



# INSPIRING IMPACT

## How can we help?

Consulting the sector on how to develop and improve the Inspiring Impact programme

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### Summary

Inspiring Impact exists to help charities and social enterprises adopt a culture of good impact practice. An important part of our achieving this mission is talking to individuals, organisations, and the sector as a whole about what they need from us, and how we can help them get better at collecting and using impact data.

On 17 November 2015 we hosted the first major consultation<sup>1</sup> with Inspiring Impact stakeholders since the announcement that Inspiring Impact will receive three more years of Big Lottery funding. At the consultation event, the Inspiring Impact team presented the outline for the programme's strategy for the next three years. Attendees were then consulted on how they thought the programme could best achieve its ambitious aims and realise its strategic goal of building an impact movement. The same questions were put to Inspiring Impact's broader network of supporters through an online questionnaire.

The following report summarises the feedback given by those who contributed to the consultation.

### Key findings

- Inspiring Impact is making a **positive impact across the sector**, and users find it valuable.
- The programme has potential to expand its reach even further, particularly by **getting funders to engage as much as other parts of the sector have**.
- Users would like Inspiring Impact to provide more opportunities to create a **network of users who can meet and discuss impact practice** - alongside producing new tools and guidance when relevant.
- Engaging **small charities is seen as an essential part of Inspiring Impact's growth**. Inspiring Impact should not only aim to make its resources even more easy to use for small charities, but should also engage to a wider extent with organisations who support small charities – such as funders, umbrella and infrastructure bodies.

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<sup>1</sup> In total, 57 stakeholders attended the event and contributed online, and they represented a wide range of organisations: Charity (56%); Funder (14%); Umbrella, infrastructure, or membership body (14%); Campaigning organisation (2%); For profit (5%); NGO (2%); Press (2%); Social enterprise( 5%). The event attendees provided their feedback through discussion groups, and the online contributors provided feedback in the form of responses to a multiple choice questionnaire.

## The road to impact: What Inspiring Impact has achieved so far

Contributors to the consultation have engaged with Inspiring Impact in a myriad of ways - ranging from taking part in training courses and using [Measuring Up!](#), to signing up to become the first [Impact Champions](#).

The aspects of Inspiring Impact that they see as most valuable are:

- Access to simple tools for small charities or those who are new to impact practice.
- Provision of good quality background knowledge about good impact practice.
- An effective introduction to the Impact Cycle through [Measuring Up!](#).

They also admire Inspiring Impact for its capacity to bring people together, and appreciate the legitimacy it provides when talking about impact practice - especially when convincing funders of its importance.

*'[It's] a great repository of tools that I can direct the charities I am working with towards to improve their work around impact.'*

Online survey respondent

## Looking to the future: Realising Inspiring Impact's potential

There is clear ambition about the potential for Inspiring Impact to continue to enhance the sector and there are four core areas where many would like to see further support.

### Spreading the word

Raising awareness of Inspiring Impact and good impact practice is key to engaging more people and organisations in the programme.

#### Getting the messaging right

Inspiring Impact appeals in different ways to different audiences eg, frontline workers, senior management, and trustees. An overly generic third-sector focus can fail to recognise the intricacies of the impact needs of some organisations. In certain cases, the programme's messaging could be tailored to specific sectors or subsectors in order to make it easier to spread the word about the programme.

An effective and strategic way of promoting Inspiring Impact would be to develop a communications strategy focused on relatable and transferable impact journey success stories.

Impact Champions – an initiative that Inspiring Impact was already piloting at the time of this consultation – are seen as a potential way of spreading the word. It is felt that small charities in

particular would benefit from hearing from their peers about how Inspiring Impact works, and how it could benefit their organisations.

Another suggestion for spreading the word about Inspiring Impact was for charities to make a public 'pledge' to support [the Code of Good Impact Practice](#). These organisations could then encourage others to do the same through a 'pass on the pledge campaign' – in which they would actively signpost others in their network towards Inspiring Impact.

## Building a network

More opportunities for networking, both in person and online, are needed. Many potential and existing users would benefit from Inspiring Impact having a greater digital social networking presence. This could enable organisations to reach out and support each other, no matter where they are based. Inspiring Impact should tap into pre-existing networks of peers and trusted parties, which are seen as key to supporting others on their impact journey.

In order to reach more users, Inspiring Impact should also take advantage of new and emerging digital tools such as Google Hangouts, podcasts, and webinars.

### Impact Ambassadors: Bringing funders to the network

One of the challenges when building a network is how to engage funders. A suggestion from one of the attendees was to cultivate 'impact ambassadors': key individuals in the funder community who are able to make the case for impact, and help funders to prioritise it.

## Helping with which tools to use and when

While many agree that the tools available in the Impact Hub good quality, there remains a lack of clarity about which tools are ideal for which sort of organisation. Users would benefit from:

- A greater degree of guidance about when it is appropriate to use different tools, especially in relation to how far along an organisation is on its impact journey.
- A clearer, more widely used rating system for tools.
- A further categorisation of how tools might be useful for specific subsectors or outcome areas.

While simplicity and accessibility are really important, it is key that sufficient services exist to support more specialist users. For example, government funders, where more complex and detailed tools and language may be needed to keep them fully engaged.

## Bringing the sector together: The challenge of different types of organisations

Two of the big questions the consultation event looked at was: how Inspiring Impact might better encourage smaller, local organisations to engage with its services; and how large charities can help these smaller charities to improve their impact practice.

## Bringing small organisations to the table

When first engaging with small organisations, Inspiring Impact should consider the following things:

- **Engaging with pre-existing support.** Creating links with organisations that small charities already trust is key. These partners can include umbrella groups, local infrastructure organisations, funders, and commissioners.
- **Appreciating the reality of cost.** It was stressed by online survey respondents in particular that the costs for small charities of attending Inspiring Impact events in London can be high depending on where the charities are based. There is a call for more of Inspiring Impact's England-based events to take place outside of London.
- **Maintaining a clear message.** The most common concern for making the Inspiring Impact programme as inclusive as possible remains creating an accessible language that avoids jargon.

## How to get bigger charities on side

Addressing the question of how to engage larger charities to support this process is more complex. At the heart of the issue is: what would motivate larger charities to support smaller charities on their impact journey?

There is a concern that large and small organisations are often in competition for the provision of services and for sources of funding. It is therefore important that, when talking to larger charities about smaller ones, the potential for mutual benefit is emphasised.

If this hurdle can be conquered, larger charities could offer a variety of resources, such as allowing some staff members from small charities to share in some of the larger organisations' in-house training. Such cooperation brings the chance to build relationships and networks between different sized charities - and in doing so to create a stronger and more impact-driven sector.

### Collaborative involvement

One way of avoiding tension between different charities would be to focus on reporting the collective impact of organisations in specific sub-sectors, instead of the impact of individual organisations.

*'Sounds like your Impact Champion initiative is the way to go!'*

**Online survey respondent, when asked to suggest how to build relationships between large and small charities**

## Is this support for everyone?

Organisations of different sizes have different needs, so two things must be remembered:

- **Larger does not necessarily mean better.** Small charities have different structures, needs and roles, and may therefore be limited in what they can learn from large charities. Support from bigger organisations must not be seen as a silver bullet.

- **Finding the right relationship is key.** A model where larger organisations support smaller ones could be perceived by some as being overly hierarchical. Instead, a model such as peer-to-peer learning might be preferable, where participants feel they are sharing as equals.

## The role of funders: Integrating funders into enhancing impact practice

In order for Inspiring Impact to reach as many people as possible, it needs to ensure funders are engaged. There are two further benefits of successful funder engagement:

- **Coordinating measurement metrics.** Encouraging funders to pool the measurement frameworks they use opens up the opportunity for much easier sharing of data. Use of pooled measurement frameworks would also ease the burden on charities; it could mean they would no longer need to collect the same information in many different ways to satisfy multiple grant-makers.

To achieve this, funders need to be much more proactive in advertising their core messages and concepts. One discussion group suggested a geographically-focused strategy that targets Councils for Voluntary Service (CVSs), local authorities, and local sector infrastructure to encourage greater alignment and to educate funders in setting coherent requirements.

- **Investing in realistic impact practice.** Getting funders to see the importance of good impact practice means they're likely to provide greater financial support for it. At the same time, educating funders in the realities of impact practice encourages them to strike a balance between incentivising good practice and being realistic about targets. By providing support for impact practice, funders can encourage charities to embed it in their operations. However, there should be an awareness of the risk that this could lead to a culture of hoop-jumping in order to secure funding.

## Next steps

Inspiring Impact's team is grateful to everyone who contributed their time and ideas, and we are already integrating the recommendations from this consultation into our broader strategic thinking. We are also investigating particular areas of interest from the user - including how to better engage funders - and aim to use the insights and ideas from the consultation to maximise the impact of our Impact Champions scheme and Subsector Partnerships.

We will continue to engage with the network through [events](#), [social media](#), [emails](#), and for data collection for our own impact measurement.

We remain open to any ideas and recommendations about how Inspiring Impact can develop and improve. Please do not hesitate to get in touch via [inspiringimpact@thinknpc.org](mailto:inspiringimpact@thinknpc.org).

# Inspiring Impact

Inspiring Impact is a programme that aims to change the way the UK voluntary sector thinks about impact and make high quality impact measurement the norm for charities and social enterprises by 2022.

Over the next decade we will work towards five key objectives under five themes, answering the key questions for the sector:

- What does good impact measurement look like?
- How do we know what we need to measure?
- How do we measure it?
- How can we compare with and learn from others?
- What's the role for funders?

Find out more at [www.inspiringimpact.org](http://www.inspiringimpact.org)

## Partners



## Supporters

