

# Funding communities, adding value

Community development approaches  
to grant giving

By Irene Evison with Natasha Roe

PRACTICAL GUIDE



Funding communities, adding value

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# Foreword

As the Government's public body on community development, the Community Development Foundation (CDF) plays a crucial role in advising, supporting and delivering initiatives that enable people to influence the decisions that affect their lives. As a charity, too, we bridge Government, communities and the voluntary and community sector.

CDF are specialists in community development policy and practice, having worked to support and promote it for over 40 years. Our work focuses on creating engaged, cohesive and strong communities.

CDF has a strong track record managing funding and support programmes for small community groups and larger organisations for central government. This publication draws together best practice case studies from our programmes to show the value of taking a community development approach to funding and grant giving for local groups and their communities, and to funding organisations. The book features the innovative work of projects funded by the Neighbourhood Support Fund, Faiths in Action, the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund, Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants, and Grassroots Grants programmes. Our work with these programmes involves listening to the needs of local people and third sector organisations and working closely with Government. Through this approach our programme design and delivery mechanisms are continually refined to best meet our aims to help build and sustain strong, vibrant communities.

My thanks go to the many people who have enthusiastically and generously contributed their time to share their good practice.

I do hope you enjoy reading the book and that it gives you fresh ideas to improve the way we work together to benefit people in all communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alison Seabrooke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Alison Seabrooke  
*Chief Executive*  
*Community Development Foundation*

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Darnall Forum  
Devon Community Foundation  
Ealing and Brentford Consolidated Charity  
Fagley Youth and Community Centre  
The Foyer in Walsall  
FPLA  
Grassroots Centre  
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Foundation  
Heart of England Community Foundation  
Invizible Circle Education  
Joy of Sound

Kala Sangam  
Leeds Community Foundation  
Lincolnshire Community Foundation  
The Manchester Busker  
The Nishkam Centre  
Northbourne Street Youth Initiative  
Nottinghamshire Community Foundation  
Rhema Youth Works  
Rural Community Council for Shropshire  
St Philips Centre  
St Katherine and Shadwell Trust  
South Yorkshire Community Foundation  
Swipe  
Woodside Stables

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## Community Development Foundation (CDF)

CDF is the leading source of intelligence, guidance and delivery on community development in England and across the UK. Our mission is to lead community development analysis and strategy to empower people to influence decisions that affect their lives.

CDF's key aim is to spread ways of building engaged, cohesive and stronger communities and a more effective community sector:

- by advising government and other bodies on community development
- by analysing policy to identify good community development practices
- by conducting research and evaluation
- by supporting community development work through networks, links with practitioners and work with partner organisations
- by managing funding schemes for local projects
- through training, events, publications and consultancy.

We work with government departments, regional and local public agencies and community and voluntary sectors. We also operate at a European and international level. We are a non-departmental public body sponsored by Communities and Local Government (CLG) and a charity registered in England and Wales and recognised in Scotland.

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## Chapter One

# Introduction

The Community Development Foundation (CDF) has been working for many years supporting voluntary and community groups and the community sector by managing grant funding programmes for several Government departments. In difficult economic times, this form of support is crucial. Grant funding plays a key role in helping organisations to provide essential facilities and services in the community, sustaining the groups and their work and enabling them to grow. Grant funding is crucial, too, in strengthening the sector as a whole.

CDF's approach to managing and delivering grant funds is based soundly on its commitment to the values and principles of community development. CDF aims to achieve a high standard in grant making so that a grant fund is accessible to its target audience and is a positive experience for the groups which apply. CDF aims as well to make grants that enable community groups to make a real difference to their communities, and contribute to achieving the Government policy that the grant fund was established to meet.

This guide draws on CDF's extensive experience and expertise to help and influence all those who design and manage grant funds to deliver the best possible funding to communities. It has two main aims:

1. To describe what a community development approach to grant funding is and the benefits of using it, and

2. To provide practical advice for third sector and statutory funders designing and delivering grant funds, so that they are able to apply a community development approach, for the benefit of their own organisation and the recipients of their grants.

## A community development approach to grant funding

When a grant fund is designed to take community development principles and approaches into account, the grant fund has a particular shape and feel. Some might use the term 'a community development approach'; others might use phrases such as 'a personal touch', or 'supportive grant-making', or 'funding based on community needs'. All these different phrases are different elements of a whole, which together make up a unique way of grant funding.

A community development approach to grant funding is about implementing the values and principles of community development in all aspects of the grant funding process: design, pre-application and application, delivery, monitoring, evaluation and learning, and sustainability of the projects and organisations funded.

The key purpose of community development work is collectively to bring about social change and justice, by working with communities to:

- identify their needs, opportunities, rights and responsibilities
- plan, organise and take action
- evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the action

all in ways which challenge oppressions and tackle inequalities (PAULO, 2003).

What this means in the context of grant giving is that local communities are able to decide what their needs and priorities

are. They are able to get the skills and confidence, as well as the resources to meet these needs, by working together. They can also learn about what difference their work has made and reflect on the way that they worked together.

Good community development-based grant-making programmes are based on:

- Social justice – fair policies and practices which respect diversity and difference.
- Self-determination – addressing the needs of the community as expressed by the people who live there.
- Working and learning together – supporting people to work together to improve things and enabling people to take responsibility; helping to share good practice.
- Sustainable communities – giving people the skills and confidence to take action together, helping to put structures in place to bring about change and using resources in a way that respects the environment.
- Participation – making it possible for individuals and groups to take part, particularly those which might not usually do so.
- Reflective practice – supporting people to learn from the work that they have been funded to do; and the people who design the funding programmes to consider their way of working and impacts. Importantly, this learning should be shared.

### *Key features*

What does a community development approach look like in practice? What is it that distinguishes grant-making with a community development approach from grant-making without it?

There are several elements which stand out:

- The whole ethos and vision of the grant programme is about meeting needs of the community, as identified by the community that the grant fund is targeted at. This could mean funding projects, or it might be funding core costs. Covering costs such as rent or insurances for organisations can enable them to continue to provide services and facilities for communities. There is a commitment to collective action to bring about change in communities.
- The funder takes care during the design process and then through all aspects of implementing the grant to ensure that the grant is open, transparent and fair. Special attention is given to making it possible for community groups who would not usually apply for grant funding to apply. This is achieved through the way that the grant fund is publicised and in helping such groups to apply.
- There is an extra element of support at all stages. In the application process, organisations are able to get help to fill in the application form. The form itself is carefully designed using simple, jargon-free language. Once a grant has been given, the successful organisation can tell the funder about any additional support they need. Then during the delivery phase, groups have access to a range of support such as training, one-to-one mentoring and problem-solving. In relation to monitoring, the reporting system is designed to be easy for the funded organisations to use, for example through using simple language, and asking them for information that is useful for them as well as the funder. Evaluation involves a wide range of stakeholders; the funded organisations have a voice in the evaluation of the wider programme.
- The support that is available throughout the programme contributes to building the capacity of the funded organisations. This could be strengthening the organisation's administrative structures, such as writing a constitution or

making sure the right policies are in place. It could be helping organisation staff and volunteers to increase their skills so they are better placed to do their work, for example in communicating with local authority officers and councillors.

- This capacity building is part of the grant funder's commitment to organisation sustainability. Other activities by the funder that contribute include training on fund-raising, signposting to other suitable funds, building links and encouraging monitoring and evaluation that helps with future fundraising. Ideally, the grant fund is also long term so that it provides a basis for sustained activity and sound future planning by the funded organisation.
- Within the overall vision of the grant fund, the funder is flexible to the needs and circumstances of the funded organisation. As will always happen, problems crop up at times, or the activities as planned do not work out. With a community development approach, the funder's priority is to achieve the outcomes and not specific activities and outputs. If an alternative approach is viable, they can consider it. The funder can also provide the help and space for the funded organisation to find alternatives.
- The grant funder encourages organisations receiving grants to make links with other organisations. These could be nearby, so that the two organisations can explore the benefits of linking up, or they might be further away but offering opportunities for learning from each other. The funder may offer networking events and signposting between individual organisations.
- There is a learning approach within the programme as a whole. The funded organisations and projects are encouraged to learn from their work, and that of others, as well as from the programme itself.

### Benefits

The single biggest benefit is higher quality grant funding. Grant fund programme managers and funded organisations describe this in the following ways:

- A programme that really meets the needs of communities, at the grass roots level or at an area, regional or national level.
- Enabling the funded organisations to develop, so that they can take on more after the funding has finished.
- Bringing about change for individuals and for communities in a way that is more than just providing funding.
- Strengthening the voluntary and community sector.
- Helping people to help themselves.
- Being seen as a supportive funder ‘with a face’, a funder that makes an extra effort with applicant and funded organisations.
- Reaching out to organisations that do not usually make applications for grant funding.
- Improving the grant-making process as a whole, for example higher quality monitoring returns.
- Promoting learning along a broad spectrum, including all the different players in the grant-funding process, from Government policy makers to project volunteers and more.

### Challenges

There are some particular challenges in taking a community development approach to grant funding. The most significant factor is that it is more expensive. This is because of the extra time that is invested at all stages of the process through offering higher levels of support to the applicant and funded groups. However, programme managers argue that the investment is effective, for two main reasons.

- There is more likelihood that the projects which have been funded will be completed successfully and achieve the intended outcomes.
- The support will strengthen the organisations and thereby also the sector as a whole.

A second challenge is the community development approach requires programme staff who understand and buy into the ethos. The person who answers the phone to a potential applicant needs to be welcoming; the officer chasing monitoring returns needs to understand why delays can occur.

It is more stretching for programme staff to work with an outcomes-orientated approach than with the more standard focus on outputs. This is because applicant organisations tend to need more help to understand outcomes than outputs. In addition, the evaluation is more complex, as it focuses on the difference that a project has made.

Overall, the process is more complex and more challenging, although with rewards to match, as the case studies later on in this guide highlight.

## Grant programmes

The case studies in this book are drawn from several grant programmes designed and delivered by CDF:

- Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants
- Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund
- Faiths in Action
- Grassroots Grants
- Neighbourhood Support Fund.

### *Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants*

Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants was a £3 million programme aimed at community groups with grants of up to £12,000. It ran across England from 2006 to 2009. It supported the Government's 'Improving Opportunity and Strengthening Society' strategy to increase race equality and community cohesion and was sponsored initially by the Home Office and then by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The fund had four key priorities derived from the strategy:

- A. Improving the experiences of people from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds in relation to access and outcomes from public services – education, employment, health, housing and the Criminal Justice System.
- B. Increasing the confidence of people from BME backgrounds that public services are delivered in a fair and equitable way.
- C. Tackling racism and extremism.
- D. Bringing together communities from different races and faiths, and promoting a shared sense of belonging (community cohesion).

### *The Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund*

The Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund was sponsored initially by the Home Office and then by the Department for Communities and Local Government's Faith and Cohesion Division between 2005 and 2008 in England and Wales, again supporting the Government's 'Improving Opportunity and Strengthening Society' strategy. It focused on helping faith communities to promote understanding and dialogue.

The fund had two key categories:

- Capacity building – open only to faith-based organisations

- Supporting inter faith activities – open to faith-based and non-faith organisations.

The capacity building element aimed to strengthen the capabilities of faith or inter faith organisations so that they could play a fuller part in civil society and community cohesion, and engage more effectively with public authorities. The inter faith activity element encouraged programmes designed to bring people of different faiths together to promote mutual understanding, respect and co-operation. This contributed to community cohesion by developing partnerships between faith organisations, and between faith organisations and the wider community.

Faith-based or non-faith organisations could apply, either for small grants of up to £5,000, or for large grants of up to £30,000. Over two rounds, the grant supported more than 400 organisations and projects across England and Wales for inter faith or capacity-building work.

### *Faiths in Action*

Faiths in Action is a £7 million grants programme for faith, inter faith, voluntary and community sector organisations at national, regional and local levels in England. Faiths in Action aims to bring faith communities together to promote understanding, dialogue and partnerships. It runs for three years, from August 2008 to April 2011.

It has four priorities, which come from the Government's framework for inter faith dialogue and social action (*'Face-to-Face and Side-by-Side': A framework for inter faith dialogue and social action* (CLG, 2007):

- A. Developing the confidence and skills to 'bridge' and 'link'.
- B. Supporting shared spaces for interaction and social action.
- C. Developing structures and processes which support dialogue and social action.

D. Improving opportunities for learning which build understanding.

The grants in round one were available for amounts up to £12,000 over two years, for local inter faith community-based activity. Alongside Faiths in Action, CDF is providing support, funding and capacity building for the nine (emerging and established) regional inter faith forums in England over three years.

*Grassroots Grants*

Grassroots Grants is running in England between 2008 and 2011, funded by the Office for the Third Sector (OTS) and delivered by CDF. It comprises £80 million for a small grants programme aimed at supporting small, local voluntary and community groups and organisations (grass roots groups). There is an additional £50 million capital grants endowment match challenge fund to invest in community endowments to improve the long-term sustainability of grant giving to grass roots groups. This endowment match challenge element of Grassroots Grants draws in funding from the private sector and OTS funds are allocated to match these donations.

The Grassroots Grants programme is a key element of the Government's strategy for building stronger and more active communities. The programme aims to invest in a thriving community sector by:

- Increasing the small grant funding available to community groups and making it more sustainable
- Strengthening the independent grant-making capacity at top-tier local authority level.

The specific aims of the Grassroots Grants programme are to:

- Increase the funding and capacity building support available to small voluntary and community organisations (grass roots groups) throughout England, enabling them to continue or

expand their work in areas including advocacy, community voice and providing services for local people.

- Increase the long-term funding available to grass roots groups from community-owned endowments raised from local non-statutory donors.
- Improve the sustainability and quality of local grant-making by strengthening independent funders throughout England.

The 'local funders' – local third sector organisations that are already experienced and effective local independent funders – have a key role in:

- Delivering small grants and supporting local groups in line with the needs of the local communities.
- Managing the endowment match challenge element of Grassroots Grants to deliver sustainable funding for local community organisations.

### *Neighbourhood Support Fund*

The Neighbourhood Support Fund was launched in September 1999 with the aim of re-engaging disaffected and disengaged young people aged 13 to 19 with education, employment or training. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) provided £60 million for the pilot stage, which ran from 1999 to 2003, and a further £30 million for the second stage, which ran to March 2006. This money was distributed by three managing agents to projects in the 40 most deprived local authority areas in England. CDF managed more than 650 projects.

### **Structure of the guide**

The book devotes a chapter to each of the key stages of the grant funding process:

- Design
- Pre-application and application

- Delivery
- Monitoring
- Evaluation and learning
- Project and organisation sustainability.

For each key stage, the meaning and benefits of a community development approach are explored. Snapshots of Grassroots Grants local funders show how they tackled each stage of the process. Case studies of funded groups highlight these themes and are inspiring examples of a living community development approach.



## Chapter Two

# Design

The design stage is crucial in shaping every significant part of a grant fund, and through that, the fund as a whole. A community development approach is not something which is added at the point of delivering the programme. It should underpin the programme from its earliest beginnings. In this way, the approach is embedded firmly into the fund, and is seen as integral to it. There are a number of different ways in which a community development-based approach can be implemented at the design stage.

### Basing the purpose of the fund on community needs

It sounds obvious, but it is absolutely fundamental that the funding programme is designed so that it is responding to real community needs (and not, for example, responding to what a sponsor or a member of the fund programme team thinks is needed or would like to see funded).

To achieve this, it is important for the funder to understand the communities they are proposing to target the fund at. The way to do this is to listen to what that community has to say about its needs. This is likely to mean commitment to a considerable period of research and consultation. But the time spent will be reflected in a programme which is responsive to real need, and which has structures and processes that the community is able to work with. It can be particularly challenging for national

funding programmes which are covering a very broad spectrum of interests.

The way in which the funder approaches the research and consultation is important, as this is the precursor to how the funding programme will be perceived in the community. The attitude and behaviour of the potential funding programme's staff should be appropriate, demonstrating real interest and respect for the communities and the people who make up that community.

### Being local

Taking a community development approach to grant funding for many people means being a funder that acts locally and is focused on local level action. A national funder can still act locally: the Grassroots Grants programme, for example, has engaged local funders to represent and deliver the grant programme at local level. Many of the local funders have set up grants assessment panels made up of people from the local communities where the funding is being targeted. This means that a high level of local knowledge is applied to making the funding decisions. There is a good example of how this is applied in practice by the Community Foundation serving Tyne and Wear and Northumberland in Chapter 3.

Where the funder is acting locally, it is important that the funder incorporates and acknowledges local knowledge into programme design.

### Supporting sustainability

The programme aims and ways of working should be designed so they do not encourage a dependency culture on the part of the projects/organisations that are funded, but rather help them to help themselves. For example, the Neighbourhood Support Fund helped their funded projects to think about where they could access different funding to enable their projects to continue. The Neighbourhood Support Fund

provided targeted support to help the projects define their future work and to prepare high quality funding applications.

The support provided in all aspects of a community development-based programme helps to strengthen the funded organisation in many different ways, so that overall it is better equipped to maintain and perhaps expand its activities. This could be through helping organisations to improve their policies and governance so they are better structured for delivery, or it could be building the skills and experience of staff and volunteers to monitor and evaluate their work.

Successful community development is not usually short term, and ideally this is reflected in the way that community-based activity is funded. The long-term grants provided by the Neighbourhood Support Fund programme were very much welcomed, as unusually, Neighbourhood Support Fund was able to offer grants for three years and then for a fair proportion of the organisations, another three-year period.

Sustainability is not just about the long term. It can also mean thinking about a project's exit strategy or ways to fund a project that can make it effective over a shorter period. The Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund's grants were for one- or two-year periods, but were designed to encourage applicant organisations to think about the most effective use of short-term resources. Examples included by increasing the hours of an existing staff member, rather than recruiting for someone new, or delivering a fixed-term project such as a piece of research or a limited number of events. Case studies that illustrate this include Theatre Studio West in Chapter 4 (page 64 below) and Swipe in Chapter 6 (page 105 below).

## Transparency

The purpose of the grant fund as well as its processes need to be open and transparent, with information that is easily accessible to potential applicants and others. This includes

being unambiguous in how the programme is contributing to wider policy aims. For example, the Faiths in Action programme guidance makes clear links between the aims of the fund and the Government's policy for faith communities' role in their wider communities. There is important work to be done at the design stage to think about how these priorities will be communicated and achieved throughout the programme's life.

Transparency also applies to the grant-making process, so that applicants can find out about how applications are assessed and what the criteria are that they will be assessed against. Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants is just one of CDF's grant programmes that gave unsuccessful applicants feedback on why they were not awarded a grant – a demonstration of openness in grant making.

### Flexibility within a consistent framework

Any project, however well planned, is likely to need to change in some way to meet changing circumstances during the course of its delivery. Funders need to find a delicate balance between enabling sufficient flex so that a project can continue to do work that effectively meets local need, and too much change which could mean that a project is no longer likely to make the differences in the community that the funding programme is seeking.

Also, if as is likely, the fund is supporting projects which are themselves taking a community development approach to their work, the projects will be deciding on the detail of their activities in line with the wishes of their community. This means that the projects too need to remain flexible and to be able to react to changing needs.

Learning from the experiences of many projects funded by community development-based grants programmes, the key seems to be in maintaining a consistent framework, within which there is room for manoeuvre. One way that this can be done is for the grant programme to focus on outcomes, and not the

outputs or activities. The Invisible Circle Education case study in Chapter 5 (page 78) for example shows the value of this.

Another aspect of the consistent framework is that the overall structures of the grant fund remain the same throughout the life of the fund. This means that potential applicants and funded projects do not feel as if the 'goalposts are moving' and that different things are expected of them at different times.

### Building in learning from the start

A core value of community development is reflection. In relation to grant programmes, this is applied through monitoring and evaluation, both of the projects which are funded and of the programme as a whole.

The projects and the grant programme should consider how monitoring and evaluation are going to be done at design phase. This makes it possible for learning and reflection to be an integral part of the funding programme. Also, more pragmatically, it makes it more likely that the right information will be collected at the right time, by the right people, so that it becomes possible to create a picture of the whole programme.

### Summary: Benefits of a community development approach to programme design

The benefits of taking a community development approach at this stage are:

The programme meets real needs.

- It is structured in a way that the target voluntary and community sector groups can work with and benefit from.
- The programme itself is a demonstration of community development, as well as supporting others to adopt a community development approach.



## Chapter Three

# Promotion, application and assessment

When a funding programme is launched, there is a huge amount of work to be done to let the target audience know about it, get the applications in and then decide which of the applications should be awarded a grant. There are some clear ways in which a community development-based approach adds value to this stage of a funding programme. Much of this is focused on making the fund accessible, and on making the application and assessment process as fair as possible.

### Targeted publicity and promotion

Participation is a key value of community development. A grant fund can put community development values into practice when promoting the grant by trying to make sure that as many groups in the target audience as possible know about the fund. This is the first step towards participation. It is therefore important that the programme is publicised widely amongst the grant fund's target audience.

Experience suggests that word of mouth is very effective, in addition to standard forms of publicity such as information in voluntary sector umbrella body newsletters or press releases to local newspapers. Word of mouth can work well amongst voluntary sector organisations. For example, a community development worker passes on the information to a colleague working with a different sector of the community in a similar organisation, who can then tell the community groups they

work with about the funding opportunity. Or word of mouth can happen at community group level. There was a good example with Grassroots Grants recently, where a local funder found that telling a number of sports clubs about the fund led to applications being made by other community groups representing a much wider variety of interests because members of the sports clubs had spread the word or were involved with both groups. South Yorkshire Community Foundation (see below) found this approach worked well in their region.

Local funder snapshot

South Yorkshire Community Foundation

Over 50 per cent of the money South Yorkshire Community Foundation distributes through Grassroots Grants goes to organisations that have not had any form of funding support before. To find these groups, the Foundation found that they needed to tap into networks that they do not normally use. They used part of the Grassroots Grants money in year one for what the Foundation called 'cash giveaways'. £95,000 was set aside to respond to applications that were made as a result of special promotions across the three local authority areas where they were working (Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield). The Foundation ran promotions with two local newspapers and two local football clubs.

They thought the sports clubs would put them in touch with groups running sporting activities. They were surprised to find that those networks put them in touch with groups for older people, lunch clubs, art clubs and young people's music projects – a whole range of different community projects. The chief executive feels that this is an important lesson to learn, as donors often focus on geographical communities rather than communities of interest. Their experience was that by engaging with communities of interest, they were able to get messages out into the communities and trust that people passed that information on in a way that helped the fund.

### What made this approach successful?

- Information grew virally, gaining its own energy rather than being pushed out from the top down.

### Helpful hints

- Offer a sufficiently large pot for the 'cash giveaway' so it grabs people's attention.
- Work out how to manage the expectations that are raised by the 'cash giveaway', for example by providing ongoing support to the projects.

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New or different forms of publicity can be useful when trying to include 'hard to reach' communities. A number of Grassroots Grants local funders have had success through building on more traditional ways of working with the local media to use new approaches, in particular 'cash giveaways'. Amongst the case studies featured in this publication which had used cash giveaways successfully were Community Foundation for Calderdale (see opposite) and Leeds Community Foundation (see page 26).

Local funder snapshot

Community Foundation  
for Calderdale

Community Foundation for Calderdale used an imaginative approach to trying to meet the Grassroots Grants programme's aim of reaching out to very small community groups, who may not previously have applied for grants.

For its work in Kirklees, the Foundation developed a strong partnership with the local paper, the *Huddersfield Examiner*. The idea was simple: a splash headline to get people's attention, along with very simple information about how to make an online application via the newspaper's website.

'£30,000 Up For Grabs' certainly caught the attention of plenty of organisations. There were 200 applications, of which about 45 groups were funded; many were unknown to the Community Foundation.

#### What made this approach successful?

- The chief executive of the newspaper was committed to the community and the idea, so that the newspaper was truly working in partnership with the Community Foundation.
- The application form was very simple.
- There was a high profile presentation evening for all successful applicants with the local MP who really understood the community.

#### Helpful hints

- Be prepared for the fact that the newspaper may need to edit the information which is printed about the application process.
- There are likely to be a large number of applications from organisations which are not eligible.
- There will be a need for staff to follow up many of the applications by phone and email to ensure that all the information required for eligibility is included.

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**Local funder snapshot**

**Lincolnshire Community  
Foundation**

As with all local funders, Lincolnshire Community Foundation was committed to making it possible for very small, new, or inexperienced groups to apply for funding. The approach they took was focused on raising awareness about Grassroots Grants, combined with providing a high level of support.

Past experience had shown that using the local press was the best way to reach out to small community groups. They had a strong relationship with the county newspaper, the *Lincolnshire Echo*, and other papers. They also wrote a press release and sent it to the weekly free papers and each market town's newspaper. The press release explained what the Grassroots Grants fund was and what people needed to do to make an application. Of the groups applying to date, around 60% had never had funding before. The project manager attributes the success of reaching out to 'new' groups to using the press and other networks within the voluntary sector.

Lincolnshire Community Foundation designed the process so that potential applicants have to contact Foundation staff directly to get an application form. The staff can make sure that the group is eligible before a group puts time into doing an application. At the same time, the Foundation can find out if a group needs additional support to make their application. Often, staff go out to groups to provide that support. This can include offering template Constitutions or policies, and signposting to infrastructure support and free training opportunities.

### What made this approach successful?

#### For the publicity

- Being brief in the press release! Presenting all the key information on a single sheet.
- Building a relationship with local papers, so that they are interested in the material.

#### For the application process

- Designing the application system so that potential applicants cannot just download a form, but must make contact with the local funder.
- Being proactive in going out to meet the applicant groups, so that the groups feel that there is a 'face' behind the Fund and that they are approachable.
- Taking the time to 'look behind' the application form, and helping groups to present their project as well as possible.

### Helpful hints

- In the press release, use large print, and put the key points in bold type.
- Provide contact details on all publicity material, so that readers know where to go for more information.
- Think about all the different sorts of newspapers in your local area.
- Establish relationships with other organisations and funders, so that you can signpost potential applicants to opportunities for support or other funding. This also helps to keep up with relevant developments and local information.

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## Clear guidance

When potential applicants have discovered a grant fund that could be suitable for their group, they need to be able to get hold of published guidance about the fund. This tells them in detail about the purpose of the fund, who is and is not eligible, how to apply and what the criteria are for assessing grant applications. The way that this guidance is written is important, as the information will be accessible to a wider audience if it is presented clearly, using simple and appropriate language. ‘Jargon busters’, which give explanations about key technical terms, can help if funders cannot avoid complex wording.

For Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants, the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund and Faiths in Action, CDF put considerable thought into how to make the guidance accessible to people whose first language is not English, so that they were not disadvantaged in applying to these funds. CDF decided not to print the guidance in other languages because of the difficulty of choosing the right languages and resources. Instead, the grant programmes provided one-to-one support from someone who spoke the same language as the applicant and who was also trained in grant fund guidance.

## Proactive and appropriate support

Projects that had received funding from the grants programmes administered by CDF repeatedly told them that a community development-based approach to grant-making meant that they had opportunities to access a range of support to help them make a grant application. Lincolnshire Community Foundation is one good example amongst many illustrating the range of support offered by local funders (see page 22).

Providing this support is in part about social justice, making it possible for different organisations, with different levels of experience of applying for grants, to have a fair chance to access the particular grant fund available. But it is also about building the capacity of the applicant organisations. Even if they

are not successful this time, they are better equipped to make other applications in future, as the Youthpoint case study shows in Chapter 4 (page 59).

In its various grant programmes, CDF has provided a range of support:

- An applicant can get in touch by email or phone with an independent reviewer, who will look at their draft application form and give constructive feedback on how to make improvements. Intentionally, the reviewers are not part of the grants assessment teams, so there is no conflict of interest.
- CDF typically also arranges a series of briefing events, so that potential applicants can go to a presentation about the grant fund and have the chance to ask questions. Funders are able to demonstrate their commitment to local groups by being seen working in and with the community.

Members of CDF's grant programme team are always willing to answer small queries directly, either by phone or email. If necessary, potential applicants are then signposted to other forms of support, for example to organisations with a remit to offer capacity-building support to local community groups.

This support is resource-intensive, and must be recognised by the grant funder at the design stage so that sufficient funding is available. The main need is for staff time, so that they can go out to community groups and have time to respond to requests for support. However, it is also important that support is given in the right way. Staff need to demonstrate appropriate attitudes and behaviour towards community groups. Time and time again, community groups talk about how funders demonstrating community development in practice really listen to local groups, respect and value what they have to say, seem to be learning from them (as well as the other way round), and trust them. There is a good example of how a local funder has applied this in practice in the Community Foundation serving Tyne and Wear and Northumberland (see page 27).

The support to potential applicant organisations is not just in relation to the grant application itself. In many cases, there can be a significant period of capacity building required before a group is ready to begin to think about making an application.

#### Local funder snapshot

#### Leeds Community Foundation

One of the biggest issues for Leeds Community Foundation is that the very small groups that the Grassroots Grant fund is targeting tend to need lots of support. Some of the groups have never applied for a grant before. The grants team were receiving many more queries than they had anticipated, and meeting these requests involved intensive input.

The Foundation needed to consider how best to offer support, as there were few other available sources of support besides the Foundation itself. It needed to find a way which did not give the grants officers a conflict of interest when it came to making assessments, and which was realistic in terms of the time needed to provide it.

The Foundation decided to address the issue by holding weekly drop-in sessions. These sessions are run by volunteers who have been trained by the grants team. If the query is particularly complicated, a volunteer will get a grants officer to help. In that case, a different grants officer will assess the application.

#### What made this approach successful?

- The applicant organisations get the detailed, one-to-one support that they need.
- The grants team's time is freed up, but they are still available if necessary.
- Using trained volunteers keeps the process open and transparent and reduces the risk of any conflict of interests between the applicant and assessor.

### Helpful hints

Once the weekly workshops are up and running, you can use them to publicise other events, for example, networking events, and fundraising support events.

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### Local funder snapshot

### Community Foundation serving Tyne and Wear and Northumberland

A community development grants programme is different from other grant programmes because the dividing line between assessment and support is potentially more blurred. This Community Foundation, based in Newcastle, came up with a way of handling the potential compromises it might encounter.

The Community Foundation uses some of the funding to pay partners to do the community development parts of the programme. The partners are local Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) and other specialist agencies like BME networks. Not only does the Community Foundation see this as a way of keeping the relationships between it and the groups it funds cleaner, but also as an important part of its own community development approach.

The Community Foundation holds quarterly meetings with its partners to ensure that the learning goes both ways. The Foundation asks its partners to tell its staff about the issues that local groups are bringing to them, what the groups think of the way that it is running the programme and about any new areas of community need.

The Community Foundation follows through its partnership approach by assessing grant applications using committees that are made up of community representatives and chaired by one of its trustees.

### What made this approach successful?

- The Community Foundation has a genuine, longstanding relationship with the organisations to which it outsources work.
- The Foundation is confident about the quality of support that its partners are giving.
- The applicant is in touch with the key local influential organisations through the Community Foundation and the local CVS. In turn, these organisations know about Grassroots Grants.

### Helpful hints

It is important to have skilled assessors who are experienced enough to deal with governance and due diligence issues in a balance with community development outcomes.

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### Getting the timing right

There can be tensions between the timescale a funder needs to operate in (particularly if working with specific Government policy drivers) and the timescales that community groups would like to work with.

A rolling programme allows organisations to make applications when they are ready. A number of local funders for the Grassroots Grants programme have adopted this approach, as they feel this avoids the problem of organisations rushing to complete applications, submitting a poor application and being rejected. Ealing and Brentford Consolidated Charity have come up with a way of stripping down their application process to make it easy for groups to apply quickly and easily (see below).

There are also instances where community groups have reached a crisis situation and need funding at very short notice. This can be difficult to funders to react to, particularly when they also need an assessment system that is not too burdensome for participants. So the Heart of England Community Foundation doesn't set deadlines and has a short 'micro-application' form for groups that need funds of under £900 quickly (see page 31).

Local funder snapshot

Ealing and Brentford Consolidated Charity

For Ealing and Brentford, taking a community development approach means putting the people who are going to benefit at the heart of the processes. To achieve this at the application stage of the grant-making process, they found that they needed to strip their applications forms right down. They have come up with an application process which they describe as 'short and sweet and accessible to even the smallest community group'.

In straightforward language, they ask groups who they are, what they want to do, how they have identified the need that their project will meet, and who will benefit. They provide a checklist of things that groups need to have done before submitting their applications, which has proved to be very popular with the applicants. The manager has found that queries have significantly reduced.

To make sure they are able to support groups to take action at any time, there are no deadlines for applications. This is particularly important in the area, as the local council has reduced their funding rounds for local groups to once a year.

### What made this approach successful?

- Clear, straightforward, simple application forms.
- A flexible timeframe that doesn't set deadlines for applications.

### Helpful hints

- Areas of need can be targeted through existing networks, for example being passed potential applicant groups from local organisations that work in the most deprived areas.
- Use the local radio station to let groups know that they can apply for money from Grassroots Grants.
- Word of mouth works. If people find out how they can apply to Grassroots Grants through their church or sports club, then others in those networks get to know about the grant too.

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## An accessible application form

A crucial part of the application process is, of course, completing the application form. It is vital that the form works well for the applicants and the funder. There is a difficult balance between making the form easy to fill in, and getting

enough good quality information to make a sound judgement on whether to fund the project or not.

As with the guidance information, the application form should use simple and appropriate language. The questions should flow logically from one to another, so that they encourage groups to reflect constructively on the activities and intended outcomes of their project. It should also enable applicants to demonstrate sound planning of their project, for example providing evidence to show their understanding of community needs.

Projects with little experience of making grant applications may struggle with what funders regard as the simplest possible form. In this case, a grant funder which is taking a community development approach will offer support to help the group to make an application. However, it is important the form is designed so that it records the right level of information for the level of funding, so that, for example, funders distributing public money meet appropriate accountability standards.

Local funder snapshot

Heart of England Community Foundation

Grassroots Grants requires funders to have a quick turn around time between application and assessment. Heart of England Community Foundation has designed its application and assessment process with this in mind, but at the same time taking a community development approach. For them, this means building the capacity of the groups through proper targeted support, 'setting groups up to achieve and not to fail'.

There are a few key features relating to the design of the process. There is not an assessment committee, as assessments are done by the Foundation's Grassroots Grants project manager. Pre-application support is provided by other grants officers. There is thus no potential for conflict of interest in the assessment. The Foundation is open and transparent about its process. Also, there are no deadlines for applications, to discourage poor quality, rushed applications.

The Foundation has worked hard to make the application form as simple as possible. There is an option for a 'micro-application', which is just four pages long, for grants of less than £900. This has proved really popular with local groups. The standard grant application form is carefully worded to be easy to understand.

### What has made this approach successful?

- The Foundation has created a single process for all grants applications. A grants administrator has been employed, which has freed up time for community development support work with the groups.
- Local knowledge means that the funder understands the demographics so can tell how accurate a group's application is in assessing the needs of their area.
- Groups are able to apply when they need to.

### Helpful hints

- Make time for grants officers to go into the community and join networking forums in the area, so that they can build the local knowledge which is essential for their work.
- Tailor support, so that groups can access one-to-one and workshop-based support. Very small or inexperienced groups may not be confident at workshops, or may need more intensive support.

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## What happens when an application is unsuccessful?

A community development approach to grant-making is fundamentally about encouraging and enabling community-based groups to become stronger and to achieve more for their communities. When a group finds out that its grant application has not been successful, it can be a very difficult time and a very discouraging experience. What can be done to mitigate this?

One of the Grassroots Grants local funders, Wolverhampton Network Consortium (see Chapter 6, page 94), invites every unsuccessful applicant to come to its offices to meet the community engagement team, to discuss what went wrong and what could be improved, and in particular, to search for other potential sources of funding.

CDF provides all unsuccessful applicants with brief feedback on why their application was unsuccessful, in the letter telling them what the decision has been. Groups are also invited to get in touch for more detailed feedback. The aim is to give them some guidance on how they could improve their application in future.

However, CDF does more than this. All applicants are sent a publication or information which is relevant to their work. This may relate to the type of work they do, for example a practical guide *Setting Up for Success* for groups applying to Faiths in Action, or a 'Putting the Fun into Fundraising' guide on a memory stick for Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants successful and unsuccessful organisations, or it could be material signposting them to other potential sources of funding.

The unsuccessful applications are also looked at as part of the programme's evaluation. With Faiths in Action, the programme managers realised that many of the applications from a particular faith group were poor quality and therefore not being recommended for funding. CDF has now agreed with Communities and Local Government (CLG), the fund's sponsor

unit in Government, that these groups will be given extra support to help them improve their applications and to reapply.

### Summary: Benefits of a community development approach to promotion, applications and assessment

The programme is promoted in ways that mean it is not just the organisations that are good at making grant applications that feel they can apply for the funding; it is able to attract a spectrum of applications to meet the identified needs.

Community groups have a positive experience of making a grant application, regardless of whether they are successful or not. At the same time, it enhances their experiences and skills for future funding applications.

Providing simple application forms and processes makes assessing the grants more straightforward. However, there is a need to balance simplicity with the amount of information needed to take a well-evidenced decision about whether to fund or not; often a programme sponsor may need to satisfy rigorous audit trails.

### Case studies

The case studies presented below show how organisations have been encouraged to make an application, and also given the practical support they need to do so. For **DAMH**, this was their first experience of applying for funding; as a result of help from the funder, the project manager gained the confidence to make an application. The **Maitri Project** found the fund reviewer's feedback on the draft application form invaluable. For the **Brighton Festival of World Sacred Music**, the most important thing was being able to meet the funder at a briefing event. **ISR** benefited from a simple application form, while **Grassroots** found the way that the application form asked for information in the same order that they had used to plan their project very helpful.

## Case Study

Organisation:

**DAMH – Drugs, Alcohol, Mental Health**

Project name:

**Who gives a DAMH?**

### Project purpose and activities

DAMH is a small community group in North Tyneside offering support to the people who are caring for relatives or friends addicted to drugs or alcohol, or who have mental health problems. It is the only such service in the area which is open in the evenings. Everyone is a volunteer.

The volunteer project leader is a qualified cookery teacher, who uses these skills to offer cookery and nutrition lessons. There are three main reasons for offering cookery lessons:

- They help carers learn about nutrition and about meals that can be cooked cheaply and easily.
- Food can be given to carers who can't afford nutritious food.
- By selling the food that they cook, volunteers can raise funds for the project.

The purpose of the Grassroots Grant funding was to put the cookery activities on to a firmer footing by providing cookery equipment, such as a food processor, liquidiser, baking trays, a casserole dish, and clingfilm. The project also bought essential ingredients using a small amount of remaining funding.

The cookery lessons are just one part of DAMH's work, which also includes a weekly support group, phone support at times of crisis, signposting support to other services offering help, information about signs of drug use, and a six-week 'Cooking for Christmas' course.

## Reason for applying to the Grassroots Grant fund

This was the first time that DAMH applied for a grant. The volunteer project leader heard about Grassroots Grants from a worker in a local Government-run drugs and alcohol support service, who told her about an information session being held locally. At this session, she found out what the Fund was and could see how it would help her get the equipment she needed for the project's cookery activities.

## Project outcomes

The cookery activities help the carers in several ways:

- They have something they can look forward to and enjoy in their lives, as they often can't get out much.
- As the project leader says, 'It does carers good to be able to chat about their problems with someone who understands.'
- The carers can see that there is someone who is caring for them, there is someone doing someone for them.
- They gain practical skills which help them to cope.

## The community development approach

### *Application process*

The volunteer leader notes that she would not have made an application if she had not had the level of support offered by the local funder.

She was not experienced or confident with application forms, and so valued the 'hand holding' that enabled her to understand what each question meant and what sort of information she should provide. It was important that she could talk to someone face to face. This conversation also helped her to clarify what she was trying to achieve and what DAMH needed the funding for. Also, she feels that it was a great way to get across to the funder her passion and

enthusiasm for what DAMH is doing, which was unlikely to be possible just on paper.

The local funder helped the volunteer leader to finish off the application form, and make a few corrections to some of the information. This gave the volunteer leader more confidence that the application was good enough to be submitted.

The support from the local funder was also invaluable part-way through the project, when one of her co-workers unexpectedly moved overseas and the volunteer leader was worried about her ability to carry on by herself. The local funder's calm response was much appreciated, as was the suggestion to 'see how it goes' for a short time. In the event, the volunteer leader was able to keep going, and was grateful that the funder was flexible and supportive at this difficult time.

#### *How a community development approach made this funding different*

The volunteer leader has since received funding from another source, but notes that she preferred the personal approach offered by Grassroots Grants. She felt much more comfortable being able to see someone, and this made it easier to explain why DAMH wanted the money. She feels that her local Grassroots Grants funder is approachable.

#### *Design and delivery: practical suggestions*

The volunteer leader made the following suggestions:

- Make it possible for the applicant to talk to the funder, for example at a local workshop.
- Be enthusiastic, as this will help to give the applicants encouragement.
- Send publicity about the fund directly to local organisations.

“From my perspective, the biggest difference the community development approach made was that

it was so much more relaxing to see someone and talk to someone to find out what would and would not be acceptable.👉

**Organisation name:** DAMH – Drugs, Alcohol, Mental Health

**Grant fund:** Grassroots Grants

**Grant amount:** £700

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## Case Study

Organisation:

### The Maitri Project

Project name:

### The Monday Morning Project

#### Project purpose

Maitri means friendship in Sanskrit, and it is friendship that underlies the Maitri Project's purpose. The organisation was set up as a multi-faith pastoral project to offer support to anyone who came to their events. Using volunteers, the Project has three main areas of activity: a women's group, a listening project and a counselling project.

The Project is using its Faiths in Action (FiA) funding to expand the services of the listening project. This is a Monday morning drop-in café in a local church hall, hosted by volunteers from different faiths. The aim is to create a supportive environment to help anyone who comes, so that they feel more confident and able to engage in the wider community.

#### Main activities

The volunteers are Christian, Buddhist, Muslim and with no faith, recruited mostly through Leicester's volunteering agencies. The Maitri Project offers them training in listening skills. Each Monday morning, around five volunteers work at the drop-in café, serving free tea, coffee and biscuits, and start informal conversations with the people who come in. The volunteers do not give any particular direction to these conversations (and do not continue them at all, if people prefer), but will discuss matters from a faith perspective if appropriate. Being sited in a church hall tends to help this to happen.

The Project is using its FiA funding to expand the café-based work. The Maitri Project had noticed that it was difficult to recruit Sikh or Hindu volunteers through the volunteer agencies, so the project is now working proactively to find volunteers itself. It is doing this by making contact through Sikh and Hindu places of worship. The funding will also be used to extend the opening hours of the café, either for a full day or two half days, so the service is more available to potential users.

### Reason for applying to the Faiths in Action grant fund

The Maitri Project applied to this fund because it was a good fit with its faith-based work.

### Project outcomes

It is too early to see the final outcomes from the FiA funding, but the Maitri Project has seen the difference the café is already making:

- It is broadening the horizons of the volunteers, enabling them to meet people of different faiths, ages and backgrounds, in different areas of work or without a job, or with mental health problems.
- Regular visitors to the café are becoming more confident and are improving their social skills.
- People have a safe space to just sit and be the beneficiary of hospitality, when they may not get hospitable welcomes elsewhere.

### The community development approach

#### *Application process*

The project manager found the application form challenging – ‘in a good way’. She noted that you couldn’t just cut and paste

from other material, but had to think very carefully, particularly about the overall beneficiaries of the Project. For the Project, these were both the volunteers and the café users. The process of planning the form required also helped the Project to think more clearly about their intended outcomes.

However, the most important thing for the project manager was the support the Project received from the FiA reviewer, who helped them to revise their draft application. She gave them concrete suggestions on what could be improved and how this might be done. The reviewer helped the project manager to show how the Project was a good fit with the Fund's categories. She also helped the project manager to get across the message about the Project's outcomes, and how they would achieve them. The project manager was able to see how the draft application had been quite vague in places, and the reviewer helped her to make it more specific.

The project manager believes it was vital that the reviewer was external to the Fund, and not associated with assessment of the application. It also meant the project manager was not concerned about being prejudged before the actual assessment.

#### *How a community development approach made this funding different*

For the project manager, the real difference was they were not left to fill out the application form on their own, as the Fund offered them the opportunity to have their draft application form reviewed independently of the assessment process. She thinks this made a critical difference to them getting the funding. The project had not taken up an opportunity for review on an earlier application to the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund, and they were unsuccessful in their bid. Also, the project manager notes that being able to work with a reviewer 'took the scariness out of the process'.

#### *Design and delivery: practical suggestions*

The project manager made the following suggestions:

- Make clear what the fund is looking for in terms of outputs and outcomes, so the applicant can understand the funder's interpretation, as these can have different meanings for different funders.
- Give enough space for the applicant's projects to show creative scope. Some aspects of community development work may not be easily measurable or quantifiable.

‘From my perspective, the biggest difference the community development approach made was helping us to work out exactly what we were aiming to achieve.’

**Organisation name:** The Maitri Project

**Grant fund:** Faiths in Action

**Grant amount:** £12,000 over two years

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## Case Study

Organisation:

Brighton Festival of World Sacred Music

Project name:

Spirit of Brighton

### Project purpose

The Brighton Festival of World Sacred Music organisation brings people from different faiths and cultures together through music. It believes that music crosses boundaries more easily than words. Until recently, its central focus has been organising an annual festival of sacred music from different faiths.

The Spirit of Brighton is part of the organisation's efforts to expand their work to include more year-round activities. The project has the same main aims as the organisation itself, but adds the dimension of dialogue. The project wants participants to deepen their understanding of different faiths, and build relationships with people from other faiths. The organisation also hopes to attract a wider audience than attends the Festival.

### Main activities

The project is in its early stages. The project is a series of cultural interfaith events, each one with a mix of speakers, discussion, music and informal chats while enjoying some food. The speaker will be from one faith, the music from another and food from another still. The first event is planned with a Christian speaker, Jewish singing and light refreshments from Brahma Kumaris.

The project will work with the local interfaith forum on several events. It is hoped that the question and answer discussion

session immediately following the speaker will be an opportunity to consider a topic from the perspectives of different faiths. It is also hoped that participants will be able to follow up on these more informally while chatting over the refreshments.

## Reason for applying to Faiths in Action grant fund

The Festival applied to the Faiths in Action (FiA) grant fund because it was a good fit with the project that they were planning.

## The community development approach

### *Application process*

The Festival was experienced at applying for and winning grants, although primarily from arts-focused funds. They had received one small grant (£5,000) from the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund, but had been unsuccessful in their application to another of the CDF-administered funds, the Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants (CCPlus) programme. Getting feedback on the CCPlus application, and learning from it, was thought to be important in the later successful application to FiA.

The most important element identified by the project manager was the information session that was offered prior to making their application. Although they had to travel to attend, it was well worth the effort. The project manager picked up on several things. The information clarified what the fund was about and gave a clear explanation of the programme's purpose. The underlying policy framework was described (*Face to face and side by side: A framework for partnership in our multi faith society*, CLG, 2008 ). The project manager had not known about the framework and could now see it was pivotal both to the direction of the programme, and to what funded projects should be contributing.

The project manager was able to find out at this early stage – before putting significant time and effort into an application – whether their proposed project was eligible for the fund, and how well it met the priorities. The project manager saw this as particularly important, because a poor fit with fund priorities had been one reason their application to CCPlus failed. Beyond this, the project manager was able to get a much better understanding of the funder. In her words, she could ‘get inside the funder’s head in a way that you couldn’t just from paperwork’.

The session was a good opportunity to ask questions and learn from other potential applicants’ questions. Importantly, the programme officer leading the session was knowledgeable and answered questions clearly, in an engaging way.

#### *How a community development approach made this funding different*

The application process was open, with support available to everyone, and following a guided process. This made it easier to understand the purpose of the fund and what the funder was looking for, as well as being clear about the policies that the fund was aligned with.

The application form itself was different from other funders’ forms, being more straightforward and transparent about what the funder was looking for.

The project manager also noted, however, that the support offered can make the application process seem more involved. There can be a fear that if the applicant organisation does not take up the support offered, they could be at a disadvantage in relation to other applicants who are competing for the same limited funding.

#### *Design and delivery: practical suggestions*

The project manager made the following suggestions:

- Make it clear if there is a key policy linkage, what it is and where to find it.

- If groups need to send supporting material with the application form, make this clear right at the beginning of the form. This part of the application can be time-consuming and require input from other people, so it's important to know about it as soon as possible.

‘From my perspective, the biggest difference the community development approach made was putting together a stronger application.’

**Organisation name:** Brighton Festival of World Sacred Music

**Grant fund:** Faiths in Action

**Grant amount:** £11,973

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## Case Study

Organisation/project name:

### ISR (Churches' Council for Industry and Social Responsibility)

#### Project purpose

ISR is an ecumenical church organisation sponsored by five denominations in the south-west of England. The role of ISR is to engage with workplace issues and industry on behalf of churches by providing chaplains. ISR also aims to help churches in the region grow and engage with issues of social justice, social action and environmental projects.

ISR coordinates a multi-faith response to the Major Emergency Plan on behalf of churches in the region. This ensures that faith communities play a supportive role in the event of any major disaster or emergency in the area and can liaise with the statutory planning agencies. ISR holds a database of 180 trained, local volunteers who can support emergency workers at very short notice.

#### Main activities

ISR received Faiths in Action (FiA) funding to bring together faith groups in the area, mainly Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian, to take part in planning for a faith response to a local emergency.

ISR knew that for a community development approach to be successful, they needed to start by listening. It would not have been appropriate to run a business meeting initially. Instead they needed to facilitate a conversation with faith groups around the issues, and build trust and relationships before the right work could be identified together.

They began by holding a series of events where representatives from different faiths could come together to share food and

talk. As this process continues, it will allow people to build relationships and learn to trust each other in a safe space. It will be possible to consider sensitive issues, such as the relationship between the police and some faith groups in the area which have not always been easy. Cultural dimensions to how communities respond to emergencies or disasters, for example the requirement with some faiths to bury people one day after death, can also be taken into account.

## Reasons for applying to the Faiths in Action fund

ISR finds that many funders are reluctant to support faith-based project work. Not only was FiA specifically supporting work with different faiths, but the work that ISR wanted to develop met each of the grant criteria, namely to build bridges, develop spaces for shared interaction, support dialogue and share learning.

## The community development approach

### *Application process*

The director of ISR found some elements of the FiA application process useful. The headings on the application form were very helpful, as they made connections with Government policy. The timescale worked well, with enough time available to complete the application form.

The funder was able to accept an application which described the overall process that the group planned to follow, but did not need a description of each particular activity. This meant that ISR could take a fully participatory approach, where the detail of the project's work could be led by the agendas that came out from the participants' work. On the application form, it was sufficient for ISR to provide an example of the activities they would run, how they would measure success, and how these related to the intended outcomes to the categories of the FiA fund.

### *How a community development approach made this funding different*

The main difference for ISR was that FiA was available to support their work with faith groups in the way that other sources of funding were not. In particular, they note the way that the programme's criteria were broad enough to allow for ISR's planned activities, but kept within an overall framework.

The project felt the timescale of the application process as a whole was different, allowing time for application, but without delay in getting a response from the funder.

### *Design and delivery: practical suggestions*

ISR had a number of practical suggestions for funders wanting to take a community development approach to their grant programmes:

- Balance the amount of information required with leaving the programme open enough so it can be a genuine learning process.
- Build narrative evaluation into monitoring, so that smaller groups can tell stories. This means taking a listening approach which values story telling, but it also means letting go of measuring some outputs.
- It is important to have experienced funder staff who can manage light touch monitoring, so smaller groups are able to stay focused on the difference they trying to make.
- Run grant programmes over several years, so that groups can take a proper community development approach. This is particularly true in areas such as work with faith groups, where it is difficult to get funding to continue the work that has been started.
- Be prepared to invest in getting information out to smaller groups. Faith networks are quite fragmented and become more so with the minority faiths. It takes time and effort to reach the smaller faith groups.

‘From my perspective, the biggest difference the community development approach made was investing in the capacities to listen and reflect on what we were told.’

**Organisation name:** ISR (Churches’ Council for Industry and Social Responsibility)

**Grant fund:** Faiths in Action

**Grant amount:** Just over £5,000 over two years

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## Case Study

Organisation:

**Grassroots**

Project name:

**Precious Pearls**

**Making Luton a Fair Trade Town**

### Project purpose

Grassroots is a Christian organisation, registered as a charity in the early 1990s. Its aim is to serve and be alongside churches in the community. Grassroots also aims to use the buildings and the congregations as a community resource to address the needs in that particular local area. It has three main streams of work:

- Inter faith relations – building relationships between different faiths.
- Spirituality of justice – highlighting the justice issues in every faith and looking at how these are translated into action for the common good.
- Women across faith and cultures.

The two projects that are funded by Faiths in Action (FiA) relate to the second and third of these work streams. They are both at an early stage.

Precious Pearls aims to involve and engage women who are most disadvantaged through age, education, and cultural attitudes. The project wants to give a voice to these women and to celebrate their roles and achievements.

Making Luton a Fair Trade Town aims to create awareness about Fair Trade amongst non-white communities in Luton.

Even though these communities have close links through family, friends and business to many of the countries that benefit, there are low levels of awareness about Fair Trade.

### Main activities

The Precious Pearls project has begun by forming a core group of women from different faiths who will work together to steer the project. The group includes volunteers who are Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Jewish, Jain and Baha'i. They are planning to invite local women to talk about their lives and experiences, and in particular encourage women who would not normally be heard to come forward. Different ways will be chosen to acknowledge publicly and celebrate the women's stories. They could be through drama, food or some form of art. The aim is to find a creative, safe way for the women to tell their stories.

The Making Luton a Fair Trade Town project is preparing tailor-made presentations about Fair Trade to show the relevance of Fair Trade to different communities. The presentations will cover for example, cotton production for Gujaratis, and football and carpet weaving for Punjabis. They will also make links to people's faiths, considering how their faiths consider issues of justice. The presentations will then guide people to consider what actions they can take, such as selling Fair Trade produce in their shops, or making their temple or gurdwara Fair Trade.

### Reasons for applying to the Faiths in Action grant fund

Grassroots applied to FiA because they needed funding to make the projects happen and felt that the fund was a good fit. They found the fund's staff encouraging and the application process made it easy to apply, in comparison with many other grant funds.

## The community development approach

### *Application process*

The project manager notes that he saw a real difference in how CDF approached grant-making. In particular, the whole process of applying to FiA was very simple. He comments that a level of trust was demonstrated that is not seen in other grant funds. This was evident in a number of ways. The form was simple, so that it was not important to be an expert in form-filling. The questions were straightforward and not seeming to try to 'catch you out'. The funder seemed to have realistic expectations about how articulate the applicant organisation could be on paper. The application form was laid out in a logical fashion, so that questions flowed in much the same way that the project plans had been prepared. This meant that there was not a lot of extra work required.

CDF also offered support to the project to apply. In the project manager's words, this 'enabled the knowledge to be uncovered, to blossom and bloom'. This was matched by the funder's attitude, so that the organisation never felt intimidated by the funder. Any approaches to the funder were always responded to promptly and in a simple and appropriate way.

### *How a community development approach made this funding different*

The project manager notes that the whole attitude is different. Staff have a 'sense of humility', they behave in a way that is enabling and empowering.

### *Design and delivery: practical suggestions*

The project manager made the following suggestions:

- Make the fund as unbureaucratic as possible, so that people are not discouraged from applying.
- Offer help, at the application stage and beyond. Be open to helping the applicant organisations to develop, for example through helping them to devise the policies they need to be eligible and then inviting a reapplication.

- Show trust towards the applicant and funded projects. Aim for a relationship where the funder accompanies the project. Give people a sense of dignity.
- Be available and approachable, even though this will cost more money.

“From my perspective, the biggest difference the community development approach made was a very human and humane interaction with applicants. You always remember how you’ve been made to feel – valued, encouraged.”

**Organisation name:** Grassroots

**Grant fund:** Faiths in Action

**Grant amount:** £12,000

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## Chapter Four

# Delivery

At the delivery stage, the funder is keen that the groups are delivering the work that they have been given a grant to do, and that the intended outcomes are being achieved. This is not just about accountability, but also about ensuring that the funding programme is making the difference in communities that it was set up to do.

A community development approach to the delivery stage of a grants programme will be focused on supporting the funded projects and ‘being there’ to help deal with any issues as they arise.

### Ongoing support

Support is the backbone of a community development approach. It can take a number of forms:

- Finding out what support groups might need to deliver their project when, or very soon after, they have been offered a grant. The key here is to approach this in an appropriate way, so that the project manager feels comfortable to talk about weakness where they may benefit from support. Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants, for example, sent a representative of the Fund to meet the projects and to have this conversation face to face. In this way, the group can get to know the ‘human face’ of the funder and feel more confident to talk. Other support the funder can typically give at this stage includes giving advice on setting up monitoring

and evaluation systems; identifying policies that should be in place such as to support vulnerable adults; signposting to or providing templates; and answering queries about what the funder is expecting of the project during delivery.

- Offering opportunities for networking between a number of projects all supported by the same grant fund. This could be through events, as was done with Neighbourhood Support Fund which ran quarterly networking meetings at a regional level, or it could be virtual, for example an online forum. The networking gives the funder a chance to give out information, advice or training to help the projects with different aspects of delivery. Often, projects find it particularly helpful in relation to monitoring and future sustainability. There is also a real benefit for the groups in terms of meeting and communicating with other groups who are either doing similar work or working in the same locality. The support therefore is not just from funder to group, but also from group to group.
- Later on in the delivery process, when problems come up and need to be dealt with, the most valuable support that a funder can offer is to be accessible to the group and willing to offer advice. It is important that funders respond promptly to requests for help, offered in a manner which the group feel comfortable with. The support is therefore not just practical advice, but also confidence boosting. A funder that can react positively to hearing from a group about the difficulties they are having will be hugely valued by that group. There are also benefits for the funder, in that if the problems are overcome, the project is more likely to be completed and achieve the intended outcomes. There may also be added value in terms of the skills and confidence that the group gains from dealing successfully with the experience.

The funder's role is to make support available, and to ensure that people know about it, but not to force people to take advantage of it.

## Flexibility

As we noted in the programme design chapter, any project, however well planned, is likely to need to change in some way during its delivery, to meet changing circumstances. This may be to overcome unexpected problems, or it may relate to different needs that are starting to emerge in the community. Also, where a community development approach is applied by the group that is funded, they may rely on deciding the details of the project's activity during the course of the project itself, in response to participants.

If the funding programme has been designed with a focus on outcomes, it is possible to be flexible about the route by which the agreed outcomes are achieved. So it does not matter if the exact activities are different to what was proposed in the funding application so long as they lead to the intended outcomes. Working this way is empowering for the funded organisation. However, it is not always an easy approach for funders to adopt, as it is quite different to how grant funds tend to operate; that is, with agreed activities and outputs. It may therefore require some changes in attitudes and working practices.

## Summary: Benefits of a community development approach to delivery

- Organisations are more likely to achieve the outcomes they have been funded for, and therefore to make the difference that they had intended in their community.
- Reacting positively to changing needs is one way of empowering the organisations and communities that have been funded, as this recognises their ability to articulate problems and find a way round them.
- The relationship between the funder and the group which has been funded becomes stronger, with benefits felt by both.

## Case studies

The case studies presented below show how the funder has contributed to the delivery of the projects. The **Cardigan Centre's Youthpoint Directions** found it helpful that the funder focused on the outcomes rather than the way in which it did the work, as this enabled it to react to changing circumstances. Similarly, for **Theatre Studio West**, the important thing was that the funder set the right balance between making sure the money was being used responsibly and giving it the freedom to do the work. The **Nishkam Centre** found that the ongoing communication with the funder helped it to maintain focus for its project. The networking events were useful in many ways, including making contacts with other local groups who it could call on when it needed ideas or help.

## Case Study

Organisation:

**Cardigan Centre**

Project name:

**Youthpoint Directions**

### Project purpose

The Cardigan Centre set up Youthpoint in 1995 to support local young people aged 13–19 who were not engaging in education or training. A consultation with young people had shown they wanted to have somewhere they could drop in to if they needed help, wanted someone to talk to, or where they could just find things out.

Everything that the centre does is young people-centred, with young people key to shaping its activities and active in its governance. The Neighbourhood Support Fund (NSF)-funded project offered tailored support packages to help young people overcome barriers to participation in education, training and employment.

### Main activities of the project

The NSF-funded project had two components. Youthpoint offered issue-based group work, such as developing social skills, anger management, over 8 to 12 weeks, in schools or in the community. The project also offered one-to-one support so that young people could carry on receiving support if it was needed after the group work finished.

### Reason for applying to the Neighbourhood Support Fund

The Centre was looking for a grant fund aimed at small community-based projects specifically for young people. As the

project noted, NSF 'fitted really well with the way we work'. Although they had had grants before, this was their first large grant. They see this as fundamental to the project's growth since then.

## Project outcomes

The youth work manager notes outcomes for individuals and the project.

### For individuals

- Young people have gone back to school after not attending for a long time, feeling more confident to do so and knowing that there are support structures there for them if they need them.
- Young people are getting jobs. Several are choosing youth and community work, following their positive experiences with Youthpoint Directions.

### For Youthpoint

- They could develop the skills of the staff and also their volunteers. One former volunteer young person is now a senior member of the Centre's staff.
- Youthpoint has expanded considerably, moving from employing one worker to 17.
- NSF funding gave them the time to 'really listen' to young people and develop work to meet their needs. The range of project activities is much wider and reaches more young people, including offering an alternative curriculum programme and the 'Making It Happen' initiative where young people are given the support to make their own ideas for local community projects happen.
- Youthpoint has been successful in winning substantial new grant funding, for example with Connexions, taking on some

of the work originally done with NSF funds and expanding into new work.

- The project model used with NSF is still being used in the development of new pieces of work.

## The community development approach

### *Project delivery*

The youth work manager notes that NSF was focused on project outcomes and was not prescriptive about *how* the project did the work. NSF let them find the best way to reach their intended outcomes within an overall framework. Because the activities were not absolutely laid out, they were able to adapt to meet changing circumstances, such as new funding becoming available.

NSF staff locally and within CDF were responsive to issues that came up with the project. Project staff felt comfortable about phoning up and talking to them at any time, or to raise issues at networking meetings organised by NSF for all projects that they funded in the region.

The NSF programme offered a balance between local autonomy and a national support structure that the youth work manager found invaluable. Although there was freedom to work as they wished, the project staff also had access to many training and development opportunities. These included information-based support, such as child protection and safeguarding, and networking meetings. They were an excellent opportunity to meet other local, regional and national providers, and to learn from them.

The youth work manager worked with other NSF-funded projects to write best practice case studies; it was helpful to meet other people doing similar work and to share best practice. This was one element of the positive attitude to

learning that the project manager describes, where the NSF programme offered ‘lots of recognition of good practice’ which she found encouraging and helped to overcome the feeling of the project working in a vacuum.

*How a community development approach made this funding different*

There were two factors that the youth work manager singles out as making NSF different. First, the amount of flexibility for the project to respond to changing community needs. Secondly, the amount of trust that NSF demonstrated towards the project. Although there were requirements for auditing and accountability, the demands for monitoring were not bureaucratic or overbearing. They therefore had more time to work with young people, rather than having to be in the office providing evidence of it.

*Design and delivery: practical suggestions*

The youth work manager made the following suggestions:

- Look at the outcomes and achievements, keep the process flexible.
- Trust the organisations to do the work. There should be regular monitoring and audit, but it should not be too onerous.
- Offer local responsiveness together with a national support infrastructure.

‘From my perspective, the biggest difference the community development approach made was being able to respond to the changing needs in the community and be flexible to what young people are saying.’

**Organisation name:** Cardigan Centre

**Grant fund:** Neighbourhood Support Fund

**Grant amount:** £215,292 over six years

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## Case Study

Organisation/project name:

**Theatre Studio West**

### Project purpose

Theatre Studio West was set up to give young people from socially and economically deprived areas in South Acton the chance to get involved with all forms of art and theatre. Seventy-one per cent of the young people that Studio Theatre West works with are from BME communities.

The founder grew up on the South Acton estate and knew what it was like to grow up in the community with nothing to do. Now a trained actor, she was shown round youth theatre projects in New York and wanted to bring the positive benefits of that work back to her own community.

It has proved to be very popular. When Theatre Studio West first opened their doors they had 114 young people wanting to take up the 45 places. Since then they have developed a good reputation with young people in the area. People come back again and again to take part in their projects.

### Main activities of the project

Theatre Studio West runs workshops and rehearsals that lead to a performance. They cover all forms of visual and performance art and young people are involved both in the performances and back stage.

Theatre Studio West used the funding from Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants (CCPlus) to put together a themed performance on the Seven Deadly Sins. They explored what these meant to young people today through music, dance and poetry.

## Reasons for applying to Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants

Theatre Studio West felt that CCPlus had the right ethos and supported everything that they wanted to do. The funding represented community groups such as theirs and supported activities that give communities a positive voice.

### Project outcomes

There have been some very tangible outcomes. Around 650 people saw the Seven Deadly Sins performance. Theatre Studio West has 16 additional volunteers and has been asked to run the project again with another group of young people. There have also been other positive outcomes particularly around community cohesion. The project:

- Challenged and explored the participants' preconceptions about people from different races and faiths.
- Explored some difficult issues, including drugs and gangs, in a non-threatening way using drama and music.
- Created a shared sense of belonging among the participants around the goal of working creatively together.
- Encouraged participants to express themselves positively and find their voices.
- Helped young people think about how they should respond to issues in the wider community.
- Brought together young people from 16 different nationalities.

## The community development approach

### Delivery

For Theatre Studio West, the key aspect of CCPlus was that the funder allowed them to set the delivery criteria. They had

to complete a detailed proposal but then were allowed to get on and run the project. The director says this worked brilliantly for them. It was the right balance between making sure they were going to use the money in a responsible way and freeing them up to run the project with the tutors and the young people at the centre.

The stringent proposal had encouraged them to plan everything out clearly so that when they came to run the project, they knew what they were going to do, when and how much it would cost. They feel that the level of information CCPlus required from them when they were delivering the project was perfect. It was enough to keep them in line with the Fund requirements but didn't take time away from delivering their activities.

#### *How a community development approach made this funding different*

Theatre Studio West says that it is rare that small community organisations such as theirs are able to apply for so much funding and it meant a lot to them. They could be confident that they had enough money to do what they wanted to do and it made it easier for them to showcase what the young people could do. They also felt that CCPlus fitted in with the way they work and that the funder shared the same aspirations as the participants and tutors.

#### *Design and Delivery: practical suggestions*

From Theatre Studio West's perspective, the right balance between doing and reporting is essential if funders want to support a community development approach. They make the following points:

- Long proposals that make sure that groups meet the funding criteria are fine, but then leave the groups alone to get on with the project.
- Delivery and monitoring criteria should be light touch, so that groups run by volunteers aren't asked to spend days

doing monitoring and evaluation. There isn't the capacity or the funding within community groups to support this.

‘From my perspective, the biggest difference the community development approach made was it allowed us to facilitate a whole project without worrying about whether we could include 68 kids in a really intense community project. And it allowed us to do it to a really good standard.’

**Organisation name:** Theatre Studio West

**Grant fund:** Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants

**Grant amount:** £10,987.

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## Case Study

Organisation:

**Nishkam Community Association**

Project name:

**The Nishkam Centre**

### Project purpose

The Nishkam Community Association is a Sikh faith-led civic development organisation. It aims to draw on the spirituality and energy from the gurdwara on the same site to run a centre that can act as an anchor or hub for the wider local community in Handsworth.

The Association was aware of tensions in the local area, within and between faiths, cultures and nationalities. Members wanted to put into practice their aim to work for the wellbeing of all by bringing these communities together, and increase understanding, awareness and interaction.

### Main activities of the project

The Association has set up a steering group comprising representatives of different faith communities (including Christian, Sikh, Muslim) and from new organisations and local Government structures operating at local level (including, Birmingham Citizens, Birmingham Street Pastors, Chamberlain Forum and Handsworth Neighbourhood Management). The group is now planning the project's work, which will run over two years.

There will be two main strands to the work – a series of community days, and community dialogue workshops. The community days will bring people from the different communities together to 'tell their story' – where they are from, what they do, what they feel are the issues confronting

their community, what they feel the tensions with other communities are, their aspirations and hopes for the future. This will be backed up with an introductory guide or community profile in printed and electronic versions. The community dialogue workshops will focus on areas of tension, using skilled facilitators to help participants talk to one another in a safe environment. The aim is to come out with some agreement on potential solutions and a way ahead.

There will also be two annual events to celebrate the developing relationships and the journey that they are taking together.

## Reasons for applying to the Faiths in Action grant fund

The project lead was familiar with Government policy relating to faith communities, particularly *Face to face and side by side: A framework for partnership in our multi faith society* (CLG, 2008) and felt that this was in line with what the Nishkam Community Association was trying to achieve. As he notes, it was 'strategically aligned with our mission, vision and values'. It was clear that the same thinking was behind the Faiths in Action (FiA) funding programme, so it was an excellent fit for them.

## The community development approach

### *Project delivery*

The most important thing identified by the project lead was the way that the funding is acting as a strategic lever to bring about change – in the community and in the organisation itself. Through the 'journey' of planning the project, making the application and beginning to deliver the work, the people who are involved are introduced to new thoughts, ideas and experiences. The requirement for simple monitoring helps the project to stay in line with the original project plan, and avoid being drawn into other things.

The fact that the funder is coming back to the organisation to find out more about the project's work is helping the project manager and his team to 'stay focused and sharp'. It is also helping them to think about the best ways of working.

The project manager finds it useful to attend events held by the funder, as it helps the project avoid becoming too insular. It also enables the project manager to meet people. Sometimes the benefit is just putting a face to a name, other times it is about building networks which he can then call on if he needs help or ideas to tackle a particular situation. The guidance documents and other publications provided by the funder are also helpful.

#### *How a community development approach made this funding different*

The FiA programme has offered support at all stages, including checking at the very start of the funding what support the project might need to help them with delivery.

The monitoring systems are not onerous, which the project manager felt was appropriate given the scale of the grant.

#### *Design and deliver: practical suggestions*

The project manager made the following suggestions:

- Don't make the application form too hard. Make sure that you, the funder, are asking the right questions and are looking for the right information that will tell you what you need to know.
- Be aware of the amount of work that the project has to do within its own organisation to be able to make an application and to deliver the project work.
- In designing the programme, be careful to ensure that faith-based organisations are not excluded. Be aware of how their work can make a difference in the wider community.

‘From my perspective, the biggest difference the community development approach made was enabling us to focus on faith in action, to reach out to potential natural partners to work with them to make a difference.’

**Project name:** The Nishkam Centre

**Organisation name:** Nishkam Community Association

**Grant fund:** Faiths in Action

**Grant amount:** £11,955.

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## Chapter Five

# Monitoring

With the funded projects underway, the groups delivering the projects and the funder need to know what progress is being made. Monitoring refers to the regular collecting and analysis of information that explains what activities have been done and what the outputs and outcomes are. For example, in relation to what was planned, how many after-school activity sessions for young people have been held, how many young people came and what they did at these sessions. There could also be more detailed analysis to give a more in-depth picture of progress. For example, groups could look at where the young people taking part in their projects come from and whether there are some parts of the neighbourhood where young people are not getting involved.

Community groups may be worried about the monitoring requirements of the funder, or they may not even be aware that they are expected to monitor their work. A community development approach to monitoring is focused on being open about the requirements and supporting groups to meet those requirements.

### Clear communication about monitoring requirements

Every funder's monitoring requirements are different, so even for experienced community groups, it is important that funders are clear about what is required. For those groups who have

never had funding before and who are unfamiliar with the whole notion of monitoring and inexperienced at doing it, monitoring is a real challenge.

The first step for the funder is to communicate its monitoring requirements as early as possible. Ideally, this happens at the application stage, perhaps by including some basic information in the guidance materials. The way that the application form is designed can help with monitoring later on, by asking applicants to set out information in a way that they can refer back to easily.

As soon as groups have been awarded funding, it is important that funders remind them about the monitoring they will need to do. Commonly, this forms part of the grant notification letter or acceptance paperwork, but it can also be done at an event such as the monitoring and evaluation training workshops run by Bradford Community Empowerment Network (see below). The benefit of the latter is that attendees have the chance to get more detailed information and to ask any questions they may have. It is also a chance for the funder to be seen face-to-face, and to get to know the groups and their projects better, which will pay dividends in the longer term. The events are also a great opportunity for networking, giving groups a chance to get to know one another.

Local funder snapshot

Bradford Community Empowerment Network (CNET)

CNET's community development-based approach to grant-making is centred on the core philosophy of capacity building. All organisations that receive Grassroots Grants funding are given specific support about monitoring, so that they know what is expected of them. They are each invited to attend one of a series of monitoring and evaluation training workshops, where the funder explains what monitoring is, what the funded organisations are expected to do and why.

Small organisations often lack experience of monitoring, and may not keep records of their activities. They need support to understand what they have to gather information about regularly and why the funder needs this information.

CNET keeps monitoring requirements deliberately simple. A monitoring question might be, 'How do you know that your project has made a difference to your local area and the lives of the people in your community?'

### What makes this approach successful?

- The workshop-based training helps funded organisations to understand why monitoring is important, and how to go about it.
- The information the funder seeks from the groups is not complicated.

### Helpful hints

- Make sure that you are not asking for more information than you really need.
- Be flexible in the kinds of monitoring information groups can give you, including press cuttings, photos and letters from beneficiaries.

#### For more information, contact:

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## Simplicity

Bearing in mind the fact that the funded groups may be unfamiliar with monitoring and initially at least, may lack the necessary skills, the systems that the funder sets up and the information that they ask for should be as simple as possible. For example, reporting forms in Word tend to work well, as this is a software package that is widely accessible and people are mostly familiar with.

Ideally, the monitoring requirements will be appropriate to the scale of funding and designed in a way that is easy for the funded organisation to work with (rather than the funder).

## Ongoing support

As with the application and delivery stages, providing support for monitoring is a key pillar of the community development approach.

As noted above, the first element of support is likely to be helping some of the funded groups to understand what is required of them. This will be particularly important for small community groups for whom this is their first experience of receiving a grant, and who therefore do not have experience of the monitoring terminology and typical types of information asked of them. One Grassroots Grants local funder, the Community Council for Shropshire, produced a list of examples of the kinds of monitoring information that would be acceptable for different types of activities (see below).

Later on, the support is more likely to involve helping with specific problems in meeting the requirements.

### Local funder snapshot

### Community Council for Shropshire

The starting point for the Community Council for Shropshire was that they did not assume that the groups which were funded understood how to monitor their work. They provided a variety of different support mechanisms to help the groups with monitoring. Their overall approach was to help groups to think about their work, rather than to be prescriptive about monitoring requirements.

Community Council staff explained why monitoring and the information from the groups was important for them as the funder, so that groups understood the purpose of the monitoring.

Then they gave each group a list of examples of the kind of monitoring information that they might be able to produce, depending on the type of activity. So if a group was planning to run events, the list suggested completed attendance sheets. For training courses, it suggested copies of participants' certificate. For equipment purchases, the Community Council suggested copies of receipts.

### What made this approach successful?

The approach was successful because it worked for groups and for the funder alike. For groups, they were given the support they needed to provide the information required of them. If the initial 'crib sheet' was not enough, Community Council staff would give them one-to-one help. For the Community Council, they were able to get the data they needed to provide to the Community Development Foundation for audit and accountability purposes.

The added benefit was the skills and experience gained by the groups as a result of the extra support. This puts them in a good position when they receive grants from other funders who may be able to offer less direct support but still expect good quality monitoring returns.

### Helpful hints

- Be prepared to go back to groups to seek clarification or a bit more information.
- Be accepting of a group's inexperience. Be gentle in your approach, so that the groups can learn in a constructive way.

### For more information, contact:

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## For the benefit of the project and the funder

The monitoring information should be useful for both the funded group and the funder. They will both probably be under pressure to deliver against their targets, so need to have the right information to help them understand how well they are doing, or where more work needs to be done. Reflecting community development values, ideally the funder and the groups will work together on this and will recognise the benefit of doing so.

Getting the monitoring right will make a big difference to how effective the evaluation can be. Both the projects and the funder will want to know and to demonstrate what difference their work has made, but this depends on each playing a part.

## Summary: Benefits of a community development approach to monitoring

- Project staff and volunteers understand more about monitoring, so they can do it effectively for this grant fund and also better in the future, whether reporting to a funder or for their own information.
- The funder receives better quality monitoring information, which is an advantage in relation to meeting audit requirements, as well as contributing to programme evaluation.

The case studies presented below show how funders and projects have worked well together in relation to funding. Through their monitoring, **Invizible Circle Education** found that their project needed to evolve and they wanted to redirect their activities. The project welcomed the flexible and positive reaction from the funder, based on evidence from Invizible Circle Education's monitoring returns. The **Northbourne Street Youth Initiative** found the initial explanations about what was required and the ongoing support they had from the funder meant they could meet the funder's monitoring requirements, as well as improve their confidence and capabilities.

## Case Study

Organisation:

**Invizible Circle Education**

Project name:

**Community Edutainment**

### Project purpose

Invizible Circle Education is a BME-led grass roots youth and community education organisation made up of experienced artists, educators and community developers. They specialise in getting excluded and disaffected young people (primarily aged 13 to 22) back into mainstream education and society through creative arts programmes, workshops, events, interactive learning resources and training. The organisation also provides a range of other programmes for all ages, focusing on self development, enabling volunteering opportunities and all round community development.

They are based in Chapeltown in Leeds, an area with high rates of school exclusions, drugs and crime, and broken families.

The project built on the organisation's experience of running events that mix entertainment with an educational purpose. The Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants (CCPlus) funding was intended to run a series of events called Community Edutainment (Education through Entertainment). These would provide local people with the means to engage with and influence public decision-makers, for example with the police, housing, health service, local colleges, the local authority area management team, as well as other public and third sector organisations. However, after the first two events which focused on improving engagement, giving feedback on previous consultations and highlighting routes for involvement, the local authority began to run their own events. The project felt that it

would be better to shift the delivery methods of its work. The CCPlus funding would now be better spent in both supporting the local authority's events and working in other ways to find out what people thought about public consultation and their involvement in statutory service delivery.

### Main activities of the project

Following the two consultation events, the project's work shifted emphasis, becoming more internet based. Project staff interviewed people about their experiences of public consultation, then posted the videos on YouTube. Local public sector organisations and other organisations holding community events were then directed to the website so the project could see what local people thought. The local community was also able to use the site to find out information from statutory providers.

### Reasons for applying to Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants

IC Education felt that CCPlus supported the use of a community development approach within the project. The essence of the Edutainment project had already been planned and the CCPlus funding was a good fit, with very few tweaks being needed.

### Project outcomes

The project manager noted that within three months of the first events there was a significant increase in community events in the area. Service providers were now running their own events as they saw more clearly the benefits of community consultation, feedback and involvement through such events.

The project targeted people from BME communities as they tend to feel the most excluded from the formal structures around public services. As a result of the project, those communities:

- Knew more about how local services are decided and delivered.
- Had greater confidence to get involved in public services.
- Got the chance to comment on current public services and consultation processes.
- Were able to attend events to share understanding and break down barriers.

## The community development approach

### *Monitoring*

IC Education believes that monitoring is central to a community development approach. The project manager explains: 'There is a gap between applying for the funding, setting up your project and running it, and you need to be able to respond to any changing needs in that time. We hope funders can also respond to that and remain flexible.'

The project manager feels that this worked well with CCPlus, who responded positively to their request to change the emphasis of the project now that local service delivery organisations were running their own community consultation events. The project manager emailed CDF and quickly got a response saying they supported the organisation's suggestion. The important thing had been to provide a good explanation of why the project needed to change the delivery method.

### *How a community development approach made this funding different*

IC Education felt the community development approach meant that the funder shared common aims with the organisation. The funder understood the ways the project needed to work and, crucially, was receptive to changing the way the project was delivered.

The interim monitoring reports CCPlus required were relatively light and so easier for IC Education to deliver

without taking time away from running the project. The funder asked for basic budget information every quarter which the group also found helpful for keeping them on track.

The whole experience of CCPlus funding has been very positive for IC Education. Significantly, they feel they have been given the chance to show they can manage, monitor and report on a grant-funded project, which will help them get funding in the future.

### *Design and delivery: practical suggestions*

IC Education has some clear pointers for funders that want to take a community development approach:

- Look at providing more money for capacity building with small organisations, rather than putting all capacity-building money into bigger organisations and registered charities.
- Build in longer timeframes – a community development approach would benefit hugely from a period of 18 months to properly plan, run and evaluate a project.
- Support legacy work. A lot of the outcomes from a community development-based project come later on, particularly when working with excluded young people. It is important to know that the project has changed the mindset of the young people over six months, a year, or longer, rather than just for the weeks that the project is running.
- Funders need to understand that community development requires balancing the risk of allocating public money with trusting smaller organisations with that money. More often, the grass roots is where the real community change can be achieved.

“From my perspective, the biggest difference the community development approach made was we weren't squeezing our project to fit with the

funding. The match and common principles were already there. ’

**Organisation name:** Invizible Circle Education

**Grant fund:** Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants

**Grant amount:** £10,980.

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## Case Study

Organisation:

Northbourne Street Youth Initiative

Project name:

Northbourne Street Youth Initiative

### Project purpose

Home Group provides affordable and supported housing in the UK. It manages 52,000 homes and provides care and support services to more than 18,000 people each year. Over 15 years ago, the organisation began to employ community development workers as one route towards improving the communities where Home Group had housing.

A community development worker based in the West End of Newcastle supported local residents of the housing estate around Northbourne Street to carry out research into their neighbourhood. Through this work they identified a lack of facilities and services for young people locally. People in the community were at the same time concerned about anti-social behaviour and the need for diversionary activities for young people. Home Group provided a 'community house' which has been used since then as the base for the early youth work and now houses the Youth Initiative.

With support from the community development worker, residents applied for Neighbourhood Support Fund (NSF) funding for the Youth Initiative. The funding was used to provide a series of activities for young people, so that there was a safe place for them to go and something to do. The aim was to give them opportunities which they had not previously had, as well as addressing the problems of anti-social behaviour.

## Main activities of the project

The project began by providing a variety of activities four nights a week after school hours and during school holidays. The funding paid for a youth worker to plan and deliver these activities with support from several local residents as volunteers. The funding also enabled the project to buy the equipment needed. The kinds of activities on offer included DJing and MCing, a pool table, bicycles, kayaking, Duke of Edinburgh award scheme and go-karting.

As the project developed and the funding increased, another youth worker was employed and activities on offer expanded. The project became more about raising young people's aspirations, helping with personal and social development (for example drugs awareness, sexual health) and addressing the issues of young people not in education, employment or training. 'Initially we were a youth club, then a youth club with so much more.'

## Reasons for applying to the Neighbourhood Support Fund

The organisation applied to NSF because it was a good fit with the aims of its project, in particular that it was for local people, in a community-based setting and allowed quite a lot of flexibility within the main structure.

## Project outcomes

The project manager notes a number of outcomes:

- Although it is unlikely to be fully attributable to the project, there was a noticeable drop in crime and anti-social behaviour in the community by young people. The project believe they made a difference by providing activities that were interesting for young people and ones that they wanted to do.

- The housing estate around Northbourne Street was going through a difficult time of demolition and regeneration, so the project gave everyone something different to focus on, where they could see something positive being done.
- For the young people, the project provided somewhere for them to go, to do things they wanted to do.

## The community development approach

### *Monitoring*

The community development worker was new in post and had not been previously involved with fund-raising or the monitoring requirements related to having received a grant. She found that the NSF approach to monitoring was very supportive, which made all the difference to her.

Most importantly, she was able to develop a close working relationship with the CDF staff member responsible for monitoring, so that she felt comfortable to ask questions and seek help. She could ring up with a problem, and would get a useful response that same day.

NSF was asking the project to provide quantitative and qualitative monitoring information, which was a completely new approach for the youth initiative manager. It involved building up personal files for each young person, including attendance records, as well as a qualitative annual report about the project as a whole. She took a 'learning by doing' approach, which worked because she could get support from CDF, who explained what was needed and, if something was missed out, what it was they were looking for. The requirements were straightforward; it was clear what the funder was asking for.

CDF visited the project, which gave both the community development worker and youth initiative manager a real understanding of where the project was 'coming from'. CDF kept in touch on a regular basis, through phone, email and letters. The project found it particularly helpful to have

feedback collated from monitoring returns from all the other NSF-funded projects in the north-east, which meant that they could compare their work with other projects. Quarterly networking meetings organised with the other projects were also helpful for sharing good practice about monitoring (among other things).

#### *How a community development approach made this funding different*

The community development worker noted specifically the support which was offered, which enabled them to become much more organised and professional in their approach to monitoring, and in fact, the project as a whole.

#### *Design and delivery: practical suggestions*

The community development worker made the following suggestions:

- Make sure that the applicant organisation can show how the local community is involved right from the start, which will make a big difference to ownership of the project in the longer term.
- As the funder, take an individual, personal approach. Have someone available at the end of the phone. Take the time to get to know the projects; go and visit.
- Offer networking events and meetings with other local projects funded from the same grant.
- Share feedback from the collated monitoring returns amongst the funded projects, so that they can compare progress.

“From my perspective, the biggest difference the community development approach made was having the young people and residents involved from the very beginning of the project, which has made it as long-lasting as it is.”

**Organisation name:** Northbourne Street Youth Initiative

**Grant fund:** Neighbourhood Support Fund

**Grant amount:** £188,859 over six years.

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## Chapter Six

# Project and programme evaluation and learning

Although monitoring and evaluation are often referred to in a single phrase, 'Monitoring and Evaluation', they are not the same thing. As noted in the previous chapter, monitoring refers to collecting ongoing information about activities, outputs and outcomes. Evaluation is about analysing and reviewing the 'big picture'.

In terms of grant funds, an evaluation helps the funder to know whether they are heading in the right direction with their programme, or whether adjustments are needed to the processes and structures. The evaluation also measures impact: what difference is the programme making for its target communities? All the learning that emerges from the evaluation can then be fed back in to the programme in order to bring about improvements. It can also be shared with a wider audience who might also be able to draw on the learning, for example other funders, Government departments, community-based organisations and so on. The Wolverhampton Network Consortium (see page 94) is a good example of how one funder is sharing evaluation within the wider community and then using the learning to shape its funding programme.

There will be evaluation of the funding programme as a whole, as well as of the individual projects that are funded by the programme.

A community development approach is demonstrated through being open about what is being done and how it needs to be

done for the evaluation. It also means helping everyone involved with the programme to have a chance to take part and to contribute to the learning, and then sharing the learning with others. Wolverhampton Network Consortium, for example, asked each of their funded groups to bring along another group to a celebration event to find out about Grassroots Grants (see overleaf).

### Raising awareness and building understanding

Evaluation is often regarded as the preserve of specialists. ‘Ordinary’ people, such as those running or volunteering with projects, or programme delivery staff, may not know much about evaluation. A community development approach recognises that everyone involved with a grants programme can have something to offer to an evaluation, but that being able to do so is based first and foremost on understanding what evaluation is and why it is important.

Several CDF grant programmes have provided targeted training and information about evaluation for the projects that they have funded. This could be through specific training events, at a general networking event or as part of a one-to-one visit to the project. Participants have noted how valuable it was to have the basics explained to them, in particular why evaluation mattered. It was also important that the person delivering the training or telling them about evaluation used straightforward language, and was not patronising.

From the funder’s point of view, the sooner that they can raise people’s awareness about evaluation and what will be expected of them, the better. As with monitoring, ideally the concept will be introduced at the pre-application phase, and information provided as part of the published programme guidance.

### Having a voice

Evaluation takes on the values of community development through seeking to hear from people across the spectrum of the grant programme’s activities, and valuing what people have

to say. The Grassroots Grants programme is a good example of how the views of community groups have influenced the shape of delivery of a grant fund locally and have fed into evaluation of the whole programme.

CDF has helped the Grassroots Grants local funder organisations to strengthen their evaluation understanding and practice. This in turn has helped local funders to design and run evaluation systems that are effective in enabling the funded projects to have a say. There are two main ways that CDF has offered this support.

First, soon after local funders were appointed, the CDF evaluation team sent each local funder an evaluation resource pack. This included a variety of materials: an introduction explaining what CDF required of them in terms of evaluation, and why evaluation was important; details of LEAP (Barr and Dailly, 2008), CDF's recommended approach for evaluation; summary ideas for evaluation methodologies, such as interviews and discussion groups; template questionnaires for local funders to use if they wished to establish baselines with funded groups and at the end of a project.

Second, CDF's evaluation team have continued to offer support during the delivery of the programme. One key part of this is analysing data from the questionnaires completed by the funded voluntary and community groups. Local funders can, if they wish, submit quarterly spreadsheets of their data. CDF will send them back an analysis report, providing the local funder with an overview of the combined responses of the projects they are managing. This information is also being used in the main evaluation reports, which will enable local funders to benchmark and compare their own work with that of all the local funders.

Community groups may need support to contribute effectively to the evaluation process relating to their own projects, for example through specific training, such as that offered by Bradford Community Empowerment Network (see opposite),

or by one-to-one support from a staff member, the approach adopted by the Community Council for Shropshire (see overleaf).

This begins, as noted above, by understanding the purpose of evaluation and what is expected of them. However, it could also mean learning about appropriate information-gathering techniques or ways to use the information which they have.

Local funder snapshot

Bradford Community Empowerment Network (CNET)

CNET's community development-based approach to grant-making is built around the capacity building and empowerment philosophy which underlies their work with applicant and funded organisations. In relation to evaluation, this means that CNET provides support to organisations receiving Grassroots Grants funding so they know what is expected of them. They also hold an annual evaluation and learning event for everyone to have their say.

All funded organisations are asked to attend one of a series of monitoring and evaluation workshops. The aims are to explain what monitoring and evaluation are, what the organisations are expected to do, and why. CNET goes through the different ways in which an organisation can provide evaluation findings, such as DVDs, photos and written reports.

Their annual Grants Review Day is a crucial way to reflect on the programme's achievements and processes. CNET invite a range of stakeholders, including partner organisations, assessment panel members, successful and unsuccessful grant applicant organisations. Some of the funded groups present their work on the day, and workshops are held to enable participants to feed back on the process and their ideas for how Grassroots Grants could work better in future. CNET's grants officers note that people made many useful suggestions that CNET has put into practice. Examples include different ways of publicising the fund, changing the wording on the application form so that some questions are clearer, and

deciding on criteria for making assessment decisions so that the decision-making process is fairer.

### What makes this approach successful?

- The training at the monitoring and evaluation workshops helps funded organisations to understand why evaluation is important, and how to go about it.
- CNET really listens to people's comments and shows them they are being used, so people are confident to keep on making suggestions.

### Helpful hints

- Make use of the suggestions made at a review day, so that people can see they are being listened to.

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### Local funder snapshot

### Community Council for Shropshire

The Community Council prepared an evaluation plan for their Grassroots Grants programme, looking at the projects and the programme as a whole.

As part of this, they visited 20% of the projects funded in the first year. They were keen to do the visits, as they felt that this helped to create more of a human feel.

The evaluation information that they sought focused on getting the groups to 'tell the story' of the work that had been funded. This could be in any format that the group liked, for example photo diaries, quotes, and reports. Groups were asked to collect as much information as they could. Groups were also asked about unexpected changes – positive or negative – that had happened.

The Community Council is also evaluating the local Grassroots Grants programme as a whole. As each funded project ended, the Community Council sent the group an end-of-grant report form, to get input from funded groups. The form asked for their feedback on their experience of the programme, including how easy the application form was, how helpful the Community Council were as a funder, how many hours the group had had to spend on administering the grant (for example collecting monitoring information), how the Community Council could improve as a funder. Feedback is also being sought from members of the grants assessment panel, covering issues such as how they perceive their workload, the application form and the guidance provided to them as assessors. Together with feedback from Community Council staff, all the returns are being analysed and pulled together in an evaluation report which the Community Council will use to inform the programme in its second year.

### What made this approach successful?

The Community Council is evaluating the difference each project is making, and the Grassroots Grants programme itself. They are making sure that all the different players are given a chance to have a say.

The projects are getting the support they need to be able to contribute to the evaluation. In relation to their own projects, groups are gaining important skills that will stand them in good stead with other funders. Also, the funder encouraged them to respond in ways that they felt comfortable with, so that they could tell their story. Besides giving the Community Council the information they needed, it was also an invaluable way for the projects to recognise the distance they had travelled. The Council's project manager noted that the stories they received really show the human values that underlie the purpose of the Grassroots Grants fund.

### Helpful hints

- Be prepared to receive large quantities of evaluation information from the groups.

Be prepared to give different amounts of support to groups, depending on their familiarity with evaluation.

For more information, contact:

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## Planning and delivering evaluation

In everyday life, it can be difficult to devote time and attention to evaluation. Ideally, the funder's evaluation framework will recognise the commitments that people already have and will, as far as possible, work with them. The evaluation requirements need to be proportionate to the size of grants, but however small a grant, it is still essential that there is some review of what has been done, how, and what was achieved.

### Local funder snapshot

### Wolverhampton Network Consortium

The local Wolverhampton Network Consortium has used two mechanisms to evaluate the Fund's first year.

The Consortium have reviewed monitoring information to give them a clear picture of how well they have reached out across Wolverhampton's communities. They have identified the geographic and thematic areas where there have been fewer grants given. The community engagement team, who promote the grant fund in the community and help groups to make applications, are aware of these findings, and are able to target their work accordingly. The grants appraisers are able to use the information to consider their priorities in assessing the applications.

The other main route to evaluating the programme has been a celebration event. The Consortium invited community groups who had received funding, and the grants appraisers and community engagement officers attended too. The Consortium

asked each community group to bring along another community group, so they could find out about Grassroots Grants. About 6 of the 20 to 30 groups attending were asked to give a short presentation, telling people about the work they had done, the difference it had made, the barriers they had faced and how they had overcome them. They also spoke about their experiences of the grant fund, for example how they had found the application process. This feedback helped everyone to learn from the groups' experiences. As the local funder, Wolverhampton Network Consortium has found it helpful to find out what the groups think about the way the grant fund works. The positive comments have helped to confirm they have been taking the right approach. The volunteer appraisers appreciated finding out what had happened with the groups whose projects they had assessed and approved, and what difference the grant has made, encouraging them to continue with their work.

#### What made this approach successful?

- Running the event from a point of view of listening to the groups, so they could see their input was valued.
- Giving groups the opportunity to meet and talk to one another, and sharing their learning. As a result, some have been asked by other groups to go and talk to them about their work.

#### Helpful hints

- Providing support for funded groups through an event is just one element of a supportive approach throughout the grant-funding process.
- Groups may be nervous about presenting their work, so give them the support and encouragement they need to do so.

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## Telling the story

Evaluation typically relies on quantitative (numbers based) and qualitative (descriptive) information. For community development-based projects, qualitative information is particularly important in explaining what difference has been made.

Experience from CDF's grant funds suggests that even projects that have little or no history of evaluation are able to tell a story about what they have achieved. More importantly, it is an approach that they feel comfortable with, and so are happy to use. The approach works best when the funded groups can choose their own way of telling their story. This could be through photo stories, audio or video recordings, or reports. The variety of information can be difficult for the funder to deal with, but it reaps rewards in terms of giving a vibrant picture of the projects. This approach has worked well for Leeds Community Foundation (see below).

### Local funder snapshot

#### Leeds Community Foundation

Leeds Community Foundation has changed its evaluation form to support a more community development-based approach. Its previous form focused on outputs but they have moved to an approach based on outcomes.

The Foundation now ask groups who receive Grassroots Grants funding to tell them how the people their group helps have benefited and to tell some of the stories about the impact they are having. They have changed the name of the form to reflect this change – 'Impact Evaluation' rather than 'Monitoring and Evaluation'.

Leeds Community Foundation believe that funders risk excluding smaller groups from getting involved in community development if they ask them to report on their organisational structures and statistical analysis.

They say that they are now getting brilliant responses and lovely stories and that people are even sending in pictures of the difference their work is making.

### What made this approach successful?

- The Community Foundation believe that the turn around in the quality of evaluation reports they are getting is a direct result of realising that they need to make everything as user-focused as possible. In this case, where groups tend to be much less experienced than with other grant funds the Foundation runs, the groups did not 'look at' their project in the way the standard monitoring form asked; they find the new form much easier to understand and use.
- By providing stories, groups can provide information in a way that they are comfortable with.

### Helpful hints

- Make your evaluation light touch and ask questions that small groups feel confident to answer.
- Use everyday language and avoid using fundraising and voluntary sector jargon – smaller groups don't move in those circles.
- Find the right balance between accounting for public money sufficiently and letting groups tell their own stories about the difference they are making in ways that are meaningful to them.

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## Reflection and learning

Reflective practice is a core principle of community development, and equally of evaluation. Where a funder takes a

community development approach to evaluation, the learning is shared, and is actively used in order to improve how things are done. Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Foundation (see below) is a good example of how this can work in practice.

The sharing of learning is not just within the programme itself, but also with a wider audience. For example, CDF is keen that the findings of its programme evaluations reach out to Government departments and ministers, and widely across the community and voluntary sector. This book is one way of taking learning out to a wider audience. In this way, other community groups, other funders and policy makers can all make use of the learning and hopefully, improve practice over a much wider field of influence.

#### Local funder snapshot

#### Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Foundation

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Foundation are working hard at the design of the evaluation system for the Grassroots Grants in their area.

Taking a community development approach to evaluation means that there is a face-to-face element, where the funder goes out to the project. There is also a partnership approach to their evaluation design. They are actively seeking input to the design from their delivery partners, the local Councils for Voluntary Service. They are also seeking feedback from all sorts of community members, including larger local charities, local authorities, local philanthropists and local businesses.

The Community Foundation will share the learning that they get from Grassroots Grants, so that future applicants can benefit. For example, they will find out what has worked well – or not so well – in similar projects, and incorporate this learning into the design of their project.

#### What makes this approach successful?

- Being pro-active in *going out* to the projects, so that as a funder, you can get a better feel for what's going on, and for

the projects to have the best opportunity possible to explain their work.

- Using the learning from one project to help another similar project.
- Making successful applicants aware of the need for evaluation at the start, so that the group monitors its progress throughout the project and doesn't leave it all until it's too late.

### Helpful hints

- Build good relationships with other local organisations that have a remit to support small, grass roots community groups, so that they can help with building the capacity of the groups that are funded.
- Give the groups a sense of empowerment, so that they feel they can say when something isn't working and see that their comments are being taken on board.

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### Summary: Benefits of a community development approach to evaluation

- The learning from the evaluation is 'owned' by all the stakeholders, so it is more likely to be taken on board and used in future working.
- Taking a collaborative approach to the evaluation means that the findings are more likely to be balanced, and may be more imaginative, than if carried out by a single person or team.

- The quality of the evaluation will be higher, and so be more useful. Participants in the evaluation have had the opportunity to increase their understanding and skills in relation to evaluation.
- The staff and volunteers from the funded projects are likely to increase their understanding and experience of evaluation, and so be better placed to evaluate their work in future.
- The learning can be applied beyond the programme itself, so that other funders can learn from the experiences of the programme.

### Case studies

The case studies presented below show how funded organisations have benefited from the funder's input to helping with project evaluation. **Manchester Busker** found funder's training on evaluation helpful, particularly the training on why it was needed. For **Swipe**, the ongoing support was valuable, including the fact that they were able to build up a relationship with one person in the funder team. **FPLA**'s experience shows how effective it was to get young people to tell the story of their involvement in the project and to give their ideas about how to make improvements.

## Case Study

Organisation/project name:

**Manchester Busker**

### Project purpose

Manchester Busker has a longstanding reputation for providing local up-and-coming performance artists with the platform to advance to the next stages of their careers. It brings together people from all races, faiths and generations and the shows are enjoyed by enthusiastic local audiences.

The purpose of the project funded by Grassroots Grants was to continue the work that they do, focusing on giving all participants encouragement and a chance to progress and grow in confidence, and maybe to make contacts that will lead to paid work. The funding enabled a fee to be paid to all of the artists, backstage technicians and event organisers – the same for everyone. This reinforced the organisation's culture of equal respect for one another, and at the same time, reduced the financial risk for the organisation.

### Main activities

Manchester Busker identifies people with talent who are playing on the streets or in informal venues. They put on twice-yearly shows to which they invite journalists, agents and talent scouts, as well as the local community.

There have been some notable successes of people who have started on Manchester Busker's stage, including Steve Coogan and Caroline Aherne. Manchester Busker also provides valuable opportunities for people to gain experience in backstage skills and event organisation.

### Reasons for applying to Grassroots Grants

Manchester Busker had not applied for any funding before.

They felt that Grassroots Grants represented and understood their needs as a grass roots group and were sympathetic to what they are trying to achieve.

The project manager has a strong background in organising events but is a complete beginner when it comes to funding. He felt that Grassroots Grants was accessible enough for him to feel confident to apply.

### Project outcomes

Projects take a financial risk when they try to put on a professional show using volunteers. Being able to pay people took away that risk and cemented some of the already well-established outcomes previous shows had demonstrated. It was also a way of encouraging people, by showing them that they were good enough to be paid, and that their contribution was recognised.

The project manager noted several outcomes for the organisation and the participants:

- It has built people's confidence and has inspired them to go on to take part in more activities.
- Manchester Busker has opened the doors to professional careers, for example a backstage job at the theatre venue, a first exhibition for the show's photographer.
- The shows are well known and enjoyed by the wider community across all faiths, ages and cultures.
- It has helped to break down barriers and encourage equal respect for everyone involved in the project.
- It has introduced people who have not had experience of the arts before to a wide range of performance arts. This has opened up the arts to people who don't have that background and given them the confidence to visit other events and performances.

## The community development approach

### *Evaluation*

Manchester Busker had not evaluated one of their shows in terms of a funder's criteria before but found that Grassroots Grants made that easy for them. They were asked for numbers of participants and beneficiaries but they were also asked to tell the stories of the people who had taken part in the project.

The project manager felt that they had benefited enormously from the training day on monitoring and evaluation run in the region for all community groups receiving Grassroots Grants for the first time. Groups were given a toolkit and had the basics of evaluation explained to them. Crucially from Manchester Busker's point of view, the trainers explained the reasons for evaluation and why community groups were being asked particular questions, and did so in a way that was professional and friendly.

The training day brought community groups together. Manchester Busker met other local groups working to bring people together and promote community cohesion. The training and the opportunity to share their experiences with other groups in a similar position gave them confidence to evaluate their project effectively.

### *How a community development approach made this funding different*

Manchester Busker says that Grassroots Grants stands for the community approach. They found that it was accessible and encouraging, even to people who had never applied to a funder before.

They pointed to several aspects of Grassroots Grants that they felt supported the community development approach. Top of the list was that the materials and guidance were written in plain English and asked questions that the project felt confident about answering. This made the Fund feel much more accessible than others which they had found off-putting

because of the language used and the amount of detail required.

Manchester Busker feel they have been so well supported through applying to Grassroots Grants that they now have the confidence to apply to other sources of funding.

*Design and delivery: practical suggestions*

From their experience as a first-time funding applicant, Manchester Busker suggest that funders wanting to adopt a community development approach to their programmes should:

- Encourage people to feel that grant-making is not something foreign that they can't grasp.
- Bring people together to gain confidence and not to be scared of some of the things that you ask them to do.

‘From my perspective, the biggest difference that a community development approach made was breaking down barriers and creating a bridge between people.’

**Project:** Manchester Busker

**Grant fund:** Grassroots Grants

**Grant amount:** £2,000

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## Case Study

Organisation:

**Swipe**

Project name:

**The Studio Project**

### Project purpose

Swipe was originally established to give young people from the African Caribbean community an alternative to hanging around on the streets. Swipe now works with young people from all communities aged between 8 and 18, or up to 25 if they have special needs.

Swipe has been going since 1997 and is based in an area where many young people excluded from school are involved in anti-social behaviour. Over the years, Swipe has tried many activities but finds that music is a common language that draws young people together. The project is open outside school hours; any young person can use the facilities. Swipe also gets young people referred to them by other organisations in the region, such as disability support groups and mental health services.

Swipe value the connections they have with the wider community. They are active in many local networks and forums, which they use to share learning with other organisations and keep track of community needs.

### Main activities of the project

Swipe offers free lessons in drums, guitar, steel pans, violin and vocal coaching, as well as providing rehearsal and recording facilities. However, until they got the Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants (CCPlus) funding, they had had to close their studio project.

Through their CCPlus grant, they were able to open the studio again. Young people in bands had access to a professional studio where they could rehearse and record demos. Tutors support them by offering vocal coaching and training in the technical aspects of using a recording studio. The funding also meant Swipe could buy extra equipment for the studio, so that it was fully equipped for loaning out to young people.

At the end of the funding period, they held a celebratory community event that showcased the young people's achievements.

### Reasons for applying to Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants

CCPlus was the only source of funding at the time that suited what Swipe was doing. They found that other funders would not support the age range that they worked with.

### Project outcomes

The most important outcome for the project has been to see young people coming back to Swipe instead of being on the streets. However, Swipe also points to other outcomes that have benefited both individuals and the wider community:

- Music brings together young people from different races and faiths.
- Young people learn to play instruments, vocal coaching and how to use a recording studio.
- Young people are given opportunities to become mentors.
- Barriers are broken down and young people carry on the relationships they form through Swipe in the wider community.
- Young people take part in community events and learn additional skills in running and putting on events.

- One band from the project has been featured in the heavy metal magazine *Kerrang*.

## The community development approach

### *Evaluation*

The funder provided clear guidance about what evaluation was required, particularly around how CCPlus defined community cohesion and how Swipe could evaluate their successes. A member of the CCPlus team visited the project to help with this. This person then became the named contact for Swipe to get in touch with if they had any questions. The project manager found it very helpful to have one person that he could go to directly.

Swipe found that the evaluation required by CCPlus fitted in with the methods they already used. They have an evaluation form at the beginning of each project that captures basic information about participants. The tutors then talk to the participants and use feedback forms throughout the course of the projects, so that young people have regular opportunities to tell Swipe what they want. Swipe were able to use all the evaluation that they gathered in their general working practice for the CCPlus evaluation.

### *How a community development approach made this funding different*

An added bonus was the extra support offered to the community development officer. He was given media training at the end of the funding which not only gave him new skills that he has since gone on to use, but also put him in touch with other organisations in the region that had received CCPlus funding.

### *Design and delivery: practical suggestions*

For funders wanting to adopt a community development approach to their programmes, Swipe has the following advice:

- Make sure that the application forms and guidance do not use jargon.

- Longer term funding is very helpful. It is a struggle to get funding for limited periods and organisations do not get core funding to pay for the time to research and apply for grants. The time taken up with applying for grants means that they are not working in the community.
- Some applications are too long and the impression is that the funder is trying to put you off.

‘From my perspective, the biggest difference a community development approach made was that it enabled us to build on what we already have.’

**Organisation name:** Swipe

**Grant fund:** Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants

**Grant amount:** £11,830

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## Case Study

Organisation:

**Friction Arts**

Project name:

**FPLA (Funding Pending – Live Arts)**

### Project purpose

FPLA (Funding Pending – Live Arts) was the result of the demands and needs of an informal group of young people and single mothers who met at a city centre arts venue for young people in Birmingham. Many of the people in the group were involved, or at high risk of getting involved, in drugs and gangs. They had found an alternative outlet through their meetings in the arts centre and wanted a project to get involved with over the summer holidays that would help them stay out of trouble. Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants (CCPlus) funded this summer project.

### Main activities

FPLA drew together young people aged between 7 and 16 and artists who had experience of working with young people at risk, and ran a 12-week summer arts project.

The participants wanted to use art and multimedia to explore the serious territorial issues between the Ladywood and Five Ways communities. Both are deemed inner city deprivation areas and have rising gun and gang violence. The participants wanted to portray their experiences of growing up in those areas, but also to illustrate their dreams for the future.

The artists used workshop techniques to explore these difficult areas. They mapped the issues the young people wanted to include in the show, helped them to decide how to stage those issues and held auditions for each part. At the end of the

summer, FPLA put on three performances in three prestigious venues in the region.

## Reasons for applying to Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants

FPLA felt that CCPlus understood that community cohesion could result from young people coming together to do artistic activities, and valued that. CCPlus was less prescriptive about the outcomes they expected. FPLA could apply for the full amount they needed to run the project from one source, rather than having to put in lots of bids for smaller grants.

### Project outcomes

The tangible outcome was the shows but there were many other positive outcomes from the project, particularly around tackling racism and extremism and building young people's confidence. These included:

- The characterisation process which enabled young people to explore difficult issues in a supported and safe way. They could talk about what they'd experienced through their characters rather than from themselves.
- The project involved young people from 16 different cultures; working together helped to break down barriers.
- The project got young people involved in a separate peer group and gave them an alternative to gang culture.
- Some participants went on to sign up to college and other accredited courses.
- Two participants are now performing professionally.

## The community development approach

### *Evaluation*

FPLA see evaluation as central to a community development approach. When working with young people, things often

change, so it is important to keep an eye on what is happening and to think about how the project needs to react.

They used dictaphones to evaluate their project as they went along. The project asked young people to talk about how things are going, what is working and what is not working so well. The project managers have meetings with the artists who are facilitating the projects, and use the recordings to plan the next stages of the project. It is a very active form of evaluation, in that young people are continually giving feedback and shaping the direction of the project.

The evaluation that CCPlus wanted fitted neatly with this approach because FPLA could use story evaluation in their funder's reports. FPLA's experience has been that under other funders' criteria it can be difficult to evidence the positive outcomes from confidence-raising work. The CCPlus evaluation, however, valued those softer outcomes, including hearing the stories of the young people's experiences.

#### *How a community development approach made this funding different*

Someone from the CCPlus team visited FPLA when they were preparing their application, which they found useful. They felt this gave the funder the chance to see their project and get a better understanding of their work than they could put down on paper. FPLA were then allocated an individual contact within the CCPlus team who they could ring with any questions. After they were awarded a grant, they built up a relationship with this person and felt that they could discuss their project at any time.

#### *Design and delivery: practical suggestions*

FPLA had some clear advice for funders who want to run a successful community development grants programme:

- The language is really important. Recently formed community groups don't use funders' language, so make it easy to understand.

- Some evaluation should be done a year or longer after the project has finished, in order to capture stories about the longer-term impact of community development.
- Build relationships with the community groups which are funded and provide them with access to other networks and support.
- Allow groups to define their own communities.

‘From my perspective, the biggest difference the community development approach made was that it allowed us to develop the artists by buying in their expertise and putting all their experience of working with street kids into practice.’

**Organisation name:** Friction Arts

**Grant fund:** Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants

**Grant amount:** £11,541

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## Chapter Seven

# Project and organisation sustainability

Community groups face a constant battle to raise enough funds to maintain their organisation and their project work. Grants tend to form one of the main sources of income. For the grant funder, this raises difficult issues, in particular how to respond to the enormous demand for funding and how to avoid creating dependency on the grant programme.

There are a number of elements of a community development approach to grant funding that help to tackle these issues.

### Building the strength and capacity of a funded organisation

The funder can offer support to the organisations to help them build the core strength of the organisation that is funded. This can mean getting strong organisational structures and processes in place, for example through providing templates for key policies or helping the project manager to think about what governance arrangements are needed for the project.

It often involves giving support to staff and volunteers so that they are better equipped to make funding applications in future. With Grassroots Grants in particular, but also other CDF programmes, this grant may be an organisation's first experience of applying for funding. The support that they received during the pre-application phase, as well as during delivery, can be crucial in enabling the organisation to have the

confidence and knowledge to approach other potential funders. The Neighbourhood Support Fund gave targeted support to organisations, including general training in good practice for grant applications and one-to-one organisation support to review draft project plans and applications. They also provided the organisations with a funding certificate, that is, a reference which they could then include with future funding applications.

### Recognising the long-term nature of community development

Community development is a long-term process, and ideally this is reflected in the way that the grant fund is designed, so that funding for a project is available for a three-year period or longer. The organisations funded by the Neighbourhood Support Fund were immensely positive about the fact that the two tranches of funding, each for three years, had offered them a unique opportunity to take community development approaches within the context of a grant-funded project. Added to this, the stability of the funding over several years had enabled them to strengthen their organisation as a whole, for example by enabling them to improve and expand their services, and by developing the skills of their staff and volunteers.

### An appropriate project strategy and exit strategy

It is not always possible, however, for a funder to establish a long-term grants programme. Where they can only offer one or two years' funding, it will be important to guide the applicants towards appropriate use of that funding. For example, suggesting groups not take on new staff for a post that can only be funded for 12 months but find other solutions, such as adding hours to an existing role, or buying in services from another organisation.

The funder can also play a role in helping the funded organisations to develop exit strategies for projects. Projects funded by the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund, for

example, have joined up with other projects in their area doing similar work. Often, an organisation will decide to apply for grants from other providers to continue the work, or to start up a new project which has come out from the original work.

And of course, some projects are not intended as long-term pieces of work, or they may have succeeded in meeting the need that they were set up to address. In these situations, there is no benefit in continuing.

### Linking and networking

In line with the community development value of working and learning together, funded organisations may find it helpful to work with others to think about how to carry on after the end of a grant. CDF's networking events have proved popular as a forum for organisations to share their concerns and develop solutions to their problems. Organisations may often discover that there is another organisation working nearby, doing similar things, with which they can work together or share resources.

### Summary: Benefits of a community development approach to sustainability

- Offering long-term funding gives the funded organisation a strong platform for solid planning and development, and enables a community development approach to be implemented by the project. Longer-term funding is ideally three years or more.
- Support to the funded organisations can give them the skills and opportunities they need to be able to move on constructively after the end of the grant.
- The funder can feel comfortable that its intervention has been effective.

## Case studies

The case studies presented below show how grant funding and support from the funder has enabled organisations to strengthen and grow. For **Fagley Youth and Community Centre** and **Rhema Youth Works**, the long-term funding was fundamental in giving them the stability to plan and deliver their work. The networking with other local organisations offered by the funder has also continued after the end of the funding because it is so useful. For **Woodside Farm Stables**, the funding was key to enabling them to strengthen their organisation, so that they managed to deal with a crisis situation. **Joy of Sound** were able to build on the funded project to expand their activities. The support from the funder enabled **The Foyer in Walsall** to access follow-on funding and to increase their range of activities.

## Case Study

Organisation:

**Fagley Youth and Community Centre**

Project name:

**Fagley Youth and Community Centre  
Personal Development Programme**

### Project purpose

The main focus of the Centre's work is with young, disadvantaged people in Fagley, Bradford. Many of these young people are growing up in difficult family circumstances and in housing estates with high levels of deprivation. In the wider local community, young people are perceived to be associated with anti-social behaviour.

The Neighbourhood Support Fund (NSF)-funded project's aim was to help young people get involved in developing provision for young people in the area. Through this, young people would be able to see alternatives to anti-social behaviour, and learn about new life opportunities, training and employment.

NSF provided core funding towards the cost of staff time, running costs (such as heating, lighting, insurance) and equipment for activities (for example sports, music, IT).

### Main activities

The first challenge was to attract young people into the Centre. The Centre ran a variety of recreational activities such as games evenings and discos, as well as daytime training opportunities in IT, motor education skills (mechanics, driving safety) and support to explore training and career pathways.

Once the young people were engaged, the Centre offered them personal and skills development, which included communication

skills, presentation skills and IT, and developing the young people's self-confidence and self-esteem.

## Reasons for applying to the Neighbourhood Support Fund

The project applied to NSF primarily because it was one of few funding opportunities available at the time. However, the project identified NSF as a fund that suited the way that they wanted to work, in particular the fact that it offered long-term funding which they saw as crucial in enabling them to plan for and deliver work with a long-term view.

## Project outcomes

The project manager outlined a number of clear outcomes as a result of the NSF-funded project:

- Young people gained a new perspective on what they could do in life, seeing beyond the long-term unemployment that is common in the area and being able to identify training and potential careers.
- Young people accessed training when previously they had been persistently truanting, and then found work.
- Young people who had previously been truanting and exhibiting anti-social behaviour joined the programme and are now becoming paid youth workers with the Centre.
- Young people have a voice with local decision-makers such as MPs, councillors, and other funding organisations.
- Young people make enormous progress in terms of gaining self-confidence and self-esteem.

## The community development approach

### *Community development and project sustainability*

The single most important thing identified by the project manager was the long-term funding offered by NSF. It allowed

them to take a community development approach to the project.

The assured longer timescale meant the Centre could get local people involved 'so that they could have a say and own it'. They have been able to get several other organisations involved in new projects as a result of this earlier work. Local schools, the youth service and the youth offending team are just some of the partners now working with the Centre to develop an adjoining derelict area into a nature park, an outdoor classroom, polytunnels for food production and a large hard-standing sports area. These were ideas suggested, supported and planned by young people at the Centre.

#### *How a community development approach made this funding different*

As well as the unusual long-term nature of the Fund, the project manager saw NSF as being different to other funding programmes in how supportive it was. This was demonstrated in several ways:

- The funder organised seminars so that projects funded by NSF could meet as a group. This gave the projects the chance to talk with one another about problems and ways of tackling them, as well as offering wider networking opportunities. They could also learn how other projects were working, which gave them new ideas.
- NSF staff visited the project to talk to the staff and young people. The project manager thought that this was a very positive approach, as it gave the NSF staff a real understanding of the Centre's work and the context for its work.
- The monitoring required of them was easy to understand, reasonable and fair. There was support from NSF to complete the monitoring forms, if needed.

#### *Design and delivery: practical suggestions*

The project manager made the following suggestions:

- Provide long-term funding to allow the project to plan for the long term, and to develop the relationships for working effectively with communities so that they can get fully involved and take ownership of the work.
  - Make the performance targets realistic, for example, numbers of young people accessing training within a particular time period.
  - Make the monitoring requirements simple and easy to understand.
  - Visit projects, in order to get a deeper perspective on the work they are funding and the challenges faced by the projects.
- ‘From my perspective, the biggest difference the community development approach made was enabling young people to develop their skills and abilities to make a difference in their lives.’

**Organisation name:** Fagley Youth and Community Centre

**Grant fund:** Neighbourhood Support Fund

**Grant amount:** £192,823 over six years

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## Case Study

Organisation/project name:

**Rhema Youth Works**

### Project purpose

Rhema Youth Works was started by a group of volunteers working out of a church. The area in Hull has high unemployment and many young people struggle in school. Before Rhema Youth Works started, there was very little support and few activities for young people in the area, particularly after school hours. Rhema wanted to fill this gap.

They talked to young people about what they did, what was missing from the area and what support they would like. From that research, the volunteers knew that they wanted to work with 13 to 19-year-olds, particularly those who were socially excluded, to help get them back into training and, ultimately, work. The Neighbourhood Support Fund (NSF) money fitted that purpose.

They used some of the NSF money to employ a project manager and the rest they used to support activities, such as running drop-in sessions, and buying equipment so a young person could go on a course or attend an interview.

### Main activities

Rhema Youth Works offers a variety of support and youth work activities. Their approach is flexible and can be tailored to what each young person needs to get them engaged in education or work in a positive way. For example, at a drop-in session they might give housing advice or help with a welfare rights issue, as well as helping to research courses that a young person is interested in.

Nine years after the project started, they have developed the range of services and now run five different programmes:

- Daytime support for people struggling at school.
- Drop-in sessions offering activities including art, DJ workshops, quizzes, karaoke, circus skills and competitions.
- A music project, run from the music studio they have built.
- A social enterprise project that helps young people into business.
- Support and training for post 16-year-olds.

### Reasons for applying to the Neighbourhood Support Fund

Rhema Youth Works applied to NSF because it provided funding to grass roots groups that know the area they work in. Rhema also felt that what they wanted to do exactly fitted the funding criteria. The application process was straightforward; it asked all the right questions and the decisions were made very quickly.

NSF was the first funding that Rhema Youth Works had applied for and the project manager says that it allowed them to kickstart the project. It allowed them to put together the publicity and the structure needed to deliver activities and grow the organisation.

### Project outcomes

NSF funding has allowed Rhema Youth Works to:

- Target a particular group of socially excluded young people.
- Work with young people individually on a one-to-one basis.
- Offer them support for all of their needs from under one roof.

- Establish a good reputation in the community for delivering quality services that young people can trust and are happy to continue to use.

All of this means that Rhema Youth Works regularly engages young people in positive learning activities, some of which lead on to employment.

## The community development approach

### *Sustainability*

Two aspects of the community development approach to NSF funding have made a big difference to Rhema Youth Works. The first is that it was awarded in three-year blocks. This allowed Rhema to make three-year sustainable plans against which they were able to raise other match funding and employ more staff.

The other is that it was administered by a local umbrella organisation that arranged meetings of the groups funded through NSF. This gave Rhema instant access to a network of local third sector organisations and involved them in discussions about wider youth issues within Hull.

This legacy continued after NSF funding ended. Rhema still meets with the other projects that were funded under NSF and continues to be part of Hull's youth work scene. On a practical level, they knew the organisation that took over administering local funding once NSF ended and were able to lobby early for the following year's money.

### *How a community development approach made this funding different*

For Rhema Youth Works, NSF funding was different precisely because it took a grass roots approach. This meant that, unlike other funders, NSF was prepared to take a risk on a brand new organisation. In the project manager's view, this has definitely paid off in Hull.

### *Design and delivery: practical suggestions*

Rhema Youth Works had some clear pointers for funders that wanted to take a community development approach.

- Offer funding on a long-term basis, so that organisations are able to put in place proper structures and long-term plans.
- Make a commitment to meeting the needs of the community, as identified by the community, rather than making decisions about what is needed yourselves.
- Provide opportunities for networking, so that community groups can share information and resources. Collective working is more powerful than lots of small groups working individually.
- Be prepared to fund groups that don't already have an established track record of delivering services. Funding needs to be available to new groups, providing they are making a difference to the wider community.

“From my perspective, the biggest difference the community development approach made was we could meet a local need in a relevant way.”

**Organisation name:** Rhema Youth Works

**Grant fund:** Neighbourhood Support Fund

**Grant amount:** £186,172 over six years

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## Case Study

Organisation/project name:

### Woodside Farm Stables Riding for the Disabled (RDA)

#### Project purpose

Woodside Farm Stables provides therapy for disabled children and young people through structured horse riding sessions.

Woodside Farm Stables RDA is a registered charity within the national umbrella of Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA). It is the only riding for disabled group in Nottinghamshire currently able to take individual disabled riders rather than only school groups. It has been running for 38 years and is very popular, with a waiting list.

However, Woodside Farm Stables RDA faced a crisis of management. The owner of the riding school was about to turn 80 and did not wish to renew the riding school licence. The RDA horses had been able to earn part of their keep within the riding school. Once the riding school itself closed, the full cost of keeping the horses became the responsibility of the RDA charity. The trustees urgently needed a way of raising awareness of what the charity could achieve to attract financial support. Also, as most of its trustees were retired, they needed to get younger people involved to make the organisation sustainable.

The group applied to Grassroots Grants to buy a laptop and projector, which they have used to promote their work and to produce resources to train new and existing volunteers.

#### Main activities of the project

With the equipment funded by Grassroots Grants, the volunteers wrote some promotional resources covering: the

difference that Woodside RDA makes to riders with disabilities; recruiting new volunteers; inducting, training and keeping existing volunteers; and the practicalities of RDA riding lessons.

They also produced resources that explain the basics of charity management including: the importance of annual reports; how to bid for financial support; the responsibilities of charity trustees; and keeping up to date with accounting and legal formats.

These resources were then used to find new volunteers and to train them together with existing volunteers.

### Reasons for applying to Grassroots Grants

The broad 'shopping list' of activities that Grassroots Grants funds matched what Woodside wanted to do. But it was the quick turn-around time in which Woodside was able to apply and get a decision that was the most attractive aspect of the grant.

### Project outcomes

It has only been a few months since Woodside got Grassroots Grants money, but so far they have been able to:

- Attract more volunteers to work in the stables.
- Maintain a core group of volunteers who may be interested in getting involved in running the charity.
- Raise wider awareness of the work they do by giving presentations to organisations, such as the Women's Institute and Council for Voluntary Service volunteers.
- Attract donations off the back of presentations.
- Offer their resources to other RDA charities in the Nottinghamshire County region.

## The community development approach

### *Sustainability*

Woodside's priorities for sustainability were to attract inspired trustees of the right age group while training all board members, new and old, in charity law and best practice. The most important aspect of the community development approach that supported them to do this was the straightforward application process that allows groups to apply for the money when they need it. Also, they felt the funder understood their needs and was flexible in approach.

With the support that they had received from the local funder, they felt sufficiently encouraged to be able to apply for the balance of the £5,000 they are entitled to under Grassroots Grants. Smaller organisations can struggle to meet their general organisational costs and full cost recovery of project expenses can be a real difficulty. One of the ways that Grassroots Grants supports the community development of smaller organisations is by providing funding for running expenses. Woodside need to fund the full cost of keeping the horses and employing a groom and Grassroots Grants is one of the few sources of funding they can apply to for their running costs.

### *How a community development approach made this funding different*

For Woodside, the main difference is the understanding that grass roots groups need accessible funding, sometimes at short notice, and that they often can't wait for the set rounds of other funders. Many have immediate needs or don't have the reserves or resources to be able to do that.

Woodside also highlighted Grassroots Grants' appropriately light touch reporting requirements that come with a community development approach, which are easier for smaller groups to comply with. For example, Grassroots Grants allows groups to set their own budget and reporting headings rather than requiring them to measure outcomes against fields that are pre-described by the funder.

### *Design and delivery: practical suggestions*

Woodside Farm Stables RDA say that funders who want to develop a community development approach should:

- Make the reporting processes as simple and straightforward as possible. Frequently funders have specific requirements about what statistical data they want and different funders will require you to split this in different ways. Smaller groups that aren't used to data gathering and analysis can find this a real barrier.
- Allow organisations to define what they mean by community.
- Make decisions quickly and make the money available quickly.
- Make funding available to cover general running costs.

‘From my perspective, the biggest difference the community development approach made was feeling that there's immediate support, rapid turnabouts and a broad perspective on what you can apply for, including running expenses.’

**Organisation name:** Woodside Farm Stables Riding for the Disabled (RDA)

**Grant fund:** Grassroots Grants

**Grant amount:** £1,160.64, plus have a bid in for the balance of £5,000

**Contact details:**

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## Case Study

Organisation/project name:

### The Joy of Sound (JOS)

#### Project purpose

Joy of Sound is an inclusive music and arts project. It provides workshops and bespoke equipment to enable everybody, regardless of their abilities and dexterity, to take part and enjoy participating in music making and other arts activities. Joy of Sound works with a range of people including a high proportion from BME communities and other minority communities, such as people with profound and multiple learning difficulties, disabled people, and people who have mild to moderate mental health problems. The project is based in Brixton in south London.

#### Main activities of the project

Joy of Sound received Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants (CCPlus) funding to offer inclusive training opportunities for the volunteers who help to run their music and arts projects, and for the care workers employed by the local authority who attend Joy of Sound sessions with their clients.

The training programme was open to people with and without physical and mental disabilities; the trainees decided the topics covered. Guided by experienced facilitators, each of the participants shared their own insights and skills in relation to their voluntary and professional experience and expertise.

Over three months, participants covered many aspects of Joy of Sound's creative music and arts activities. Hand in hand with this went contextual learning such as disability awareness, group dynamics, personal health and wellbeing, and meeting different special needs. All trainees ran a part or whole

workshop. They passed on their own experiential knowledge of topics like health and safety, non language-based communications, improvisation techniques, creative feedback, rhythm and syncopation, and reflective practice.

The funding also paid for an event attended by more than 450 people. Everyone who had taken part in the training was presented with a certificate and with a musical instrument. Joy of Sound filmed the event so that they would be able to promote their work to a wider audience.

### Reasons for applying to Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants

The director and founder of Joy of Sound feels that CCPlus was the perfect fit funding for them. Their plans to offer a fully inclusive training project matched the CCPlus criteria fully and allowed them to offer their first inclusive training programme successfully.

### Project outcomes

The CCPlus funding aims to improve the experiences of people from BME communities in accessing public services and give them confidence that public services are delivered in a fair and equal way. The Joy of Sound training improved:

- The skills and knowledge of carers mainly from BME communities.
- The skills and knowledge of the Joy of Sound volunteers, the majority of whom come from BME, disabled or marginalised communities.
- The activities that could be run for the participants, and their carers who take part in the Joy of Sound's projects, a large number of whom are from BME and other marginalised groups.
- Local and extended public awareness of the Joy of Sound project and its outcomes.

Joy of Sound is writing a report on their training rationale so that they can offer it to other organisations. The feedback and ideas from those people who took part are being incorporated into the report. This will ensure that all participants are in some way contributing to the structure and content of Joy of Sound's future training programmes.

## The community development approach

### *Sustainability*

As a direct result of the funding from CCPlus, Joy of Sound is in negotiation with Lambeth Council to run more inclusive training courses for local authority care workers and other volunteers.

The success of the first training has given the organisation the confidence to try out other training approaches. They are currently looking at running a one-day inclusive programme that would be more accessible to other employees of Lambeth Council..

A couple of the trainees have come back to Joy of Sound to present ideas to be able to deliver their own training.

The film of the public event will soon go on line at [www.joyofsound.net](http://www.joyofsound.net), which will help further in promoting increased disability awareness and Joy of Sound's development.

### *How a community development approach made this funding different*

CCPlus funding worked very well for Joy of Sound. CCPlus supported the group to take an inclusive community development approach to their work, precisely because the funder shared the same community development approach and principles as Joy of Sound.

Joy of Sound noted that the application procedure was an open and semi-formal process, which they found supportive and reassuring. The funders visited Joy of Sound which the project team appreciated. It gave the project a chance to describe their work in detail, and to get immediate and detailed face-to-face feedback from the funders.

### *Design and delivery: practical suggestions*

The project manager identified a number of key elements:

- To maintain an interactive grass roots approach, it is crucial to be aware of what's happening at the very roots of the community. This means actively connecting with the community and being aware of its needs.
- A community development approach does not work if administrators are too separate from their communities, and if funders pre-determine community needs, rather than getting to know the community directly by mutual contact.
- Funders need to support community development through their personal convictions, not just because it is a requirement of their jobs.
- People gain through meeting on an equal basis, and in sharing their experiential knowledge. Sharing food can be a very important and potent means of achieving this and should always be encouraged and facilitated in funding applications.

‘From my perspective, the biggest difference that a community development approach made was that it made accessibility accessible and inclusivity actual.’

**Organisation name:** The Joy of Sound (JOS)

**Grant fund:** Connecting Communities Plus, Community Grants

**Grant amount:** £9,500

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## Case Study

Organisation:

**Walsall Housing Regeneration Agency**

Project name:

**The Foyer in Walsall**

### Project purpose

The Foyer in Walsall is an accommodation-based service for homeless young people. It is based in a deprived area, where there is a relatively high proportion of young parents.

The project funded by the Neighbourhood Support Fund (NSF) was for young mothers aged 16 to 19, aiming to get them into education, training and employment through equipping them with the information and skills they would need. The project also aimed to help the young women see that despite having become mothers at a young age, there were still opportunities in front of them.

### Main activities of the project

The project was structured around twice-weekly drop-in sessions. Each session had a targeted activity, such as a talk from a young single mother who had started up her own business, presentations and information from training providers, workshops by employment agencies. Lunch was provided.

There was an incentive scheme so that regular attendance was rewarded with tickets. If the young women had enough tickets, they were able to join one of the special trips arranged three times a year, to places like Drayton Manor fun park or SeaLife.

## Reason for applying to the Neighbourhood Support Fund

This was the first funding that the project received. They applied because it was a very good fit with the project they were planning.

### Project outcomes

The project manager notes outcomes for individuals and the project.

#### For individuals

- The young women gained valuable personal skills, such as motivation and conflict management.
- They also increased their knowledge about subjects that were important for them, including nutrition and food hygiene, paediatric first aid, basic maths for home budgeting.
- Some of the women have gone back into education or are accessing training.

#### For the project

- The funding was essential in enabling the organisation to survive, to move on to win more funding and then expand their work.
- The support the funder gave them increased the skills and confidence of the staff.
- Some of the young women have stayed in touch and are working as volunteers with the project.

## The community development approach

### *Sustainability*

The project manager notes the one thing that above all else, and uniquely amongst grant funders at the time, enabled their

project to survive and grow. This was the support offered by the local NSF co-ordinator.

For the project manager, the most valuable part of this support was how the co-ordinator helped them to apply successfully for funding to follow on from the NSF grant. The project manager notes that without this support, they would probably not have won subsequent funding from Connexions, and certainly not the amount they were awarded.

The co-ordinator helped the project manager to find out about sources of funding and how to present the project in its best light. She helped the project manager to plan how the project should be presented. This included thinking about how it could grow and how it could be improved to meet local needs, such as beginning to work with young fathers, and getting the young people involved in community activities in order to give them a voice. The co-ordinator also helped the organisation to understand how to make their case to a funder on paper and in person, through preparing mock tenders and interviews.

The project manager's initial feelings of uncertainty about working with someone from the funder organisation were overcome because it became clear that the co-ordinator was genuinely trying to help. As the project manager said, 'She really listened and really worked with us.'

#### *How a community development approach made this funding different*

The project manager saw NSF as totally different from other grant funds because of the support that was given, and the way in which it was given. There was never any apprehension about visits from the funder because they knew that the co-ordinator had the project's best interests at heart.

#### *Design and delivery: practical suggestions*

The project manager made the following suggestions:

- Look at what the fund is asking the applicant organisations to do and the outcomes the fund is expecting. Be realistic about what can be achieved for the size of grant available, for example, the numbers of beneficiaries that a project could work with.
- Offer the funded projects support to identify and win future funding.

“From my perspective, the biggest difference the community development approach made was that it gave me a direction, a focus and support that meant the project could make a big difference.”

**Organisation name:** Walsall Housing Regeneration Agency

**Grant fund:** Neighbourhood Support Fund

**Grant amount:** £213,033 over six years

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## Chapter Eight

# Conclusions

### A special approach or just good practice?

Is a community development approach to grant funding simply good practice? Or is there more to it than that? The experiences related in this book suggest that there are special features which underlie a community development-based approach.

**Addressing the needs of communities as expressed by those communities.** The agenda is set by the community the fund is targeting, and not by the fund.

**Enabling the funded organisations to deliver their work using community development approaches.** The design of the fund is such that the organisations which are funded have the freedom to adopt community development approaches. In particular, the funder trusts them and respects them, and gives time for community development in practice. As one person put it, 'We're growing oak trees, not wheat ... A long-term solution for communities, not quick wins.'

**Focusing on outcomes, not activities and outputs.** Within the priorities of the fund, and an overall framework set by the funded organisation, the funder is flexible enough to allow the project the freedom to choose how best to deliver the intended outcomes. It is alright to change activities part way through. What matters is the difference that the project makes, not the detail of the activities.

**Being supportive, at all stages of the programme.**

Starting before an organisation even makes an application, and right the way through to when the funding finishes, the funder is supportive. This is not just about accessibility to the programme. It is also building the capacity of everyone involved so that the impact of the programme is maximised in all ways – for the benefit of the communities, the funded organisations and the funder itself.

**Building a relationship with the funded organisations.**

The funder presents a ‘human face’ to the funded organisation, is a ‘listening organisation’ and is pro-active in building the relationship. This relationship is built on mutual understanding, trust and respect, where the two parties are working together to make the best impact.

**Leaving the last word to those who know ...**

The people who are best placed to comment on community development approaches to grant-making are those who have been directly involved: the civil servants in the Government departments sponsoring the programmes; grant programme managers; local funders; and the organisations and projects that have been funded.

Every person who contributed to this publication expressed their own views about what a community development approach to grant funding meant to them. This is a selection of what they had to say.

From my perspective, the biggest difference that a community development approach to grant funding has made is ...



### Local funders

Running a successful grant programme that's owned by the community.

Enabling local groups who know the need for the project to meet those needs effectively.

More satisfied communities ... the communities feel they've been helped, and will come back to us for other things, not just money.

Talking to real people at grass roots level.

That it allows us as grant makers to really strengthen our local communities with things that make a real difference to them. We're not just people that give out money.

Making the assement process much quicker and makes it clear for groups whether they can or cannot apply.

### Funders and programme managers

A greater likelihood of better outcomes, that is broader, deeper, longer lasting.

Everyone having a more mature understanding of how communities work.

Helping hundreds of organisations to become stronger ... to play to their strengths.

The national enthusiasm for a Government fund that is easily accessible and meets the needs of small community groups.

Meeting real needs ... making a difference to public policy and community groups.

Using flexible support and outreach helped the groups to come out stronger at the end of their funding period.



## “ Projects

Putting together a stronger application.

Being able to respond to the changing needs in the community and be flexible to what young people are saying.

That it was so much more relaxing to see someone and talk to someone ... to find out what would and would not be acceptable.

Enabling young people to develop their skills and abilities to make a difference in their lives.

A very human and humane interaction with applicants ... you always remember how you've been made to feel – valued, encouraged.

Helping us to work out exactly what we were aiming to achieve.

Enabling us to focus on faith in action ... to reach out to potential natural partners to work with them to make a difference.

Having the young people and residents involved from the very beginning of the project, which has made it as long-lasting as it is.

That it gave me a direction, a focus ... and support that meant the project could make a big difference.

That it allowed us to develop the artists by buying in their expertise and putting all their experience of working with street kids into practice.

That we weren't squeezing our project to fit with the funding.

Investing in the capacities to listen and reflect on what we were told.

That it made accessibility accessible.

Breaking down barriers and creating a bridge between people.

We could meet a local need in a relevant way.

Feeling that there's immediate support, rapid turnabouts and a broad perspective on what you can apply for, including running expenses.

”



## Chapter Nine

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# Funding communities, adding value

Community development approaches to grant funding deliver considerable benefits. Benefits such as reaching organisations that have not applied for funding before. Higher quality grant funding that meets the needs of communities. Strengthening the voluntary and community sector as well as funded groups.

This practical guide covers every aspect of these approaches to the funding process, from promoting the fund to sustaining outcomes after the funding ends.

- 14 local funder snapshots provide hints and tips for replicating their approaches to the different funding stages
- 18 in-depth case studies of funded groups highlight the elements of the community development approach that contributed to their success.

The guide draws on the Community Development Foundation's (CDF) extensive experience of managing grant programmes for over a decade. CDF is one of the UK's top three funding providers (source: Directory of Social Change), and runs top-level national funding programmes with a community development approach.

## About the authors

Irene Evison has worked in the private, public and voluntary sectors, and is now a Director at Resources for Change, a consultancy that focuses on engaging people in change. She has a strong interest in community development and involvement, capacity building and engagement, and is a consultant with CDF's grants programme. Natasha Roe has a background as a published author and social action writer. She is Director and Founder of Red Pencil Projects that specialises in providing communications consultancy to third sector organisations.



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