#iwill Fund Learning Hub
Quality Practice Workstream

Impact Accelerator Initial Insights Report
Generation Change
April 2019

About the #iwill Fund Learning Hub

This is a report by the #iwill Fund Learning Hub. The #iwill Fund Learning Hub was commissioned to support, and build on, the activities of the #iwill Fund. It has two strategic objectives:

1. To inform the strategic and investment direction of the #iwill Fund. This will ensure that the Leadership Board and #iwill Fund delivery partners are able to target funds into the right areas, ages and approaches, where it is really needed.

2. To strengthen and connect the youth social action sector by enabling and facilitating the sharing of learning, data and insights across delivery partners, including what does and doesn't work. Sharing key insights and learning more broadly within the wider youth social action sector.

The #iwill Fund Learning Hub has developed three workstreams which will support its objectives. This will allow us to support funders in making decisions about how to support youth social action now, and to capitalise on the evidence generated through the #iwill Fund to create a legacy of evidence to support funding and delivery in the future.

1) Systems

This work will develop our understanding of barriers and enablers in building and strengthening sustained youth social action. It will support the identification of emerging practice and the testing of potential new solutions as well as to help guide investment decisions.

(a) Systems Mapping
Co-production workshops, supported by research briefings, will build the understanding of barriers to, and opportunities for, embedding and sustaining youth social action in three priority themes: education, place, and the relationship between youth social action and 'all ages' social action. Workshops are attended by Match Funders, invited grantees, and other invited stakeholders. (Sept 2018 – Mar 2019)

(b) Funder Collaboration
A series of 'Lab Storms' will be offered to Match Funders to enable a collaborative approach to identify common challenges, and to find and share actionable responses to them. The Lab Storms will support Match Funders to fund as effectively as possible (April 2019 – April 2021).

2) Sector Evidence Plan

This work will build our understanding of what youth social action achieves, how to reach under-served groups, and how to sustain youth social action (Aug 2018 – ongoing). It will draw on these four information sources to develop and evolve answers to key questions:

- Intra-fund evaluation aggregation
- Extra-fund research aggregation
- Match Funder returns to the Fund #iwill Fund and data from Information Management System
- Results from other workstreams.

3) Quality Practice

This work will deepen our understanding of what it takes to deliver quality youth social action. It will illustrate how delivery organisations define 'double benefit' and how they attempt to both achieve and measure it. This work will support delivery organisations to improve their offer (September 2018 – ongoing). 'The Impact Accelerator', delivered by Generation Change, is an intensive process of impact support, challenge and development – up to 30 organisations will take part in this. Learning from these organisations will be shared more widely to spread knowledge about improvement across the youth social action landscape.

Introduction

The Quality Practice workstream seeks to identify strengths and weaknesses in youth social action delivery by supporting learning and improvement amongst delivery organisations and sharing the resulting learning with funders and beyond. At the core of this workstream is a 12-month learning and evaluation scheme developed by Generation Change called the Impact Accelerator. This scheme is undertaken by #iwill Fund grantees individually and as part of a peer cohort. The Impact Accelerator includes an independent validation of #iwill Fund grantees using a tool developed by Dartington Service Design Lab called the Confidence Framework. This is offered alongside a package of training and consultancy to help organisations to use the tool to drive improvement and learning.

By supporting these providers to improve their offer in this way, and by building their capacity to learn about their programme outcomes, this work will deepen our understanding of what it takes to deliver quality youth social action. We will be able to identify strengths and weaknesses in youth social action provision based on how confident we are in what they deliver. This will generate insights that can inform Match Funders' understanding of practice across different settings, and guide attempts to replicate and disseminate practice across different settings. The Impact Accelerator also aims to establish a strong community of practice amongst providers of youth

social action, all of whom using the Confidence Framework as a common assessment tool to better understand their outcomes and develop best practice that can be shared.

The work is led by Generation Change, who are the authors of this paper. Generation Change is a partnership charity set up by youth social action providers, with the mission of driving collaborative systems change in the sector. The Quality Practice workstream intends to support 3 cohorts of organisations in total to undertake the 12-month accelerator process. Each cohort will produce two **Practice Insights Reports** - one during the early stages to capture initial insights, and one produced at the end, once improvement work has been implemented.

This is the initial insights paper for the first cohort, which commenced the Impact Accelerator in October 2018, and have completed nearly half of the 12-month process. It covers insights that have been collected from the first two phases of the Impact Accelerator, along with learning from the recruitment, selection and participation to date of organisations taking part in the scheme.

Assessment outputs

The findings in this report are based on reviewing the following forms of assessment:

- **Rapid assessments** of 11 #iwill Fund grantees who attended our Taster Days
- **Validated Confidence Frameworks** for 9 organisations participating in the Impact Accelerator
- **Submitted evidence** in support of each organisation's Confidence Framework scores
- **Case notes** from each organisation's 1:1 meetings and Improvement Meetings with Research Associates
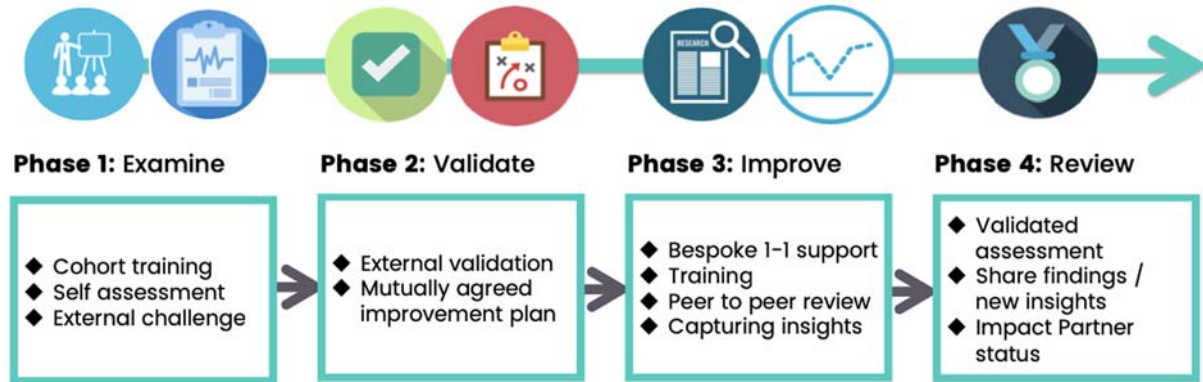- **Feedback** from participants of our training events and peer review day.

Methodology

The Impact Accelerator

The Impact Accelerator is a 12-month process designed to help organisations delivering youth social action to examine, build confidence in, and improve their programmes' outcomes on the basis of evidence. It has three core aims:

i) to foster a culture of learning within youth social action delivery
ii) to support evidence-led improvement work to develop stronger practice, and
iii) to establish a common assessment of programme efficacy

The Impact Accelerator is delivered in 4 distinct phases:

Phase 1: Examine	Phase 2: Validate	Phase 3: Improve	Phase 4: Review
◆ Cohort training ◆ Self assessment ◆ External challenge	◆ External validation ◆ Mutually agreed improvement plan	◆ Bespoke 1-1 support ◆ Training ◆ Peer to peer review ◆ Capturing insights	◆ Validated assessment ◆ Share findings / new insights ◆ Impact Partner status

The Confidence Framework

The Confidence Framework is an assessment tool developed by Dartington Service Design Lab as part of the £25 million *Realising Ambition* programme funded by The National Lottery Community Fund. It has been specially adapted for youth social action in partnership with Generation Change. The tool examines 5 fundamental components of a programme's life cycle, and within each highlights 5 areas for detailed examination. (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Example of partially completed Confidence Framework

For each section of the framework, an explainer and scoring criteria is given. Organisations must give their own self-assessed score in each area as well as provide evidence / documentation to support their rating, which is then independently validated by Dartington Service Design Lab to provide a final score.

Fig. 2: Example section of the Confidence Framework

DESIGN	1. The activity has a **well-defined target population** of young people it aims to serve. It also has defined the parts of the community they intend the social action to benefit.	Your target population are the young people and communities / beneficiaries you and young people want to serve, and that you believe your programme is fit to serve. Your target group of young people should be clearly defined, with inclusion and exclusion criteria which staff can use to guide their enrolment decision. Criteria may include age, sex, location, other demographic factors, or risks.		It is unclear which young people the activity is intended for and why it would be beneficial
				A target group is identified but no rationale given as to why this target group is the right target group
				The target population of young people is identified and justified, and the community, cause or beneficiary of their social action is clearly stated.
				The target population is justified, using external evidence to identify young people and community beneficiaries best-placed to benefit.
				The target population is justified, using external evidence, and internal data from past delivery to identify young people and communities that are best-placed to benefit
	2. The activity's **core components are clearly defined** from end to end.	The core components refers to the key ingredients that make it work; the structure and features that stay the same each time it is delivered. This is in contrast to the flexible components which include those that are decided by the young people taking part, and those that can be altered according to circumstances. These should be specified end-to-end i.e. from referral and enrolment, through the delivery of the activities, to the young people's exit from the programme, and any post-programme support.		There is no attempt to define what the core or active ingredients are
				A loose or vague reference is made to what is core but there are many gaps end-to-end
				The activity comprises a set of clearly defined youth social action activities, some of which are evidence-based but not all and/or there are gaps end-to-end.
				The activity has an end-to-end codified programme design comprising clearly defined activities, and is clear about whch are core and which are flexible.
				The core and flexible evidence-based activities of the activity are defined, and monitoring data has been used to test and improve this. There is evidence to link the core activities with their intended outcomes.

What is "Evidence-Confidence"?

The Confidence Framework does not directly measure, audit or assess outcomes. Instead, it examines each of the critical components of a programme that enable us to have confidence that outcomes are clearly and consistently being identified, measured, and evaluated. The Confidence Framework provides a scoring system to measure **how much confidence** we have that this is taking place, based on the evidence and documentation that an organisation is able to provide. In this report, we use the term "evidence-confidence" as a way of referring to this confidence we have in the evidence as a 'property' of a programme.

Cohort overview

Recruitment of the Summer 2018 cohort began in May and continued up until the end of June 2018. The aim was to recruit organisations who met selection criteria set by the #iwill Fund Learning Hub (see appendix I), and were movitated to participate in the scheme, given the resource and time commitments involved. The #iwill Fund selected 6 organisations, which are detailed below. For more information on the recruitment and selection process, please refer to the Appendix.

Grantee	Match Funder	Programme Description
UK Youth	Spirit of 2012	UK Youth have been funded by Spirit of 2012 Trust to develop and deliver a new programme for young girls called EmpowHer. They were selected to join the cohort under the strategic focus area of '**delivering at scale**'.
Young Minds	The Co-Operative Foundation	The Young Minds Activist Programme is a youth-led programme through which young people with lived experience of mental health issues design and deliver a range of activism and campaigning activities for the benefit of other young people. They were selected to join the cohort in line with the strategic focus area of '**delivering at scale**'.
N-Gage	Young Manchester	N-Gage are a youth organisation based in Manchester. They were selected to join the cohort as part of the strategic focus area of '**place-based social action**'. Their programme, 'Transform' uses a traditional youth work model to support youth-led social action projects.
Student Hubs	Sport England	Student Hubs are #iwill funded through Sport England to deliver the Active Programme. This builds on

		established volunteering programmes, broadening their scope to include sport activities and thus reaching more children. They were selected for this cohort through the strategic focus area: **"potential to be replicated across a setting'**.
Football Beyond Borders	**Sport England**	Football Beyond Borders use football as a setting for supporting disadvantaged children. Their schools programme is being funded through the #iwill Fund to incorporate social action, and they have been selected to join the cohort as part of the **'potential to be replicated across a setting'** learning focus.
WE Charity	**Team London RUMI Foundation**	WE UK run schools-based campaigns that inspire and motivate children to do social action with the reward of attending WE Day in London. They have been selected to join the cohort under the learning criteria of **'delivering at scale'**. They are funded through multiple #iwill Fund Match Funders and are themselves a direct delivery match-funder.

There were a further 3 organisations who joined the Summer 2018 cohort through sponsorship from other partners besides the #iwill Fund. 2 of them also receive funding from the #iwill Fund, and we have agreed to include them in our Practice Insights Reports for this cohort.

UpRising	**Esmee Fairbairn & Paul Hamlyn Foundation**	UpRising deliver a leadership programme for young people from under-represented backgrounds.
Co-Operative College	**Co-Operative Foundation**	The Co-Operative College deliver a social action programme in colleges, providing resources to support 'community reporting' and teaching young people about co-operative principles.
City Year	*Not funded through the #iwill Fund*	City Year deliver a full-time social action programme in schools where volunteers act as role models and mentors to pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Involvement by organisations

Each participating organisation identifies a staff member to act as a Project Lead for the process. The Project Lead must have overall responsibility for either delivery on the programme, or its evaluation and monitoring, as they are responsible for completing the self-assessment and then implementing improvement work.

To ensure that the Project Lead is supported to deliver a process of internal change, Generation Change meets with each organisation's Chief Executive early on in the process to clarify expectations and identify strategic priorities shaping staff roles in the organisation.

What we learned from the validation process

About the validation process

Each organisation attended a cohort retreat where Generation Change and Dartington Service Design Lab delivered core training in the concepts behind the Confidence Framework. This also included a detailed exercise in which Project Leads at each organisation were supported to critically examine the Confidence Framework, with some facilitation, and then develop a plan for conducting a self assessment exercise.

The self assessment was then done internally by the Project Lead who collected evidence and internal documentation to demonstrate the score they believed most suitable for each criteria. Most organisations involved multiple team members in this exercise beyond the Project Lead, and one conducted a whole-organisation training session to cascade the cohort retreat training and to engage all staff in the process.

Evidence collected was then submitted to the Dartington Service Design Lab, who validated the Confidence Framework scores by a process of review. This was conducted by two separate researchers and then moderated to create the most accurate scores.

Insights

i) Organisations consistently rated their evidence-confidence as higher than the validated scores.

On average the cohort rated themselves 1 score higher than the validated rating. The fact that this was so consistent across multiple criteria indicates a bias towards over-confidence, rather than a lack of clarity in the criteria themselves.

Fig 3: difference between validated and self assessed scores for validated frameworks
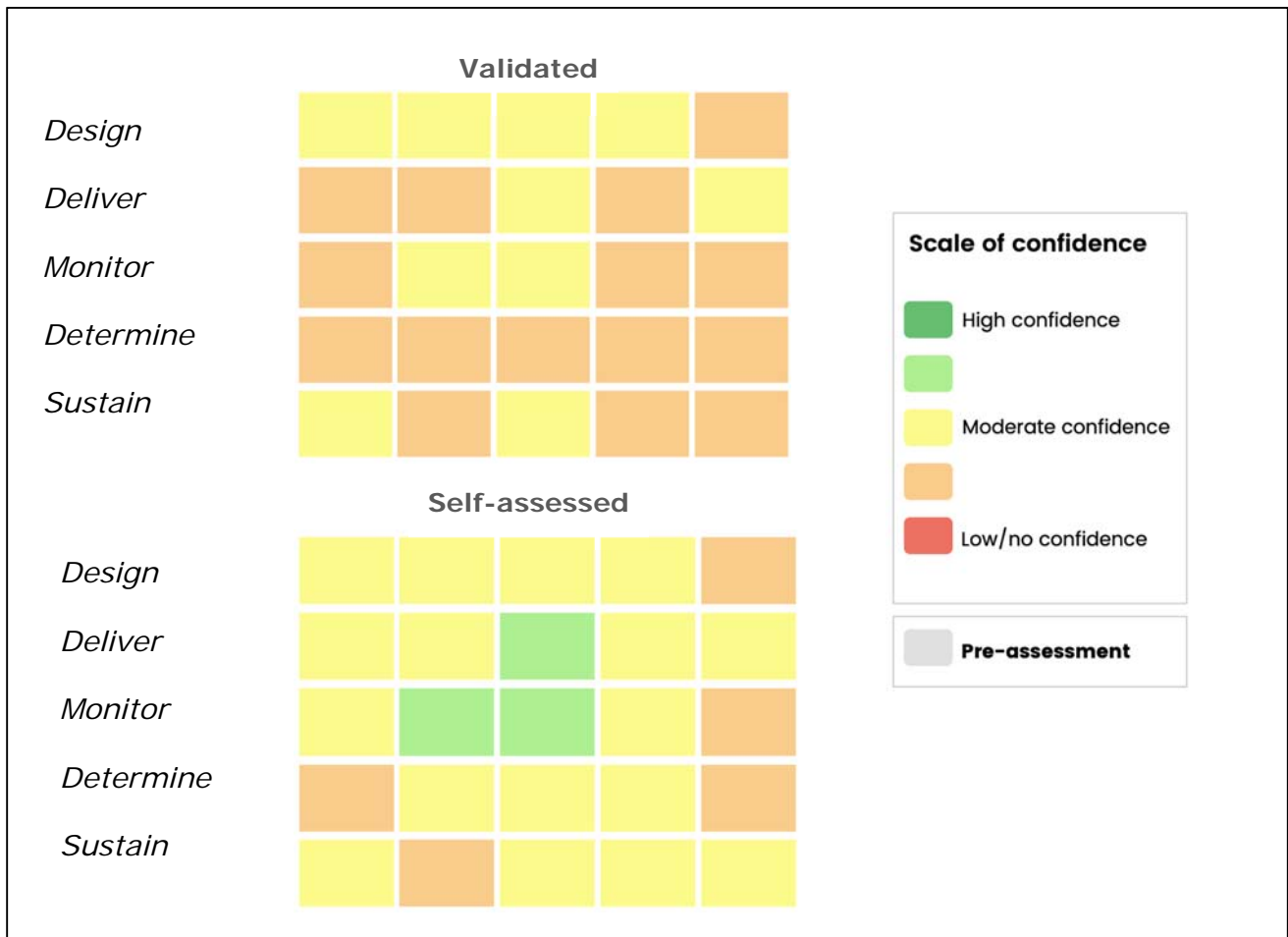
ii) The Impact Accelerator process and Confidence Framework tool, are highly valued by providers.

The training and cohort retreat received positive feedback from all participants, with an average of 8.5/10 on general feedback scores – or a strongly positive net promoter score.

The validation process was viewed as a challenging but rewarding exercise by organisations. Feedback from Project Leads who conducted the self-assessment indicated that organisations valued undertaking a 'definitive', systematic review; and were keen to receive independent and authoritative confirmation of their own self-assessment.

There was consistent feedback that the independent validation gave organisations a clearer sense of priorities, as well as a benchmark to work from, helping to relieve anxiety about evaluation and performance. A common pattern after receiving the validated Confidence Framework was for Project Leads to encounter some shock and resistance to downgraded scores, before progressing on to a state of relief and renewed confidence in having an accurate and objective picture of their programme's strengths and weaknesses.

In many cases gathering evidence internally required an increase in cross function/department collaboration which was viewed positively, and led to organisational change in some cases even at this early stage. In some cases discussions in the Improvement Meetings confirmed that evidence was in place but had not been produced for validation.

iii)   Evidence-confidence scores are an indicator of overall programme performance.

Overall, our findings from the validation process indicate that there is, indeed, a difference in evidence-confidence of #iwill funded social action provision. Some programme providers are more effective at identifying and improving outcomes than others. This is indicated by the fact that validated frameworks appear to have stronger confidence scores the fewer "red" sections there are on a framework. Likewise, the more "red" areas, the more likely a programme is to have low scores across the board. See section iii in the Appendix.

This indicates that evidence-confidence scores are a measure of 'performance' for programme providers – i.e. results are not arbitrary or determined by differences of approach.

iv)   Strong evidence-confidence scores are not determined by organisational characteristics, the type of provision or mode of intervention.

A larger sample size is needed to better understand what factors may instead be driving differences in performance. However, in our current cohort, there does not appear to be a link between efficacy and: organisational size, funding resources, or the type of provision. For example, organisations within the cohort that have similar overall income have very different evidence-confidence profiles, and a provider's "Sustain" scores, which mostly indicate a stronger business model for the provision, do not consistently predict scores in other parts of the framework. A larger sample size is needed to confirm this finding and better understand what factors might be driving differences in performance.

v)   The overall evidence-confidence scores for this cohort is low.

Looking at all 225 Confidence Framework scores for the whole cohort, only 3 were validated as having a "very high" confidence score. This indicates that the overall maturity of youth social action practice is low. Furthermore, 127 scores (over half) were validated as having "little" or "no" confidence, compared with 98 scores (under 45%) being validated as having "moderate" or "high"

confidence. We need more comparative uses of the Evidence Confidence framework in other fields of practice to understand what is to be expected generally for programmes receiving similar levels of funding.

vi)   Weaker programmes still have areas of best practice – with most organisations having at least one area of high confidence.

Programmes that are 'weaker' (i.e. have more "red" areas on their Confidence Framework) still have areas of strength ("light green") that other providers could benefit from. 7 out of 9 #iwill Fund grantees in the cohort had at least one part of the Confidence Framework that was rated as "Light Green" – or "high confidence". This was true even for organisations that had a large number of "red" – or "no confidence" – scores. We therefore see it as being useful to explore and capture for each of these organisations some of the specific practices they are employing in these areas and highlight them as best practice.

The Impact Accelerator includes peer review days, and an ongoing cohort peer support offer, to encourage organisations to share best practice with each other – and we will be focusing on these areas of strength going forwards.

vii)   Organisations that had a historic focus on youth social action had stronger confidence scores across the board than those that were new to delivering it.

A majority (4 out of 6) of #iwill Fund grantees in the Impact Accelerator cohort do not see social action as their primary offer as an organisation, and many are delivering social action for the first time as a result of funding from the #iwill Fund.

Organisations that are adding youth social action into existing provision tend to have weaker confidence in the aspects of their programmes that relate to "Design" and "Determining benefit" than other organisations in the cohort that are focusing on their core service and have historically been more invested in youth social action. This suggests there could be benefits in investing in peer learning and dissemination of practice.

It was widely felt by these organisations that are "new to social action" that the evidence-confidence is likely to have been stronger for their primary / core activities. This may pose some questions about the goal of Match Funders in funding these organisations to deliver activities outside of their core specialism, where they have lower evidence-confidence.

Emerging insights about practice

Deeper insights into specific practices within programmes will be gained during Phases 3 and 4 of the Impact Accelerator, which is where we will help #iwill Fund grantees to conduct improvement work which will further help us to understand their practice. A future paper will explore these in more detail. However, below are some initial reflections on practices that appear to be contributing to the quality of social action offered by #iwill funded grantees.

These insights stem from our case notes, and conversations that have taken place in the Improvement Meetings. Further work is needed to examine and codify practices that have been identified through the validation process as having higher evidence-confidence.

Fig 4: Common areas of strengths and weaknesses

Design The YSA opportunity is logical and clearly articulated	The YSA activity has a well defined target population	The core components of the YSA activity are well defined	The necessary core inputs are clearly specified	The YSA activity has clearly defined outcomes	The YSA activity is tightly supported by a theory of change
Deliver The YSA opportunity is effectively and properly delivered	There is implementation fidelity	Realistic impact-focused targets are set	Delivered by people with the appropriate competencies	Staff and volunteers have appropriate support	Key stakeholders for success are known and involved
Monitor Evidence is used to learn and adapt, as required	Outcomes of young people are routinely monitored	The proportion of the YSA activity attended is monitored	Attendance and drop-off of participants is well monitored	Staff and young people are involved in shaping the YSA	Learning and approaches are shared across the organisation
Determine Double Benefit Confidence in the outcomes	The logic model of the activity is underpinned by evidence	Evidence from elsewhere suggests the activity improves outcomes	The organisation can gather, analyse and communicate evidence	Evidence generated by the activity suggests it is improving outcomes	There is evidence of a wider double benefit
Sustain YSA opportunity is good value for money and is sustainable	There is evidence of satisfaction and value by young people	There is evidence that the activity is value for money	There is a compelling business case for replication	The financial and organisational structures are robust enough for replication	Delivery of the YSA opportunity is sustainable

Key
- Typically strong (green)
- Variable (yellow)
- Typically weak (red)

Common areas of strength

All members of the cohort had done work on their **Theory of Change** in the past and were familiar with the concept, but in many cases this was at the organisational, not the programme, level. This may have been due to the newness of the programme, however it could be argued that any new programme should begin with consideration of the intended theory of change.

#iwill Fund grantees tended to have **well defined roles** for staff and volunteers. There was good documentation provided during the validation stage for skills profiles, staff development and competencies.

Target population in relation to the young people was usually the most clearly articulated criteria. The target population of the community beneficiaries was generally not well articulated. Often the reason for this was the intention to co-produce the community social action with the

young people, meaning that it was not completely controlled by the organisation and designed ahead of time, making it hard to determine who the community beneficiaries would be.

All organisations appear to have embraced the concept of what is *core* and what is *flex* about their programme model – which formed a central part of the cohort training retreat. The "core" of a programme is the active ingredients that must be in place for it to achieve its intended outcomes, whereas the "flex" are elements of the activity that can be adapted to context (or which are primarily in place to help users respond to the 'core' components).

Whilst this concept is understood by providers at the design stage, many are currently weak at ensuring this informs delivery – i.e. there may be some attempt to define what is core and flex at a strategic level for the organisation, but limited articulation of this in actual programme implementation materials such as handbooks for staff and volunteers. Work to delineate the 'core' and 'flex' of different social action activities could help to disseminate best practice and make it more transferrable.

Common areas of weakness

Common to many organisations was the need to underpin their Theory of Change with some / more **evidence for the outcomes they are seeking to achieve**. This was generally recognised as a legitimate need, but one that is very hard to resource for internally in terms of time, staff skills and equivalent implications for money. Given that the evidence base underpinning certain aspects of each Theory of Change will be drawn from the same or simliar sources, more work could be done to make the external evidence base accessible to youth providers in a way that can inform design practices. The sector evidence plan workstream may provide some solutions to this.

Within the Theory of Change itself, common among the cohort was the need to better understand the **mechanisms of change** – or core components / active ingredients, of the programme. What *must* a participant go through or experience to have the best chance of achieving the desired outcome. Theory of Change models were particularly weak in describing the intended mechanisms of change for achieving 'community benefit' – with many programmes not attempting to do this at all.

The scores on the **Deliver** criteria varied most consistently from the validated rating. Discussions within the Improvement Meetings served to define the concepts that were driving these criteria and on the need for organisations to reach a deeper understanding of concepts like implementation fidelity: what this means and how to measure it. This starts with codification and ends with measurement, and work on these areas features on many of the improvement plans.

Many organisations confirmed that they were not adept at sharing learnings internally, and this is an area when cross cohort learnings can and should be faciliated actively.

Improvement needs

There is a need to support youth social action providers in understanding, **managing and monitoring implementation fidelity**, to ensure that programmes are delivered as designed, and that the mechanisms of change identified within a TOC are being monitored. This will enable greater sector-wide learning in identifying *what* these mechanisms of change are, and how they are affected by context, age of participants, and other factors. Implementation fidelity is more important for larger scale programmes, and those that have some existing confidence in their programme design.

There is a common theme around the challenge of **measuring impact solely through self-reporting**. A common discussion is the need to identify ways to 'triangulate' measurement between self report (young person), relevant adult (parent, teacher, youth worker), and where possible, some objective marker if there is one – such as a behavioural indicator. This is a challenge that all organisations face and some more robust advice on what is reasonable, acceptable, sector best practice, etc has been requested.

Several organisations also raised the challenge of **measuring the impact of social action on the community who it is designed to benefit**, and how important this is to enabling the changes the programme is looking to effect for a young person. Many providers see these outcomes as incidental or of less significance than the outcomes to young people. Dartington Service Design Lab and Research Associates advised that organisations should at least be in a position to define the 'expected benefit', even if they can't measure it.

The need to support better **sharing of systematic learning** across an organisation (between teams, colleagues or departments) was discussed in the peer review meeting in February 2019 – which was itself seen as a good example of how real and practical advice can be shared between cohort members. The potential for this to be faciliatated and systematised further by Generation Change and Research Associates is significant, and could open up dissemination of practice beyond the cohort.

Further, a training session on **change management** by the Dartington Service Design Lab at the peer review day was well received and seen as relevant to the challenge identified above. Culture has been identified as a key enabler of programme improvement as quality necessarily impacts all areas of an organisation. Many discussions return to the issue of culture and change management.

Recommendations for Match Funders

1. Be clear about the goals of funding organisations that are not solely / primarily or historically focused on delivering social action

Those organisations in the cohort that are delivering social action programmes for the first time:

A) believe that their evidence-confidence would be stronger for their core activities
B) tend to need more work on the "design" areas of their work to ensure that logic models have been adequately defined, and to draw on existing evidence
C) are reluctant to invest limited learning resources into non-core activity – even if that activity is seen as positive and impactful for the organisation

But on the other hand:
D) may be more curious and open to sharing failure, as they see the success or failure of these activities as lower stakes for the organisation.

2. Help to cofidy and disseminate best practice from those organisations that are most invested in delivering, evaluating and improving youth social action

There may need to be a way of delineating: 1) organisations that are deeply invested in delivering youth social action, and therefore committed to learning and improvement around these activities; from 2) organisations that are willing / able to offer social action activities but are not primarily invested in developing new learning about what makes these activities achieve their intended outcomes.

For organisations that fit the first type, it would be highly beneficial to do more of the sort of deep-rooted learning that the Impact Accelerator provides support for, and then codify emerging best practice so that it can be made transferrable for other settings. This way, organisations that fit the second type might be able to apply well-developed insights about quality practice without having to shift organisational priorities when it comes to learning and improvement.

Currently there is very little work done to identify best practice, codify it, and make it accessible for use in other settings.

3. Treat evaluation and learning as an organisation-wide process for youth organisations, and assess grantees on their capacity to do this well.

Our use of the Evidence Confidence framework strongly indicates that some organisations are better at measuring and learning from their outcomes – and this appears to be unrelated to organisational size or type of provision. Some youth organisations have higher evidence-confidence than others – and this is likely to be down to performance and the strength of their organisation.

Just like quality is everyone's responsibility in any business, so quality of impact should be everyone's responsibility within a purpose organisation. It makes sense for funders to examine how their grant application process is able to capture what processes are in place across a whole organisation to enable them to learn about their outcomes in a rigorous way. It might be possible to incorporate some of the scoring criteria of the Confidence Framework into grant applications – or use independent validation to assess evidence-confidence.

It may also be appropriate to identify how funding can incentivise or price in the costs of integrated learning activity across a whole organisation.

Appendix

i) Recruitment and selection process

About

Our recruitment process was designed to build and validate demand for the scheme, by communicating the value of taking part to prospective organisations, and ensuring that the full obligations of taking part are known from the start. It was critical to identify organisations that were fully able to participate over a 12-month process, and could meet the time commitments.

Generation Change undertook the following approach:

- Communications with organisations to pitch the scheme and highlight the benefits to them should they choose to take part. This was supported by face-to-face meetings to establish the value proposition, answer questions, and identify client needs / drivers for taking part.

- We held 2 Taster Days - one in London and one in Birmingham, where we offered a free day of training in the Confidence Framework to give prospective organisations a low-stakes way of finding out whether the process was right for them.

- As part of the Taster Day, participants were asked to conduct a **Rapid Assessment** of their programme against the Confidence Framework, to give us a broader based set of findings for this report.

- Organisations were then invited to submit expressions of interest, confirming that they met our requirements for taking part in the scheme, and providing information to aid the selection process.

- We assessed organisations against selection criteria agreed with the #iwill Fund Learning Hub Steering Committee in order to determine which organisations would be chosen.

Organisations were informed that the Impact Accelerator would focus on just one programme that they offer (if they deliver more than one), or one discrete aspect of their services that involves social action (if their services are not defined into 'programmes').

The agreed selection criteria looked at three areas of consideration:

1. **Primary eligibility**
   YES / NO criteria was applied to ensure that only #iwill Fund grantees delivering in England with capacity to take part over a 12 month period were considered for sponsorship by the #iwill Fund Learning Hub.

2. **Strategic areas of focus**

   Organisations were then categorised as to whether they fit into three strategic learning areas put forward by the Steering Committee:

   i) **a place based approach**

   ii) **delivering at scale**

   iii) **potential to be replicated across a setting**

   Thse learning areas were chosen with the goal of identifying transferable learning about practices that can be replicated widely, beyond the cohort organisations that took part in the scheme.

3. **Emerging good practice**

   Organisations were scored according to how well they demonstrated an aptitude and appetite for evidence-based learning in their existing work.

Result

22 organisations submitted an Expression of Interest to join the Summer 2018 Impact Accelerator, of which 13 were #iwill funded grantees.

Of these 13 #iwill grantees, 9 were put forward by Generation Change and Dartington Service Design Lab to join the scheme as part of the #iwill Fund Learning Hub.

Of these 9 organisations, 6 were approved by the Steering Committee and started the scheme in July 2018:

Learning

The recruitment process encountered a wide range of organisations, most of whom had identified the need to invest in improvement and learning, and had a desire to be recognised as operating with good practice within the field of youth social action. There was a diverse range of organisational sizes, modes of delivery and historic focus on youth social action. Programmes represented at Taster Days tended to cater to the older end of the 10-20 age range that the #iwill Fund is focused on.

Of 22 organisations who submitted an Expression Of Interest, 19 stated they would be willing to contribute £1,500 towards the cost of the scheme. This is a firm indicator that organisations value the offer on its own terms, and had considered the cost/benefit trade-offs of taking part. Organisations that were not willing to pay £1,500 were not excluded from the process.

Organisations who applied to join the scheme were consistently reluctant for their #iwill Fund programme to be the focus of the Impact Accelerator - although this was a condition of being selected by the #iwill Fund. This tended to be because the activity that was being funded through the #iwill Fund was time bound and not seen as a core / historic part of their services as an organisation.

Many cohort organisations acknowledged the benefit of getting involved in the IA just before or during an internal strategy review – either intentionally or coincidentially – and this may be a question to ask of future cohort applicants. If navigated well, the IA can help incoming CEOs or an internal strategy review to identify very quickly the strengths and weaknessess in the current model and frame a systematic approach to programme improvements, as part of the broader work.

	Desired trait	Indicator?
Attitude	Sees the value of evidence and the empirical method. Curious.	Attitudinal indicators and assessment of client needs.
Aptitude	Has some existing skills base in service design or evaluation.	Is directly involved in designing and assessing the programme (as opposed to using materials from another provider). Already using evidence to inform decisions.
Capacity	Has motivated staff with sufficient headspace and organisational backing to lead a process of organisational learning and improvement	CEO has identified time commitments and a suitable staff role. There are at least 2 full time members of staff responsible for direct delivery.
Motivation	Is highly driven to undertake a process of validation and supported improvement	Willing to pay to participate.

ii) Rapid assessment insights

About
As part of the two Taster Days, participants from organisations were given the opportunity to conduct a rapid, simplified assessment of their programme against the Confidence Framework. This came at the end of the day, after a series of training exercises helping them to understand the framework and what we mean by evidence.

To conduct the rapid assessment we simplified the framework by providing a single, detailed explainer for each section, without criteria for what evidence is required to meet the different confidence levels. Participants were asked to give a traffic light score from Red to Green based on their own instinct for how strong they were in this area. Providers were encouraged to provide an honest reflection on their known strengths and weaknesses.

In total we collected 11 rapid assessments, with 275 confidence scores, with some rapid assessments being incomplete (with one of 5 areas of the framework not being completed in the time we had available on the Taster Days).

Context to these findings

The rapid assessments were conducted in order to give us a wider sample of Confidence Framework data, to help us examine any questions that arose about the wider applicability of findings from the accelerator itself. The methodology was necessarily adapted in order to enable us to get this wider sample. Therefore the following points of consideration are important for understanding the findings:

- **Confidence ratings were provided anonymously**, in order to remove the instinct to inflate scores or under-report weaknesses.

- **Rapid assessments are not based on submitted evidence**. Providers were not asked to locate the relevant evidence to support their scores.

- **Self-assessment ratings are consistently lower than validated ratings**. When averaged out, validation lowers over 55% of Confidence Framework scores by 1 confidence level.

- **Not all rapid assessments were from #iwill Fund grantees**, although all participants are delivering social action for young people under the age of 25.

Findings

Overall, rapid assessment findings had similar features to the initial self assessments conducted in Phase 1 of the Impact Accelerator, that were later validated by Dartington Service Design Lab:

- The average of all scores look similar
- 4 of 6 common areas of weakness are identical
- The distribution between organisations is similar to the validated findings

Because of this, we have some basis to believe that the validated findings from our cohort organisations might be reflective of youth social action providers more widely. This gives us increased confidence that a wider sample size of organisations completing the validated framework would give us a good understanding of the overall trends in the quality of youth social action provision.

iii) Overall confidence framework scores
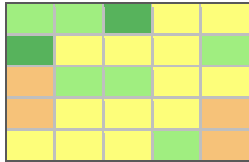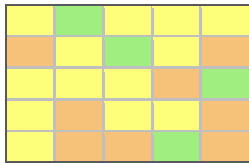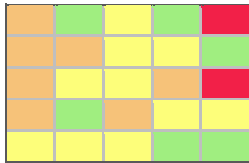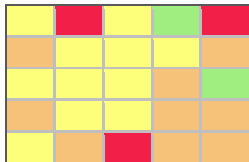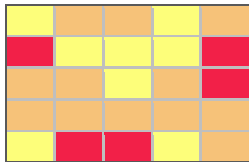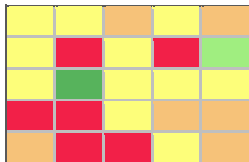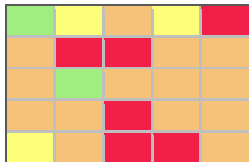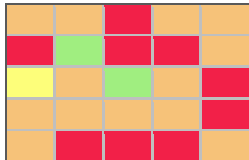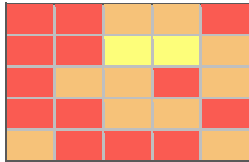
Validated framework scores for each of the 9 organisations on the cohort have been anonymised and ordered by the number of 'red' scores. This shows a clear linear distribution in the evidence confidence of youth social action provision

Design The YSA opportunity is logical and clearly articulated	The YSA activity has a well defined target population	The core components of the YSA activity are well defined	The necessary core inputs are clearly specified	The YSA activity has clearly defined outcomes	The YSA activity is tightly supported by a theory of change
Deliver The YSA opportunity is effectively and properly delivered	There is implementation fidelity	Realistic impact-focused targets are set	Delivered by people with the appropriate competencies	Staff and volunteers have appropriate support	Key stakeholders for success are known and involved
Monitor Evidence is used to learn and adapt, as required	Outcomes of young people are routinely monitored	The proportion of the YSA activity attended is monitored	Attendance and drop-off of participants is well monitored	Staff and young people are involved in shaping the YSA	Learning and approaches are shared across the organisation
Determine Double Benefit Confidence in the outcomes	The logic model of the activity is underpinned by evidence	Evidence from elsewhere suggests the activity improves outcomes	The organisation can gather, analyse and communicate evidence	Evidence generated by the activity suggests it is improving outcomes	There is evidence of a wider double benefit
Sustain YSA opportunity is good value for money and is sustainable	There is evidence of satisfaction and value by young people	There is evidence that the activity is value for money	There is a compelling business case for replication	The financial and organisational structures are robust enough for replication	Delivery of the YSA opportunity is sustainable

Scale of confidence

- High confidence
-
- Moderate confidence
-
- Low/no confidence

Pre-assessment