavour of it.

### **Have funders' requirements changed during the last five years?**

*Funders' requirements have become much more demanding to the point where the monitoring requirements of our funders are dictating how we do all of our work.*

*All become more demanding – all want similar information but in different ways.*

*More demanding but more relevant.*

*Requirements are mostly the same. Expectations and interest have risen a lot.*

### **What changes have been brought about by commissioning arrangements?**

*Another strand of monitoring and evaluation needed. Different timescales for monitoring.*

*Use of a specific commercial software tool to best capture the information required. This has accidentally given us strong internal management tools.*

*We are expected to do additional monitoring to meet local/central government targets. Impact of this is an increase in time and resources we have to allocate to change data gathering mechanisms.*

*The requirements are subject to change each year as the DOH changes its priorities. Outcomes based monitoring is beginning to come in. More evaluation from service users is required.*

### **What are the benefits to organisations of monitoring and evaluation?**

*Clarity of definitions within funded programmes and criteria for assessing and prioritising. More flexible respite service and wider range of support and increased numbers of Young Carers supported. Revised quality surveys to obtain outcome based feedback. Services focused to achieve each project's outcomes.*

*More rigorous objectives. More consistent approach.*

*More responsive to participants' interests and development needs in developing future programmes.*

*Increased activity and numbers of volunteers and beneficiaries taking advantage of wider scope of service provision through listening and responding to needs of both.*

*Adjustments to services provided. Changed priorities for funding.*

*Everything is now outcomes-based. We have had to change the organisational mindset as a result.*

*Monitoring and evaluation has enabled us to be more realistic about what we can achieve with different people and the actual costs involved in achieving the results required.*

Charities Evaluation Services

23 July 2007

---