



Creating a Digitally Confident Third Sector in Scotland

An Evaluation



LOTTERY FUNDED



Background to the Project

In 2016, researchers from the School of Media, Culture & Society at the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) were commissioned by the SCVO to evaluate the One Digital programme in Scotland.

The One Digital programme is a UK wide, Big Lottery funded consortium made up of six organisations delivering projects to develop digital skills through digital champions.

The SCVO-led One Digital project in Scotland aimed to identify, develop and assess the contribution that existing frontline organisations in the third sector could make when delivering basic digital skills.



Action Learning

Action learning sets were designed to bring together senior leaders from across the third sector to tackle real digital problems or issues.

In total, three action learning sets were created with nineteen participants. The leaders explored how to make their charities more digitally agile, including time, motivation, resourcing and access to training and support.

Action Learning Set Objectives

1

Development of a strong peer support network that will continue to function after the project inputs have finished

2

Senior leaders have increased knowledge and understanding about the potential of digital

3

Senior leaders have made significant progress in creating a more digitally mature organisation



Making Digital Work and Making Digital Everyday

The Making Digital Work and Making Digital Everyday interventions were delivered in partnership with network of local organisations, most commonly the Third Sector Interface.

Training was delivered in every local authority area across Scotland to 531 people from 306 different third sector organisations. Only 50% of people, and 1 in 5 organisations possessed all five basic digital skills before the workshops, and 93% of people were either satisfied or very satisfied with the training.

Making Digital Everyday

This one-day training workshop with ongoing support was aimed at staff and volunteers in third sector organisations and sought to facilitate the passing on of basic digital skills to service users, by embedding them within everyday encounters.

Making Digital Work

This one-day training workshop with ongoing support was focused on training staff in third sector organisations to disseminate basic digital skills within their work environment.

Overall Conclusions

Based on the data collected, the One Digital project in Scotland appears to have been successful in implementing supported learning activities that stimulated capacity for digital skills development, both within third sector organisations and amongst users of third sector services in Scotland.

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As a small group it was really useful to have the opportunity to learn, share and think about how we can support each other and all reach more people

Making Digital Work

Good opportunity to take time out to reflect, consider and explore how myself and my organisation can be better digitally minded

Making Digital Everyday

Excellent, valuable day for both my organisation and others that I support. Has given me positive solutions for issues I've tried to resolve for a number of years.

Making Digital Work

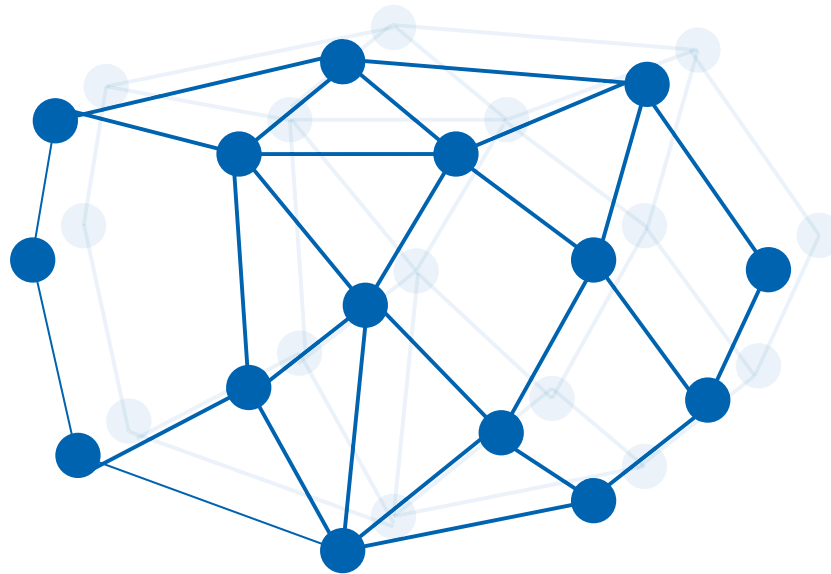
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It is difficult, based on the data obtained, to ascertain, robustly, which of the supported learning activities were most effective or the degree to which substantial and long-lasting change will be achieved.

1. Action Learning Conclusion

The trust has been the biggest thing I think - that people feel they can talk about things that they probably wouldn't even talk about with their own directors.

Our study has found that the action learning sets have produced strong peer support networks but that these will need to be supported through ongoing activity and perhaps financial resource if they are to be sustainable in the longer term.



Furthermore, there exists the potential for members of the action learning sets to take on the role of digital leaders in their sector but this will likely require ongoing nurturing and, potentially, expert facilitation.

2. Action Learning Conclusion

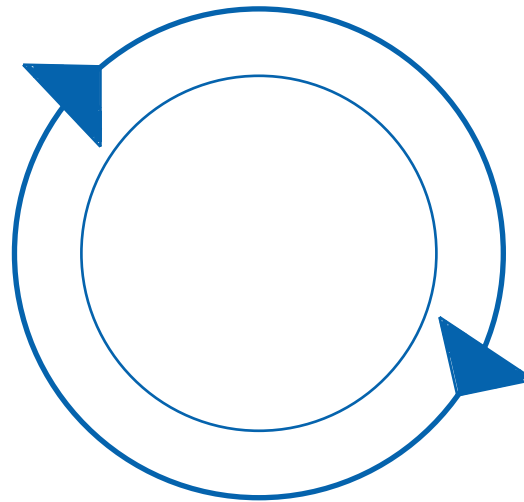
It's been good to have time away from the desk to think about what you do and why you do it

Our study has found clear evidence that senior leaders have increased knowledge and understanding about the potential of digital, for their organisations, and for the third sector more generally. There is evidence that strategic investment decisions have been revised on the basis of knowledge and understanding accrued during participation in the action learning sets. Digital strategies are now being viewed as a greater priority than short-term operational imperatives.



3. Action Learning Conclusion

Our study has found evidence that senior leaders have been able to translate their increased knowledge and understanding about the potential of digital into tangible outputs. However, progress on embedding digital 'possibilities' into digital 'action' will not be immediate. Greater awareness, more positive attitudes and explicit digital strategies are potentially useful outcomes from the action learning sets but their implementation into more digitally mature organisations will take time.



Those senior leaders that have made a start on transforming their organisations need to be able to draw on continuing support from their peers, SCVO and others key agencies to ensure the progress made is sustained over time.

4. Making Digital Everyday Conclusion

There was clear evidence of participants using approaches from the training to pass on digital skills. Examples ranged from helping end users to identify their own learning styles, to co-producing audio blogs about their lived experiences.

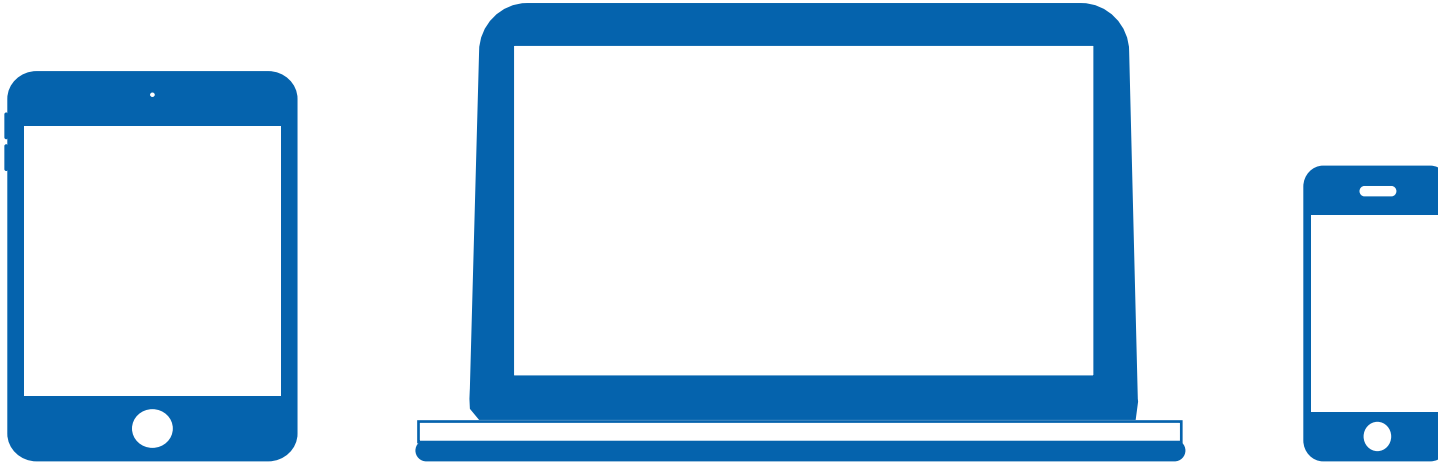


For such outcomes to be obtained, training needed to be targeted at individuals with enthusiasm for passing on digital skills. It was also crucial to work closely with well-networked TSIs, or similar organisations, to identify such participants.

5.

Making Digital Work Conclusion

There were clear examples of participants using materials from the workshop to increase their organisation's use of digital technologies, most notably through the creation of digital strategies.



Identifying participants who are looking to develop their organisation's strategic approach to digital skills, rather than acquire tips and techniques on specific applications, is likely to be a key ingredient in producing long-term positive outcomes. Working closely with well networked TSI or similar organisation, and introducing follow-up activities in a staged manner is also likely to contribute to the effectiveness of MDW.

Recommendations

To incorporate the learning from the evaluation into future delivery, SCVO should consider these actions:

- Ensure that the follow up support, such as action plans, buddies and future meetups are clearly understood and agreed to by all training participants when they join the programme.
- SCVO and the local partners could seek to 'match' workshop participants who were working in similar sized organisations, in similar sectors, and had similar digital goals.
- Utilise and develop pre-existing networks of third sector organisations. SCVO should work with local partners and ensure they have the capacity to offer ongoing courses and meet up opportunities to build on momentum.
- In order to translate interest in digital 'possibilities' into digital 'action', SCVO and its TSI partners need to develop a programme of more practical courses. Consider identifying a pool of trainers, buddies and mentors to help individuals and organisations to lead on digital issues themselves.
- SCVO and its partners should continue to support emergent networks with resources to ensure the third sector locally owns the digital agenda and is empowered to lead change. Local leadership should also include sectoral leads to ensure these interests are represented.



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