



Can small Charities demonstrate the difference they make?

Charities can still evaluate their results despite a lack of funds – and that's a fact. This simple Toolbox Guidance Note provides some basic information on how small charities can demonstrate the difference they make.

Let's start with what we all know: Measuring impact strikes fear into many across the Charity sector. There's a commonly held belief that only big Charities can afford to tackle such complex and technical challenges, because it requires huge resources, both in terms of staff time and expenditure. Whilst it is true to say that larger Charities are entering into the Impact arena with *gusto*, the reason could simply be that larger Charities are bidding for funding pots in their millions, where a much closer scrutiny of impacts and evaluation are probably required.

A small charity cannot be expected to measure its results, or can it?

While actually measuring the changes Charities bring about in the world can be difficult (people's lives and changes in them are often complex), Charities both large and small can get to grips with measuring results if they adhere to some simple yet important principles.

The best approach is to begin with some basic questions about what all this effort is for.

Why do you want to measure your results?

Answering this question is important if you want to make sure this isn't just something you do because you think you should.

If it's to help you and your trustees understand your impact and how to improve it, make sure your approach is going to give you what you need.

If it's to communicate your results to funders, make sure you know what it is they're looking for, and how to tell your story in a way they'll understand and believe in.

If it's to feed back to your stakeholders, talk to them before you start and find out what's important.

It may be a good idea to talk this through with your board of trustees, as you'll need as much agreement on the "why" as possible.

You'll find [Inspiring Impact's Code of Good Impact Practice](#) a helpful orientation to the subject.

Make sure that your thinking is proportionate to the size of your organisation and the resource and capacity you have. Do not overcomplicate, as sometimes less is more.

What will you do once you have some results?

It may seem obvious, but it's important to work out what you'll do once you have started to measure your results. Develop a plan for how you'll review the findings, how you'll work out what action to take, and how you'll communicate findings internally and externally. Think about what you will do with any challenging findings. What will you do if some service users tell you that your service is not as good or effective as you think it is?

As much as possible, treat it as an opportunity to learn and improve, so that difficult or negative findings are actually an opportunity, not a problem or issue.

How do you communicate the findings?

It's very important to communicate your results outside the organisation but it can be sensitive, so you should find the [Principles of Good Impact Reporting](#) a helpful resource for thinking this through.

Remember that at the heart of any Impact Measurement approach is a very basic ingredient: speaking to people about the changes you want to help them make in their lives.

If you keep your focus on trying to understand this, your journey should begin and end well.

Hints and Tips:

- Most funders now require some form of evidence about how you have spent their money. Always check with the funder or the fund criteria before you apply, as fore-warned is fore-armed. This will *kick-start* your thinking process.
- Any movement towards evaluating the work you do and on demonstrating the difference you make will stand you in good stead. The Voluntary Sector now lives in a changing world where competition is greater and funds more restricted. Movement towards impact evaluation is here to stay.
- There are a wealth of resources on the subject of Impact and Evaluation. Support Cambridgeshire can help you with your Impact journey by providing advice and guidance on what's best for your organisation. Simply contact info@supportcambridgeshire for further support and advice, or visit <https://www.supportcambridgeshire.org.uk/social-impact/>
- Always remember that the journey is as important as any process or evaluation you undertake.
- Make sure that any process you decide to embed is proportionate to the size and capacity of your organisation, and is relative to the funding pots you are submitting applications to.