



Scotland's International Development Alliance

Strategy Evaluation 2017-2021

February 2021

Radcliffe Consultancy Services

Executive summary and key recommendations

“Who the Alliance represents is unique and how they do it makes a difference – they have enabled international development to maintain and grow its place in public policy... It has been important in these difficult (4) years and critical in next 3 too”.

External stakeholder

Radcliffe Consultancy Services was commissioned by Scotland's International Development Alliance (the Alliance) to assess the extent to which the organisation met its four strategic objectives: agreed in 2017 to run for a 3-year period (with an additional year's extension to core funding agreed by the Scottish Government in 2020).

The evaluation found that over the strategy period, the Alliance achieved a fundamental improvement and reshaping of its service offer to members, demonstrating flexibility in responding to changing needs and taking a leadership role in positioning international development at the heart of sustainable development policy. Much of the Alliance's service activity has successfully focused on building the capacity, transparency and good governance of the sector in Scotland, whilst informing and educating members and external stakeholders on the relevance of international development to current global environmental, equality and human rights priorities.

Of necessity much of this focus has been internally facing, equipping the sector to become fit for purpose in the face of these developments. The future challenge will be to further develop of the Alliance's externally focused activities, alongside direct services to members.

The four strategic objectives

The strategy successfully delivered two of its four objectives, adapting effectively to a changing political, economic and policy landscape and delivering high quality, personalised services to meet member needs:

1. **To grow our membership base and improve the services we provide to members:** this was achieved, supported by both quantitative and qualitative evidence collated for this report.
2. **To better represent the sector on policy and advocacy issues:** this was also achieved, evidenced by activities and external stakeholder views.

The second two objectives were partially met:

3. **To improve the perceptions of international development and the profile of the sector in the minds of the public and other key stakeholders across Scotland:** There was a wealth of qualitative evidence that indicated significant improvement in key stakeholder perceptions and an enhanced reputation of the

Alliance and the wider international development community. However, there is little evidence that public perceptions have been impacted; in addition, it would be problematic to attribute any improvement in public perceptions solely to the work of the Alliance.

4. **To ensure the infrastructure and IT capability are fit for purpose to deliver the plan:** whilst IT capability was improved through a new website and members' portal and the number of member services delivered online significantly increased, ICT functionality is still impeded by a lack of integration between systems, which would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of operations.

The evaluation found that the reasons for not fully meeting objectives 3 and 4 were a lack of dedicated staff resource to address externally facing communications with the public, necessary to counter an increasingly self-interested domestic agenda, together with little resource capacity or missed opportunity to fundamentally address IT functionality issues following the website commissioning at the start of the plan period.

Recommendations

The Alliance should review its activities in the light of its new strategic objectives and theory of change and rigorously prioritise only those capable of contributing to delivering the strategy. Board input is required at a strategic level, to re-assess those activities which do not yield high outputs or deliver impacts and/or the mission of the organisation. This is critical if resources are to be identified to deliver the externally facing public awareness raising and coherence that the Alliance seeks to achieve.

The evaluation recommends review of the following areas:

- The development of an *External Communications Strategy*, and consideration of the creation of a role for public engagement and social movement campaigns.
- A review of *Membership Strategy*, and a focus on maintaining and developing membership and prioritisation of members' needs against the new theory of change.
- More effective mechanisms to facilitate *peer to peer learning* remotely, including the usage of and value assigned to the current "Alliance Community" by members, and alternatives which, once established, can be peer-led rather than requiring constant officer input.
- A review of the *Monitoring and Evaluation Framework* indicators and the usefulness of data and management information collated. Where is impact most effectively evidenced? What do existing reporting requirements demonstrate? and where can reporting be simplified?
- Further building on civil society organisation (CSO) partnerships and increased collaboration to effectively promote the international development agenda.
- A review of the existing support offered on fundraising and where, as a membership organisation, the Alliance can most usefully add value in supporting the resilience of the sector.

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- 1 Internal stakeholder topic guide
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- 3 Questions for membership interviews

1 Introduction

This report brings together and reflects on evidence of the impact that Scotland's International Development Alliance's (the Alliance's) activities have had in achieving its strategic objectives over the last 4 years. The evaluation of these results and outcomes over a four-year period (2017-2021) was conducted by Radcliffe Consultancy Services using both primary and secondary research methods and directly engaging with stakeholders and members of the Alliance community.

1.1 Evaluation objectives

The evaluation's objectives were to:

- Assess the impact of the Alliance's Strategic Plan through identifying the extent to which each of the Strategy's four objectives have been met.
- Identify, from members' perspectives - acknowledging their diverse range and capacity - where delivery has been more effective and efficient, assessing the relevance of the services and interventions carried out for and on behalf of members.
- Identify the extent to which activities funded by Scottish Government have achieved the outputs and outcomes agreed in a coherent way, capable of sustainable benefit to the international development sector and its objectives.

1.2 The Alliance's Strategy 2017-2021

In 2016 the Alliance, formerly known as NIDOS (Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland) undertook a strategic review of its purpose and activities, consulting with the international development community in Scotland, its core funders - Scottish Government (ScotGov), the (former) DFID and sister organisation BOND - and other representative bodies in Scotland. As a result, a refreshed vision, mission, values and new objectives were developed for the organisation and a new name chosen, all of which better reflected the purpose and mission of the organisation. [The four strategic objectives](#) form the focus for this evaluation's assessment of outcomes and are:

- To grow the membership base and improve services to members.
- To improve perceptions of international development and the profile of the sector: both public perceptions and those of key stakeholders in Scotland.
- To better represent members on policy and advocacy issues.
- To ensure the infrastructure and IT capability are fit for purpose to develop the Plan.

1.3 Context: changing landscape for international development

The Strategy was informed by several key factors, both operational and environmental. From 2020 activities were severely impacted by the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, both in terms of the Alliance's own operations and most importantly the impact on its membership's international development service delivery and fundraising abilities. The key political, socio-economic and capacity factors for the Alliance's membership during this period have been:

- Charitable giving and the movement of donor focus towards supporting self-interest (domestic wellbeing) resulting in less support for international development.
- A desire by the Scottish Government, as a core funder, to see the Alliance increase its alternative revenue streams (such as through membership income and delivering trading activities).
- The legacy of the negative media coverage surrounding internationalism and safeguarding in international development and the sector's need to respond to this.
- [Increasing pressures and competition for raising charitable income for membership](#) and the restrictions caused by COVID-19 that have impeded efforts, together with an economic recession and reduced household disposable income.
- The Brexit referendum and the uncertainty playing out through 2019-2020.
- The UK Government's [decision to reduce public spending](#) (below the recommended 0.7%) on international aid and the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development, focusing attention more on domestic benefit of international development interventions.

The key policy issues impacting the Alliance's members and their service delivery over the Strategy period are:

- The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the development of a ScotGov National Performance Framework in Scotland, which aims to achieve all 17 goals by 2030.
- The climate emergency and environmental crisis: the urgency of the climate emergency, most keenly felt by our international partners in development.
- A recent emphasis by ScotGov ([in its International Development Review launched in Autumn 2020](#)) on the principle of 'localisation' (already well-embedded within the sector), interpreting this as an opportunity to re-balance spend towards in-country partners and away from Scottish organisations.
- A renewed focus on equality and diversity during 2020, reflecting the rising awareness amongst policymakers of positive action required to respond to deep-seated racial bias, responding to the Black Lives Matter movement.

2 Methodology

Our evaluation methodology took a phased approach to understanding the organisation's Strategy, consulting with the whole team at inception, assessing existing secondary sources of evidence and management information and gathering new qualitative and quantitative evidence to inform our assessment of the Strategy's success in achieving its desired outcomes. Throughout the process, the Alliance team provided an abundance of data, contacts and feedback to inform the process. Our recommendations recognise that a new strategy for 2020 - 2023 has already been approved by the Alliance's membership, alongside a theory of change for the organisation, and seek to add value to these key frameworks for future Alliance activity.

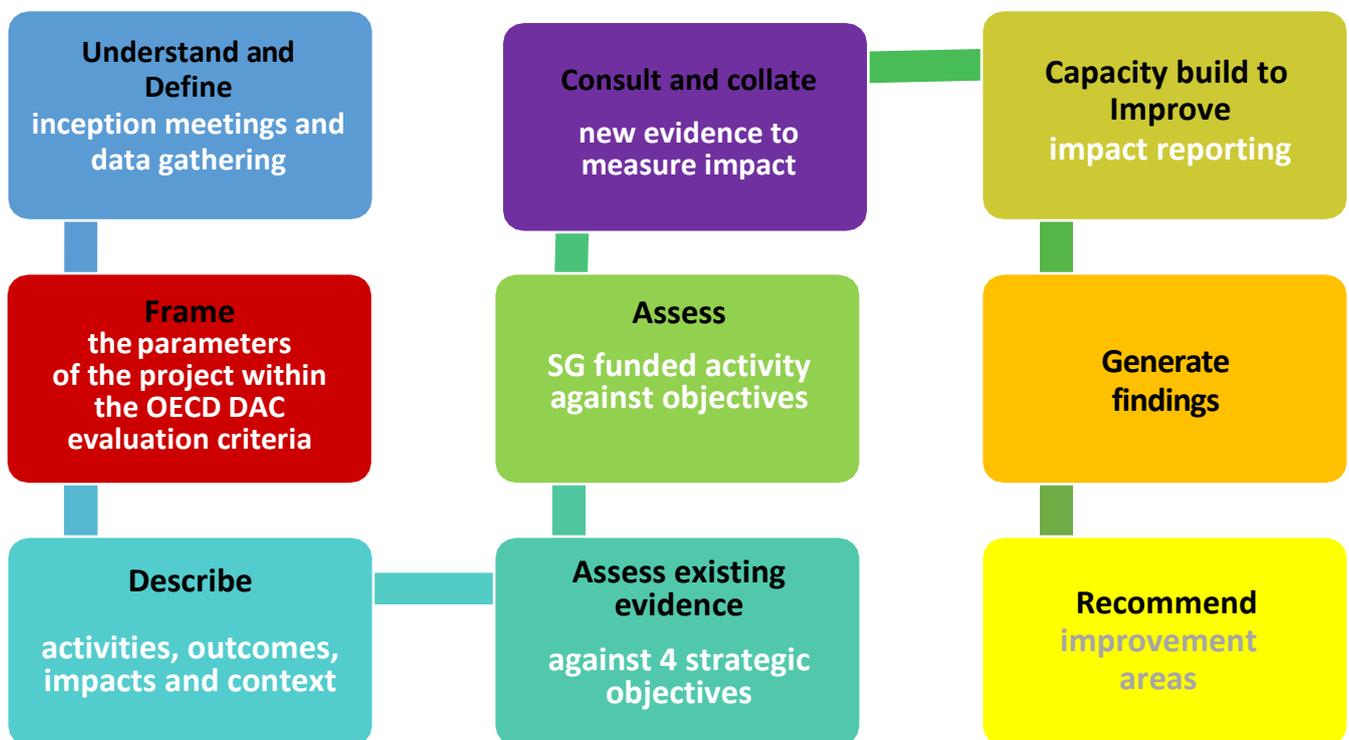


Figure 1: The methodology as a process chart

OECD Development Assistance Committee evaluation criteria

Our methodology was framed and informed by the OECD's DAC evaluation definitions, which were revised in 2020 and comprise 6 key areas for investigation. These are:

1. Relevance - is the intervention doing the right things for beneficiaries.
2. Coherence - how well does the intervention fit? (internally, externally, with wider Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development)
3. Effectiveness: is the intervention achieving its objectives?

4. Efficiency: how well are resources being used?
5. Impact: what difference does the intervention make?
6. Sustainability: will the benefits last?

All our research tools, including online survey, workshops and topic guides for depth interviews were informed by these key questions. For the Alliance, as an intermediary, membership organisation, these criteria are assessed against evidence focused on the benefit to both the individual member of the Alliance and the international development sector in Scotland as a whole.

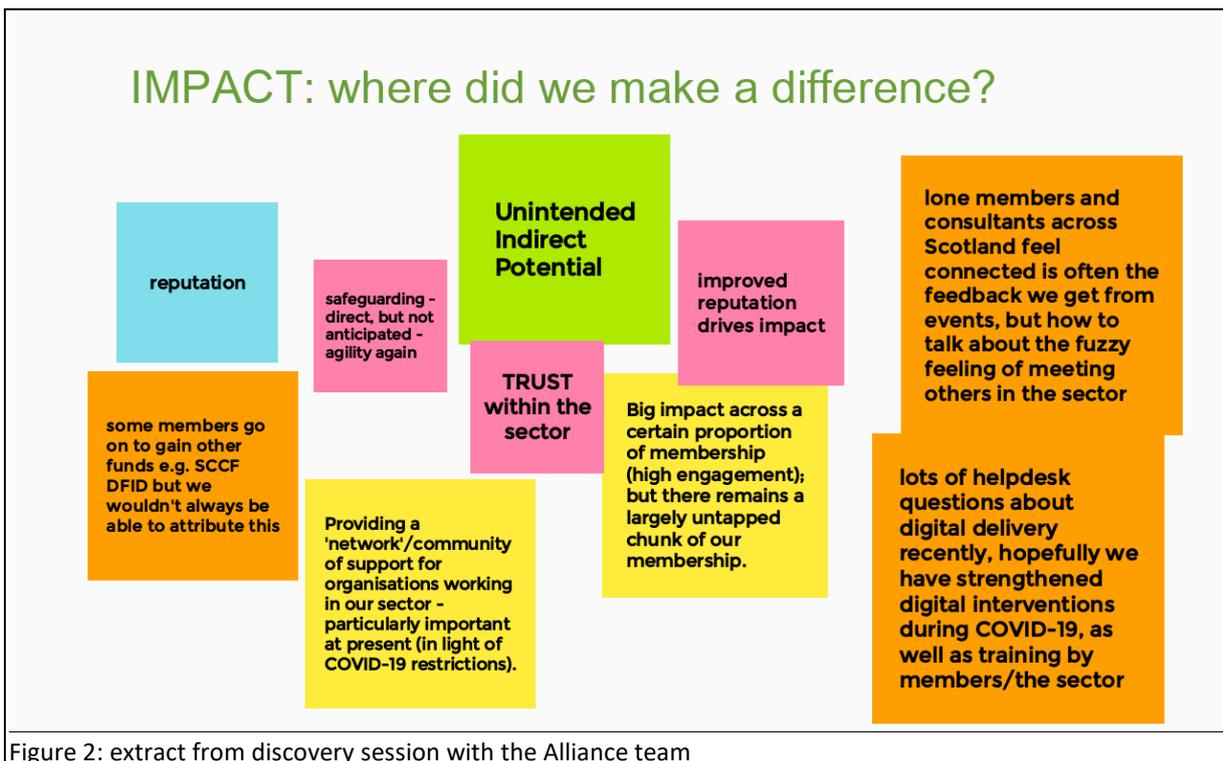


Figure 2: extract from discovery session with the Alliance team

During the evaluation period from October 2020 to January 2021 we used the following research tools:

- Desk research - existing management, financial, monitoring and evaluation information and reports collated by the Alliance using its own Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework and log frames as required by funders.
- A discovery workshop (conducted via video conference) with all members of the Alliance team, to elicit their views on the extent to which they had met their strategic objectives.
- 6 depth interviews with key Alliance employees and Board members.
- 11 depth external stakeholder interviews with key partner and funder organisations, including the Scottish Government.
- A short online members' survey circulated to all categories of membership, eliciting a 34% response rate with representation across all member organisation sizes and capacity.

- 13 interviews with a representative sample of members, conducted by telephone or video conference.
- An interim findings presentation to the staff team and shared with the Chair for comment and follow up.

3 Relevance and Impact of Alliance activities

"The services provided by the Alliance have been more valuable than ever since the Covid-19 pandemic - they have adapted so well to be able to continue training and networking opportunities to members during this very challenging time. Thank you to the whole team".

Member

This chapter reviews both how the Strategy's objectives responded to the changing economic, environmental and political landscape for the Alliance's members (its relevance) and the ultimate impact of the interventions and secondary consequences (impact). Overall, the focus of the team in improving its responsiveness to the changing landscape through the services delivered was commended by both internal and external stakeholders, with safeguarding training, 'Going for Growth' mentoring, ScotGov Small Grants accompaniment services and Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) training specifically cited by those consulted.

External stakeholders, from national membership organisations to Scottish Parliamentarians, highly rated the performance of the Alliance in representing the sector on policy and advocacy issues - particularly in relation to [Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development \(PCSD\)](#) and the [National Performance Framework \(NPF\)](#) in Scotland. They also praised the responsiveness of the services offered to smaller international development organisations as 'accessible' and 'responsive', and there was an acknowledgement that this was a strength in Scotland, in contrast to BOND's focus on larger NGOs. Staff were regarded as professional and dedicated to delivering for the membership.

"The staff are incredibly helpful and encouraging. No question goes unanswered and genuine support is always offered".

Member

The skills and capacity building support provided to the international development community in Scotland is regarded as having a positive impact on the sector's reputation, with the overall improved governance (including policy on safeguarding and transparency) of smaller organisations and learning relating to the context of development within the climate change and wider UN goals a key benefit of the Alliance's service delivery cited by external stakeholders.

"Their knowledge and experience on SDGs ... invaluable in terms of upskilling and increasing knowledge of others (in voluntary sector) ... helped build awareness and understanding of sustainable development policy and ideas on how the (voluntary) sector can influence the agenda in Scotland."

External stakeholder

A minority of external stakeholders and one member felt that the Alliance could be doing more to encourage a wider diversity of membership from business and the

public sector. It is understood that engagement is ongoing with several larger organisations within these sectors; the interests of these bodies being assessed against the vision and scope of the Alliance.

3.1 Growing the membership base and improving services to members

As a national membership organisation, the need to ensure that its activities represent the international development community is key to the Alliance's relevance. Despite the severe challenges that NGOs and charitable organisations have faced in terms of public opinion and fundraising over the plan period, membership has grown and representation increased across the commercial, academic, research and public sectors.

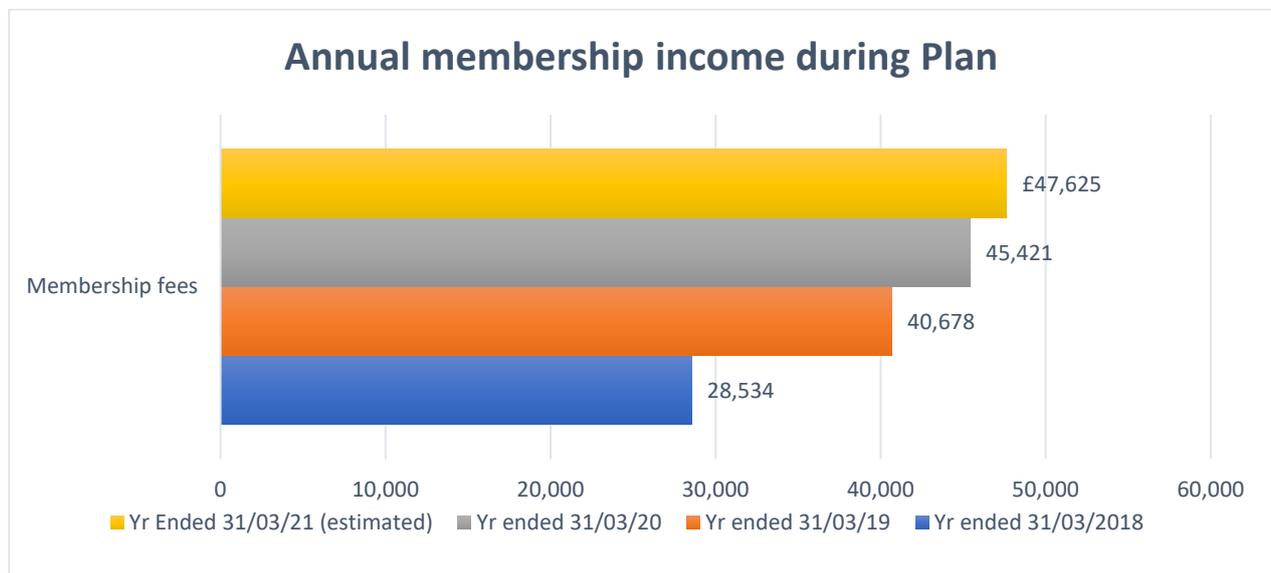


Figure 3: Annual membership income growth during plan period

Membership fees and alternative sources of income increased by over 50% over the plan period, with figure 3 showing a 60% increase in income derived from membership fees. This is due both to an increase in the size and scope of membership, including a new category of membership being created (individual) and to a more diverse membership with newer members including public sector agencies such as Police Scotland.

Membership (organisations) increased from 111 in March 2017 to a total of 159 currently, an increase of over 40%, with a net growth of 15 members in the last year of the plan. In addition, there are now 68 individual members contributing to the Alliance community.

Eight organisational members resigned at the start of the most recent financial year (from 1 April 2020), the majority citing financial pressures, with the trend in membership withdrawals decreasing over the plan period (17 chose not to renew in 2017). None of those contactable stated that they were unhappy with the

services provided by the Alliance. Alongside the new membership category for individuals, business members have almost doubled in number since the first year of the plan (from 10 to 18), academic institutions by one and voluntary organisations/NGOs reduced by 2. Figure 4 provides a breakdown of membership by type and size in the last year of the plan.

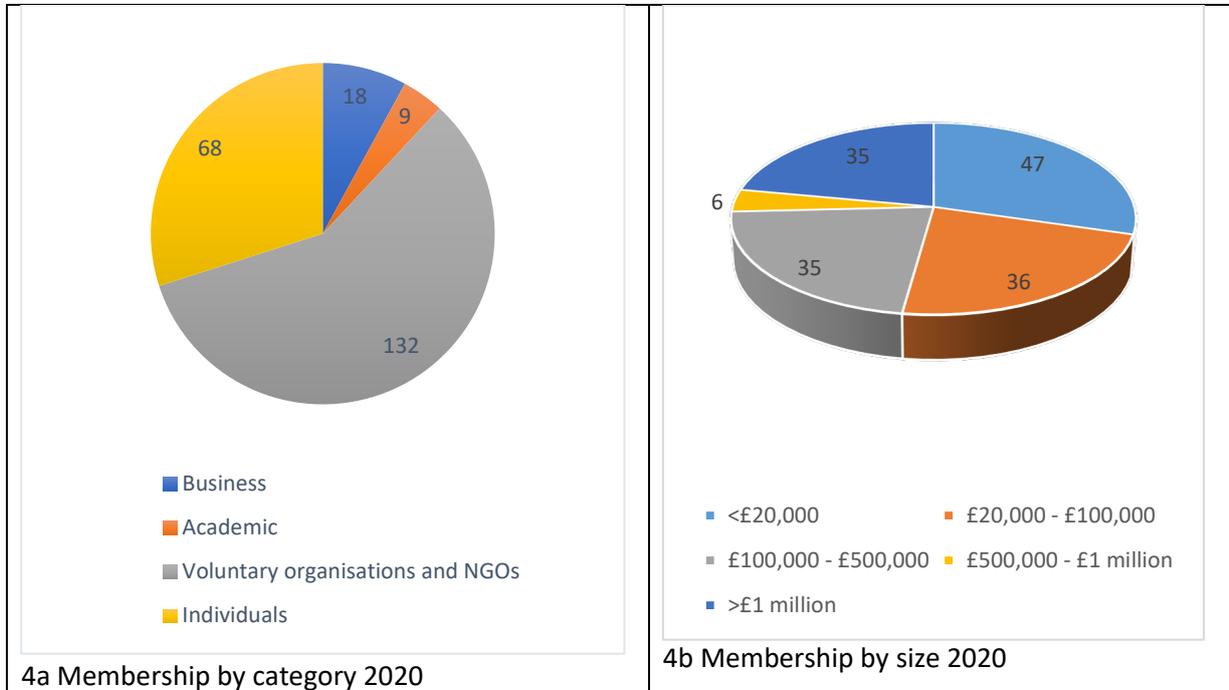


Figure 4a Number of members by organisation type (2020) and b by organisation size (determined by income)

Members were also asked about the extent to which they thought the Alliance had met each of its objectives over the last 3 years. The majority of respondents think the Alliance has met or at least partially met each objective over the last 3 years. Most frequently rated as fully met (by 39 of the 54 respondents) was representing the sector on policy and advocacy issues.

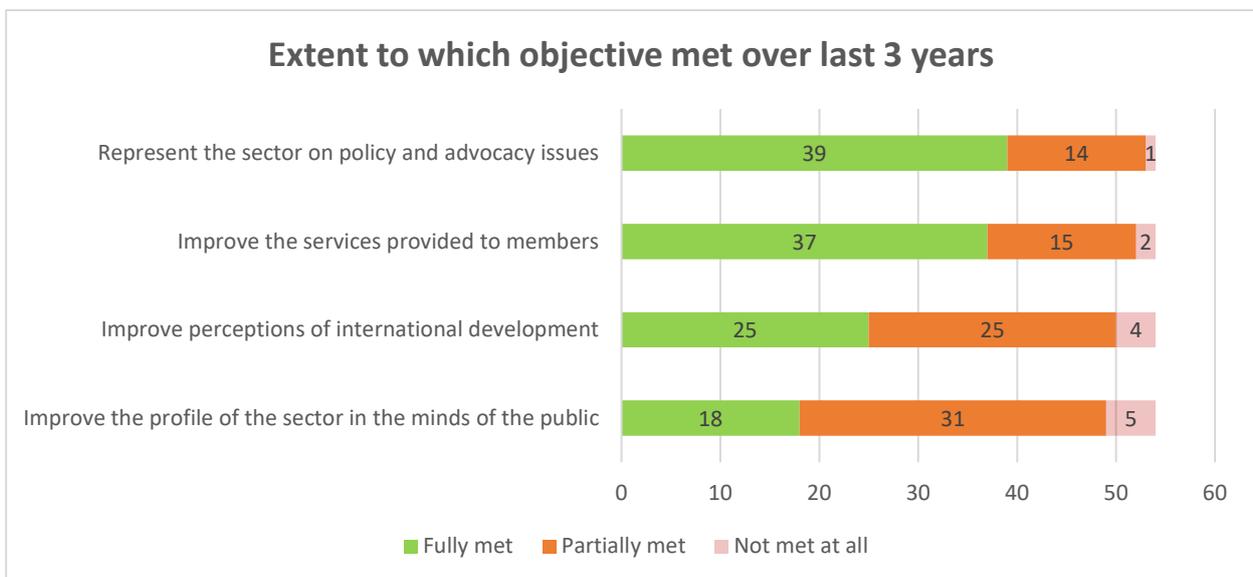


Figure 5: Extent to which members perceive objectives to have been met (n=54)

Asked about the relevance of each of these objectives to the needs of their organisation and the wider sector, respondents clearly rated them all as relevant, with improving services ranking most relevant amongst them, by a small number (7) of respondents.

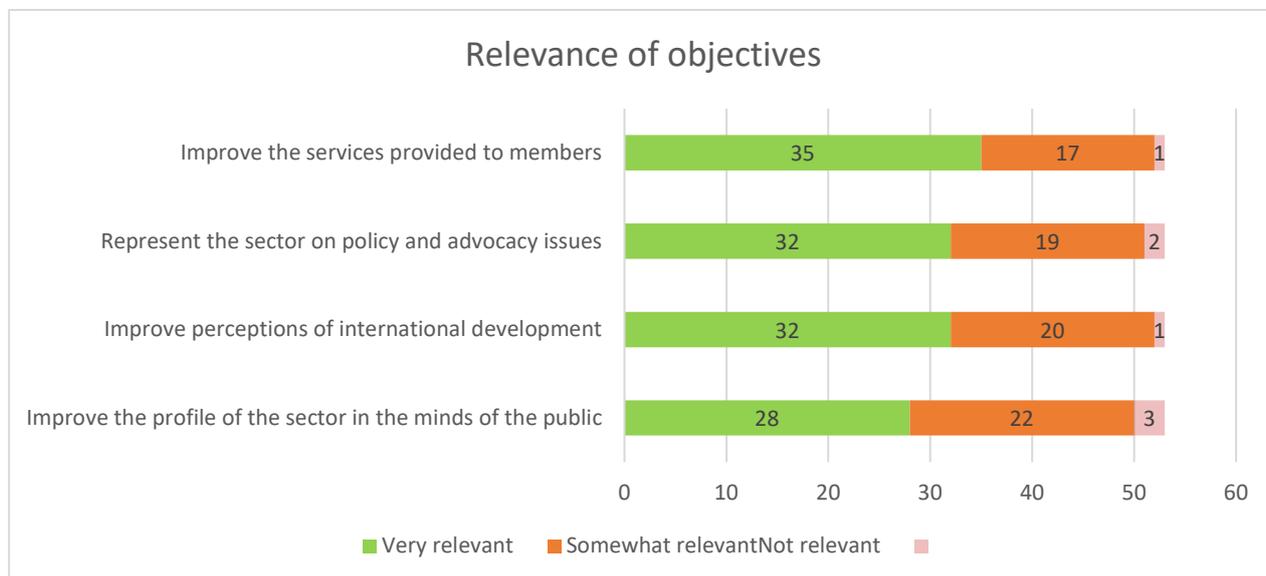


Figure 6: relevance of strategy objectives to members (N=53)

Most members perceive all the Strategy's objectives as relevant to varying degrees (figure 6 above) and most services delivered as having value (figure 7 overleaf), with membership service improvements most often rated as very relevant.

3.2 Relevance of networking and training

Across the evaluation research it was clear that members, regardless of size or capacity, most highly value networking opportunities enabled by participating in Alliance training, events and peer learning resources and that this benefit has a direct impact on their ability to deliver their own mission and the principles of international development more generally. Networking includes working groups, annual conferences and training events and ministerial meetings or Cross Party Group for international development. This presents opportunities for peer-to-peer support and learning as well as influencing and fundraising. For example, one NGO member interviewed who participates in the Fundraising Working Group stated that:

“Without the Alliance network it would be very hard to have access to large corporates such as Diageo; it's fantastic and valuable! An example of direct benefit to our organisation is the opportunity to talk with People's Postcode Lottery, which it is hard to get an individual meeting with. Now we are developing a relationship with the funder because of that contact. This will directly benefit our in-country partners”.

Member

Individual members (not organisations) also ranked networking opportunities most highly, with 7 of the 10 ranking it as the most or second most valued aspect of their membership. Training opportunities was in the top 3 most valued aspects for half of individual members (5).

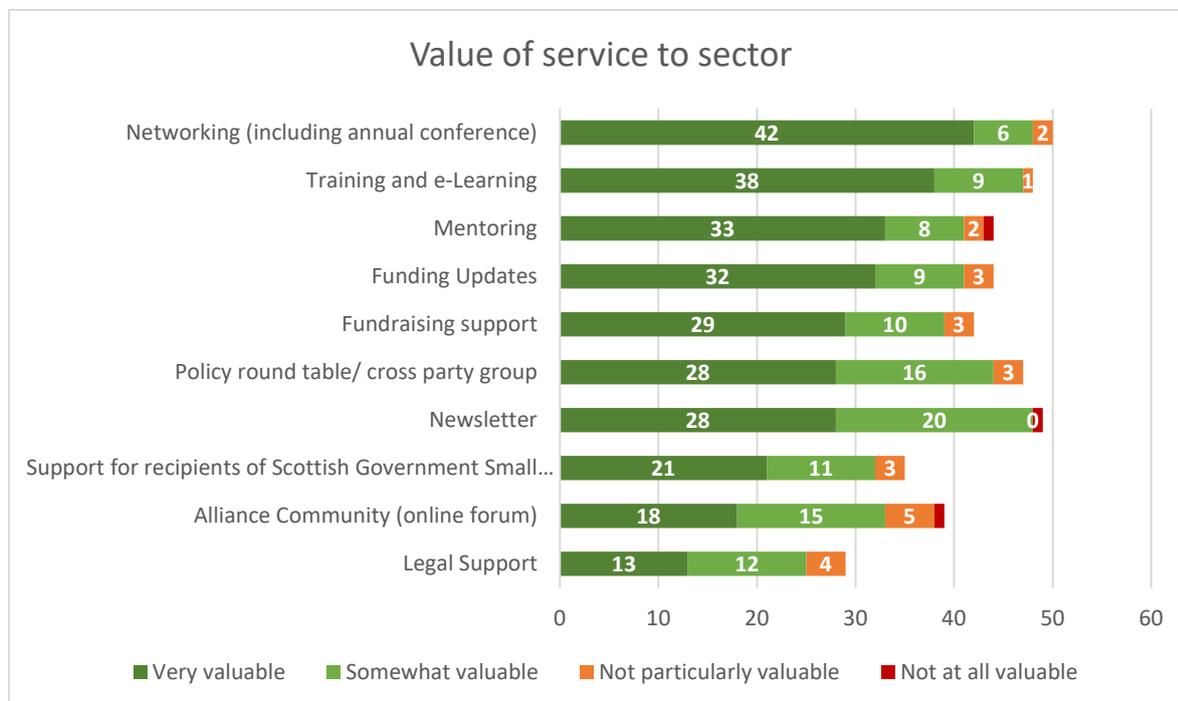


Figure 7: value of the services offered by the Alliance to the sector: member views

The level of take-up of services also shows a marked improvement from baseline at the end of the plan period, March 2021: quantitative data on numbers of users indicates an increase of take up of services from 289 individuals in 2017 to 798 in year 3 of the plan, with the number of people attending Alliance events increasing by 111% (from 289 in 2017 to 321 in the final year of the plan).

Training, mentoring and safeguarding

Organisational members with annual incomes of up to £100,000 (19 responses) valued training opportunities (12 assigned this in their top 3 most valued aspects of membership) and networking opportunities (10) highly. Safeguarding training and support and advocacy and influencing were included in the top 3 for 8 of the 19 respondents from this size of organisation.

Seven of the 12 organisational members with annual incomes of £100,000-£500,000 valued networking opportunities and training opportunities amongst their top 3 aspects and 6 included fundraising support. All 9 organisations with an annual income of over £1M included networking opportunities in their top 3 most valued aspects of membership and 5 included safeguarding training and support.

This is borne out by the Alliance's own monitoring data which shows that all services take-up by members increased from 289 in 2017 to 798 in year 3. The percentage of ScotGov grantees using the Alliance's accompaniment services has increased from 30% in year one to achieving a final target of 58% in year. The

Going for Growth mentoring programme also saw 9 mentors trained in Scotland, and 12 organisations supported in year 3. UK-wide international development NGOs, BOND and DFID all commented on the strength of the safeguarding training and ability of the Alliance to respond with bespoke training to meet smaller organisations' needs.

One trustee of a mentored organisation described the benefit to their charity:

"At the very start mentoring helped us to focus and step back and articulate our aspirations and how to get there; our new treasurer at the time was given capacity building mentoring on charitable finances. All our governance policies are now developed, alongside safeguarding and we now have an MoU between the organisation in India and trustees in Scotland. All of this has given us confidence as charity trustees....it has been so valuable".

Member

This organisation also described securing mentoring for their Indian founder who delivers the services for which they fundraise. This was delivered both in person (when he visited Scotland) and online in-country. This helped both trustees and in the in-country partners better understand the operating context in which both worked.

Main benefits of membership

Members were also asked 'What would you say the main benefits of membership have been for your organisation/body over the last 3 years?' In response to this, the most frequently mentioned benefits were 'networking' (mentioned by 22 of the 50 respondents who answered this question), training (mentioned by 13) and support (mentioned by 9).

In interviews and additional comments provided through the member survey, a key benefit to membership was regarded as the staff team itself. Support from staff and the level of member engagement were consistently rated as 'fantastic', "totally 'on it'", with their skills and knowledge, providing a "broad" and "authoritative overview". Several external stakeholders and members also commented on the impact achieved for 'such a small team'.

3.3 Improving perceptions of the sector: public and stakeholder perceptions

Whilst improving *stakeholder* perceptions of the international development sector in Scotland, and the reputation of the Alliance as a representative body, were evidenced as being met through the interviews undertaken for this review, there was little evidence that *public perceptions* had been impacted. It must be noted

that this was an extremely hard outcome to measure and there are significant challenges currently.

Perceptions of external stakeholders

Stakeholders interviewed reported that the Alliance had a good reputation in its field and had achieved significant gains in the last four years, relating to both parliamentary and policy and advocacy work (see 3.3).

One national stakeholder organisation commented:

“Because they’re so good at what they do and have clear parameters, they are the go-to voice for international development and occupy a very clear place in the sector - if you took the Alliance away there would be a massive gap in skills, knowledge and experience”.

External stakeholder

Scottish parliamentarians also commented on the Alliance’s impact on stakeholder perceptions with one stating:

“They (the Alliance) have certainly had a big contribution especially in context of Scottish Parliament, but I also know they have related well to UK Parliament and Government, and other civil society organisations too, representing their sector and increasing impact”.

External stakeholder

The Cross-Party Group was cited as an influential forum for highlighting the Alliance’s leadership of the sector, as was the Annual Conference, with invited speakers and a good representation from non-member delegates. Some of the those interviewed thought the Alliance could do more in promoting its own in-house expertise on key sector issues, such as localisation or SDGs rather than signposting to others, thus promoting the Alliance as a representative body.

Several UK NGOs and government representatives commented on the leadership shown by the Alliance in interpreting SDGs in an international development context, and its presentation of the National Performance Framework beyond Scotland.

Public perception of international development

Over half of the members responding to the online survey viewed improving public perceptions as a relevant objective for the Alliance (though less relevant than the other objectives). This was the objective thought by the largest number of respondents to be partially or not at all met (figure 5). Most consultees interviewed regarded this objective as not being met, with all stating that it was a difficult outcome to assess in terms of the Alliance’s contribution to raising the profile of

international development in an increasingly self-interested, domestic national agenda.

One stakeholder of a national organisation commented: "there are too many variables outside the Alliance's control in terms of influencing public perceptions, many driven from UK Government and its policy/language".

Another stakeholder suggested that indirectly the Alliance did support the delivery of this outcome, through creating a "platform for others to do this - they don't do projects or fundraise but enable others who do to reach a wider audience".

This perhaps demonstrates a key question for the Alliance as an intermediary networking organisation: whether its focus is to enable its members to present international development positively to the public or whether it should be doing this itself as a representative body? A fundamental requirement to achieve the latter, will be additional/reassigned resources to enable an external communications function. One stakeholder commented on the need for the Alliance to explore a new approach to its communications strategy:

"The Alliance have tried to influence politicians and the public through traditional ways of briefings/campaigning, but now they need to look beyond that; populist politics has found new ways of influencing change".

External stakeholder

All stakeholders cited the need to work collaboratively with other organisations to make any impact on this outcome in the future.

3.4 Better representing members on policy and advocacy issues

As figures 5 and 6 show, this objective was regarded by members as highly relevant and the objective believed by most members to be been fully met, indicating a considerable achievement. Members and external stakeholders cited many examples of the work delivered in this area, including:

- Representing their work on SDGs and [National Performance Framework](#) to UK international development audience.
- Leading work on [Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development](#) and the sector's contribution to SDGs.
- Supporting the third sector membership organisation SCVO to understand SDGs in a wider than Scotland context.
- Supporting the [IDEAS Network Scotland](#), [Scotland Malawi Partnership](#) and [Scottish Fair Trade Forum](#) through providing information and speakers on key current development issues.
- Convening and advising the [Cross Party Group](#) on International Development at the Scottish Parliament.

- Responding with representative position statements on for example, the reduction in aid spending announced in November 2020, brokering collaboration in the development of an International Development Manifesto and responding to Scottish and UK government reviews.
- Chairing the [Scottish Sustainable Development Network's](#) Steering Group, promoting the role of the international development community to a wide range of public, private and third sector stakeholders.

Areas where a small minority of stakeholders thought the Alliance could become more relevant and impactful were: 'localisation' in international development, positioning international development in a new wellbeing economy context (doughnut economics), new models of financing aid and equalities policy. All these areas are part of the Alliance's current workplan, with a *Leave No One Behind* Working Group, speakers on new financial models at the recent annual conference and a longstanding understanding of the principles of localisation in development. However, the fact that these areas are cited indicates that there is more externally facing advocacy and positive public/stakeholder perception work that the Alliance could ideally deliver to promote the good practice already evidenced within the sector.

3.5 Ensuring infrastructure and IT capability are fit for purpose

The relevance and impact of information and training, mentoring and working groups delivered through the Alliance's infrastructure has increased exponentially with the socially distanced restrictions of the pandemic preventing face-to-face support on either a one-to-one or group basis. The performance of the team in delivering services remotely throughout 2020 was praised by many members, who nevertheless missed the opportunity for face-to-face networking contact. Of note were the Annual Conference and members' event following the AGM, both of which were well attended, and the IT provision rated at 8.8 out of 10.

Whilst members praised the content and delivery of events and workshops delivered online, there was criticism and frustration expressed at the log-in and registration procedures for some events

"There was a problem with logging onto the system for the conference and it didn't seem to interface with Eventbrite ... But any criticism on quality is purely administrative/technical".

Large member interviewed

Other (external and internal) stakeholders felt that the website was unclear on its audiences and tried to provide too much information, making it harder to navigate for an external party (such as a media person or organisation with little knowledge of development).

Post COVID-19, the blended learning model of delivery will undoubtedly become the norm in the delivery of training and meetings and will enable the Alliance to reach its geographically scattered membership across Scotland. It will also continue to enable closer collaboration and learning exchange with in-country partners, as was witnessed in the members event in November 2020, when an international panel of development representatives gave authoritative views on a variety of current topics.

4. Effectiveness and efficiency of processes and services delivered

4.1 Resources to deliver the plan

The financial resources dedicated to achieving the strategic objectives are shown in figure 9 on the following page with the outputs agreed for each of the sources provided in the final column. The Alliance has a current staff team of 7, and during the plan period 4 of the 7 team members have changed and several roles re-structured to better reflect the Alliance's response to members' needs and accommodate secondment to the Mentoring and Safeguarding project.

The table also demonstrates an increase in income from trading activities over the period, including membership fees, rising to 20% of total income in year 3 of the plan, a significant achievement. During 2020 and year 4 of the plan, the pandemic reduced income (to 14.5%) from sponsorship and events given online delivery and reduced fees for non-member delegates.

4.2 Efficacy and quality of service delivered

Organisational members responding to the survey were asked to rate the quality of each service they had used in the last 12 months. Very few rated any services they had used of poor quality and most gave ratings of 'very good' or 'good'. The "Alliance community" was proportionality most likely to be rated as of less high quality, with 3 of the 33 members who had used it rating it 'poor' or 'very poor' and 6 as 'mediocre'.

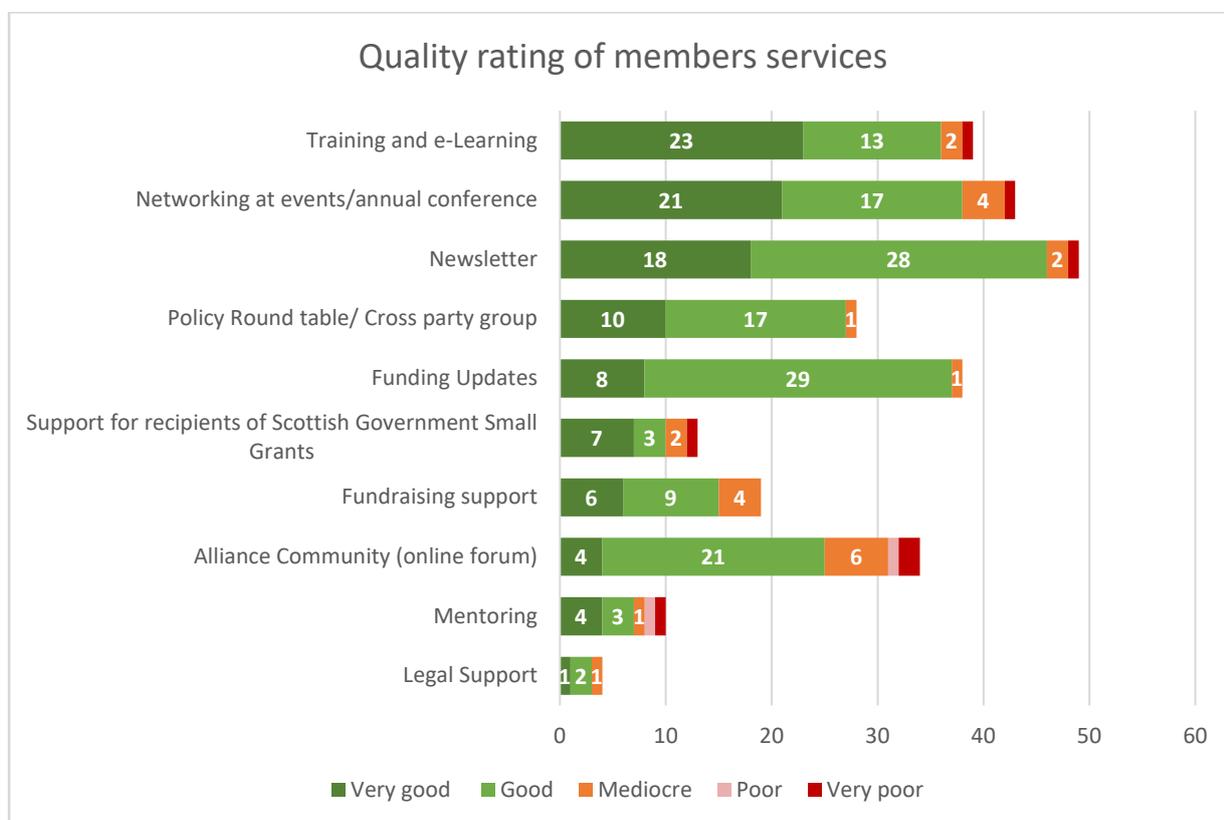


Figure 8: online survey responses to the quality of specific member services

Revenue stream	Yr ended 31/03/18	Yr ended 31/03/19	Yr ended 31/03/20	Yr Ended 31/03/21 (estimate)	Key Agreed outputs
Membership fees	28,534	40,678	45,421	£47,625	Needs-led services for members.
Training and events	0	2,047	3,867	196	this year reduced income due to COVID-19; reduced ticket price for non-member delegates at annual conference
Advertising & sponsorship	2,165	3,474	12,295	£5,500	PR opportunities provided
Donations	0	1,100	1,594		
Total income from non-government sources (%)	30,699 13%	47,299 16%	63,177 20%	53,321 14.5%	
Scottish Government core funding	225,945	224,008	194,487	194,487	An enlarged and widened membership base: all with interest in international development in Scotland; Members benefit from use of services designed to meet changing needs; ID sector is well represented on policy and advocacy issues; infrastructure/IT capability fit for purpose to deliver the plan
ScotGov Safeguarding and effectiveness (mentoring)	0	20,000	25,127	39,199	Delivering a Safeguarding Strategy, training, training the trainer and resources; Mentoring support to build governance capacity
BOND/DFID Civil Society UK Aid Connect project	0	52,528	89,928	81,535	Build capacity of Scotland-based civil society organisation to better respond effectively to changing humanitarian and development needs.
	225,945	296,536	309,542	368,542	

Figure 9 : Inputs (income) to deliver the Strategic Plan's outputs and outcomes 2017-2021

Views on the Alliance Community were also provided through in-depth interviews with members. Examples were given of where requests for peer through this communications channel had often not received any response, with the staff team picking up the thread to answer themselves.

The 10 *individual* members all rated each service as of 'good' or 'very good' quality, with the exception on one 'mediocre' rating for fundraising support, one 'mediocre' rating for training and e-learning, one 'mediocre' for policy, round table/cross party group, and one 'poor' and one 'very poor' quality rating for the Alliance community (online forum).

"I feel the individual membership offer needs to be re-thought. I don't feel I have access to anything extra that was not available to me before I joined. Perhaps the only 'extra' is the discussion forum, which no one contributes to except staff".

Individual member comment, member survey.

Need for more fundraising support

Small to medium organisations clearly wanted to see the Alliance do more in terms of fundraising support: members with annual incomes of up to £100,000 (19 responses) gave 'mediocre' ratings for fundraising support, reflecting the pressure that organisations are experiencing in raising funding in the current environment.

The 12 organisational members with annual incomes of £100,000-£500,000 only gave 1 'mediocre' quality rating for fundraising support and 1 for funding updates. The Alliance community (online forum) attracted 2 'mediocre' quality ratings from this group. Amongst the 9 organisational respondents with annual incomes over £1M, there were 2 'mediocre' ratings for the Alliance community (online forum).

External stakeholders, including parliamentarians and national representative bodies, expressed the view that the Alliance was an authoritative voice on behalf of the sector and did its job well. However, it was conceded that the Alliance was not well recognised externally (unlike SCVO for example), which diminished its reach and efficacy. One stakeholder commented that the Alliance would do better to focus on a few key messages, and "building external collaborations with the civil society movement to strengthen its voice".

4.3 Efficiency of processes and activities

External perspective

Most external stakeholders felt that the Alliance was extremely efficient in the delivery of its services and activities, albeit most did not have a detailed knowledge of operations.

“My perception from a distance is that they are punching above their weight for a relatively small organisation – it’s really impressive from my viewpoint”.

External stakeholder

This was reiterated in most of the interviews undertaken, with an appreciation of the ‘extra miles’ Alliance staff go to in order to answer an individual enquiry. Members of all sizes also expressed admiration for the breadth and depth of services delivered, given the size of the team. A partner organisation commented:

“The Alliance provides lots that these smaller members need - capacity building and professionalisation - raising the quality of the work they do ... (it) offers lots of resources to help, to connect with other organisations and maximise impact in various ways”.

External partner

Internal stakeholder perspective

Internally staff members and stakeholders were more self-critical, citing an inability to efficiently deliver all the demands of a diverse membership and commenting that, although membership engagement was high for lots of organisations, there was still a sizeable minority which did not appear to access services or respond to communications.

Several internal stakeholders, echoing member comments, described the re-design of the website, Application Programme Interface (API) and Content Management System (CMS) as a missed opportunity, with the back and front-end systems failing to integrate with one another. This has created needless barriers for team members in regularly communicating targeted information to the membership and efficiently delivering events according to member interests.

The work of the Alliance in promoting *monitoring, evaluation and learning* is exemplary and several members interviewed expressed a view that this had led to great efficiency of their own organisation’s operations. However, the value of some of quantitative management information collected for internal reporting purposes is arguably extremely limited and does little to inform either funders or the membership on the actual efficiency and effectiveness with which services are delivered. Over the last year during the pandemic, a notable development within the funder community has been a recognition that funders need to adapt their funding processes and relationships to accommodate greater flexibility, focus on key essential milestones data and move to partnership relationships with grantees that are based on trust.

It was clear that several members of staff felt that there was simply not sufficient capacity with the current resource to deliver all that was required to fully meet the Strategy’s objectives.

Membership strategy

Refreshing the Alliance's policy on member engagement and its priorities for delivery in the new plan period will be key, with Board consideration of:

- Who are our services for?
- What are we aiming to achieve with each?
- What service levels is it reasonable for respective membership categories to expect? (for example, individuals as opposed to organisational members).

Whilst the Alliance as a democratic membership organisation aims to deliver to all members and has a critical role in the support and development of smaller international development NGOs and charities, the income received by respective categories to deliver services varies considerably. For example, individual members total 68, almost 30% of the total membership (227), yet contribute only 6% of membership income. Individual members do help build a stronger international development community network but is this 'nice to have' or essential to the delivery of the Alliance's mission?

5. Coherence and Sustainability of activities and their outcomes

Chapter 3 has already touched upon coherence of the Alliance's strategic objectives and their impact in the context of the relevance of activities and results. This chapter now explores the 'fit' of interventions within Scotland, its international development sector and as a third sector membership organisation. It also asks what net benefits and legacy (sustainability) the Alliance has had in delivering its four strategic objectives.

5.1 Networking and a voice for the sector

The primary research undertaken for this evaluation clearly found that the Alliance presented the distinctive voice of the international development community in Scotland, enhancing the existing work of other NGOs, public bodies and charitable organisations within the international development sphere in a coherent way. With one exception, stakeholders believed there was no overlap with or undermining of other organisations in the Alliance's delivery, although three stakeholders cited the need for increased co-ordination and collaboration to achieve greater impact on shared goals, for example in the area of SDGs and Scotland's externally facing response.

The strength and quality of the Alliance's voice on behalf of the sector was seen as a key net benefit by both internal and external stakeholders, the opportunity for peer learning exchange through working groups and partnership brokering across organisations was also frequently cited.

Internal coherence of the fit of all services and outputs was regarded by some team members as difficult to achieve in making inter-linkages, with the team working across so many different project areas, in depth. This had been further hindered by the necessity of home working for over a year, which made regular informal communication on potential synergies in work difficult to achieve.

"I think there is a good fit with other organisations generally. There is overlap in terms of IDEAS and DEC's but they have a primarily educator role, whereas the Alliance fulfils a wider strategic role in overseeing the whole of international development strategy".

Stakeholder

5.2 Building capacity and resilience

Building the capacity of the sector was a key legacy or 'net benefit' that was cited by members and external stakeholders alike. Responding (with special funded projects) to an historic lack of transparency, evaluation, learning and good governance within

some sector organisations was viewed as a coherent and sustainable response to supporting the future resilience of the sector.

Two stakeholders interviewed cited continued capacity building and good practice as fundamental to the future survival of international development NGOs as they face increasing challenges in fundraising. Perceived threats to the continued coherence and existing benefits accrued in the medium term included the uncertain future of the ScotGov Small Grants scheme, and the trend for governmental and private sector funds to be diverted to consultancies to support direct in-country activity, based on a limited understanding of the localisation agenda.

A key message for the Alliance will be the important role that NGOs and their network play in ensuring international development is delivered appropriately in partnership, clearly demonstrating a strong equality-driven and access-focussed stance for the sector. This messaging needs to convey the importance of the 'multiplier effect' that Scottish NGOs and charities can play in delivering net benefits to developing country partners.

5.3 Influencing external organisations

The Alliance's work in supporting the wider voluntary sector to understand the sustainable development agenda and its place within it was cited by several respondents as a further example of coherence. The Alliance was seen to complement the work of environmental, climate change, human rights and fair-trade NGOs in promoting a lasting understanding of the place of the UN goals within public policy. Its legacy in securing an understanding of international development's role within a changing public policy sphere is less certain, particularly given the limited extent to which the Alliance was able to deliver externally focused communications work within existing resources.

One academic institution representative interviewed encouraged the Alliance to make better use of their research networks in promoting their expertise in delivering MEL training and policy advice, providing an opportunity for increased recognition and coherence across the sector.

Independent voice for the sector vs. core funding from Government

Several stakeholders highlighted the tension between the role of the Alliance as an independent voice for the sector, directed by its priorities, and its funding through government grants. This is familiar territory to many NGOs and is often a barrier to achieving coherence within the wider government and public agency landscape, where current political priorities do not align with the priorities of an independent sector.

"The Alliance is dependent on ScotGov funding and it's an uncomfy place to be ... Within the system of checks and balances there needs to be civil society action to hold government to account and if there was no network organisation this would all be uncoordinated, messy and at a much lower level - so they have an important role to keep reminding Holyrood and the Executive that these things exist, these issues are pressing".

External stakeholder and large membership organisation.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Summary

The evaluation found that over the Strategy period, the Alliance has achieved a fundamental improvement and reshaping of its service offer to members, demonstrating flexibility in responding to changing needs and taking a leadership role in positioning international development at the heart of sustainable development policy.

Much of the activity has successfully focused on building the capacity, transparency and good governance of the sector in Scotland, whilst informing and educating members and external stakeholders on the relevance of international development to current global environmental, equality and human rights priorities. Of necessity much of this focus has been internally facing, equipping the sector to become fit for purpose in the face of these challenges. The future challenge will be to further develop the Alliance's externally focused activities, alongside direct services to members.

6.2 The four strategic objectives

The Strategy has successfully delivered two of its four objectives, adapting effectively to a changing political, economic and policy landscape and delivering high quality, personalised services to meet member needs:

1. **To grow our membership base and improve the services we provide to members:** this was achieved, supported by both quantitative and qualitative evidence collated for this report.
2. **To better represent the sector on policy and advocacy issues:** this was also achieved, evidenced by activities and external stakeholder views.

The second two objectives were partially met:

3. **To improve the perceptions of international development and the profile of the sector in the minds of the public and other key stakeholders across Scotland:** There was a wealth of qualitative evidence that indicated significant improvement in key stakeholder perceptions and an enhanced reputation of the Alliance and the wider international development community. However, there is little evidence that public perceptions have been impacted; in addition, it would be problematic to attribute any improvement in public perceptions solely to the work of the Alliance.
4. **To ensure the infrastructure and IT capability are fit for purpose to deliver the plan:** whilst IT capability was improved through a new website and members' portal and the number of member services delivered online significantly increased, ICT functionality is still impeded by a lack of integration between

website, API and CRM systems. Addressing this would significantly improve the effectiveness and efficiency of operations and has the potential to build stronger member relationships.

6.3 Recommendations: review, risks and opportunities

All members of the Alliance team are high performing, knowledgeable, and extremely committed to supporting and promoting international development; however, it was evident that many are feeling under constant pressure at being unable to deliver all that they wish to within the resource available.

There is a need for review of and much greater prioritisation of activities, with Board input at a strategic level, reconsidering those activities which do not yield high outputs or impacts and/or deliver the mission of the organisation. This is critical if resources are to be identified to deliver the externally facing public awareness raising that the Alliance's new Strategic Plan seeks to achieve. The evaluation recommends review of the following areas:

- The development of a *Communications Strategy*, including a review of the website's purpose, content and key audiences and creation of and consideration of the creation of a role for public engagement and social movement campaigns.
- A review of *Membership Strategy*, and a focus on maintaining and developing membership and prioritisation of members needs against the new theory of change.

"Users today are becoming accustomed to a high level of personalisation in their day-to-day online experiences (in every aspect, from online shopping to bank accounts to social media). They also expect to have the ability to control and self-service online and expect their online experience to be interactive and engaging. Many membership organisations are responded to this challenge and are taking steps to improve the member-experience, including:

- Improving their websites by mapping their customer journeys and optimising navigation and content
- Launching new mobile sites
- Providing new eLearning tools
- Personalising services, because 'one size does not fit all'
- Segmenting their member-base and sending only targeted, relevant information to members".

Richard Gott, Memberwise Network¹

- More effective mechanisms to facilitate *peer to peer learning* remotely, including the usage of and the value assigned to the current "Alliance Community" by members, and alternatives which, once established, can be peer led rather than

¹ <https://memberwise.org.uk/blog/>

requiring constant officer input. One member suggested building a database of subject expertise amongst members so that enquiries could be directed in a more targeted manner.

- A review of strategic plan indicators and the usefulness of management information collated. Where is impact most effectively evidenced?

"The big challenge remains use, rather than collection, of data..."

"Examples and experiences (of funders) all reflected three interrelated themes - simplicity, trust and connection".

"Covid has really forced you to look at how proportionate we are (in our reporting requirements)".

Institute for Voluntary Action Research [More data is not the Answer](#). Briefing Paper, October 2020

There is clearly a risk in neglecting to maintain the importance of the democratic nature of a membership organisation where all member needs are considered. However, the Alliance should consider all developments and requests (from both membership and funders) through the lens of its theory of change and its wider role in supporting the international development sector, alongside how effective activities can be designed within available resource. Some activities may be 'nice to do' or even a current political priority but have little impact on the organisation's mission and strategy or its opportunity to build a sustainable sector.

One area where greater impact could be achieved in meeting member needs is a review of the support offered on fundraising, and where as a membership organisation the Alliance can most usefully add value in supporting the resilience of the sector.

A further risk is the threat to securing further project funding to build the resilience of the sector in the face of severe challenges to its sustainability and long-term health. *The Independent Commission for Aid Impact* in 2019 reported² on the risks to civil society organisations (CSOs) in ensuring their relevance, health and adaptability, through too many "time-consuming and costly application processes and short-term project-based funding models". The opportunity will be in demonstrating the potential of the sector through the civil society movement to deliver future sustainable development priorities, including response to the climate crisis as COP26 is finally planned for delivery.

² DFIDs partnerships with civil society organisations: a performance review; Independent Commission for Aid Impact. April 2019.

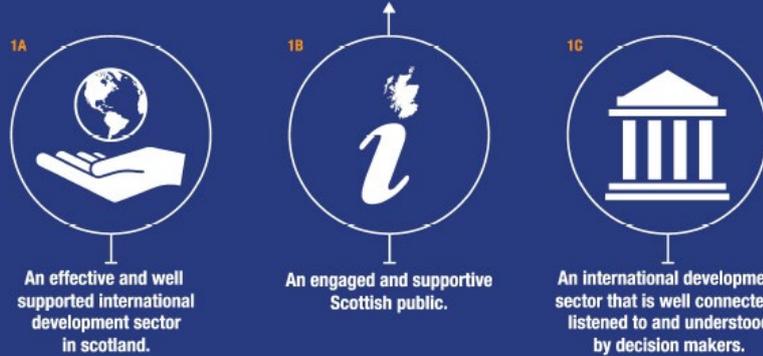
Theory of Change 2020/2023

Throughout this theory of change we refer to 'the international development sector in Scotland' or 'sector' in the broadest possible sense: as all elements of public life, across institutions, organisations, communities and individuals, who strive in a paid or unpaid capacity, professional or personal, towards creating a fairer world, free from poverty, injustice and environmental threats.

Our vision is: a Scotland increasingly committed to creating a fairer world, free from poverty, injustice and environmental threats.

Strategic Goals

Our New **long-term strategic goals** for 2020/2023



Pre-Conditions

In order to meet our strategic goals, we will work towards establishing these **interrelated pre-conditions**



Outcomes

To establish the pre-conditions, we will carry out activities designed to achieve these **outcomes**

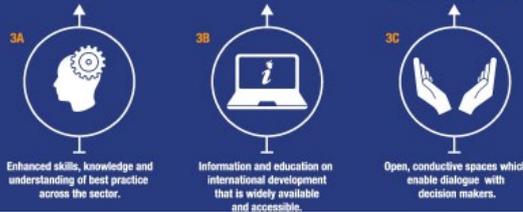


Figure 10: The Alliance theory of change

Appendix 1

Internal stakeholder topic guide

Intro

Thank you for taking the time to speak to me. The interview should last around 20-30 minutes and allow us to explore in greater depth the areas your work has focused on in the last 3 years. You may not be able to comment in all areas and that's fine. Findings will be reported anonymously without names or job titles being used.

Do you have any questions before we start?

Role

1. Tell me a bit about what you do and how you came to this role.
 - a. Key audiences/clients in role
 - b. Range of international development issues dealt with in last 3 years and which predominates.
2. What, if any other organisations or individuals do you interact with relation to your role in international development?

The Alliance as an organisation

3. And how would you describe the Alliance as an organisation – as it is and as you would like it to be?
 - a. What are the 3 key adjectives you would use?
 - b. If the Alliance was a person, who would it be like?
 - c. What stops it achieving all it could be?

Views on the work of the Alliance

4. What are your views on the extent to which each of the following has been achieved by the Alliance over the last 3 years? (focus on those relevant to the role).
 - a. Growing the membership base
 - b. Improve the services provided to members
 - c. Improve perceptions of international development
 - d. Improve the profile of the sector in the minds of the public
 - e. Represent the sector on policy and advocacy issues
5. In hindsight, how relevant were these objectives to the needs of the sector?
6. And how do you think the work of the Alliance has sat in the sector overall over the last 3 years?

PROMPTS

- a. To what extent does it fit/not fit with other work/organisations/policy direction?
 - b. Are there overlaps with other organisations or work? If so, are these helpful or duplicating effort?
 - c. Are there any conflicts with other organisations or work in the sector?
 - d. Are there unique gaps that the work of the Alliance fills?
7. Overall, would you say that the Alliance has delivered value for money/ over the last 3 years, or not?
- a. Why do you say that?
 - b. Are there areas where it could have delivered more/more efficiently?
ELABORATE
8. What difference has the Alliance made over the last 3 years?
- a. What has happened that wouldn't have otherwise?
 - b. In what ways would the International Development sector in Scotland look different if the Alliance had not been there in the last 3 years?
 - c. What, if anything is unique about the Alliance's contribution?
9. If the Alliance disappeared tomorrow, what would its legacy be?
- a. Has it contributed over the last 3 years to the resilience of the sector?
 - b. Has the work of the Alliance over the last 3 years had any lasting impacts? ELABORATE
10. Is there anything else you would like to add?

THANK AND CLOSE

Appendix 2

External stakeholder topic guide

Intro

Thank you for taking the time to speak to me. The interview should last around 20 minutes.

As you are aware, Radcliffe Consultancy Services has been commissioned to review Scotland's International Development Alliance's strategy (2017-2021). We have identified a small number of key stakeholders including yourself who we want to consult as part of this work, to ensure that get a range of views on the work of the Alliance over the last 3 years. You may not be able to comment in all areas and that's fine. We are speaking to a range of stakeholders with different levels and types of relationship with the Alliance to get a comprehensive overall picture.

Your responses will be treated with the utmost confidence and will not be shared with anyone outside our study team. Findings will be reported anonymously without names or job titles being used so there are no means of identifying individuals. I will take notes during the interview for our own use. Would you mind if I recorded the interview? Just so I can fill in any gaps in my notes after the interview. The recording will not be shared with anyone outside our team and will be destroyed at the end of the study. You can say no to the recording if you wish.

Do you have any questions before we start?

Role

1. It would be useful, first of all to understand your current role and interest in international development. Tell me a bit about what you do, how long you've been doing it for and how you came to this role.

PROMPTS FOR

- c. Where international development sits in this picture and relative importance in current role
 - d. Key audiences/clients in role
 - e. Range of international development issues dealt with
2. What, if any other organisations or individuals do you interact with, in relation to international development?

PROMPT FOR

- a. nature of interaction (policy/strategy, networking, referral, signposting, etc.)

The Alliance as an organisation

3. Thinking about the last 3 years, what would you say are the key things that the Alliance has achieved?
4. And how would you describe the Alliance as an organisation?
 - a. What are the 3 key adjectives you would use?
 - b. If the Alliance was a person, who would it be like?

Views on the work of the Alliance

5. If able to comment, what are your views on the extent to which each of the following has been achieved by the Alliance over the last 3 years?
 - a. Growing the membership base
 - b. Improve the services provided to members
 - c. Improve perceptions of international development
 - d. Improve the profile of the sector in the minds of the public
 - e. Represent the sector on policy and advocacy issues
6. How relevant were these objectives to the needs of the sector?
7. And how do you think the work of the Alliance has sat in the sector overall over the last 3 years?

PROMPTS

- a. To what extent does it fit/not fit with other work/organisations/policy direction?
 - b. Are there overlaps with other organisations or work? If so, are these helpful or duplicating effort?
 - c. Are there any conflicts with other organisations or work in the sector?
 - d. Are there unique gaps that the work of the Alliance fills?
8. Overall, would you say that the Alliance has delivered value for money/a bang for its buck over the last 3 years, or not?
 - a. Why do you say that?
 - b. Are there areas where it could have delivered more/more efficiently?

ELABORATE

9. What difference has the Alliance made over the last 3 years?
 - a. What has happened that wouldn't have otherwise?
 - b. In what ways would the International Development sector in Scotland look different if the Alliance had not been there in the last 3 years?
 - c. What, if anything is unique about the Alliance's contribution?

10. If the Alliance disappeared tomorrow, what would its legacy be?
 - a. Has it contributed over the last 3 years to the resilience of the sector?
 - b. Has the work of the Alliance over the last 3 years had any lasting impacts? ELABORATE
11. Is there anything else you would like to add?

THANK AND CLOSE

Appendix 3

Questions for Membership interviews

Intro

Thank you for taking the time to speak to me. The interview should last around 15 minutes.

As you are aware, Radcliffe Consultancy Services has been commissioned to review Scotland's International Development Alliance's strategy (2017-2021) and a members' survey already circulated. We are also speaking to a small number of members to dig a bit deeper into your views on the work of the Alliance over the last 3 years. You may not be able to comment in all areas and that's fine. We are speaking to a range of members with different levels and types of relationship with the Alliance to get a comprehensive overall picture.

Your responses will be treated with the utmost confidence and will not be shared with anyone outside our study team. Findings will be reported anonymously without names or job titles being used so there are no means of identifying individuals. I will take notes during the interview for our own use. Would you mind if I recorded the interview? The recording will not be shared with anyone outside our team and will be destroyed at the end of the study. You can say no to the recording if you wish.

Do you have any questions before we start?

1. Can you tell me how your organisation came to be a member of the Alliance?
 PROBE If longstanding member, what keeps them renewing membership?

Membership category

Full member, very small	A
Full member, small	B
Full member, developing	C
Full member, medium	D
Full member, large	E

Event/service	Number
F2f training (safeguarding, fundraising, project management, reporting, proposal development, gender and inclusion)	
Online training (crowdfunding global giving, institutional funding)	
Mentoring	
Webinars (SG small grants info session, good governance with SCVO, theory of change with Isabel Vogel)	

Effectiveness support (use of mentors, helpdesk, safeguarding, SG applicant reviews)	
Working groups (LNOB, MEL, Safeguarding, funding)	
Events (members meeting with SG, networking, small charities dialogue, Sec of State visit, DFID/ISD meeting, Ambassadors meeting, Special interest group public perceptions, Brexit roundtable, Intl FCStone info event, photo exhibition/reception, roundtable with Ben McPherson, Zambia roundtable, SCVO gathering policy coherence, CDC roundtable with SMP, meeting with sec of state and DFID)	
Cross Party Group	
Annual conference	
AGM	
Member visit	
Promoting your vacancies	
Total number	

2. According to the info I have you are a category [...] member and you have[outline things engaged with]
3. For each of these member services/event types that you have engaged with, can you comment on what you thought of it? Was it good or not so great quality and why do you say that?

Event/service	Good/poor quality and why?
F2f training	
Online training	
Webinars	
Effectiveness support	
Working groups	
Events	
Cross Party Group	
Annual conference	
Mentoring	
Member visit	
Promoting your vacancies	

4. What other Alliance member services and events are you aware of?

ASK SPONTANEOUSLY THEN PROMPTED

Event/service	SPONTANEOUS	PROMPTED
F2f training		
Online training		

Webinars		
Effectiveness support		
Working groups		
Events		
Cross Party Group		
Annual conference		
AGM		
Member visit		
Promoting your vacancies		

5. For each aware of but not used, are there any particular reasons you have not engaged with?

Event/service	Reason not engaged
F2f training	
Online training	
Webinars	
Effectiveness support	
Working groups	
Events	
Cross party Group	
Annual conference	
AGM	
Member visit	
Promoting your vacancies	

6. How could the services and events the Alliance offer be improved for your organisation?

PROBE FOR SPECIFICS

7. Is there anything you would like to see the Alliance offer its members that is not currently available?

PROBE RE WHY IMPORTANT TO THEM

8. Thinking of your priority needs for support in the last 3 years, did the Alliance help meet these?

Prompts:

What more could they have done/ done better to support you in this area?

Do you have different needs now? What are they?

9. Anything else to add?

THANK AND CLOSE