

Social impact measurement in Ireland today

A presentation by Sandra Velthuis
for Clann Credo's
Common Cents conference

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Research

- Scoping research late 2011
- Led by The Wheel
- Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation support
- Ireland, England and Portugal



CALOUSTE
GULBENKIAN
FOUNDATION

Methodology

- 'Fact-finding mission'
- 13 semi-structured depth interviews
- 9 telephone and 4 face-to-face
- 6 more individuals provided signposts
- Analysis of qualitative data
- Comparison with other countries
- Dissemination of findings



Demonstrating Impact:

Current Practice Amongst
Social Purpose Organisations
in the Republic of Ireland



History

- Growing attention in past 15-20 years to governance, planning, quality assurance, etc
- Retrospective output-focused evaluations
- Measuring impact more recent
- Flurry of interest in social auditing c. 2000 not sustained



Present

- Underdeveloped with poor understanding
- Burgeoning interest, gathering momentum
- Noticeable differences between subsectors
- And organisations in same subsector
- And programmes within organisations



Drivers

- International influences
- World of business
- Growth in infrastructure organisations
- Rights-based movement
- Funders
- Value-for-money debate



Attitudes

- Servility *versus* good service
- Relationship-based decision-making
- Reflection = navel gazing
- Underdeveloped local government
- Traditional charity model still common
- Community development *process*
- Yet quite positive



Costs, benefits, risks

- Resistance to change, especially in current climate of threat
- No clear and present danger
- Show that benefits > costs
- Fears about lack of impact
- Lack of sharing of successes
- Lack of sharing of failures



Skills, knowledge, resources

- Practitioners and funders unversed in art of impact measurement (with exceptions)
- But raw ingredients are there
- Lack of time biggest barrier



Systems and tools

- Theory of change and logic models
- Randomised control trials
- Social value approaches
- Quality management systems
- SPEAK
- Customised approaches
- Increasing IT options



Providers of support

- International support market
- Intermediary and umbrella organisations
- Methodology-specific supports
- Consultants
- Funders



Support needs

- Raise awareness
- Make it easy to start
- Provide one-to-one supports if needed
- Facilitate peer support and sharing lessons
- NGOs and funders both need support!



Other stumbling blocks

- Lack of clarity on 'the big questions'
- Systemic problems need systemic response
- Public data deficit
- Insufficient linkages with academia
- Lack of leadership



Conclusion

- Whole field still in its infancy
- Much scope for improvement
- Some exciting future initiatives
- Organisations are receptive
- But need supports
- Coherent approach is needed
- It should be possible!



Thank you

Please feel free to contact me for further information on outcomes, impacts and social value:

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