

Scoping the evaluation of ChangeUp

Overview

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**Partners:
COGS**

Mandy Wilson, Tony Herrmann, Jane Leathley, Linda Mitchell

**CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University
Rob Macmillan**

**CRC, University of the West of England
Marilyn Taylor, Lucy Grimshaw, John Lever**

Introduction

This is an overview of the scoping phase of the evaluation of ChangeUp. Additional papers provide more detailed evidence and support for the points raised here. These papers include:

- A Evidence Review
- B Horizon Scanning
- C Perceptions and Reflections
- D Proposals for Knowledge Management
- E Evaluation Design

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1. Aim of the scoping phase

The focus of the evaluation is ChangeUp and the impact that changes within the Third Sector's capacity-building infrastructure have had on front-line organisations.

The recommended research approach - the final output of this scoping phase - should enable Capacitybuilders to answer the question:

In what ways and to what extent has the ChangeUp programme created a more effective third sector in delivering services, whether publicly funded or not, in campaigning and voicing community concerns, and in enabling community/citizen engagement?

Prescribed tasks

Four main tasks were identified to meet the above aim:

1. Mapping and analysing existing information about changes in the infrastructure and impact on front-line organisations
2. Developing and testing the methodology for the Evaluation of ChangeUp
3. Setting up systems to communicate ChangeUp achievements, and share information and learning
4. To plan and design an evaluation approach which looks at the impact of ChangeUp as a whole, built upon but not dependent upon any one type of intervention.

Tasks undertaken

Our response to the brief has involved:

- An evidence review – a literature search and production of a baseline literature listing, methodology for extracting useful information and key findings around progress to date as evidenced in the documents analysed.
- A horizon scanning exercise to understand the environment in which ChangeUp is taking place – this includes an overview of the policy context, significant aspects of the third sector landscape and some implications for the evaluation of ChangeUp.
- Interviews with stakeholders who have a national perspective on ChangeUp and with stakeholders (including frontline organisations) within four selected localities, Camden, Lincolnshire, Chester, Bristol.
- Feedback consultation with the above and five feedback workshops to further inform the design of the evaluation of ChangeUp
- Dialogue with Capacitybuilders board and staff (including a design workshop) and with OTS.
- Identification of appropriate knowledge management systems - both internally for Capacitybuilders and as part of the collection and dissemination of evaluation material.
- Design of an evaluation framework and proposals for methodology.

This report sets the scoping exercise in the context of ChangeUp developments to date, summarises its findings from the above strands of work and proposes a framework and methodology for the evaluation.

2. ChangeUp developments to date

2.1 Background

The Government's 2002 Cross Cutting Review of the Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Service Delivery¹ recognised the need to build the capacity of the organisations in the VCS. Infrastructure support to frontline organisations was identified as variable in quality and reach and lacking sustainability, particularly at local level.

The Home Office was charged with responding to this need and in 2004 set out the ChangeUp framework for ensuring by 2014:

“voluntary and community sector support which is available nation-wide, structured for maximum efficiency and sustainably funded, offering excellent provision to meet local needs accessible to all and truly reflecting and promoting diversity”.

Three key aims were identified as ensuring that:

- Frontline organisations have better access to high-quality support in key areas of organisational need
- Infrastructure services are configured to better
- meet the needs of frontline organisations, are coordinated, delivered efficiently, and are more sustainable
- There is increased engagement of the VCS in geographical areas of deprivation and priority public service areas

The underlying rationale was tied in with government's belief that voluntary and community activity was central to civil renewal and responsive and appropriate service delivery but that frontline organisations didn't always have the support and expertise they needed to fulfil these roles. Both gaps and duplication in infrastructure provision were seen as issues to be resolved. So, ChangeUp was about building the capacity of frontline organisations through a framework of underpinning generic and specialist infrastructure support at national, regional, sub-regional, local and neighbourhood level.

The key strategic areas of need, and therefore support, for frontline organisations were identified as: performance improvement; workforce development; ICT; governance; and financing of VCS activity. National hubs of expertise were established to take forward these areas of capacity building. The hubs were expected to signpost, to co-ordinate, to provide knowledge, to influence practice, and to provide the tools and resources for effective practice. In addition, geographic hubs

¹ *The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery: a Cross Cutting Review.* (HM Treasury, 2002)

were to be formed through stakeholders coming together at the regional, sub-regional and local levels to map the context and needs of frontline organisations and to shape and structure appropriate provision within their area.

ChangeUp made funding available to support the national (themed) and the geographic hubs of activity as organisational entities and particular projects they identified as relevant to filling support gaps or rationalisation of support services.

2.2 Moving on

ChangeUp was initially hosted by the Home Office. In 2005, however, it was felt that this role could be better played by an organisation which was not inside government and plans for establishing an arms length, non departmental public body were discussed with a range of stakeholders.

Capacitybuilders began its life in April 2006 - charged with managing the ChangeUp programme. It sets out its overall aim as to help create a more effective third sector through access to high quality and timely support, the rationale being that by improving support, the sector will be strengthened and more able to create a better quality of life for individuals and communities. Capacitybuilders inherited two basic methods of delivery: national hubs of expertise, and geographically based consortia. It also inherited some challenges² including:

- *challenging timescales*
- *weak sector ownership*
- *weak voice for frontline organisations*
- *complex fund management*
- *little evidence of 'what works'*
- *limited action around meeting the diversity of the sector (research around 'mainstreaming diversity'³ was commissioned in late 2005)*

Since starting up, Capacitybuilders has continued to fund manage and deliver the ChangeUp programme but it has also undertaken a number of initiatives aimed at moving the programme on. These include:

- Launching the Improving Reach programme (August 2006). This followed the Zahno Rao report (mentioned above) and seeks to enhance the access to capacity building and support for particular front-line organisations:
 - Black and minority ethnic groups
 - Refugee and migrant groups
 - Faith groups
 - Isolated rural groups
- Commissioning of a number of research studies e.g. around the delivery mechanisms of ChangeUp - the national hubs and the regional consortia - to understand what is working and the potential for different models of delivery.

² As identified by Helen Edwards, Director General, Home Office Communities Group at Stakeholders conference July 2005.

³ Zahno Rao Associates '*Mainstreaming Diversity and Equality in ChangeUp: Final report*' January, 2006

- 'Destination 2014' – a draft strategy and consultation process with the sector to inform the next phase of ChangeUp

Capacitybuilders has described its role and contribution to the ChangeUp programme as to manage the programme funds and to influence the policy and practice of decision-makers and other funders, in order that there are more effective and sustainable support services for frontline organisations

2.3 The context

The ChangeUp programme takes its place in a comprehensive set of policies to support the third sector that have been introduced since 1997 and are described in more detail in Paper B. Successive government documents have underlined the significance of the third sector's role in transforming public services, enabling greater voice and campaigning, and strengthening communities. The capacity of central government to engage with the sector has also been increased dramatically with the eventual creation of the Office of the Third Sector with its own Minister. A wave of new policies has introduced:

- new organizational forms suited to the twenty first century;;
- new frameworks for investment, with support for social enterprise, the transfer of assets to communities, and a range of new funding initiatives as key features, along with measures to improve the way the sector is funded;
- a new framework for relationships between the sectors, based on the Compact agreed in 1998 and building on the growth of partnership working, including requirements on public sector partners to engage communities and the wider third sector in decision making, new mechanisms for citizen engagement and a range of measures to promote community empowerment.

The Third Sector Review published in 2007⁴ reinforces these developments and extends government's commitment, expressing a desire to work with a fuller range of organisations and support a wider range of activities, emphasising in particular community action and campaigning and social enterprise. The ChangeUp brief, originally focused on equipping the sector to play a greater role in public service delivery, has widened accordingly to include both voice/campaigning and social enterprise.

The operating environment for the sector, meanwhile, is characterised by:

- a shift from grant to contract funding, which poses particular challenges to the sustainability of smaller organisations, and creates pressures for growth and economies of scale;
- the ending of significant funding streams (SRB and EU funds) and the devolution of other central government funding streams (e.g. neighbourhood renewal) to local level;
- the increasing demand for a skilled workforce, volunteer and trustee base and increasing regulation of volunteers with implications for recruitment and retention of paid and unpaid workers;

⁴ *The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration* (HM Treasury/Cabinet Office, 2007)

- an increased emphasis on performance management and quality assurance along with an increasing demand for evidence on which to base practice and for robust outcome measurement;
- the spread of partnership working with a need for capacity building for partnership on **both** sides of the equation as well effective and transparent system of representation;
- heightened awareness of the diversity of organisations in the sector and the need to improve reach;
- the opportunities offered by new technology and especially web 2.0 but also the potential exclusion of those who are not up to speed with the latest developments.

Taken together these developments will create high expectations of both ChangeUp and the infrastructure it is supporting – there is the potential to be pulled in a lot of different directions and a need for high levels of expertise. ChangeUp will need to support the infrastructure in responding to all these challenges, but also in determining priorities, while the evaluation will need to enable Capacitybuilders not only to demonstrate the value of its support but also to reflect the impact of a rapidly changing environment back to policy makers.

The operating environment is also characterised by a rapid pace of policy change and development, which places heavy demands on both third sector organisations and their partners in the public sector. This rapid pace of policy change has been part of the backdrop of this scoping exercise with the OTS Third Sector Review, the Comprehensive Spending Review and Communities and Local Government’s Action Plan for Community Empowerment all appearing in the past four months. This rate of change and development – and the accompanying uncertainty - is likely to continue. It will place a premium on the capacity of both ChangeUp and the infrastructure it supports to keep abreast of change and adapt to new imperatives, opportunities and pressures as well as making difficult choices about priorities. Indeed, even the implementation of ChangeUp itself has been a ‘moving feast’ during this exercise with developments in relation to national support services, ongoing research on the significance of, and implications of ChangeUp for, subsectors, the self-assessment process carried out by consortia and so on. The implication for the evaluation is that it will need to be able to capture a moving and dynamic picture and also to reflect the impact of a rapidly changing environment back to policy makers.

These developments also mean that demands on both infrastructure and front-line organisations are heavy. Time and attention are at a premium and there are many parallel demands for performance measurement and evaluation. The Change Up evaluation will need to enable Capacitybuilders to demonstrate the value of its support to government but also ensure that it supports learning within the sector, adding value rather than simply adding another set of demands.

Finally, the ChangeUp Programme is just one approach amongst a range of strategies which are attempting to improve effectiveness and sustainability of services to support well-functioning front-line third sector organisations. Other infrastructure initiatives include the Big Lottery Fund BASIS programme and support for community anchors, while government departments have a range of programmes to minimise obstacles to third sector service delivery, support community empowerment, encourage volunteering and reform existing funding streams⁵. The landscape of associated programmes and policies is complex and it will be important

⁵ See Third Sector Review, HM Treasury/Cabinet Office, *op cit*.

to develop synergy between them. Meanwhile, the evaluation of Change Up will need to take into account how other interventions are shaping both sector support and the fortunes of frontline organisations themselves.

What have we learnt to date?

Material is drawn from a number of sources; primarily:

- 1 A review of existing evidence
- 2 Interviews with national bodies and a feedback stakeholders workshop
- 3 Locality studies through interviews with those operating at regional and locality level and feedback stakeholders workshops

3. Evidence review

The purpose of the evidence review was to provide a picture of available evidence of outcomes, as well as information gathered around what helps and hinders implementation and impact of ChangeUp.

The review aimed to source, sift, select and analyse relevant documentation on ChangeUp. From an original compiled list of sixty-six documents, forty-nine have been selected for the review on the basis of:

- **relevance:** they either discuss ChangeUp in principle or as policy, or they refer to ChangeUp funded or promoted interventions
- **activity:** do they provide information on current activity associated with ChangeUp?
- **processes:** do they discuss processes and mechanisms which help and hinder implementation and impact of ChangeUp?
- **outcomes:** do they provide evidence of potentially relevant outcomes?

In each case, the review has looked for evidence of ChangeUp in relation to:

- **needs** (what needs are being addressed?)
- **activities** (what activities are being undertaken to address these needs?)
- **processes** (how is the programme operating?)
- **outcomes** (what difference is it making?), and
- **implications** for the evaluation of ChangeUp.

A standalone report provides more details of the approach and findings from the evidence review (Paper A).

In summary the evidence review has found that:

- **needs** analysis has been interpreted in two ways: to provide an aggregate overview of needs and priorities of the sector, and as individual diagnosis of support needs. Either way, it is important to distinguish between 'needs' and 'wants', because they might be different.
- ChangeUp has supported an extremely broad range of different **activities**, but it is quite hard to gain a comprehensive sense either of what had been funded in detail, or of the overall balance of funding on different areas of support.
- much of the evaluation evidence refers to **processes**: reflections and learning about the challenging task of establishing the programme, devising structures, partnerships, processes and procedures, and implementing activities. Concerns over short timescales have led to the suggestion that administering funds and project delivery have been prioritised over strategic development.

- there are very few evidenced **outcomes** from ChangeUp activities. Listed achievements tend to be 'showcase' descriptions of projects, activities, new services and outputs, rather than the difference these make.
- there are a number of important **implications for the evaluation** arising from the review, including the importance of variable contexts and starting points, the potentially contested nature of the evaluation of ChangeUp, and some interesting methodological approaches which might be of use in the evaluation.

The balance of evidence appears to focus on processes. There appears to be far less material identifying needs, specifying activities or attempting to assess outcomes. This may be a broader reflection on the current position of the programme on its overall timeline, i.e. a couple of years in, much of the work identifying needs and planning activities has been undertaken, and participants are being asked to reflect on the processes developed so far. It is likely that further material will emerge in due course which can augment this evidence review. For the evaluation, it is recommended that a (relatively light touch) annual updating of the 'evidence review' be carried out accordingly.

4. Interviews with national bodies, locality studies and feedback workshops

Whilst this piece of work is not the actual evaluation of ChangeUp, we have talked with a lot of people about their experience of, and aspirations for ChangeUp. A detailed report on these discussions can be found in Paper C: 'Perceptions and Reflections'. The following broad points provide a flavour of what we've heard:

- The two areas of strongest progress and achievement at local level centre are collaboration and recognition of the value of infrastructure, irrespective of context.
- Government recognition that infrastructure is important is significant. It recognised the legitimacy of capacity building and infrastructure and has raised the profile of infrastructure organisations as providers of support to frontline organisations who cannot possibly be expected to provide all support functions in house.
- There is evidence that some local authorities who were previously ambivalent about infrastructure have engaged with the agenda and it has levered in other support. Sometimes this leverage is in the form of increased influence of, and respect for, the sector which can have indirect longer term funding benefits. On the other hand, there are examples of local authorities who have cut their funding to local infrastructure.
- There are several examples where the ChangeUp agenda of greater collaboration / rationalisation of services has been effective at county level. In one area, four CVS are co-ordinating their services, each focusing on a different support function. In some cases ChangeUp has led to informal benchmarking and standard building amongst CVS. There are, however, still some areas where relationships between infrastructure organisations remain difficult and there has been little change with regard to the configuration of services.
- There is widespread support for the practical resources that have been produced by the national hubs, which are seen to be increasing the 'professionalism' of the

sector; “there is the beginning of a cultural expectation that passion needs to be combined with trying to run the organisation effectively”. On the other hand, there is a perception that ChangeUp has been too focused on the interests of those providing support services and concerns have been raised about its relevance to small frontline groups. There is also some concern about the need to tailor nationally produced guidelines and expertise to particular ‘specialist’ needs (e.g. BME; rural).

- There are many who feel that the money has got in the way of vision – that ChangeUp is a funding-led programme, not a strategy-led programme.
- Despite an initially fairly straightforward concept, the fund management arrangements became very complex. This is seen to have been compounded by short term funding and tight bidding deadlines within a long-term programme. Indeed, the short time scales emerged as one of the strongest factors likely to compromise the success of the programme at all levels.
- The thematic structure at the national level and the primarily geographic structure at the regional level has led to questions about where national, regional and local specialisms sit.
- ChangeUp was conceived at a time when there was a strong regional emphasis. Since then there has been a shift to ‘new localism’ with strategy and monies devolved to local authorities. Thus, regional consortia can enhance co-ordination and collaboration, with good relationships with regional agencies, but their component members may at the same time be facing huge funding cuts locally. Equally, some local authorities have felt their contribution to infrastructure functions has been ignored by ChangeUp.
- There appears to be a lack of linkage between the national support services and the themes they cover, as well as poor links between the layers of the ChangeUp system; “Did nothing to reinforce the point that local infrastructure should relate to communities”.

5. The future of ChangeUp: opportunities and threats.

Some of the responses from the scoping phase interviews related to the programme’s future and contain comments about potential opportunities as well as factors that might get in the way.

There were felt to be significant opportunities from the establishment of OTS, the broadening of the national areas of expertise (including recent policy recommendations from different government departments and more intelligent grant making by Capacitybuilders. At a local level, the focus on ‘localisation’, development of new unitaries and more opportunities to engage in public service delivery were thought to be important. In general the trend towards more joining up and rationalisation were seen as opportunities.

Some of the key threats identified were the short-termism and timetable for ChangeUp funding and delivery, the general climate of tighter spending in local government and the general lack of understanding (and willingness to pay for infrastructure) in the statutory sector. At a local level there were fears about further shifts in government policy and the outcome of the next spending review. Some

views of the third sector were critical of the tendency for organisations to act as they have always done, to be weaker at marketing and in leadership skills and highlighted the danger of support agencies lapsing into service provision for financial viability. There were also comments about the changes in national support services and the difficulties in losing constructive relationships as people move on.

The discussions at national at local level threw up a number of considerations for the evaluation, which are reflected in the later section on Evaluation proposals. However, two particular concerns that emerged – already highlighted in earlier sections of this report – were:

- the need for the evaluation to complement and take account of existing work on evaluation and self-assessment:
Infrastructure organisations are subject to a range of demands from ChangeUp and other funders for performance information and evaluation, as well as requests to contribute to other research. They may also commission their own research. It is important that the evaluation does not add further pressure or duplicate existing information. Many of our respondents were keen to see the evaluation establish common systematic frameworks for information collection within ChangeUp itself.
- The need to allow for local variations
Consortia and second tier organisations are starting from very different points in different parts of the country. They can also be set back a long way by the departure of key people. One respondent described the need to develop a typology which could distinguish between consortia at different stages of development or facing different challenges. Key factors were likely to be:
 - Staff turnover and difficulties of recruiting – one of the biggest destabilisers
 - The lead agency losing significant funding
 - The existence or otherwise of formal systems and terms of reference and of transparent channels for communication with the wider constituency
 - The strength of the links with the public sector
 - The strengths of the core group

6. Knowledge management

A stand alone report (Paper D) provides a more comprehensive analysis.

This task comprised the following activities:

- Identifying commonly used channels
- Exploring possibilities of these as dissemination channels
- Research on ‘what works’ in knowledge management
- Producing a menu of options with costs and benefits.”

The full report draws on three key sources of information:

- published research, materials and tools relating to sharing learning from developmental work and complex evaluations
- informal interviews with individuals involved in developing some of these materials and tools, and
- interviews with key stakeholders in the ChangeUp programme.

Summary of key points

A variety of factors effect whether audiences use information disseminated to them and on whether this influences learning and practice. Key to this process is ensuring that audience needs and concerns are incorporated into evaluation design and management and into the presentation and dissemination of findings.

There are a variety of audiences for the findings from the evaluation of ChangeUp and within each broad category are a variety of interests and concerns. This means that the dissemination of findings needs to deploy a multi-layered approach incorporating core good practice and a range of methods with more targeted approaches to priority audiences.

There are opportunities for Capacitybuilders to align its internal information management of grant administration for ChangeUp with ongoing assessment of progress and strategic planning. The development of internal information systems offers the potential for wider sharing of the achievements of ChangeUp activity.

6.1 Summary of proposals

For Capacitybuilders:

- Ensure that dissemination issues are designed-in to the evaluation at all levels, including in commissioning processes.
- Provide strong links with internal information management and communications and the evaluation team to avoid duplication of effort and systems, and to minimise the burden on ChangeUp funded activity.
- Amend the current system of registering for the e-bulletin online to include basic details of the organisation registering and any particular interest areas.
- Consider developing an online searchable database of ChangeUp activity generally building on the dissemination of evaluation findings and the development of the Contact Relationship Management system. A similar but simpler concept to <http://www.idea.gov.uk>. This work may need to be commissioned externally to provide the necessary skills and staff capacity.

For the evaluation team:

- Develop a series of high quality templates - designed for both on screen and hard copy use - along with a simple set of quality standards for evaluation products.
- Ensure that all evaluation products include a brief, readable summary report with action points, checklists or other useable information. Other products such as case studies and presentations need to address learning outcomes for the work.
- Develop an online searchable database of evaluation findings, accessed through the proposed national portal *Support Finder*. This resource would

act as the host for all evaluation products and would underpin many of the dissemination channels for the evaluation.

- Use a limited number of existing, well regarded and widely used sector e-bulletins and newsletters (see appendix III) and identify specialist as well as generic sector circulations.
- Produce hard copy versions of key evaluation products and provide press releases, feature articles and hard copy inserts to key sector journals and newsletters. Specialist interests within any given overall audience should be targeted as a priority for hard copy circulation. Consideration should also be given to whether anyone warrants a personalised approach, such as a particular Government Minister or policy group.
- Consider when it is appropriate to deliver stand alone events as part of giving something back to participants in the evaluation, and maximise opportunities to piggy-back on existing events. The evaluation team should attend key events that provide an opportunity for dissemination and liaise with Capacitybuilders about any events they are attending.
- Ask consortia and the National Support Services to identify relevant events that their members are attending and / or hosting. Individuals from the consortium or National Support Service concerned could then be co-opted to disseminate materials provided by the evaluation at such events.
- Expanding on the above, seek to recruit individuals from all levels of the ChangeUp programme to act as a loose network of advisers on dissemination issues for particular audiences and as disseminators within their particular networks, communities of interest and / or geographical areas. A coordination and servicing role within the evaluation team is needed here.

7. Evaluation proposals

At the beginning of this overview report we outlined the key question that the evaluation should answer:

In what ways and to what extent has the ChangeUp programme created a more effective third sector in delivering services, whether publicly funded or not, in campaigning and voicing community concerns, and in enabling community/citizen engagement?

We also highlighted the importance of focusing the evaluation on **the impact that changes within the Third Sector's capacity-building infrastructure have had on front-line organisations.**

The evaluation will need to:

- generate learning about what works in capacity-building the Third Sector at local, regional and national levels
- demonstrate to Government/the public whether money has been well spent and that funded agencies have performed effectively

- steer the programme in its later stages by informing Capacitybuilders' strategy and policies, as well as those of other key stakeholders.

7.1 The research framework

The framework for the evaluation is based on a 'theories of change' approach, which sets out the key assumptions that underpin the ChangeUp model and uses these to identify the key research questions (the 'what' of evaluation). Details of the framework are provided in Paper E.

The ChangeUp programme is ultimately about building the capacity of frontline organisations to deliver effective services and support 'community voice'. It can be understood as a system of support built upon the following logic:

- **Capacity:** Frontline third sector organisations require support to develop their organisational and operational capacity.
- **Support:** This support should be of high quality, available and accessible to all frontline organisations irrespective of where they are located and their particular focus or specialism.
- **Strategy:** There are both gaps and duplication in existing support which can be resolved by support services working together to 'map and gap' need and provision and co-ordinate improvements in the support system
- **Resources and expertise:** There is room for improvement in the quality as well as the reach of support services – investment is required to provide the resources they need to improve quality and reach. Expertise should be pooled at the national level to provide these resources
- **Influence and partnership:** A more effective and informed third sector will result from this support system, a sector better able to partner other sectors in shaping, designing and delivering services and civil renewal.

A simplified version of key elements of this framework is given below.

Need/Rationale	How will change happen?/Outcome
Capacity of front-line	More effective/sustainable front-line organisations More awareness of/use of support
Support	User focussed services, better communicated and relevant to the diversity of frontline organisations, with regular updating of information on need and outreach to ensure equality of access
Strategic Co-ordinated	Effective collaboration with fewer, more efficient bodies focussing on the full range of sector needs Central point for buying 'backroom support and third sector specific products Relationship between specialist and generalist support services

	<p>Effective relationships with strategic bodies</p> <p>Examples of joint working and learning where this has proved more difficult</p>
Resources and expertise for the second tier	<p>Use of national products by local, regional and specialist bodies</p> <p>Skilled and knowledgeable third sector support services</p> <p>Improved quality and relevance of support available</p>
Influence and recognition	<p>New opportunities for voice</p> <p>Improved procurement environment</p> <p>Leverage of funds</p> <p>Understanding of costs and added value of third sector involvement in services</p> <p>Influence on LSP and other key services</p> <p>Partners drawing on third sector expertise</p> <p>Fit with other investment in support services</p>

Within this framework, the importance of cross-cutting issues, such as equality of access and the need to integrate ChangeUp’s generalist framework with specialist support services, needs to be recognised.

We also identified three different models of support which run through the Change Up Programme:

- A vertical and primarily provider led approach with support cascading down through the layers of the third sector (from national support services through consortia to local second tier support services and through them to the frontline)
- A horizontal networking approach illustrated by collaboration and partnership working (national hubs/support services and consortia)
- A demand-led market approach emphasised by the use and possible encouragement of other resources in the public and private sectors and informed by the frontline identification of need.

7.2 Research questions

This framework has been consolidated into the following main research themes.

Context

1. What is the changing and variable environment in which ChangeUp is operating and how is this shaping the nature of the programme as well as the supply and demand in relation to support services?

Process

2. To what extent are frontline organisations aware of and accessing relevant support when they need it? (Capacity)
3. To what extent is support reaching the breadth of frontline organisations? Have any gaps been identified and what has been done in response? (Support)

4. To what extent do consortia enable a strategic approach to support services? (Strategy)
5. How are resources and expertise tailored to, and made use of by third sector organisations? (Resources and expertise)
6. To what extent does ChangeUp enable a partnership relationship with statutory and private sectors and what is the effect of this? (Influence and partnership)

Cross cutting questions

7. Where do specialist support services fit in the ChangeUp model (vis-a-vis generic support services)?
8. To what extent is equality of access and support embedded within the mainstream programme?
9. What models of support (vertical, horizontal, market) are operating and how are they contributing to improved support for frontline organisations?

Outcomes

10. To what extent has this intervention / way of working improved the quality and effectiveness of support for frontline third sector organisations?
11. In what ways has partnership within the third sector, and with the public and private sectors, contributed to third sector service delivery and community voice?
12. To what extent and in what ways are frontline organisations more effective as a result of ChangeUp interventions?

The national evaluation of ChangeUp will be expected to address all the questions above - analysing the totality of evidence gathered independently and through internal self assessment and evaluation processes. Support may be required to ensure internal processes align with the national evaluation.

Project based / theme specific evaluations and assessment (e.g. those undertaken by national support services and consortia) will be expected to select one of the strands relating to questions 2-6 and to address questions 1, 7-12

7.3 Methodology

A range of possible routes to collecting information for the evaluation are proposed in Paper E.

These are:

Existing information gathering in ChangeUp

- Developing a systematic approach to monitoring information
- Analysis of the consortia self assessment process

Other research and evaluation

- Adding questions to other research:
- Use of other research underway or in preparation

Primary evaluation research

- Stakeholder update interviews
- Thematic case studies
- Locality based studies
- Survey of frontline organisations

Sharing learning and experience

- Feedback workshops
- Learning exchange workshops
- Supporting evaluation capacity of 2nd tier organisations

The evaluation will need to encompass breadth and depth, provide for feedback and verification, and offer opportunities for learning. It will also be important, as previous sections have underlined, that its processes are integrated with other demands for information on infrastructure and front-line organisations. We suggest that these should be developed under the following headings:

1 Capturing overview:

Annual interviews with national stakeholders / those with overarching perspective
Annual evidence review
Annual policy scanning
Interrogation of Capacitybuilders monitoring and reporting data
Create an evaluation template* for consortia, projects and regional plans to provide a means of assessing (appropriate to the levels of funding) their effectiveness against standard criteria.

2 Breadth:

Identify common monitoring systems to be applied across the board
Improve and analyse the self assessment process*
Analyse the meaningful information to be drawn from LAA indicators
Make use of existing research studies such as state of the Sector panel, Guidestar etc
Add questions to existing surveys of national and regional membership organisations
Short questionnaire to existing samples of the sector (such as futurebuilders database)
Survey of frontline

3 Depth:

x no. locality studies** including an annual survey with specified minimum no. of frontline organisations (could be part of building evaluation capacity within support services and carried out in partnership to maximise reach and response)
Annual interviews and workshops with locality stakeholders
Review of internal systems/self-assessment in selected localities
x no. thematic / capacity building case studies each year, related to national support themes
Facilitate action learning sets based on selected research questions
A small number of studies of 'good practice' to assess transferability.
Case studies in local authority areas with 'thriving third sector LAA outcome and in selected number of those without

4 Feedback and verification

Annual regional workshops

Workshop at Capacitybuilders annual conference

Workshops at annual conferences of range of national membership organisations

5 Learning:

Knowledge exchange system

Map how frontline organisations access support and facilitate action learning process about how they prefer to access support and more importantly what they do with it? (i.e. not just about access, but also about whether and how knowledge/capability sticks and/or cascades)

Work with Capacitybuilders and other infrastructure support programmes to facilitate learning exchange

Policy update workshops once a year at national conferences.

However, we also identified a number of challenges for the evaluation, which the above approach aims to address but which will need to be taken into account by the evaluators. These are:

Scrutiny and integrity – a perceived (lack of) objectivity of the evaluation as it will be commissioned by Capacitybuilders – also a contributor to programme achievement.

Buy-in from frontline bodies - Engaging frontline organisations and capturing their views is difficult – ChangeUp is not on their radar and they are often too focused on the immediate problems they're grappling with.

Evidence base (i) - There is a lack of evidence to date and the earliest a baselining study and other work is likely to start is in the early Spring –yet evidence will possibly be required showing distance travelled etc by the end of 2008 (re CSR).

Evidence base (ii) - The period of study will be measuring from a baseline (captured in 2008) plus three years (i.e. activity from 2004). i.e. looking at progress over one year in a programme which will have been going for four years.

Too big to measure - The vision and aims of ChangeUp are grand and the outcomes therefore feel too big to measure.

Not evaluating like for like - ChangeUp is about investing in one layer to have a positive impact on another layer. This takes time to have an effect and in part will be dependent upon differing contexts.

8. The Tender

The suggestions above are not intended to prescribe the methods to be used but prospective evaluators will need to show how they will cover all five strands and add additional methods as thought necessary, to produce the evidence required. They will also need to show how they will address the challenges identified above.

Proposals should specify:

- the rationale for the methods chosen,
- the balance between the 5 strands in terms of gathering evidence,
- the balance of costs between each strand
- detail of the routes to evidence,
- frequency of approach over period 2008-11
- indicate how they will ensure all research questions are covered.

Outline indicative timetable and outputs of the evaluation

Capacitybuilders should aim to let the contract for the evaluation by February 2008 and the selected team will be expected to start the evaluation within 10 working days of the contract start date.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PHASE 1 (to Sept 2008):<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Detailed workplan for first nine months of contract- Liaison with Capacitybuilders grants team re reporting mechanisms and internal data capture systems- Negotiation and refinement of consortia self assessment tool- Update evidence review and begin baseline study
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PHASE 2 (Oct - Dec 2008):<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Continue baseline study and produce baseline findings by December 2008- Develop proposals for any case studies to be carried out
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PHASE 3 (Jan – Sept 2009):<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Continue evaluation research- Update evidence review- Interim report by September 2009 (determined by needs of Comprehensive Spending Review)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PHASE 4 (Oct 2009 – Sept 2010):<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Update baseline and evidence review- Review policy and implementation context- Further findings papers in February and September 2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PHASE 5 (Oct 2010 – March 2011):<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Complete evaluation research- Draft evaluation report to Capacitybuilders, January 2011- Final reports to Capacitybuilders, March 2011