

The Lens

Enables innovation culture



“With The Lens people can really see the benefits of innovation.”

Enabler



“It’s a massive boost to building our culture of innovation.”

Senior Manager



“It has generated huge excitement and energy.”

Senior Manager



“Even the way I approach people at work has changed. It was brilliant.”

Finalist



Evaluation - Executive Summary

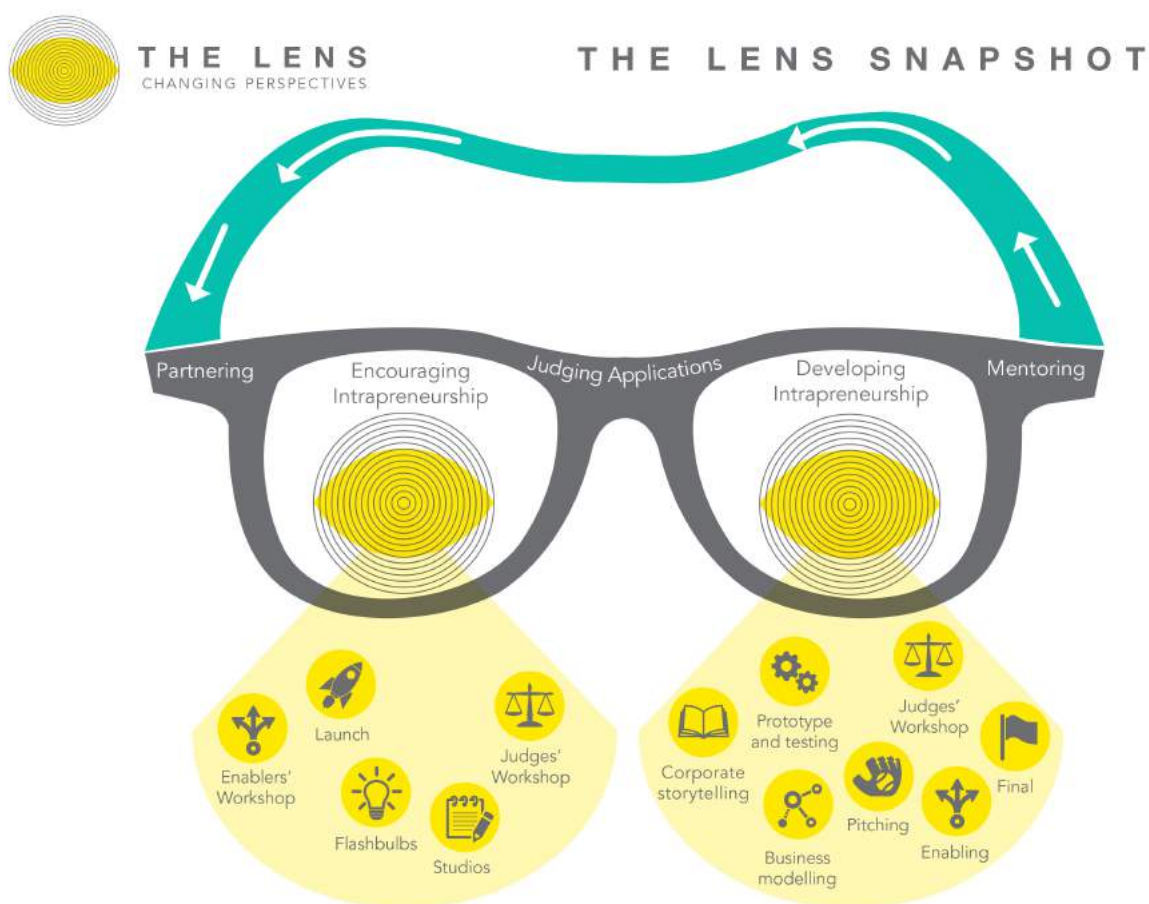
September 2016

Introduction

The Lens

The Lens develops **workforce innovation** by developing front line staff as internal innovators or Intrapreneurs, their peers as Judges and managers as Enablers.

These groups participate in two phases of The Lens: Encouraging & Enabling Intrapreneurship and Developing Intrapreneurship. The process includes a Final, where Intrapreneurs pitch their ideas to Judges for a share of an investment fund and mentoring support.



Evaluation scope and method

The evaluation focused on **learning** from how The Lens worked in its **first cycle in four charities**. It developed an understanding of The Lens' **effects**. The evaluation did not look at the support that is offered to winners after the Final. The evaluation method included interviewing a sample of people in each organisation and running a Learning Event to test initial findings. The views of 42 people were captured and analysed and put into context through reference to relevant literature.

Findings

The first cycle of The Lens:

- **Widened participation**

It enabled each of the organisations to include more of their workforce in innovation, not just the “usual suspects”, which in turn:

- **Found and developed useful ideas**

Senior Managers and Lens Enablers agreed with the Judges’ view that the ideas presented were a strong fit with existing organisational direction. Intrapreneurs were supported to develop their ideas and The Lens also worked with Judges and Enablers leading to:

- **Developed capacity and skills**

The Lens developed Intrapreneurs’ resilience and appetite for learning; it increased their confidence to make more use of their skills, interests and observations in their job; and it developed wider networks and cross-organisational awareness. This led to professional development because Intrapreneurs applied their learning to their day-job. This development of Intrapreneurs, alongside work with Enablers and Judges, and the high profile of the Finals in each organisation, meant that The Lens:

- **Generated momentum**

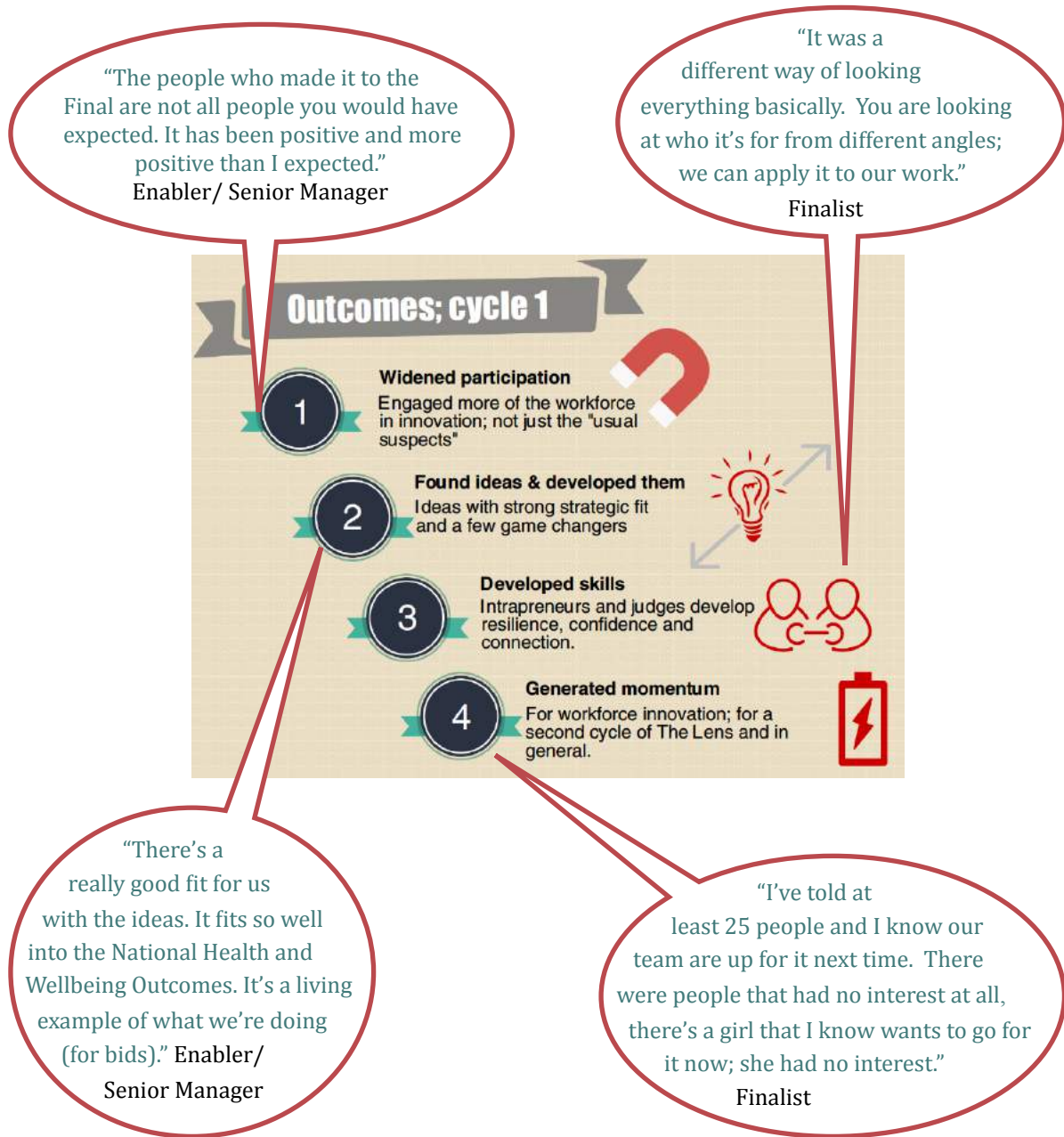
Ultimately these effects on participants culminated in a buzz around innovation in each organisation. Participants thought that running further cycles would strengthen the effect and that this would be felt beyond people having ideas for a second round.

“The benefits to staff are really huge. We’re quite pioneering here so it’s only going to be a really good thing, to have people so confident.”

Senior Manager



Participants confirm the value of The Lens:



Participants thought that **running further cycles of The Lens would contribute to sustainable culture change towards workforce innovation becoming the norm** in their organisations. This view is backed up by findings of a systematic review into sustaining culture change (Willis et al. 2016), who identify six principles including two that The Lens is particularly strong on: "fostering distributed leadership" and "promoting staff engagement".

Participants also made suggestions for how The Lens could be tweaked to be even more successful in its second cycle in their organisations; details can be found in the full report. The overwhelming view was that the Lens is high quality and well designed.

Conclusions

Innovation is often considered important in the public and third sectors because of shrinking resources and increased demands, which disproportionately affect medium sized charities (NCVO, 2015). In comparison to other intrapreneurial programmes, **The Lens is a lean approach and therefore well suited to addressing innovation in smaller organisations**, not just large organisations.

Given the complexity of social problems, it is important to include a wider range of people in initiatives aimed at innovation, including front-line workers working directly with people that the organisation seeks to serve (NPC and Lankelly Chase, 2015). Involvement of a wider range of employees in innovation has also been recognised as important to private companies' productivity and competitiveness (Totterdill, 2015). However many organisations struggle to achieve inclusion of their workforce in innovation. **The Lens is a practical way for organisations to enable employees to have their ideas heard and acted upon.** Although it attracted good ideas, empowering people to participate in innovation may be the most important aspect.

The Lens also addresses the risk of rejection of ideas that challenge organisational norms (Birkinshaw and Ridderstråle 1999), although it does require an open mind on the part of senior managers to achieve that.

Lastly, The Lens is not just about the Intrapreneurs, nor their ideas. By working with others in the organisation as peer Judges and Enablers it has developed a unique selling proposition. **The Lens is well placed to enable workforce innovation culture across the public, private and third sectors.**

“This is an ear to the ground, it’s trying to be close to people. That’s why The Lens is so attractive. It is about that triangle; turning it on its head.”

Senior Manager



References

Birkinshaw, J.M. and J. Ridderstråle (1999). Fighting the corporate immune system: A process study of peripheral initiatives in large, complex organizations. *International Business Review*, 8: 149-180.

NCVO (2015) A financial sustainability review. https://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/policy_and_research/funding/financial-sustainability-review-of-the-voluntary-sector-july-2015.pdf

NPC and Lankelly Chase (2015). Systems Change: A guide to what it is and how to do it. <http://lankellychase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Systems-Change-How-to-Do-It.pdf>

Totterdill, P. (2015). Closing the Gap: The Fifth Element and Workplace Innovation. *European Journal of Workplace Innovation*

Willis, C., Saul, J., Bevan, H., Scheirer, M., Best, A., Greenhalgh, T., Mannion, R., Cornelissen, E., Howland, D., Jenkins, E., & Bitz, J. (2016). Sustaining organizational culture change in health systems. *Journal of Health Organization and Management*, 30(1), 2-30.

Report Author

This report was written by Jenni Inglis (MDes, MSc, FRSA) of VIE. VIE is a trading name of VIE for Life Ltd. VIE specialise in impact evaluation of innovative projects and services in the public and third sectors and enabling organisations to work alongside citizens and end-users to co-create more desirable futures. www.vieforlife.co.uk

Acknowledgements

VIE would like to thank The Lens' partner organisations; Cornerstone, Loretto Care, Prince's Trust and Carers Trust, who generously made themselves available for interviews. The Lens's work with these organisations was made possible by the support of The Robertson Trust and The Scottish Government. This evaluation was funded by the Big Lottery Fund Scotland.

The full evaluation report is available at www.lensperspectives.org.uk

