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# Top Tips: showing the impact of your work through story-telling...

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As well as funding not-for-profit groups which develop strong empowered communities without poverty or isolation in York, the JRHT York Committee offers additional support to the groups they fund. Our Funder Plus work commissions programmes of learning and invests in expert advice to help groups with organisational development.

The 2019 Funder Plus programme was delivered by Skyblue Research Ltd to 11 organisations who wanted to develop their understanding of 'impact', 'evidence' and their 'story of change'. The programme was co-designed with participants around their own learning styles using a mix of group learning via topic-based workshops and self-guided learning through practical 'homework' tasks before and between workshops.

Here are the top tips from the programme, which you can use to tell your own organisation's story of change and the difference you make through your work.

# 1

**Get your motivation right – collect and use evidence to improve what you do for those you support.**

Learn about impact for yourselves - try not to see collecting evidence as a huge burden or something that has to be done for funders.

# 2

**Map the changes** – set out a ‘**user journey**’ of those you support at different stages of your work with them. Think about the short-term, medium-term and longer-term changes (outcomes), especially those that will endure for those you support.

# 3

**Listen to ‘change’ language – how do those you support talk about changes they have achieved?** This will help you find the best way to define outcomes / change words that can tell your stories of change.

# 4

**Decide what to measure and what evidence to collect - using the change language** of those you support will give you the confidence to re-think about what you should be measuring and collecting to form part of your story.

# 5

**Be realistic about your contribution - good evidence will create credible stories** and isolate the particular contribution your organisation has made within the lives of the people you are supporting.

# 6

**Link numbers and facts with experiences – balancing hard and soft data** can help to build **effective stories of change**.

# 7

**Go beyond surveys - evidence extends past just using surveys**, though these can be a **valuable method** in a **wider toolkit**.

# 8

**Build emotional connections** to audiences through your stories. **Include funders** and the **wider public** and remember to share stories with others supported by your organisation and with your own staff and volunteers.

# 9

**Create 3D stories** - 2D stories are linear and factual. Make your stories in 3D, **bringing people’s experiences** and **your work to life** by making change real.

## Challenges for Funders...

Funder Plus is also about making us a better grant-maker. Key questions for us are...

- Can funders work together to co-produce reporting processes?
- Can funders work together to produce a style for stories?
- Can funders create an over-arching narrative for a place (York) to which your stories can connect?
- Can funders add their voice to your stories?
- Can follow up evidence gathering be funded to understand enduring change?

Using these questions, we will be working ourselves and with other funders in York to become better story tellers. JRF/JRHT is also part of a project with other funders and the Institute for Voluntary Action Research, entitled 'Principles for Better Reporting'. The funders involved are working to make grant reporting a shared, more meaningful and mutually beneficial experience. We are one of nine funders committed to testing out these principles. You can find out more at [www.ivar.org.uk/aligning-grant-reporting](http://www.ivar.org.uk/aligning-grant-reporting)

## Further support...

Skyblue Research Ltd have published the materials they used during the programme of learning on their website:

[www.skyblue.org.uk/index.php/specialisms/stronger-communities](http://www.skyblue.org.uk/index.php/specialisms/stronger-communities)

They also refer to a list of other websites which offer free practical resources aimed at the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector as follows:

- [www.inspiringimpact.org](http://www.inspiringimpact.org)
- [knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/organisation/impact](http://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/organisation/impact)
- [www.socialvalueuk.org](http://www.socialvalueuk.org)
- [www.globalvaluexchange.org](http://www.globalvaluexchange.org)
- [www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk](http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk)