Information for Social Researchers - Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP)

A QuIP study will require experienced qualitative social researchers who have extensive experience within the UK voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. They must be able to organise and collect narrative stories of change from pre-defined respondents using an approach to impact assessment called the QuIP. This document provides more information on the QuIP approach and details the skills and experience required for undertaking data collection for a QuIP study.

We are seeking to recruit experienced social researchers to undertake 1:1 interviews with selected individuals and organisations in and around Bristol using a semi-structured questionnaire provided by the commissioners. The research will contribute to an impact study for a large public sector organisation in Bristol and will focus on the impact of change and the perceived support for any change experienced by the individuals and the organisations over a set period of time.

This study will use an approach called the Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP), an approach pioneered in the international development sector by a University of Bath spin-out, Bath Social & Development Research Ltd (BSDR), and now being applied in the UK context. One of the key features of this approach is the ‘blindfolding’ of researchers in relation to the commissioner and project being evaluated in order to mitigate confirmation bias as far as is possible. For this reason the commissioners of the research will remain anonymous until interviews are completed.

A briefing paper as well as a set of complete QuIP Guidelines can be downloaded from BSDR’s website. The guidelines are designed for overseas QuIP studies but it will give you a good overview of the approach, and include examples of the type of interview questions that make up a QuIP questionnaire.

Successful candidates will receive a full day of training on the QuIP approach to data collection by Bath Social & Development Research Ltd, a non-profit research organisation who hold the licence to accredit QuIP researchers via Voscur. You will become part of a UK and international network of QuIP accredited social researchers, enabling you to work on future QuIP studies.

About this contract

The study for which we are recruiting will take place in and around Bristol between January and March 2018 and will require each interviewer to undertake up to 12 individual interviews and up to 4 focus groups (the most likely numbers are 8 interviews and 2 focus groups but this will be dependent upon the number of researchers recruited).

Interviewers will be freelance and will be expected to meet all their own costs for tax, insurance and travel from the fixed interview fee.

The evaluation is in relation to community and organisational development, and as such the interview schedule will focus on relevant domains. No more details about the commissioner or the subject of the study can be shared at this stage, but there may be scope to arrange a debrief between researchers and the project delivery team once all the data has been analysed.

Interviews are expected to take between 45mins-1hour, with an additional 45 minutes allowed
for writing up annotated notes based on recordings (verbatim notes are not required). Interviewers will be given pre-formatted Excel spreadsheets in which the notes data will be entered. Researchers will be paid £30 per interview (to include note writing up, and travel costs to locations in Bristol).

**How to Apply**

Applicants should have experience in qualitative research techniques, preferably within the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector in the UK, a full person specification is available. They should also familiarise themselves with the QuP materials, and demonstrate an understanding of the QuP approach in their application. Applications should include:

- Qualifications and experience (CV) particularly with qualitative research methods, including knowledge of the UK VCSE sector. Evidence that you have carried out similar work to a high standard in the past.
- A covering letter of no more than 2 sides of A4 that includes how you meet the requirement of the person specification and a brief paragraph summarising your initial reactions to the QuP approach and its application in the UK VCSE sector.
- Confirmation that you are able to attend a full day of training in Bristol on 30 January 2018 from 09:30 to 16:00.
- Confirmation that you are able to carry out up to 30 hours work between 1 February and 30 March 2018
- Confirmation that you have the required arrangements to operate as a freelancer and that you will be responsible for the payment of all taxes and other associated costs.
- **Interviews will last 45 minutes and will be held on 4 January 2018. Candidates will be notified before Christmas 2017 if they are to be invited to interview.**
- **Applications should be sent to:** info@voscur.org
About the Qualitative Impact Protocol – QuIP

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSE) are working to support some of the most marginalised people in our communities and need evidence about whether they are indeed achieving what they intended. This evidence should help them decide whether to carry on, to expand or change what they are doing. They also need to inform those with whom they work, including people intended to benefit from the actions and those helping to finance it. In diverse, complex and rapidly changing situations it is not obvious how best to obtain evidence about whether they are indeed achieving what they intended.

The Qualitative Impact Protocol, or QuIP, was designed to try to help meet this need – initially in the international development sector, but the QuIP is now starting to be used in the UK VCSE sector. Its main purpose is to serve as a reality check on whether the social effects of a planned activity or set of activities on intended beneficiaries is as expected, or whether it is having unintended consequences. It may reveal harmful effects, and throw light on other factors – some perhaps unexpected – that are affecting hoped-for changes. It can also highlight variation in causes and effects across a group of intended beneficiaries. The approach is not so good at revealing the magnitude of changes, and for this reason some people refer to it as a way of assessing impact contribution rather than attribution. However, it can usefully assist in estimating the magnitude of possible impacts when used in combination with other methods.

In contrast to quantitative methods, the QuIP sets out to generate case-by-case evidence of impact based on narrative causal statements elicited directly from intended project beneficiaries without the need to interview a control group. Evidence of attribution is sought through respondents’ own accounts of causal mechanisms linking ‘project’ activities to impact indicators, alongside hard-to-measure confounding factors. This contrasts with methods that rely on statistical inference based on variable exposure to ‘project’ activities, such as randomised controlled trials. The narrative data collected in a QuIP study can usefully complement quantitative evidence on changes obtained through routine tracking or monitoring of key project indicators.

There are strong ethical grounds for asking people directly about the effect of actions intended to benefit them. Doing so can also contribute practically to learning, innovation and wider accountability. But doing so entails finding credible ways to address potential response biases. The QuIP does this by arranging for qualitative data collection to take place with as little reference as possible to the specific activity being evaluated, and by giving equal weight to all possible drivers of change in possible domains of impact of interest. This is achieved by working, where possible, with social researchers who are completely independent of the organisation responsible for the actions being evaluated. Indeed where possible social researchers are ‘blindfolded’ or ‘semi-blindfolded’ from knowing the identity of the organisation being evaluated (where appropriate) and its theory of change. Data collected from respondents in this way take the form of narrative statements about causal drivers of change in selected areas of their life. Another researcher (who is not blindfolded) then organises and analyses these using a standardised approach to coding which highlights whether these explicitly or implicitly confirm or undermine the causal theory underpinning the
intervention, or are completely incidental to it. Where available, this analysis can then be compared to known interventions and outcomes from monitoring data, helping to build a more detailed picture of what has really changed and why.

Even if potential response bias is absent, another potential limitation of self-reported evidence of impact is that it is limited by what respondents actually know and regard as most important. Use of the QuIP does not depend on believing that respondents are all-knowing or best placed to judge how their lives are being changed. It can be used alongside other forms of data collection analysis to identify important cognitive gaps between different subjects. For example, if project staff and intended beneficiaries do have widely contrasting perceptions then it is likely to be useful to know this. You will find plenty of papers and resources on the QuIP on the BSDR website.

Please note that Bath SDR uses the QuIP methodology and name under license from the University of Bath. Use of the methodology without a licence is limited to non-profit purposes only and all applications for use of the QuIP must come through info@bathsdr.org first.

1 http://bathsdr.org/about-the-quip/
2 http://bathsdr.org/