



UNIVERSITY OF
BATH



Using QuIP to gauge success in complex contexts

Marlies Morsink
June 2017

INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT BACKGROUND

In August 2016 Frome Town Council (FTC) contracted with the University of Bath to deliver a project about Frome. The contract specifies three deliverables:

First deliverable: Baseline description of Frome, its resources and capabilities and the challenges and opportunities it faces.

Second deliverable: A stocktaking of novel approaches and best practices elsewhere and an assessment of their relevance to Frome.

Third deliverable: New methods to measure success in changing and complex contexts.

The project is being carried out by a Master of Research candidate as part of the MRes in Social Policy at the University of Bath, which is a one-year full-time taught course and culminates in a dissertation due in September 2017.

The second deliverable took stock of novel approaches to evaluation and impact assessment used elsewhere, and selected one deemed particularly applicable to Frome: the Qualitative Impact Protocol or **QuIP**. This summary report draws on research conducted over the course of the spring term of the MRes into this innovative approach to measuring change and identifying causal drivers in complex contexts. Research included delving into the context in which QuIP was developed, understanding the rationale behind how it is structured, and participating in training on how to apply it. One key study during the semester examined how QuIP moved from being used by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Africa to being adopted by **Voscur**, the principal organisation in Bristol working closely with the Bristol City Council to support voluntary and community sector organisations.

Understanding how QuIP was useful to Voscur sheds light on its potential for use in Frome. On the one hand, FTC and Voscur share certain similarities of values, vision and purpose, which makes Voscur an interesting organisation to learn from. Voscur is a third sector organisation which provides “infrastructure” support to voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, providing advice, training, facilitation, and so on, in an ongoing way. FTC has embraced a similarly facilitative role in Frome, moving away from direct funding and direct management of projects (aside from certain investments in property, such as the Cheese and Grain and Rodham Meadow), and choosing instead to provide facilitation and support to the numerous VCS groups in Frome. On the other hand, Voscur adapted QuIP to suit its particular context in Bristol and the ways in which its beneficiaries differed from the beneficiaries of a typical NGO in Africa. That QuIP was deemed useful even with such adaptations is significant for Frome.

What follows is a spotlight on QuIP and its relevance to Frome, highlighting Voscur’s experience as a basis for comparison. This research lays the groundwork for the third deliverable, which will involve trying out alternative methods for measuring the effects of new interventions within local communities like Frome.

ABOUT THE QUALITATIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL (QuIP)

Researchers from the Centre for Development Studies at the University of Bath developed QuIP in collaboration with two NGOs in Africa between 2012 and 2015, to provide a credible way to assess the impact of their development activities

By systematically reviewing evidence against project goals and intentions, QuIP serves a “confirmatory” purpose; and by employing open data collection methods to reveal unintended consequences, it serves as a more open-ended or “exploratory” role

Development activities are multi-faceted and evolve in complex contexts; QuIP was developed to provide evidence of causal impact in a timely and cost effective way under precisely these conditions

QuIP gives a voice to intended beneficiaries, and generates evidence that is credible not only to those directly involved in the activities, but also to objective third parties.

How does QuIP work in practice?

- Questions are put directly to the intended beneficiaries of an intervention or policy, allowing them to personally identify and report on changes in their lives, and attribute the changes to causes that they perceive
- A potential flaw in this methodology is that it produces biased results when beneficiaries report what they think you want to hear; QuIP mitigates this by not revealing the identity of the intervention being investigated, such that there can be no leading questions and no artificially pro-intervention responses.
- QuIP provides a simple and semi-automated Excel framework which structures interview schedules and links the data collected to analytic tools; this framework is



flexible and can be adapted quickly for different studies, which significantly reduces the time and expense required to design and execute a study

- Very practically speaking: a so-called “single” QuIP involves deciding on a set of “domains” (i.e. areas of interest to the organisation conducting the study) to be investigated, and adapting the Excel framework to reflect these; field researchers then interview and conduct focus groups with 24 participants; data is coded and analysed, and findings are presented in a final report. A typical QuIP takes 3-4 weeks to execute.

The Ten Features of QuIP

1. Data collection by independent field researchers without knowledge of the project (‘blindfolding’).
2. Purposive then random household sampling based on quantitative project monitoring.
3. Semi-structured household interviews plus focus groups.
4. Data collection instruments structured by wellbeing domain, with alternating open then closed question sections.
5. Data entry using pre-formatted Excel sheets to facilitate coding and analysis.
6. Systematic coding of impact evidence as explicit, implicit or incidental to project actions.
7. Additional flexible coding of drivers of change (positive and negative) and outcomes.
8. Rapid semi-automated report generation to speed analysis.
9. Easy to drill down from summary evidence to raw data for auditing and learning purposes.
10. Summary report, starting point for project level debriefing between project staff and researchers.

QUIP GOES TO BRISTOL

Bristol and Voscur

Bristol City Council (BCC) has worked with Voscur for the past five years to provide support for voluntary and community organisations in Bristol.

Voscur...

- Helps voluntary and community groups decide which funding mix is right for them and supports them in getting results
- Works to give local people a voice in the city especially among those groups which are often excluded from decision-making
- Supports collaboration between local groups, helping them find organisations to work with and exchange skills and resources
- Delivers a range of accessible training courses, tailored to meet local groups' needs

The Challenge for Voscur

As budget pressures continue to weigh on local government, BCC has become more demanding about being shown evidence of the impact it and the organisations it funds (including Voscur) have on beneficiaries

Voscur traditionally conducted evaluations using quantitative indicators tracking what activities it conducted, supplemented by one-off case studies highlighting a specific successful impact it had had

Voscur has a staff of about 25 and no department dedicated to monitoring and evaluation, so it was important to find a solution that was resource- and cost-effective as well as highly credible

For Voscur, QuIP...

- Promised to meet their need to provide evidence of impact in a timely and cost-effective manner
- Had a multi-year track-record of producing similar results internationally
- Had the academic credibility of the University of Bath behind it

QuIP at Voscur

Voscur ran a trial of QuIP in 2016, which resulted in a decision to adopt QuIP in 2017.

Voscur found QuIP very useful both in measuring the changes affecting Bristol's voluntary and community sector (VCS), and the impact of Voscur's activities on the sector:

- QuIP allowed Voscur to see which of its activities were having a positive or negative impact (or no impact at all), as well identifying impacts that were not linked to Voscur activities
- QuIP revealed what factors shaped the Bristol VCS in 2016, and allowed Voscur to analyse these by positive and negative drivers
- QuIP showed Voscur how the Bristol VCS had changed in 2016 – again, breaking down responses by positive and negative outcomes, and allowing drill-down to what beneficiaries actually reported
- Voscur could analyse its role in the various outcomes, as well as identify roles that other organisations and influences had played
- QuIP allowed Voscur to visualize which of its services created what impacts



Overall, QuIP showed Voscur how it was doing relative to its intended goals, as well as how other organisations and influences in the sector were enhancing, supplementing or undermining what Voscur was doing; it also revealed information that was unanticipated and impacts that were unintended (both good and bad).

Modifying QuIP for the Voscur Pilot

Each QuIP asks different questions about different interventions or policies, and in that sense QuIP is always adapted for a given study. However, the pilot at Voscur modified two key features of a traditional QuIP, namely:

- There was no “blind-folding” involved in the field research to reduce confirmation bias: the two field researchers were Voscur employees and the interviewees were selected on the basis of professional connections
- The participants were heads of organisations rather than heads of households; as Voscur is an “infrastructure” rather than a “front-line” organisation, its clients are institutions rather than individuals

Despite these rather radical modifications, Voscur found the findings from the QuIP pilot could contribute meaningfully to its future decision-making.

Next steps include running a “full” QuIP by conducting blindfolded field research as well as expanding the participant base; there is also talk of rolling QuIP out to the frontline VCS organisations to use with household beneficiaries.



Quotes

- *“It’s very hard to determine what support is needed [by voluntary organisations], what support is given [by Voscur] and what the impact is – QuIP helps to compartmentalise things so as to clearly distinguish between the actions taken and the impact made”*
- *“QuIP lets you identify which activities had a positive, negative, or no effect; this is a very good framework.”*
- *“QuIP allows you to drill down, which is really important because Voscur provides such wide-ranging services”*
- *“QuIP lets you see external impacts too – like the Bristol Impact Fund, national policy, etc”*
- *“QuIP also showed us negative drivers, like lack of skills, changes to governmental structure, lack of financial resources, poor data management”*
- *“Overall QuIP offers two key things: objectivity and drill-down”*



RELEVANCE TO FROME

- FTC is looking for a way to evaluate the impact it is having in Frome; this is a complex question as FTC works in myriad ways that do not have quantifiable outputs, leave stand easily observable outcomes
- Nobody has yet attempted to identify changes in Frome in a rigorous way and to attribute them to different interventions, organisations or influences (of which the FTC is one)
- QuIP was developed by leading researchers with a wealth of knowledge about evaluation and attribution, specifically seeking to address how to attribute change in complex situations in a timely and cost-effective way
- QuIP has been piloted by Voscur in Bristol, which operates in many similarly complex ways to FTC, and based on the success of the pilot Voscur has decided to adopt QuIP
- By using QuIP, FTC could gain insight into how its vision of Frome and what it is seeking to change in Frome, aligns with the perceptions of Frome citizens
- QuIP could provide insight into perceived drivers of change, and would illuminate where FTC would benefit from bolstering or reducing its efforts
- Preparing QuIP would give FTC an opportunity to clarify its vision around what impacts it is trying to achieve, and what it can do day-to-day to contribute to achieving those impacts
- Implementing QuIP would serve a confirmatory purpose, showing FTC some things it may have expected to see, but also an exploratory purpose, bringing to light unexpected information

For more information about QuIP:

- <http://qualitysocialimpact.org/about-the-quip/>
- <http://qualitysocialimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Bath-SDR-Leaflet-April-2016.pdf>
- <http://www.bath.ac.uk/cds/documents/quip-briefing-paper-september-2015.pdf>
- <http://qualitysocialimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/QUIP-Full-Guidelines-English-April-2016.pdf>

For more information about Voscur and the QuIP Pilot at Voscur

- <https://www.voscur.org/>
- Voscur: QuIP Pilot Report Summary 2017