

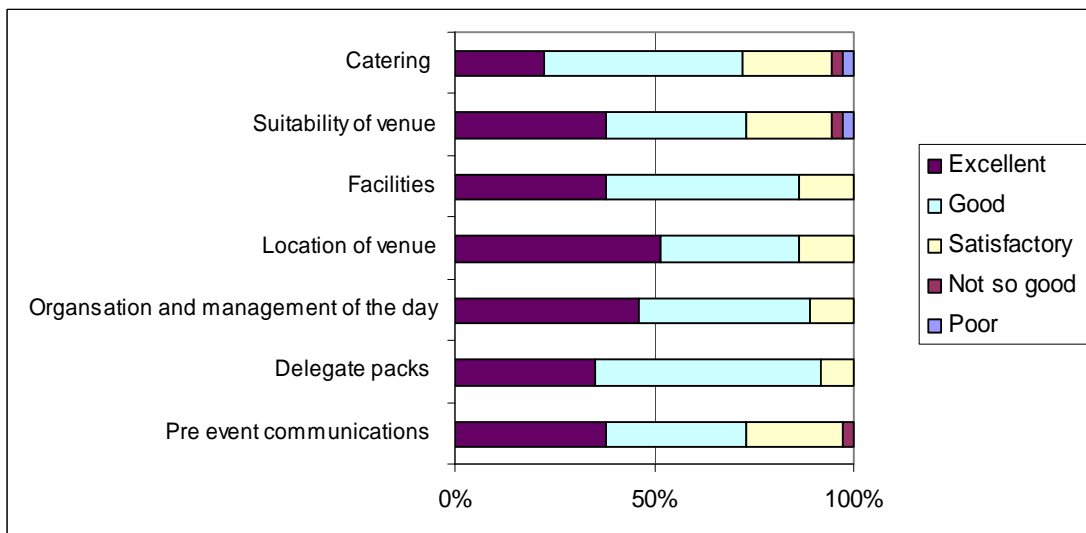
MAKING A DIFFERENCE MEASURING SOFT OUTCOMES CONFERENCE EVALUATION SUMMARY

CVS Fife organised a conference to look at the measurement of soft outcomes which enhance employability. The conference took place at the Bay Hotel in Kinghorn on 26 March 2010. Within Fife, there is strong interest in measuring soft outcomes and distance travelled - the conference attracted 81 delegates from some 51 organisations. This briefing summarises what people felt about the conference and what they learned from it.

Organisation and Delivery

The conference programme included presentations and workshops. Chart 1 presents delegates' ratings for the organisation and delivery of the event. The ratings from the delegates are positive with most aspects of the day rated 'excellent' or 'good'. In particular, the delegate packs and the organisation and management on the day were rated very positively.

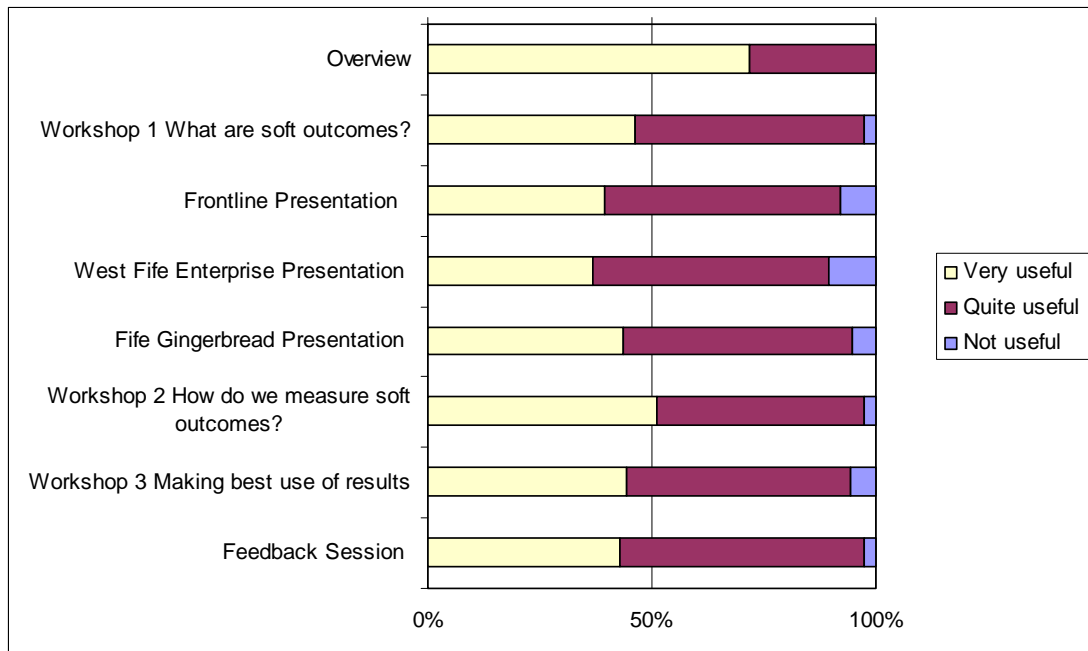
Chart 1: Ratings for the Organisation and Delivery of the Event (%)



Source: CVS Fife Survey of conference delegates

Chart 2 underlines the generally positive view of the conference, with most participants finding most of the elements of the day useful.

Chart 2: How Useful Did You Find Each Aspect Of The Day? (%)



Source: CVS Fife Survey of conference delegates

The conference also created a good opportunity for networking:

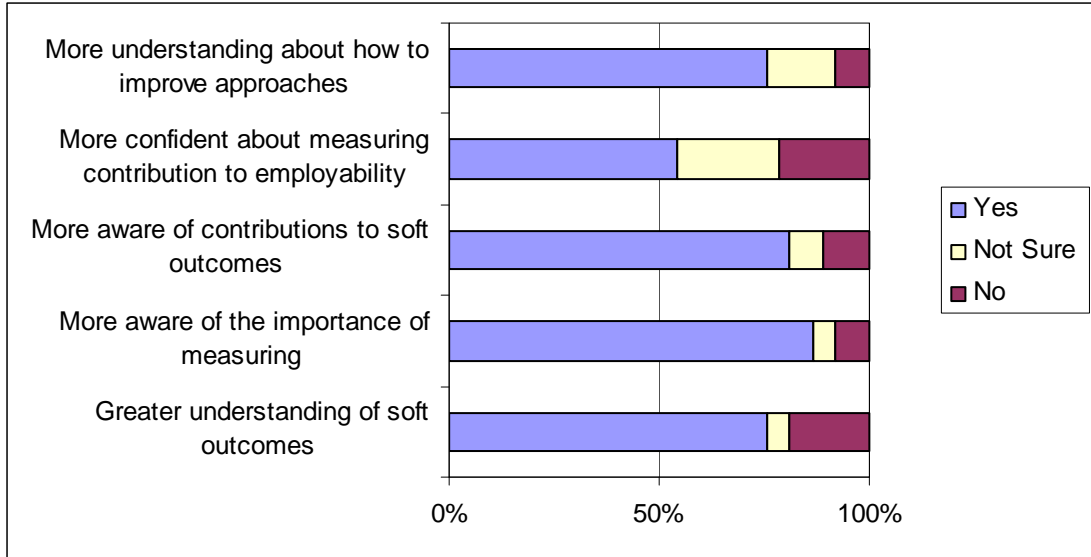
‘The conference was an excellent demonstration of the importance of networking and shared experience in a relaxed and convivial environment’.

There were some problems due to the size of the workshops and the fact that they were all in one room. However, from the feedback, there are few changes CVS Fife need to make for the organisation of future events other than considering using a venue that allows people to go into separate break out rooms and making any workshops smaller in size.

Conference Outcomes

Chart 3 provides an overview of the outcomes delegates' said they took from the conference.

Chart 3: Delegates' Conference Outcomes (%)



Source: CVS Fife Survey of conference delegates

The chart shows that after the conference:

- over 85% of delegates said that they were more aware of the importance of measuring soft outcomes;
- over 80% felt that they were more aware of the contribution that organisations like their own can make to measuring soft outcomes.
- three quarters felt that they had a greater understanding of soft outcomes and how to improve current approaches to measurement.

However, just over half felt more confident about measuring their contribution to employability. This seems to suggest that while people are fairly confident about how to measure the soft outcomes delivered by their projects they could benefit from more support to demonstrate how this translates into employability outcomes and how to evidence these.

The presentations from the voluntary sector organisations were thought to be an informative way of showing organisations how measurement could be done:

'Frontline were very impressive. Frontline's monitoring system would be of great assistance to small projects like ours if it could be tailored to meet our specific needs.'

However, one delegate commented that:

'Presentations could have looked more detail in the presentations of examples of the soft outcomes measured and what questions were asked of people rather than about the IT systems designed to do so.'

Thus, the conference highlighted the impact that the voluntary sector has on employability but the feedback has also shown there is a need for more activity to raise the profile and support organisations to do this.

Next Steps

The conference was well received by the delegates. Inevitably, it was difficult to satisfy everybody's needs on one day and further training needs were identified.

'It seemed like there was a reasonable understanding of measuring soft outcomes, but that there is probably more room for improvement in recording these, making sense of them and utilising them in the best ways.'

The further training needs included:

- practical ways to measure soft outcomes and distance travelled and involving service users appropriately and effectively in the measurement process;
- how to identify indicators and implementing soft measurement systems;
- showcasing results to maximise funding opportunities;
- working with clients on employability – for example on how to improve clients' support plans and reviews and working better with clients to move them towards employability.

The preferred ways of delivering support are short courses or further themed events or information sessions. There should be opportunities to learn from other people who had been through the process of developing and refining their systems. CVS Fife could have a valuable role encouraging further sharing of the experiences of this among organisations particularly as, in the views of one participant, CVS Fife is:

'...gaining success in cultivating an environment where groups (or projects) are now prepared to become involved in sharing their skills/knowledge rather than protecting them – well done – more, more.'