

**South West  
Forum**

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# Building Impact Leadership in the South West



**IMPACT**  
**HUB**  
SOUTH WEST

## Introduction

*In October 2013, South West Forum hosted an 'Impact Summit' bringing together key stakeholders from the public and voluntary sector alongside funders and impact practitioners, to consider the challenges and opportunities around impact measurement. Speakers included experts from New Philanthropy Capital (NPC)<sup>1</sup>, the University of Bristol, the Impact Hub South West and the Local Government Information Unit<sup>2</sup>.*

*We believe that impact measurement is key to enabling social purpose organisations and the public sector to develop models of service delivery which can meet future challenges. Good impact measurement can:*

- (i) enable providers and commissioners to understand the impact of interventions and improve outcomes for service users and communities.*
- (ii) improve services and increase organisational efficiency.*
- (iii) allow organisations to communicate the value of what they do and the difference they make.*

*But measuring impact has its challenges. And developing a culture of good impact practice requires leadership. There is no 'one size fits all' approach. However, we can learn from examples of good practice and draw on existing expertise to drive quality practice in the region.*

*We have begun to develop a centre of expertise locally through the Impact Hub South West. We see the findings arising from the Summit as an opportunity to work in partnership to support impact practice in the region.*

*Stephen Woollett, Chief Executive, South West Forum, November 2013*

*The Impact Summit was supported by: University of Bristol & Big Lottery Fund (via Proving Our Value)*

## THE CONTEXT

The current system of public service delivery is under pressure. Constraints on funding coupled with increasing demand require organisations to focus on interventions that have maximum impact. There is an increasing consensus that addressing the economic, social and environmental challenges we face will require more effective impact measurement.

Funders and commissioners are increasingly requiring organisations to assess the full Social Value or impact of their activities. They are using that evidence to inform future investment strategies. Social purpose organisations that measure impact ultimately achieve better service delivery as they understand how and why they make a difference. They are able to demonstrate results more effectively and make more of a robust case for investment.<sup>3</sup> Impact assessment can provide real evidence of the value of voluntary sector organisations.

## THE CHALLENGES

Many organisations fall short of evaluating the full impact of their interventions in a coherent and systematic way. Current impact assessment approaches are variable in quality and approach and this makes it difficult for funders and policy makers to understand which services are most effective. The Summit identified a variety of contributing factors experienced at a 'systems' and 'providers' level including: challenges from commissioning practice; insufficient resources; low capacity and skills; and the lack of an impact culture.

## THE SOLUTIONS

The Summit identified a series of solutions set out later in this report alongside calls for action for individual organisations. Fostering a culture of impact leadership will be vital in moving these ideas forward.

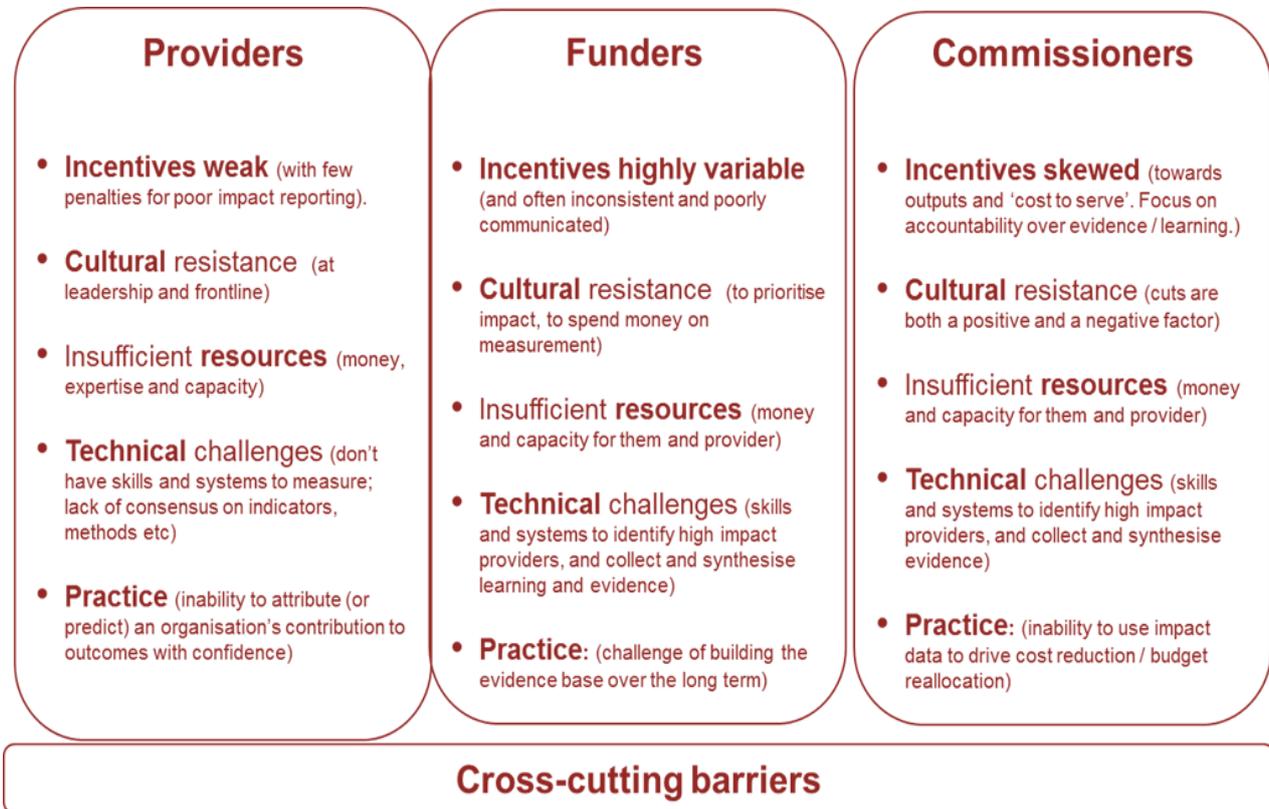
<sup>1</sup> <http://www.thinknpc.org/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.lgiu.org.uk/>

<sup>3</sup> New Philanthropy Capital 2012 Impact Survey

# The Challenges

NPC suggest that the challenges facing providers, funders and commissioners have some common themes around incentives, culture, resources, technical challenges and practice:



## Participants identified the following particular challenges in the South West:

- There is a general lack of impact culture. Greater value needs to be placed on long term analysis of outcomes.
- Organisational culture needs to shift from a time and task approach to one of outcomes based impact assessment.
- We need a more collaborative impact measurement approach developed to fit the scale and nature of the service delivery. We should share best practice.
- Smaller organisations have fewer resources and skills to measure their impact and need support in this area.
- There is a lack of clarity from funders and no consensus on approaches or quality of evidence. There needs to be shared approaches to measurement that enable innovation. There is a need for flexibility as there is no 'one size fits all' approach.
- There needs to be a greater alignment between grants and contracts and the creation of social value. Social purpose organisations often deliver 'soft' outcomes which are much harder to measure (improved confidence, wellbeing etc.) Changes also occur over longer periods of time than the usual commissioning cycle.
- There is insufficient focus on the service user/beneficiary perspective in designing outcomes and indicators.
- Lack of investment in impact measurement is a challenge for both the social purpose and public sector. Funding for capacity building and evaluation should be built into contracts.

## The Solutions

The Summit identified a number of ways to improve local leadership in impact measurement in the South West:

### For strategic partnership organisations:

- **Share good practice** examples of impact measurement to encourage and motivate others for example through facilitation of shared access to resources.
- Support **learning and development** for the social purpose sector, funders and commissioners.
- Provide opportunities for **peer learning** e.g. through action learning sets.
- Connect to sources of **impact expertise** or knowledge hubs such as the Evidence Centres for Social Policy.
- Develop opportunities for support through **mentoring** arrangements.
- Develop **opportunities for benchmarking** to enable organisations working in specific service areas to identify best practice.
- Encourage **LEPs, Health and Wellbeing Boards and other key strategic partnerships to play a key role** in setting indicators for economic, environmental and social wellbeing.
- Establish **stronger links with Higher Education Institutions** to enable joint learning and research projects.
- **Inform / lobby policy makers** and funders about the characteristics and challenges facing smaller organisations and those delivering social impacts.
- The **Impact Hub South West** could provide a hub of support, knowledge and resources as well as facilitate a network of practitioners.

### For service providers:

- **Invest in capacity** to plan more effectively and identify appropriate measurement tools.
- Too many organisations fail to plan impact assessment and spend too much time and energy collecting data that isn't useful.
- Identify an **impact champion** to lead work in your organisation. Develop a sense of

**ownership among staff and volunteers** tasked with collecting data and involve them in process design.

- Work in **partnership** with other organisations to share measurement approaches and information about what has worked and what hasn't.
- **Involve your stakeholders and service users** in deciding outcomes.
- Be **pragmatic!** Tailor the approach to your organisation's characteristics and scope.
- Encourage commissioners to make greater use of **co-production techniques** in planning new services and impact frameworks.

### For commissioners and funders:

- Build a culture of impact assessment into the commissioning cycle.
- Provide **training and support** for commissioners and procurement teams to better understand impact measurement.
- Ensure that commissioning more **accurately identifies social value outcomes** and provides resources to enable organisations to measure impact. Social value outcomes could be developed jointly with key stakeholders.
- Keep **bureaucracy** to a minimum. Impact assessment that is too demanding will exclude smaller providers.
- Promote a **shared approach to measurement** and enable a process that will allow greater collaboration & development of common frameworks & indicators.
- Consider **contracts that enable longer term outcomes** to be delivered and measured.
- Make greater use of **co-funding and co-production** to developing shared impact measurement approaches. Consider a co-production pilot to test new ideas.

## Conclusions and next steps

Impact measurement is increasingly important but there are real challenges for social purpose organisations and the public sector in moving to a more longitudinal outcomes-based approach. The following are some of the key actions that could enable change to happen in the South West:

**Identify impact leaders** from all sectors in the South West who can champion the value of better impact assessment. There is existing expertise within organisations across the South West and we need to create opportunities for sharing good practice.

**Take a wider approach to partnership development** to include Higher Education Institutions and develop new ideas such as establishing projects with research students and providing opportunities for knowledge transfer.

**Agree a set of shared principles and approaches** among key partners (investors, social purpose organisations and public sector bodies) so that each sector can understand how they can contribute to developing a culture of good impact practice. Established partnerships could take the lead on this on a sector basis, such as Health and Wellbeing Boards and LEPs.

**Develop an agreed set of simple and standardised approaches** to impact measurement to help organisations with limited resources to better evaluate their impact.

**Work more closely with individuals, families and communities to develop shared outcomes frameworks.** Action learning sets could enable organisations to share best practice in engagement.

**Funders and commissioners should support skills development in impact** and the development of new ideas to imbed a culture of impact across the sectors. This could include training, mentoring schemes or action learning sets to encourage shared learning.

**Commissioners should adopt a set of principles that ensure procurement processes are more closely aligned to**

**measuring the impact** of social value delivered by social purpose organisations.

**Get your organisation to move to a culture of evaluating outcomes and impact**, not activities and outputs. Devote resources to impact measurement in terms of time and staff to develop expertise in analysis and evaluation.

Finally, **work with Impact Hub South West** to enable greater partnership working around impact measurement and create a hub of knowledge, expertise and support.

### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Presentations from the Summit and a detailed report are available on the South West Forum website and can be downloaded [here](#).

### INSPIRING IMPACT

NPC has worked with a partnership of eight organisations through [Inspiring Impact](#) - a ten year change programme around impact practice. They have recently launched the [Code for Good Impact Practice](#) and the [principles for good impact practice](#) for funders; and are undertaking work around shared measurement.

### IMPACT HUB SOUTH WEST

South West Forum is host to the Impact Hub South West. The Hub draws on expertise from across the region to provide local, high quality advice and support through: training, events, one-to-one support, consultancy and projects. The aim of the Hub is to develop a culture of good impact practice in the region and it will work across sectors to develop opportunities for action in this area. Alongside this partnership work, the Hub is undertaking research - developing a bank of local impact evidence, creating new impact tools, and seeks to provide commentary on current impact approaches and trends. For more information you can visit the website [here...](#)

For more information on any of the material contained in this report please contact Charlotte Hanson – [Charlotte@southwestforum.org.uk](mailto:Charlotte@southwestforum.org.uk) or call 01392 247901.

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