Youth Employment Initiative evaluation

Growth Programme Board Presentation

13.12.2016

Overview of the presentation

- Evaluation aims and methodology
- Key findings:
  - strategic fit
  - design/development
  - implementation
- Considerations arising
- Questions and discussion

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Evaluation aims and methodology

Aims

1. Gathering and analysing evidence to evaluate the **strategic fit, design and implementation** of the YEI

2. Preparing for a planned second YEI evaluation focusing on effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the YEI

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Methodology

Key elements of the methodology:

- Desk review of YEI documentation
- 5 telephone interviews with ESFD and EC representatives
- 11 telephone interviews with LEP area ESIF sub-committee representatives
- 40 telephone interviews with YEI provider representatives (strategic leads and delivery partners)
- Fieldwork period August – November 2016
- Analysis based on evaluation framework

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Key findings – strategic fit

Strategic fit

- Clear read across between YEI objectives at the EU level and the translation of these at the national and local levels
- Projects and activities developed reflect EU and national guidance
- Activities generally complementary to existing provision

→ high degree of relevance and coherence in respect of the policy and operational intent but…

  - Some views that relevance lessened since YEI's inception
  - Though most interviewees felt that initiative remained highly relevant, and this is also reflected in statistical evidence

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Key findings – design and development

Design - initial launch

- Generally positive experiences with development of YEI at programme level, including involvement of EC, ESF MA and LEP area sub-committees
- Varying involvement of LEP area representatives in project level design - expressed wish for a more ongoing role beyond procurement phase
- Broad consultations and collaboration of partnerships in the design phase locally; key role of good prior relationships

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Design – key considerations

- Localism strongly influenced YEI design
- The flexibility of programme was appreciated and activities were designed to add value and address gaps in services
    - Though some potential overlap in areas with multiple projects
- Learning from previous experiences informed the YEI design
- Value for money considerations played a role, but acknowledgement that this was not the key driver
    - Engagement with the target group inevitably expensive
- ESF cross-cutting themes said to have been considered
    - Practical influence less evidence

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Design – challenges

- Initial design and development impacted by delays in agreeing the ESF OP and related factors (compressed timescale); duration of procurement process
- Geographical mismatch between NUTS2/NUTS3 areas and LEP areas– 'divided provision'
- Some perceived restrictiveness of YEI guidance and eligibility rules, e.g. around pre-NEET and apprenticeship provision
- Requirements to source match-funding
    - Potentially negative impact on innovation
- Some LEP areas felt unable to engage – issues securing match funding and fit with existing provision

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Key findings - implementation

Implementation – overall delivery

- Delivery seen as going broadly to plan though some ongoing effects resulting from delays in some areas…
  - E.g. delivery being staggered in terms of involvement of partners
- Activities broadly follow the 'participant journey'
- Governance/partnerships working well but some challenges
  - Delivery partnerships often built on pre-existing relationships
  - Limited involvement of LEP area representatives in governance
  - Issues around recruitment delays, staff turnover, lack of meetings
- Some evidence of good practice sharing but ltd. overall
- Limited reflection of cross-cutting themes in delivery

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Implementation – contractual relations

- Despite delays and procurement / contracting issues relationships with DWP seen as working well and understanding of context
  - Though some calls for more f-2-f contact, clearer collated guidance in a single place and faster resolution of queries
- Some concern over potential underspend, both at the LEP area level and in the case of particular projects/providers
  - Though equally in some areas LEP area and project representatives confident that they will spend their allocations
- Some issues raised over perceived high levels of paperwork and MI requirements related to the initiative
  - Further guidance needed

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Considerations arising

Issues to consider…

- In general a lot of positivity over the initiative and its potential benefits in addressing issues of NEET young people
- Some issues to consider however…
  - In light of possible future calls for proposals important to review position in some areas to ensure there is need for additional funding
  - Explore any ways to reduce period between procurement decision and contracting
  - Reconsider eligibility evidence requirements if possible
  - Possible benefits in reviewing guidance for providers
  - Consider how LEP area representatives might be more involved in monitoring/oversight

Questions and discussion