



**Extending the Professionalisation of
Evaluation**

Voluntary Evaluator Peer Review (VEPR)

United Kingdom Evaluation Society

Prepared for UK Evaluation Society Council 2017

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¹ Kari Hadjivassiliou, Dione Hills, Derek Poate, Elizabeth Robin and Helen Simons

Executive Summary

The VEPR Pilot

From January to April 2016 the United Kingdom Evaluation Society pilot tested a Voluntary Evaluator Peer Review (VEPR) process with a view to establishing it as a regular service for members. The approach taken to VEPR in the pilot has an emphasis on reflective practice. Applicants first self-assess all their capabilities against the UK Evaluation Society's Framework of Evaluation Capabilities² and then select two from different domains to reflect on in-depth with two peer reviewers. The reviewers are experienced evaluation practitioners who have themselves undergone training and a peer review process. Once the process is complete participants receive a certificate and their names are listed on the Society's website indicating that they have been through a Voluntary Evaluator Peer Review. Ten volunteers completed the pilot. Internal evaluation took place throughout and an external evaluation was conducted once the process was complete. Here is what we found.

Findings

Process

- Feedback from participants in the pilot was very positive and a follow-up survey of Society members indicates that there is interest in extending the trial and continuing to develop the approach
- All found the experience valuable for reflecting on their practice and assessing their level of capability on different aspects of evaluation
- The training programme on reflective practice and trialling the review process were major factors in the success of the pilot
- Self-assessment against the Capabilities Framework at the start of the process was particularly helpful
- Equally beneficial was the in-depth reflection in the main review on specific evaluation issues reviewees had identified to explore
- Follow-up was deemed essential to reflect further on the learning gained
- Frequent areas for discussion beyond specific skills or issues were the practical and political aspects of evaluation
- The documentation was generally clear. Minor modifications were suggested to clarify guidance on confidentiality, different roles of the two reviewers, and the scope of the issues selected for reflection
- The experience of VEPR has resulted in greater recognition of voluntary peer review and reflective practice as a review process and greater awareness of the usefulness of the Capabilities Framework.

² See Annex 4

In 2019 the Society changed its logo from UKES to UK Evaluation Society and the Capabilities Framework was retitled to reflect this. It is now the UK Evaluation Society's Framework of Evaluation Capabilities. However, as this report was prepared before the change, the original title is employed for the most part throughout this document and for readability is abbreviated to CF.

Future Development

- The VEPR approach needs to differentiate peer review from coaching more clearly
- More attention should be given to securing greater calibration in self-assessment and choice of issues for review
- The review report should have a more explicit link to the reviewees' continuing professional development
- The Capabilities Framework
 - needs to be integrated more closely with the review process both at the beginning and end of the review
 - is due for revision and should consider how best to frame the capabilities to establish this link, and include more on ethics
 - is being developed as an independent on-line tool for professional development
- Costs, supply of reviewers and a flexible organisational framework are the main considerations in going forward
- The feedback was overwhelmingly supportive for an extended pilot to refine the process, secure support for administration and extend the opportunity to more of the Society's members.

Please note that some of the Annexes in this report were prepared at the time to support the VEPR pilot. They have now changed as the system has evolved. The documentation is currently being updated for inclusion in the VEPR section on the website.

Background

How it all started

Rise of VEPR

Voluntary Evaluator Peer Review (VEPR) has emerged in the context of furthering the professionalisation of evaluation. It can take many forms but in the UK Evaluation Society's VEPR, its central tenet is reflective practice by practitioners of their skills and field experience of evaluation. Earlier steps to professionalisation within the Society were the development of ethical principles and guidelines for good practice in evaluation, and the development of a framework of capabilities for evaluators. VEPR, this third step, aspired to get closer to the aim of improving the actual conduct and quality of evaluation by encouraging individual evaluators to reflect upon their practice in the field.

In 2012-14 IOCE³, as part of their professionalisation agenda, set up EvalPartners⁴ which offered small grants to evaluation societies and informal evaluation networks to pursue innovative ideas in evaluation and especially in collaboration with other evaluation networks and societies. A proposal to explore the potential of VEPR jointly with the European Evaluation Society (EES) was submitted to EvalPartners by Helen Simons for the UK Evaluation Society and Bob Picciotto for EES.

The application was successful and with the grant, which was administered by the UK Evaluation Society, each society first ran a separate but parallel small survey to establish the strength of support for a VEPR system in their respective societies, together with its risks and rewards. The response rate in both societies was low. Nevertheless, some useful issues arose which merited further discussion. Following the surveys, the two societies held a small joint workshop on April 8th 2014 to explore the issues raised in the surveys and indicate what would be needed to set up a VEPR system. The aspiration was to seek agreement to a pilot in the first instance. This took place for the UK Evaluation Society from January to April 2016 with much preparation of documentation and training taking place the previous year in collaboration with the European Evaluation Society.

Context⁵ and Approach to VEPR in the Joint UK Evaluation Society/European Evaluation Society EvalPartners Project

Reflective Practice

The approach to VEPR adopted by both societies is one of reflective practice to develop an evaluator's professional skills and practice. It promotes the ability to reflect on one's actions and engage in a process of continuous learning. The key

³ IOCE, the International Organisation for Co-operation in Evaluation, represents international, national, sub-national and regional Voluntary Organisations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) worldwide. It strengthens international evaluation through the exchange of evaluation methods and promotes good governance and recognition of the value evaluation has in improving peoples' lives.

⁴ For further details of EvalPartners see the IOCE EvalPartners website Peer to Peer Programme (P2P) #06 or www.ioce.net/en/evalPartners.php Peer-to-peer (P2P) support programs

⁵ Context issues which affect what VEPR process is feasible include size of country (and of an evaluation society), capacity to set up an infrastructure of support, availability and experience of reviewers, willingness of members to volunteer for review, and total commitment of the Society's Board to the process.

rationale is that experience alone does not necessarily lead to learning; deliberate reflection on experience is essential. Reflective practice involves going through a number of steps in a review to bring to the surface and articulate elements of an experience which may not initially have been apparent. Commonly, these steps are: identify the issue; explore the feelings about it; describe key events; analyse the knowledge and assumptions; evaluate what was helpful/less helpful about the experience; identify what has been learnt and could be done differently another time.

This is distinct from other forms of professionalisation, namely that of the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES)⁶ which has been in the vanguard of credentialing processes. The logic and argument for a reflective practice approach are outlined in the concept paper⁷ developed by both societies prior to the workshop in 2014.

The Joint Workshop and Outcome

The workshop⁸ funded by the EvalPartners grant brought together key individuals from both societies to further debate the VEPR idea and accompanying conditions for possible implementation. Both societies agreed to conduct a pilot and each set up a Working Group to develop the VEPR system. Members of the UK Evaluation Society's VEPR Working Group were Derek Poate (Leader), Dione Hills and Kari Hadjivassiliou, with Elizabeth Robin as President and Helen Simons, as the UK Society's representative on the overarching UK Evaluation Society-European Evaluation Society Joint Steering Committee, taking an external advisory role.

This Steering Committee was proposed by the workshop to coordinate work on the two pilots. Members of the committee were Helen Simons for the UK Evaluation Society and Bob Picciotto for EES with Ian Davies (independent evaluation consultant and a former President of EES) as Chair. In reality this committee did not function as a formal steering group and rarely met. The two VEPR Working Groups liaised closely with each other to develop the concept and materials for the VEPR system to be piloted. Subsequently the name of this committee changed to the UK Evaluation Society-European Evaluation Society Joint VEPR Co-ordinating Committee (CC) to reflect that its major purpose was one of light touch co-ordination: to encourage co-operation between the two societies of their professionalisation initiatives, information sharing and mutual support; and to coordinate exchange of information on the two pilots to other groups within the wider education community such as IOCE, IDEAS, NESE and UNEG⁹. Its role was advisory; decisions about the development of the pilots lay with the Working Groups of each society. This interchange between the Working Groups continued after the pilot to share experience and learning to improve the system.

⁶ The Canadian model differs in that it is not face to face in person or on Skype. It has a paper and pencil format. The applicant presents a portfolio which is reviewed anonymously by a panel and, if deemed successful on a percentage of competencies, is designated as a credentialed evaluator. For further details of the CES scheme see Canadian Evaluation Society (2010) Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice. Available at http://www.evaluationcanada.ca//txt/2_competencies_cdn_evaluation_practice.pdf

⁷ See Annex 1

⁸ Proceedings of VEPR Workshop (April 8, 2014, London) <http://www.europeanevaluation.org/community/thematic-working-groups/twg-4-professionalization-evaluation>

⁹ For IOCE, see footnote 3 on previous page. IDEAS is the International Development Evaluation Association, NESE is the Network of Evaluation Societies in Europe, and UNEG is the United Nations Evaluation Group.

Charter of Principles

Supportive to these aims was the evolution of the VEPR Charter of Principles¹⁰ developed by the UK Evaluation Society-European Evaluation Society Joint Steering Committee with input from Elizabeth Robin and Derek Poate. The aim of the Charter was to provide support and quality assurance for the pilot, though it was also available for use by other evaluation societies and VOPEs wishing to pursue VEPR initiatives in their own societies or countries. The charter has six guiding principles as indicated below and further information on each principle is given in Annex 2.

A Charter of Principles

- i. Voluntariness**
 - *Willing participation, no obligation*
- ii. Autonomy**
 - *Review by evaluation practitioners, for evaluation practitioners*
- iii. Legitimacy**
 - *Explicit Capabilities Framework endorsed by UKES members*
- iv. Pluralism**
 - *Responsive to diverse roles, cultures, levels of experience and methodological preference*
- v. Transparency**
 - *Public access to review governance and guidelines*
- vi. Quality assurance**
 - *Impartiality; reviewer training and selection process*

Aim, Objectives and Process of VEPR

VEPR aim and objectives

The aim of the VEPR is to provide the opportunity for evaluators to develop their evaluation skills and practice by voluntarily undertaking a self-review of their practice with the support of peer reviewers. The objectives are to:

- facilitate evaluators to reflect on their strengths and professional development needs against a framework of capabilities
- provide support in the review process from two experienced peer evaluators

¹⁰ See Annex 2

- identify common gaps in evaluation capabilities from an analysis of those selected by reviewees to inform the Society of priority areas for support, training and professional development.

Three broader objectives are to:

- advance the discussion of quality evaluation and ethical practice
- promote the idea of, and provide evidence for, evaluator accountability to the profession through peer review
- act as a professional endorsement system that evaluation practitioners, commissioners and users of evaluation may adopt as an indicator of the maintenance of professional standards.

Key advantages of the UK Evaluation Society's VEPR approach are that it:

- facilitates regular professional development on a one-to-one basis
- is entirely voluntary, promoting participation through peer encouragement, not professional imperative or prerequisite for practice
- combines the objectives of professional learning and accountability to the profession
- sets up accountability to the profession itself, rather than to a professional body
- promotes discussion of evaluation practice and standards amongst practitioners.

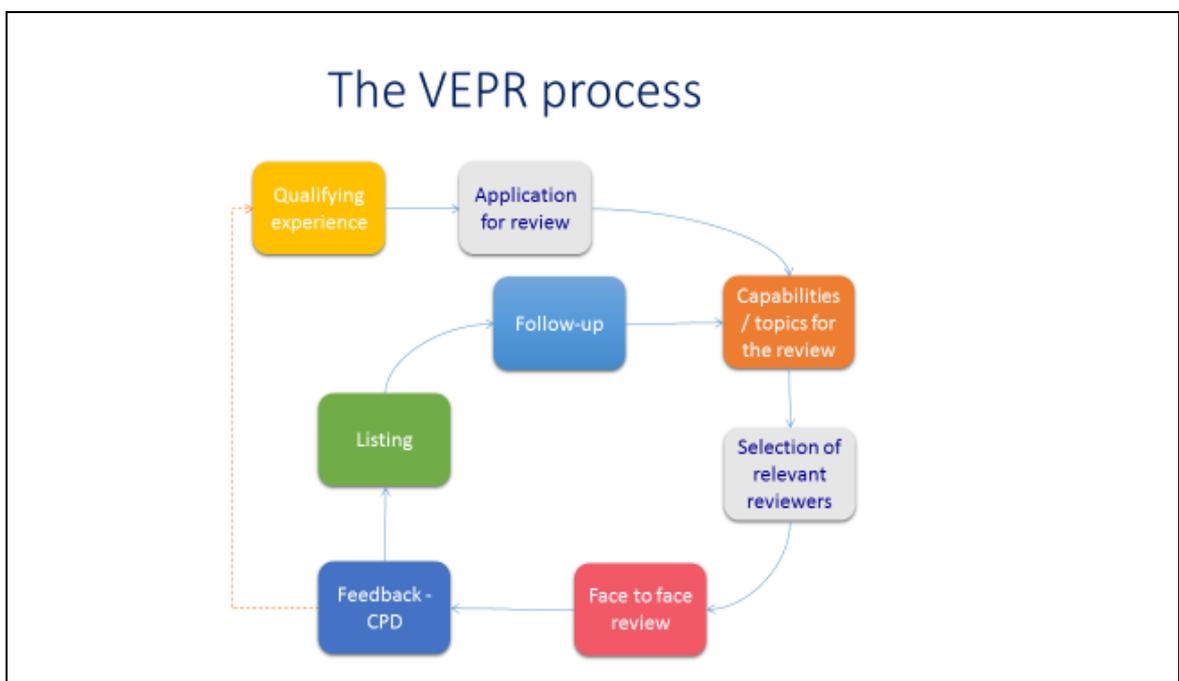
The VEPR Process

A VEPR review has the following steps:

1. The review is open to members of the UK Evaluation Society who have three years of experience in the field
2. As part of the application, the reviewee completes a self-assessment against the Capabilities Framework and uses this to select two areas they wish to strengthen
3. The reviewee then compiles a 'portfolio' of evidence that details situations where the capabilities in those areas were relevant and any issues they encountered. This forms the basis for the review discussion
4. Two reviewers are selected from a reviewer 'pool', one of whom is designated as the lead reviewer and the other as the co-reviewer. The role of the lead reviewer is to chair the discussion and guide the reflection, while the co-reviewer acts as note-taker and timekeeper and checks that all relevant aspects have been covered
5. The lead reviewer, normally the person who is more experienced or familiar with the topics for discussion, contacts the reviewee to arrange a mutually convenient time and format for the review (i.e. whether in person or via Skype/or similar) and liaises with the co-reviewer on the questions to be asked and how the review will be conducted
6. The review lasts between 90 minutes and two hours. The discussion is designed to permit the reviewee to reflect in depth on the selected issues
7. The reviewee produces a draft review report, outlining what they have learned from the review and proposing ways in which they plan to develop their skills as a result
8. The draft report is sent to the reviewers for comment and once all parties are agreed that it represents a fair account of the review, it is then submitted to the VEPR Co-ordinator

9. The VEPR Co-ordinator checks that everything has been completed satisfactorily and informs all relevant parties, including the UK Evaluation Society Council, that the review is complete
10. Reviewees receive a certificate of completion and their names are listed on the Society's website indicating that they have been through a professional development peer review process
11. The review is valid for three years, during which time the reviewee will be asked to confirm that they are implementing the action plan outlined in the review report
12. After three years, the reviewee needs to complete a further review to ensure they remain on the VEPR listing.

The VEPR process is summarised in the diagram below:



Developing the VEPR documents

The VEPR documentation used in the pilot was derived from original material prepared jointly by the VEPR Working Groups in the UK and European Societies. The UK Evaluation Society Working Group had started to form by January 2015. Interaction with the EES came in parallel and by March there was discussion around a joint process. Most of the drafting and development work took place between April and September 2015.

A first draft of the whole structure came from the EES group leader. The scope of the documentation required was then developed jointly by the two Working Groups with added benefit from one member of the EES group who had experience of peer review in another context and one member of the UK Evaluation Society group who researched the Canadian scheme. The two Working Groups used teleconferencing to meet every two weeks or so between April and September. In those calls, the groups divided up tasks and prepared drafts for mutual review. The UK group led on documents for the application stage and developing guidance about the concepts and application of reflective practice,

including an induction programme for reviewers. The EES group took the lead in developing the steps for the review itself, including outlining the roles of reviewers and co-ordinator.

In the UK Society's documentation, the terminology was slightly altered where necessary to reflect UK Evaluation Society systems and procedures. The Working Group also benefitted from feedback from the volunteers in the evolution of the review process and this was incorporated into the guidance document.

A number of contributory papers were prepared. These covered:

- The VEPR concept
- Reviewee eligibility
- Reviewee application form
- Reviewer application form
- Reviewer selection procedure
- A detailed role description for reviewers
- Guidelines for the review, from initial liaison with applicant to the final listing on society's website
- Standards for reviewer eligibility, applications and selection
- Induction guide for reviewers
- An introduction to reflective practice
- VEPR management and delivery process
- Terms of reference and role descriptions for a VEPR Co-ordinator / Administrator and a VEPR Committee

The UK Evaluation Society VEPR Working Group decided to consolidate all these into a single reference document. Some editing took place to reduce duplication. Individual authors were not acknowledged separately, but the system would not have been developed without the joint collaborative effort of the Working Groups in both societies.

The full documentation will be available on the UK Evaluation Society website, but some key elements are given in Annex 5.

Summary of VEPR Development

Stage 1: Establishing the Working Group and developing VEPR structures, roles, processes and documentation for the pilot. This phase included the development of a note on reflective practice by Dione Hills of the UK Evaluation Society Working Group and a presentation on how it should be applied.

Stage 2: A 'pre-pilot' phase, where Working Group members completed the draft application forms and held a workshop to discuss issues that required clarification. Amendments were made to the documents as a result.

Stage 3: A pilot of the VEPR process, involving UK Evaluation Society members as volunteer reviewees and reviewers, with one member of the Working Group also acting as a reviewer and another taking the role of co-ordinator. This stage had three parts: applications, the formal reviews, and assessing the process. As this was the core of the process, the table in Annex 6 offers more detail and precise timing of what each part comprised for those interested in implementing VEPR in practice.

Stage 4: An evaluative review of Stage 3.

Implementing the Pilot

The specific objectives of the pilot were to:

- develop a system and documents for the application of the VEPR approach in practice
- test the feasibility and effectiveness of this approach to VEPR for UK Evaluation Society members within the capacity and structure of the Society
- report to the Society's Council on the findings and recommend whether, and how, VEPR could be developed as a viable way for Society members to improve their evaluation skills and practice.

Timeline

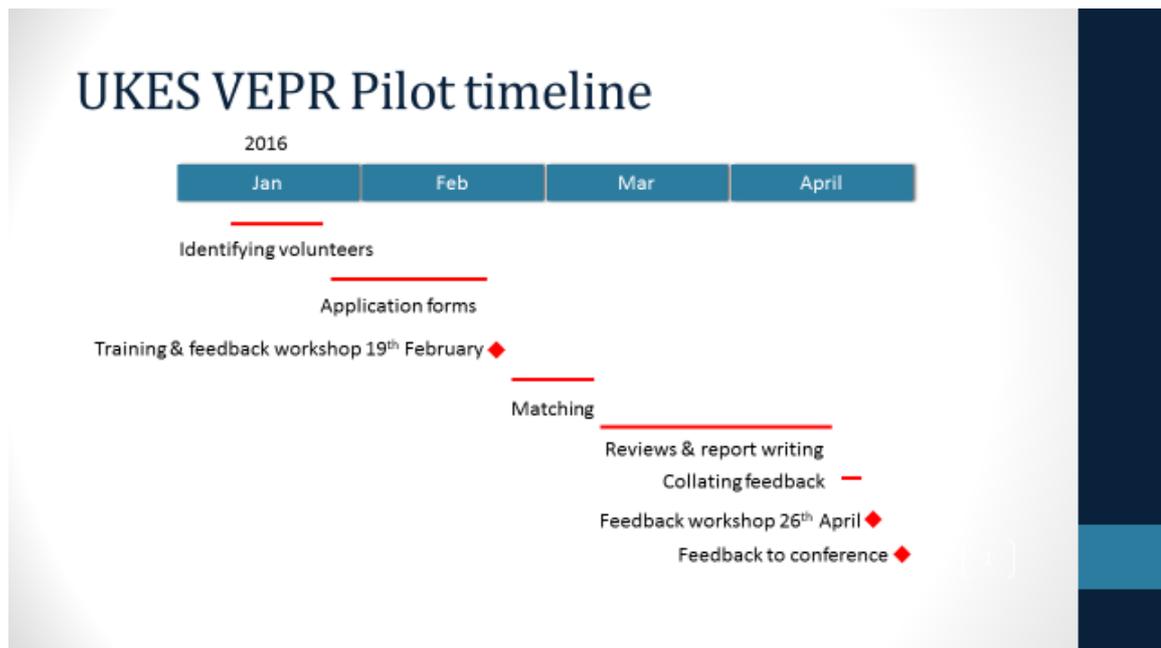
An invitation was issued in spring 2015 for members of the Society to express interest in participating in the pilot. This was followed up by a presentation at the UK Evaluation Society annual conference that year which included a request for volunteers. Out of fourteen members who initially expressed interest, ten agreed to join the pilot as volunteer applicants. Of these, seven were also prepared to act as reviewers. In addition, a member of the Working Group and an additional volunteer agreed to act as co-reviewers when it became clear that a larger reviewer pool was required. The adviser to the Working Group volunteered to act as co-ordinator.

In the event, the pilot comprised ten reviews with two reviewers each. And there were nine reviewers. Three volunteers acted as reviewer three times, two did so twice, another three did so once and one took on the role four times. Three volunteers did not act as reviewer.

A pre-pilot workshop was held in October 2015 when the Working Group trialled the application forms. One member of the EES Working Group also took part. As a result, the application forms were revised and then all the documentation combined into a single set of guidelines¹¹. This contained a certain amount of repetition, but it was decided to use it in this semi-draft form for the pilot with a view to obtaining feedback on both content and structure.

The pilot was ready to go live in early 2016. The Working Group wished to provide feedback to the Society's annual conference which was scheduled for the end of April. This gave a period of just 3 months to complete the entire process. The timeline is given in the diagram below and further detail is provided in Annex 6.

¹¹ Annex 5 contains key sections from these guidelines. The full document, which is currently being updated, will be available on the UK Evaluation Society website.



Once the reviewees and reviewers had been identified, all undertook training, either at the training workshop or in separate briefing sessions (details given in next section).

The co-ordinator had a critical role in ensuring that the timeline was met. This involved:

- issuing application forms to all volunteers for both reviewing and being reviewed, and checking these were completed correctly
- assisting with the organisation of the training and feedback workshops
- ensuring all relevant documentation for the reviews was submitted
- matching reviewees to reviewers to avoid conflicts of interest, maintain gender balance and, where possible, put people with similar methodological or sector backgrounds together
- collating the review reports
- seeking feedback on the application process and summarising both this and the information in the review reports.

Training / briefing the volunteers

An initial one-day training workshop took place in Edinburgh in February 2015 with 12 participants, five of whom joined for the morning session (which was an introduction to the VEPR concept and process plus a presentation on reflective practice¹²) via Zoom. The participants included three members of the Working Group, one of whom was the co-ordinator and another the principal reflective practice trainer.

¹² See Annex 3 for further details on Reflective Practice.

In the afternoon, practical sessions took place for those who attended in person. Here participants had the opportunity to experience being both reviewer and applicant. This involved participants working in pairs and taking it in turn to play each role. It became apparent from this exercise that it would be useful for the two reviewers to decide on their respective roles prior to the formal review. One reviewer would focus on content and take the lead in encouraging the applicant in the reflective process while the other would have responsibility for 'boundary setting' (keeping time, ensuring the issues are adequately discussed and taking notes). The thinking behind this separation of roles was that it would facilitate the reviewee's reflection by avoiding interruption or disconnect by having to respond to two reviewers, possibly with different emphases.

These practice sessions also provided ideas for the structure of the review itself. Particular points which arose related to the start of the formal review were:

- both reviewees and reviewers indicated it was important to agree on the rules of engagement, such as Chatham House rules, and how confidentiality would be handled in process and reporting
- reviewers also thought it useful to give the applicant time to
 - offer a brief overview of their current evaluation practice and the issues and capabilities they wished to discuss
 - spell out the context of the evaluation in which their chosen issue was located and their role in it (i.e. whether they were doing the work alone or as part of a team).

These ideas were then incorporated into the pilot review process.

Similar practical sessions for those who were unable to attend the workshop in Edinburgh took place later in London and Brighton (together with the presentation on reflective practice) and two further briefing/practical sessions were held with individual volunteers.

Feedback on the pilot

Feedback¹³ was obtained at several stages in the process namely from:

- a review of the documents throughout
- role playing the review process itself
- a workshop with reviewees and reviewers held on 26th April 2016 following the conduct of the pilot
- an external evaluation conducted once the pilot was complete
- an independent inquiry one year later as reviewees reflected on the initial questions and their experience post pilot.

¹³ See Annex 7 for a list of all the feedback / evaluation questions.

Findings

Introduction

The following findings are drawn from all the different forms of feedback just noted. They record the experience of the two groups - Reviewees and Reviewers - and the Co-ordinator, in their respective roles, as well as the perspectives of those involved in the Working Group.

Feedback: Reviewees

Professional Benefit

Overall, reviewees found the experience of the pilot to be most beneficial for the opportunity it provided them to reflect upon their evaluation practice in a safe, confidential space and consider how they could strengthen their evaluation capabilities and skills and extend their ongoing professional development. From the evidence provided in the feedback, the VEPR process provides a rare opportunity for professional reflection by evaluators. Seldom in their evaluation working life do evaluators have the time to reflect in detail on their capabilities, skills and experience in the field. The voluntary nature of the process in a positive setting gave the applicants confidence and the chance to formally demonstrate professional self-accountability.

The review process, it was acknowledged, was quite challenging for both reviewees and reviewers, not all of whom were familiar with the self-reflection and active listening required. Three factors facilitated the process: the informal conversation before the review (when the lead reviewer, besides setting the date and time for the review, could answer preliminary questions and set the reviewee at ease); the clear boundary that was drawn around the session with each reviewer having a distinct role; and the assurance of confidentiality aided by the adoption of Chatham House rules. Together these ensured confidence in the process and provided a sense of containment to the session which facilitated trust and openness to discuss. This enabled reviewees to reflect critically and learn. To ensure that this learning is sustained, reviewees suggested regular follow up and/or VEPR meetings were needed.

The reflective process itself was highly valued by all reviewees. However, in a few cases, the result of this reflective practice took a few weeks to sink in. A further observation from several was that it would be important in future development of VEPR to make the nature of VEPR more clear - namely, that it is not coaching, mentoring or accreditation.

Undertaking the self-assessment against the Capabilities Framework as a precursor to the review was considered a useful exercise in itself. In fact, one reviewee suggested that

“There would be benefit in getting the Capabilities Framework onto the Society’s website¹⁴ as an online ‘how would you score yourself’ assessment for any members to start a process of personal reflection, even if they don’t take part in VEPR.”

¹⁴ Work is currently in progress to develop such an online self-assessment tool.

Reflecting on the total VEPR experience, one of the reviewees here sums up what the process meant for him.

*“VEPR is a **fantastic opportunity** to meet other members of the evaluation community, learn more about reflective practice and share constructive feedback to develop professionally.*

*My review was with two experienced evaluators with backgrounds in international development and healthcare, which contrasts to my own work in UK economic development. This exposure to different backgrounds is just one way in which the review helped me, including unlocking new ideas on interviewing vulnerable groups and managing different research audiences. I have since **used these new ideas** in my own practice.*

*I also acted as a reviewer for three other people, each working in different fields and roles, and the sessions were all highly valuable. Importantly, they provide an opportunity to step back and **organise thoughts on a particular topic or issue** and consider the implications for work in practice. On top of this, the reviews take place in a supportive environment of peers experienced in evaluation who can help to progress participants' technical skills. In this way, the VEPR goes above and beyond what internal Human Resource or line management reviews can offer.”*

Value Added

The unique opportunity noted above that VEPR offered reviewees to discuss professional issues for development was seen as a ‘huge’ added value in the process. A number of factors contributed to this judgement:

- individuals were comfortable with and trusted the process; the overall view was that parameters were clear and the process felt safe
- many had been both reviewer and reviewee and this helped facilitate self-reflection on evaluation practice
- several had met at the training workshops and had the opportunity to get to know each other. As a result, reviewees felt that they could open up and be honest during VEPR
- the UK Evaluation Society VEPR pilot was set up around professional accountability as an evaluator rather than accountability to the Society as an external body to be accredited as in the Canadian Evaluation Society's credentialing scheme.

The process was also helpful at a generic level as it demonstrated that many of the issues reviewees chose to discuss were common across a breadth of sectors. This promoted further opportunity for networking (particularly valuable for solo consultants) and enabled all to develop new ways of approaching their work in the light of discussions with peers.

Opinions differed as to what point in one's career the VEPR would be valuable. Some indicated it would be useful at every point but more so for less experienced evaluators.

Others felt that there is strong demand among those with 3-5 years of evaluation experience who want validation (e.g. this is the case in Itad¹⁵).

Broader Potential

Reviewees also considered that VEPR might be useful for institutional members as they could potentially incorporate the process into their staff development programmes using their own personnel as reviewers. One of the participants put it this way in the post-pilot survey:

[This was a] valuable initiative in which most will have learnt something. However, [it] now needs to be trialled at an organisation as [it] would probably be of most benefit to Middle level staff. Can we approach one of our institutional partners since we can't afford to roll it out independently?

Further broader issues identified by reviewees are exemplified in the following statements:

"One of the biggest benefits has been increased engagement with the UK Evaluation Society and feeling more part of a professional body of practice."

"The Capabilities Framework combined with the expertise/enthusiasm of the reviewers gives VEPR credibility - two magic ingredients to help sell the process. So, need to consider how to incentivise quality reviewers to give their time and take part."

"VEPR is still trying to overcome preconceptions among UK Evaluation Society members so it needs a consistent push with clear messaging."

"More clarity is required on what VEPR means for individuals, for companies and for the Society".

It was noted that while self-accountability for the individual is the main thrust of VEPR, external accountability is also important to assure commissioners and stakeholders that evaluators are monitoring and developing their professional skills and capabilities.

Post Pilot

A few months after the pilot, the volunteers were asked some follow-up questions (see Annex 7). Seven of the ten responded and their answers were fairly consistent. Five had found the VEPR experience to be of benefit in their work, but none felt it had changed the way they worked or handled situations. Five had kept in touch with their reviewers/reviewees, and the same number had continued with reflective practice. All who were members of institutions said they would be interested in encouraging the use of reflective practice in their institutions. Unexpected outcomes noted by two participants were greater recognition of voluntary peer review and reflective practice

¹⁵ Itad Ltd is a consulting company that provides monitoring, evaluation, and learning support services for international development. www.itad.com

as a tool, greater awareness of the monitoring and evaluation skills and capabilities needed both personally and for evaluation teams, and improved listening skills.

Further comments from this survey extended the broader issues noted above for the Society to consider. These ranged from the need for external recognition to suggestions for promoting the scheme more widely and advancing opportunities for furthering reflection and networking.

- *"I am interested to know more about external recognition for those who have successfully completed the VEPR process – like it or not, most professional accreditation type schemes are motivated by some form of recognition in the market. We discussed whether 'VEPRs' should join a database accessible through the Society's website. This would certainly be part of the 'added value' of the UK Evaluation Society's VEPR"*
- *"[I]sincerely hope there will be interest in year two of the VEPR. This won't come on its own though – the Society will need to promote it at events and through channels other than the email updates. Why not produce a short YouTube about it. Why not promote on LinkedIn and Twitter, etc.?"*
- *"Linked to the above, once we've got a more stable model for VEPR in year two, hopefully the UK Evaluation Society can start promoting it as a recognised benefit of membership"*
- *"I would like to take part in a regional follow-up and exchange to keep reflecting and networking".*

The full results of this survey are given in Annex 9.

Feedback: Reviewers

Three key findings re reviewers emerged from the introductory training workshop:

- the workshop was very helpful in shaping the format of the review itself in terms of the role of the reviewers and the number of issues that could realistically be discussed
- the practical training sessions provided an opportunity to explore how the process works when reviewers and applicants have different backgrounds and experience. It demonstrated that care needs to be taken not to team people up with radically different orientations. In some cases, the reviewer had to ask further questions to clarify the issue rather than taking it 'as read', while at the same time maintain an active curiosity in the issue identified by the applicant
- the face-to-face training for reviewers was considered essential.

The following findings are based on the experience of the volunteers (whether reviewers or reviewees) during the pilot itself.

Background of reviewers and matching to reviewees

Views about the background of reviewers varied, some feeling that it would have helped if reviewers and reviewees were from similar fields; others that it was useful if they came from a different field as, in that case, they brought something new to the

process. Most felt that it is helpful for reviewers to have a good idea of the context in which the reviewee had conducted the evaluation.

Some concern was expressed over who in a mainstream VEPR initiative would read the individual VEPR reports and whether this might lead to 'reviewees having to hide something', especially if the reviewers were current or potential clients / commissioners (or even senior colleagues).

That said, there was general agreement that the reviewer-reviewee matching for the VEPR pilot was very effective: the co-ordinator took great care in the matching to align reviewer and reviewee appropriately and to avoid conflicts of interest. This good matching was considered one of the strengths of the approach of the UK Evaluation Society's VEPR pilot.

A further strength was the reviewers' active listening and attention to the reviewees' reflection on their chosen issues.

Learning for reviewers

The Role itself

Reviewers did not feel the amount of reading required prior to the review meeting was onerous, particularly as in long reports the reviewee had indicated which chapter would be the focus of the VEPR. In fact, some reviewers found it interesting to read the supporting documentation from fields different from their own.

Reviewers pointed out that they had learned as much from the process as reviewees, appreciating that it was important for them as well as reviewees to be open and honest about their experience. It is not exactly a two-way exchange however. There is some asymmetry in that reviewees can choose what information to share while the reviewer's role is to support the reviewee's process of reflection (not share their own), and enable them to probe deeply into the issues they have chosen for reflection. This requires some skill, particularly if reviewers are not familiar with the context of the reviewee's work.

Knowing the reviewee personally

Reviewers did not think it was important to know the reviewee personally, nor to meet in advance. It was felt that having no prior meeting gave opportunity and 'space' for a more open conversation. What was considered useful on the whole was having reviewers from a different field, although this could potentially be problematic if either one did not acknowledge valid differences in the reviewee's working style or evaluation approach.

Reciprocity in roles

In the pilot, most of the participants who were reviewed also acted as reviewer. As the age and experience of participants varied, this meant that some reviewers were less experienced in the field than others. While the reciprocity was considered good practice, it was also recognised that generally a degree of experience/seniority was required to be a reviewer.

Giving of advice

One point which was discussed at some length in the feedback was how far reviewers can – and should - give advice to the reviewee. It was acknowledged that doing this too soon – or in the wrong way – can get in the way of the applicant delving more deeply into their own experience and finding answers of their own, which enhances their agency in professional self-development and their scope for learning.

Reviewers thought it particularly important to avoid asking leading questions, which were effectively giving advice disguised as an invitation for reflection (e.g. Did you ever consider doing X?), which could close down alternative lines of exploration. One way of respecting both the self-reflection process while acknowledging that direct counsel is frequently sought, was devoting a few minutes at the end of the review for an exchange of experience between reviewee and reviewer. One participant suggested in fact that the review session could be seen as falling into three parts: reflective practice for reviewee and active listening for reviewers, then a summary of key learning from the reviewee, followed by a discussion engaging both reviewee and reviewers about any practical solutions available.

This shared experience between evaluators with different kinds and levels of experience was reassuring for reviewees in hearing that the reviewer had faced similar difficulties – and how they addressed these. In addition, it provided an opportunity for advice to be offered if either party thought it would be useful. This exchange of information was indeed often found helpful by the reviewees.

Feedback: Co-ordinator

The co-ordinator reported that the co-ordination role, which is a mixture of administrative and professional work, is very time consuming. While much of it is routine e.g. sending out forms and collating documentation, checking that the forms had been completed correctly and that the documentation was appropriate for the review required relevant evaluation knowledge and experience. The pilot also demonstrated that the co-ordination role requires a high degree of organisational skill to match reviewees and reviewers, to keep a tight timeline and to ensure all is completed in the time dedicated to the process.

The fact that the co-ordinator also collected and analysed feedback on the application forms, as well as the comments on VEPR in the review reports, added to the time demands. However, given that all of these forms were returned to the co-ordinator as part of the process this seemed an appropriate part of the role.

The most challenging part was matching reviewees to reviewers. There were a number of reasons for this:

- identification of the same capabilities for discussion made it difficult to optimise the best choice of reviewers whilst ensuring that individuals were not overloaded
- matching people with similar methodological backgrounds, while avoiding conflicts of interest and maintaining gender balance was not easy when numbers were small

- it was difficult to be entirely sure that reviewers who had rated themselves at the same level as others in their self-assessment against the Capabilities Framework did actually have the same level of experience and capability to support reviewees, as there was no calibration of the assessments. For example, were those who scored themselves as Strong (B) actually less able than those who scored themselves as Expert (A), or just more modest?

Taking account of all these factors the matching in the event worked well and reviewees seemed more than content with the process they experienced with their respective reviewers.

Improving the VEPR Process

Reflections on training

Overall, the training workshop and practice sessions went well, with participants reporting that they found the experience positive and useful. The presentations on the VEPR concept and process and reflective practice helped set the review in context and clarified the underpinning logic of VEPR. Most felt the purpose of the scheme had been explained well, with only one commenting that they had only been thinking in terms of learning for professional development and not demonstrating their capabilities.

It also allowed for reviewers (and reviewees) to check out aspects, such as confidentiality, about which they were unclear. While the practical sessions in the training were initially found to be somewhat on the short side, these worked best when reviewees had a clear sense beforehand of the issues – and related capabilities – that they wished to discuss.

Some participants joined the training workshop remotely via an online platform (Zoom¹⁶ was used) and this generally worked well, once a few initial technical problems were resolved.

Confidentiality

Neither the practice sessions nor the pilot reviews were audio recorded. If they are to be in the future, the majority of reviewees considered it would be useful to have this done professionally provided there are also clear procedures for data confidentiality, privacy and security over review reports. These would need to be consistent with the new GDPR Guidelines on data confidentiality and good practice¹⁷. In order for the process to promote trust and safety, several reviewees said there needed to be clarity about who sees/reads the report, how to handle sensitive and identifiable data, and where and how records are stored.

Various aspects of 'active listening' were discussed in the feedback session after the training workshop. Several reviewees found that having the reviewer repeat back what they had heard, even using the reviewees' own words, was surprisingly powerful. It was also noted that it was helpful if reviewers did not jump in too quickly

¹⁶ Zoom is a remote conferencing service which uses cloud computing.

¹⁷ The issue of data security has become even more salient in view of the 2016 EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that took effect from 25 May 2018 and currently covers the UK as well.

to fill any silences, and did not get overly involved in the issue itself (i.e. did not ask for too much information given the limited time of the review) but kept the focus on enabling the reviewee to reflect on their own experience.

Number of issues

The application forms had originally asked for three topics for the review, but in practice it was discovered that there was only time to cover two in sufficient detail. This emphasises the importance of selecting issues carefully, ideally with the two issues illustrating different areas of capability, and different levels of strength (for example, choosing one that represents a strength to be enhanced, and another, an area which could usefully be strengthened).

In the external evaluation, the question was raised as to whether or not the review allowed sufficient time to cover reflection on two issues or if more time would be helpful. Reviewees offered a variety of responses:

- *“Yes. If it was longer than that, concentration would be hard to maintain, so 90 minutes is fine”*
- *“1.5 hours with approximately 45 minutes per topic appears to work well”*
- *“Yes, it is quite an intense process and two items are enough for one session. Either the review could take place in two sessions, or the number of items should be limited to two”*
- *“Two topics is adequate as long as they are given quality attention and steps for learning”; adding “Might it be more helpful for some candidates only to provide one topic if it will really help build capabilities?”*

It transpired that the more specific and precise the reviewee was about the topic chosen, the easier it was to reflect deeply in the time available, though it was also acknowledged that the understanding of what the key issue really is can evolve during the course of the review. It can be beneficial for the reviewer to allow this to happen.

The evaluation also asked if reviewees agreed with the suggestion that one of the topics for discussion should be on a written piece of work. One response was negative and another expressed uncertainty over what reflection on a piece of written work would entail.

One review report also contained the following comment: *“We agree that discussing a live evaluation was a very constructive exercise, but in a ‘full’ (non-pilot) review we think it equally important to include a completed piece of work to enable full reflection of an evaluation from start to finish.”*

The review itself

Both reviewees and reviewers took time to prepare for the review. For reviewees, this varied from 30 minutes to just under 3 hours, while that for reviewers varied from 40 minutes to around 2 hours, with second reviewers generally taking slightly less time. On a practical level, and given the wide geographical coverage, organising face to face peer review sessions was not always straightforward and having one or more participants join remotely (e.g. by Skype) proved very effective.

It emerged that the review conversations frequently revolved around the challenges of evaluator/client relationships rather than the specific issue the reviewee chose to reflect upon. Both needed to be addressed as effective relationships are key to ensuring the evaluation is successfully completed. The task for the reviewer is to manage and balance discussion of the chosen issue with the relationship challenges. This is an area to focus on in future training programmes for VEPR.

Differentiate from coaching

Reviewees suggested that the boundaries between what constitutes coaching as opposed to peer review are not clear. While peer review is often part of coaching, the latter is more an ongoing process and more direct, whereas the aim of VEPR is self-reflection. However, non-directive coaching can be seen as similar to peer review. How to differentiate VEPR from coaching and other review processes and demonstrate how its quality is assured should be clearly delineated several reviewees indicated, as they had noted that in coaching where there are no barriers to entry, quality is an issue.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The review process highlighted the (informal) link between developing evaluation skills and CPD. This could be strengthened in the future to have a more explicit link between the VEPR review outcome and an individual's CPD with reviewer and reviewee discussing after six months how the reviewee had addressed the VEPR review outcome. Including a question in the VEPR report template about the kind of professional development that could be offered to the applicant would facilitate such a six month review and take account of the following suggestion offered by a reviewee: *"In the next phase, it will be helpful to assess what difference VEPR has made in deepening applicants' professional capabilities"*.

Improving the Documentation

Application forms

Feedback from a questionnaire on the application forms (see Annex 8 for details of the feedback) revealed a number of minor suggestions for improving the forms. These mostly concerned greater clarity around the issues to be discussed e.g. how many and from what domain/s of the Capabilities Framework, and linking capabilities to the issues chosen for discussion before and after the review. How the supporting documentation was to be used and the confidential nature of the review report, were also areas reviewees thought could be better explained.

One reviewee thought the word limit which applies to parts of the application form, restrictive. However, a more common observation was that *"the word limit was useful and a good intellectual exercise"*.

The forms themselves were not considered too onerous to complete. Apart from one reviewee who indicated s/he took 2 days to complete the form, the average was 2 hours for reviewees and approximately an hour for reviewers (who had of course previously completed the reviewee form).

Guidance documentation

Reviewees noted that on the whole *“the guidance and other documentation was very helpful as were the prompts and the reviewer training”*, although there was also a suggestion for a specific link from the application form to the background guidance. *“The manual was rather lengthy”* one reviewee noted, *“So some one-pagers with key reminders would be useful.”*

Overall the information sought was considered relevant and sufficient, although one participant asked if academic publications should count while another thought there should be a stronger focus on ethics in the review itself.

The application forms ask for details of two external referees who could be approached to offer comment on the applicants' qualifications and experience. A question was raised as to whether having referees is relevant in what is essentially a self-review reflective process. This is something for the Society to review at the next stage. Two further considerations for the future raised by reviewees were whether we should distinguish between short-term and longer-term changes, and include this in the review template, and whether we need to make clear that the review is forward or backward looking or both.

Self-assessment

The feedback form asked applicants to indicate how at ease they felt assessing themselves against the capabilities and identifying areas for growth on a scale of 1-6 where 6 is most at ease and 1 least. Only one scored 6. The majority scored either 5 or 4. One was more hesitant scoring 3 and no one chose the two lowest scores. When these judgements are combined with comments from other feedback on the usefulness of the self-assessment against one's capabilities, it lends weight to the argument some proposed, and which is now being enacted, for developing the self-assessment as a stand-alone website tool.

The UK Evaluation Society's Framework of Evaluation Capabilities

Self-assessment tool

VEPR was the first time that the Capabilities Framework (CF) was used as a practical tool. Both reviewers and reviewees found the self-assessment against the CF to be a useful exercise in itself in addition to its link to VEPR. The self-assessment proved helpful at the beginning in selecting capabilities though it was more difficult in reporting in deciding how to link the review outcome to the chosen capabilities.

Choice of capabilities

It is an aspiration of VEPR to lead into future evaluation training by identifying common gaps in skills and knowledge. Across the ten reviews most of the capabilities in each of the three domains were selected by applicants for review but numbers are too small at present to yield such information. Its major strength in the pilot was as a tool for an individual's professional development in evaluation rather than a systematic exploration of a range of capabilities. Reviewees indicated that they gained

most satisfaction from the review when they felt they had a specific capability to develop, though it was not always easy to identify the capabilities that required strengthening. It was also not clear how much flexibility there was for discussing issues that arose that were not specifically related to the chosen capabilities especially where several seemed relevant from those first selected.

Clearer link

Learning from the process might have been deepened and a disconnect avoided between initial chosen capabilities and the review itself, if there was a clearer link to the Capabilities Framework and an understanding that the reflective process can be part of longer-term CPD. One suggestion for the future was for reviewees to choose two or three areas in the Capabilities Framework at regular intervals (annually/every few years) and seek to improve each.

Strengthening this link may also help realise one of the broader objectives of VEPR to identify skill gaps for evaluation training. While maximising the use of the Capabilities Framework requires development, on the whole, as one participant pointed out, *“The Framework has since become much more “visible” as a result of VEPR”*.

Post Pilot Survey of UK Evaluation Society members

In late 2016 a further survey was circulated to Society members for their views on VEPR to inform a decision on whether or not to continue with the scheme. The response rate was low (13) but the Society’s Council thought that the responses showed a degree of consensus and were sufficiently positive to suggest continuing with the scheme. Annex 7 has the full results of the survey.

Of those who did respond, eleven (85%) indicated a personal interest in taking part in a review and five (38%) indicated an interest in being a reviewer. Three (60%) of the institutional members noted that it could be useful for their organisation. Just over half (seven respondents) favoured the reviews taking place over an open-ended period, rather than being conducted in a predetermined period (NB this is potentially more challenging administratively). The lowest cost option presented (£100-£199) was generally favoured over higher costs, but three people chose not to respond to this question.

Summary of Key Findings from the UK Evaluation Society's VEPR Pilot

Review Process

- The VEPR pilot was a successful and positive experience for both reviewees and reviewers:
 - reviewees found it most helpful in reflecting on their practice and how to strengthen their evaluation capabilities and skills
 - reviewers also learned much from the process appreciating that it was important for them as well as reviewees to be open and honest about their experience
 - the co-ordinator role was pivotal to its success and required expert knowledge and a high degree of organisational skill
 - the self-assessment against the Society's Capabilities Framework helped to identify skills to strengthen and was an extremely useful exercise in itself.
- In terms of the structure of the review:
 - the face-to-face training session was invaluable
 - two issues for the review worked well
 - having separate roles for the reviewers was effective
 - careful matching of reviewees to reviewers was a major strength
 - documentation was generally clear and only minor modifications were suggested.
- In the review process itself a delicate balance needs to be made between giving advice and/or making judgements and facilitating agency of the reviewee to self-reflect
- Frequent areas for discussion were the practical and political aspects of evaluation
- The experience of VEPR has resulted in greater recognition of voluntary peer review and reflective practice as a review process and greater awareness of the usefulness of the Capabilities Framework.

Future Development

- Follow-up is necessary for sharing with peers and to sustain learning from the review
- The VEPR approach needs to differentiate peer review from coaching more clearly
- The review report should have a more explicit link to reviewees' continuing professional development (CPD)
- More attention should be given to securing greater calibration in self-assessment and choice of issues for review
- Greater clarity is required about who sees/reads the report, how to handle sensitive and identifiable data, and where and how records are stored
- The Capabilities Framework needs to be integrated more closely with the review process both at the beginning and end of the review and include more on ethics
- The feedback was overwhelmingly supportive for an extended pilot to refine the process, secure support for administration and extend the opportunity to more members.

Objectives

In terms of its objectives (see page 10), it was clear from the feedback throughout and the external evaluation that the pilot was extremely successful and received with much enthusiasm from both reviewees and reviewers.

The development of the precise system and supporting documents (objective 1) took some time, but the feasibility of the approach (including the documentation) and its effectiveness as a professionalisation initiative for the Society (objective 2) was well tested in practice, minor amendments being made along the way. The findings were reported to the Society's Council and recommendations suggested for its future development (objective 3). These received endorsement. However, the details of exactly how VEPR could become a viable ongoing process for the Society have still to be fully worked out (see next section).

Next Steps and Implications for the Future

Next Steps

Listing on the UK Evaluation Society website

The nature of the listing on the website was discussed with the volunteers. All the reviewees were content for their names to be listed, but there was no consensus over whether the names of the reviewers should also go on the website. It was agreed that none of the pilot review reports would become public, but it was suggested that reviewees could include along with their names a short statement indicating how they had benefited from the process.

Revisiting the Use of the Society's Capabilities Framework

Independent self-assessment tool

Given how useful the self-assessment against the Capabilities Framework proved to be, the Society are currently developing this as a stand-alone online tool, independent of the VEPR process. The main aim of the tool is for professional development aligned to capabilities.

Use of Capabilities Framework (CF) in VEPR

In the VEPR itself, it is planned to integrate the CF more closely by considering the following:

- using the CF for self-assessment at the end as well as at the beginning of the review
- relating the capabilities at the end more to the actual issues covered in the review which are based on real examples
- possible calibration of self-assessments (e.g. input from line manager or chosen referee), as people's perceptions of what they can or cannot do are very different
- exploring how the issues discussed may connect to several capabilities
- how best to encourage reviewees to reflect on dispositions in evaluation and "interpersonal skills" as these came up across all reviews.

Broader review of Capabilities Framework

The Society also intends to conduct a wider review of the Capabilities Framework to consider how it may need to change to make a closer connection with evaluation training and to add capabilities that it would be useful to include. Ethics, for example may need to be spelled out more specifically than at present.

This review will also consider what may be added from other capability and competency frameworks, such as UNEG'S and that of AEA which have evolved since the publication of the Society's Capabilities Framework in 2012.

Refining the documentation

While the documentation on the whole was clear, in the next iteration it will be refined to emphasise the focus on two issues, the interrelationship of chosen issues and capabilities, the different roles of the two reviewers, the difference between VEPR and coaching, and the conditions for ensuring confidentiality both in the process of the review and subsequent uploading on the website.

Implications for the Future

Feasibility of VEPR

The feasibility of the VEPR as a regular service for Society members will depend on the following factors:

- the benefits to be gained from VEPR, both by members and the Society as a whole
- ongoing support from the Council, including governance and administrative support
- an extended pilot to refine the process, secure funding and investigate other resource requirements
- sufficient interest and uptake from Society members.

The model the Society has adopted, by which each applicant has two reviewers, is highly dependent on the availability of eligible reviewers and places pressure on the small group of reviewers currently in existence. Unless this small group is willing to undertake a large number of reviews, the total number of applicants that can be reviewed each year will be limited by the number of reviewers. In the pilot, ten reviewees were reviewed by nine reviewers. This constraint is even stronger if the Society wishes to match reviewers and applicants according to their sectoral or methodological profiles.

Possible solutions are to pay a competitive fee for reviewers' time, or to accredit less experienced reviewers as long as they have undertaken a review as an applicant themselves. The pressure will decline over a number of years as a wider pool of evaluators will have been through the process. However, if reviewers are paid remuneration or an honorarium in order to create the required size of pool, it may be difficult to cut back on this as more people become eligible.

If commissioners in the future come to favour those bidding for contracts who have been through VEPR, the process is likely to gain credence in the evaluation market. However, this could generate a larger demand for VEPR than the Society is able to cope with, and care would need to be taken that the reasons for undertaking the process are valid for the aim and purpose of VEPR. This will require more discussion.

Options for rolling out VEPR

The role of co-ordinator is quite intensive and if VEPR is rolled out to Society members there would need to be a charge to cover the costs of engaging a person with the appropriate knowledge and experience. There are three options for how the scheme could be handled:

Batch – the whole process takes around 3 months from start to finish, so it could be held twice a year, to a fixed timetable with the co-ordinator being employed part-time.

On-going – there is no particular timetable and applications are processed throughout the year. This was the favoured response from respondents in the members' survey. This could be more costly, as the co-ordinator would need to be available (depending on demand) throughout the year, rather than for a short, fixed, period.

On request – if the demand for VEPR is low, then applications could be processed as and when they arise with the role of co-ordinator being taken by a Council member without the need for a paid position.

In all cases, a co-ordinating role would be needed to manage the entire VEPR process, including approving the reviewer-reviewee matching, ensuring that the reviews took place and logging the results.

Costs

For applicants to pay for VEPR several said it may need to be linked more strongly to the value of the VEPR process itself, e.g. self-reflection, professional development and networking with peers. This “value added” needs to be clearly articulated. Calculating cost versus benefit could be difficult and some applicants indicated they would only consider paying (a small amount) if the benefits were clear. Some reviewees thought institutions might wish more in terms of certification.

Differences prevailed among the pilot volunteers on the question of whether reviewers would have to be paid. Some thought that being a VEPR reviewer should be seen as a contribution to the UK Evaluation Society’s evaluation community. Others, that few would opt to be a reviewer, given potential heavy workloads, if there was no remuneration or honorarium.

The volunteers agreed that VEPR applicants (reviewees) would have to pay a modest fee (e.g. to cover the administration process) over and above their UK Evaluation Society membership fee. The view was also expressed that unless reviewees pay, especially institutional members, they may not value the VEPR process. In the case of institutional members, it was thought that their organisation would pay.

The UK Evaluation Society has to judge the level of demand for VEPR. To keep costs reasonable, it may have to put a cap on the number, for example, 20 reviews a year on a first come first serve basis.

The challenge the Society faces in covering the cost of another round of reviews mostly hinges on the adoption of a co-ordinated matching process whereby applicants are reviewed by a co-ordinator who then matches them with a reviewer. Employing a co-ordinator is expensive. Taken together with the costs of holding a training/briefing workshop plus a small honorarium to reviewers, it is estimated that to review 10 to 15 people would cost between £350 and £400 per applicant. As the post-pilot survey indicated, members would be prepared to pay between £100-£199 for VEPR. Sponsorship would therefore need to be sought to reduce the fees to around £150.

Current position

Attempts to date to find an institutional member of the Society to sponsor an expanded trial have not been successful and the Working Group are discussing other means of stimulating demand and finding a lower cost way of continuing.

In the meantime, work is focusing on developing the independent on-line self-assessment tool related to the Capabilities Framework. If the tool proves successful, it could help raise the awareness of, and interest in, the wider VEPR process.