

Faith Communities Pulling Together

Case studies from the
Faith Communities
Capacity Building Fund

by Irene Evison



Faith Communities Pulling Together

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Communities Capacity
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Published in Great Britain in 2008 by the
Community Development Foundation
Unit 5, Angel Gate
320–326 City Road
London EC1V 2PT
Registered Charity number 306130

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-901974-91-1

Cover design and typesetting: Bearcomm.com, Penzance, Cornwall
Printed in Great Britain by Crowes of Norwich on paper sourced
from sustainable managed forests

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Foreword

The Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund (FCCBF) was sponsored by Communities and Local Government's Faith and Cohesion Division between 2006 and 2008. The Community Development Foundation (CDF) administered the fund.

This was the first Government fund of its kind, providing faith-based or non-faith organisations with the opportunity to apply for either small grants of up to £5,000 or large grants of up to £30,000. At CDF we could only speculate on the levels of interest and the breadth of activity we might see. We should not have been worried; we were overwhelmed by the response to the programme and captured by the thoughtful and innovative work the Fund would resource. Four hundred organisations and projects across England and Wales were supported for inter faith or capacity-building work.

The Fund has supported a tremendous variety of activities. Some grants have helped strengthen organisations and so enable them to operate more effectively and make a greater contribution to civil society. Other grants have funded inter faith work, such as conferences, social events and joint projects.

This book is intended to present learning that has been achieved as a result of the FCCBF-funded work. There are some important messages for practitioners and policymakers.

The organisations' and projects' huge progress is showcased here; it represents just the tip of the iceberg. I hope you enjoy reading about these FCCBF projects and use the learning to make a difference to your own work.



Alison Seabrooke
Chief Executive
Community Development Foundation

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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Introduction

Context

In recent years, there has been an increased understanding within the voluntary sector and central government of the role that faith communities play in terms of community relations and social cohesion. The Home Office report *Working Together* acknowledged that 'faith based bodies are a distinctive part of civil society and of the rest of the voluntary sector, and can make a significant contribution to social cohesion' (Home Office Faith Communities Unit, 2005, p. 3). The report *Our Shared Future* by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007) also highlighted the contribution that faith communities make. In October 2007, the Government announced a ten-point action plan to promote cohesion and tackle community tensions. This included a specific commitment to develop an inter faith strategy. As part of this commitment, Communities and Local Government, the government department responsible for cohesion work in communities, carried out a consultation to help develop the new inter faith framework. *Face-to-Face, Side-by-Side: a framework for inter-faith dialogue and social action* is expected to be published later this year. The main elements of this framework form the key themes for this case study book.

About the Fund

The Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund (FCCBF) was announced in January 2005. The Fund supported the Government's 'Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society' strategy on race equality and community cohesion. It operated in England and Wales, and provided two rounds of funding: 2006/07 and 2007/08.

The Fund had two funding categories:

1. capacity building
2. inter faith activity.

Through the first category, the Fund aimed to help build the capacity of faith-based organisations to enable them to play a fuller part in civil society. Through the second category, the Fund aimed to bring people of different faiths together to promote mutual understanding, respect and cooperation. Proposals with a significant focus on women and/or young people were given particular consideration. In the second round of funding, the Fund also supported activities that promoted a sense of shared citizenship.

Nine hundred and twenty-three organisations received a total of around £12 million over the two funding rounds. In both of the funding categories, large (up to £50,000 in Round 1 and £30,000 in Round 2) and small (up to £5,000 in both rounds) grants were available. Two thousand and sixteen applications were received for the first round, with 573 organisations in England and Wales funded to a total of around £7.6 million. There were 1,229 applications for the second round, and £4.4 million was distributed to 350 organisations.

The Community Development Foundation (CDF) administered and evaluated the Fund on behalf of the Faith and Cohesion Division of Communities and Local Government. CDF has published an evaluation report of the first round (James, 2007); the final evaluation report of the Fund will be published in autumn 2008.

For more information on CDF and FCCBF please go to:
www.cdf.org.uk

Importance of the book

With support from FCCBF, hundreds of organisations have undertaken an enormous variety of activities. Whether funded as 'inter faith' or 'capacity building' projects, they have enabled the organisations to strengthen their contribution to community cohesion. There is great potential to draw out the learning from these organisations' experiences for the benefit of other faith-based and community organisations, and policymakers at local, regional and national levels.

Using a case study approach allows more in-depth analysis of the work, which helps to bring out meaningful and applicable learning. This book is intended as an easy-to-use resource for practitioners and policymakers, so that they can be informed in their future work with faith communities and their contribution to community cohesion.

Content

The book starts with the key learning messages that emerge from the case studies. The subsequent chapters contain the case studies themselves, which present in-depth information about a variety of projects and organisations. The chapters are arranged under six main themes:

1. developing structures and processes that facilitate interaction and social action
2. improving opportunities for learning that build understanding between communities
3. supporting shared spaces for interaction and social action
4. fostering confidence and skills to bridge and link
5. women and young people
6. contributing to civil society.

The case studies are just a sample of the projects and organisations supported by the FCCBF. They have been included due to their wider relevance to policymakers and/or practitioners and their potential replicability, either because they demonstrate a sound approach or because their work is innovative or unusual.

Each case study begins with a general outline of the organisation and the project's aims, then summarises the differences made as a result of the work. The case study also describes any barriers experienced and how they were overcome, as well as any elements particularly important in helping the project to succeed. Comment is made about the sustainability of the project, before finishing with feedback from project staff on what they felt was most significant about their project and, based on this, what advice they would give to policymakers about the future for this sort of work. Project titles and spellings are those chosen by the organisations themselves.

The case studies present the detail about each funded project. Chapter 1, 'Lessons learnt', is a synthesis of the main messages that emerge from across the spectrum of projects.

A note about language. In this book we apply the term 'faith' to embrace a wide range of 'faith, religious and belief' groups. We use the term 'faith' because this is how the fund was described from the outset. We recognise that 'belief groups' play an important contribution to equality and cohesion work around 'religion and belief' in the UK. It is important to note that existing international standards, including the *Human Rights Act* 1998, do not speak of religion in an isolated sense, but of religion *or* belief. According to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE, 2004, s. A, para. 3), the 'belief aspect typically pertains to deeply held conscientious beliefs that are fundamental about the human condition and the world'. Our use of the term 'faith' in this publication is intended as a portmanteau term to cover 'faith, religion and belief' and follows from the OSCE definition.

Lessons learnt

This review of a selection of the organisations and projects funded by the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund (FCCBF) has highlighted a number of significant learning points. These are summarised in this section, in no particular order of importance, but presented so that there is a logical flow in their content.

Faith

Making it possible to discuss faith and faith-related issues

Faith is seen as an increasingly sensitive issue. At an individual level, people may not feel comfortable raising the subject in conversations; at an organisational level staff may not feel confident about dealing with discussions or issues related to faith. In a number of cases the projects were able to overcome this unease and enable people to talk to others about faith, often for the first time.

A safe space to discuss faith

The success of many projects was based on the fact that they created a sense of security for discussions about faith. In some cases ground rules ensured respectful behaviour in a discussion group; in other cases support from a facilitator to open the debate and manage it sensitively was important. Creating an atmosphere where individuals felt comfortable to talk about the subject was also significant; this seemed to be related to making connections at an individual level, in a situation where they knew others were interested in what they had to say.

Making personal connections

There were many instances where the importance of people getting to know one another at one-to-one level was noted. People valued hearing about other people's experiences of faith and could relate these to their own experiences. Often for the first time, they were meeting someone of another faith in a way where they could start to

build a personal relationship, with the result that the growing understanding of the other faith had greater meaning.

Increasing people's understanding about faith

In many instances, the projects had clearly enabled people to learn more about faith – their own and other people's. It was widely said that increased understanding led to more tolerance and respect towards people of other faiths. There was often a sense of exploration, learning more about particular aspects of faith, such as symbols or festivals. Making visits to places of worship was a very successful way of passing on information about that faith, partly because people actually saw the place, but also because they had the opportunity to ask questions and have discussions.

Similarities and differences

A recurring theme was how increased understanding had enabled people to see that there were more similarities than differences between faiths. Most often, this related to the values underlying the faith, but it also included areas such as festivals and music. This realisation was seen as a significant step towards greater respect and tolerance. Understanding similarities was often made easier by getting a personal perspective, often by meeting someone, but also by hearing stories about local people.

A cross-over between faith and culture

It became clear that people do not always find it easy to differentiate between faith and culture; for example, people may make no distinction when talking about inter faith and multi-cultural events. In some cases, the projects positively embraced the combination of faith and culture, for example focusing on how the music of the Indian sub-continent had been adopted by Hinduism. Often, it seems that there is a perceived added richness in the interplay between faith and culture.

Multi faith or inter faith?

There is another interesting point, where some people like to make a distinction between multi faith and inter faith. The term 'multi faith' perhaps clarifies that equal value is placed on each faith, with each

faith working alongside the others for mutual benefit. 'Inter faith' perhaps is better used to describe initiatives where people from different faiths are working to understand the other faiths better.

Capacity building

Personal development

In many projects, a core aim was to build the skills of individuals, so they could contribute more in their paid or voluntary role in the organisation or project, or become better equipped to contribute to the wider community. The point was made that this learning at an individual level was a fundamental building block in organisation or community development.

There were many reports of people becoming more confident, having greater self-esteem and self-awareness. This meant they were able to do more within the project or organisation by taking on new roles or performing better in their existing ones. There were also several examples of people being trained to acquire new 'technical' knowledge or skills, both accredited and informal, such as mentoring, chaplaincy, mediation and subject-specific information.

New opportunities

For many people, the project's activities provided them with new opportunities. These ranged from ways to meet people in their neighbourhood and first-time visits to local places of worship, to acquiring new skills.

The same was true at an organisational level, where the funding enabled some organisations to take on new roles or develop existing activities, which they would not otherwise have been able to do. In a number of projects participants have now taken responsibility for continuing to organise activities or are developing new ones: from small beginnings, more long-term activities are emerging.

Organisational development

Many projects were funded to make specific organisational development improvements. A number of case study organisations

spoke of the benefit of receiving funding for this sort of work because it had enabled them to prioritise this area and gave them the time and space they needed to concentrate on it. The value of the essential organisational building blocks such as constitutions, policies, strategic plans and fundraising strategies was strongly recognised. There was considerable appreciation of training, which gave volunteers and staff the necessary skills to know what was required and be able to get the necessary 'building blocks' in place.

Practicalities

Getting the venue right

People often stressed the importance of a venue to the success of their event or activity. Significant issues included a space where people could feel comfortable, the right size for the number of people and ease of access. When organising an event, supportive venue managers were important, particularly in terms of flexibility to changing needs, both before and during the event.

Food

Food was often a vital element of a successful activity; in fact it was sometimes its focus. Sitting down to eat together creates an atmosphere where it is easier for people to talk to each other. Also, the fact that different faiths often have different rules and attitudes towards food created a natural focus of discussion, which could lead into more in-depth discussion about faith.

Project planning

Even with good project planning, some projects experienced problems they could not have foreseen. There were a variety of responses, including bringing in other people to fill gaps, delaying the project and adapting the work. Several project managers noted that the time they had allowed for managing and delivering the project had been exceeded, but that they had, nonetheless, put in the necessary extra time.

Short-term funding

Often said, and strongly felt, many projects were concerned about a one-year funding window. They felt great pressure to deliver,

particularly in terms of reacting to unforeseen circumstances which had delayed their original plans. There was also an issue that the kind of work funded by FCCBF would have benefited from support over a longer period.

Sustainability

Although the project funding was only available for one year, the projects reported a variety of ways that the work would continue or have lasting impact. These included: continuing the work, with or without further funding; developing or adapting the model, using the model themselves and making it available to others; leaving a legacy of materials or skills that would be available for use after the project's formal finish; and enabling people energised and skilled by the funded project to pass on their knowledge and skills.

Ingredients for project success

Support

As with any projects, getting visible senior-level support was vital to their success. This usually meant leaders from the local faith community, but could also be organisations' senior staff. Once community members could see that the people they trusted were behind the project, they were happy to get involved themselves.

Also, many project managers or coordinators spoke of the value of support they had received from their fellow staff, trustees or line managers. This included practical assistance at events or activities when more people were needed and, in some cases, the support had helped reduce isolation.

Trust and respect

At both an individual and an organisational level, it was crucial to win the trust and respect of the project participants. There were many instances where people only felt able to take part, or to allow their children or spouses to take part, if they trusted the project manager and/or their organisation. The same was true at an organisational level, where informal or formal partnerships were formed or strengthened as the respect between the organisations was built up.

Communication

Time and again, people noted how talking to one another, building and maintaining communication, had been absolutely vital. This related both to work within the project, for example where the key to learning about other people's faith was talking, and to work to make the project succeed, for example talking to individuals and organisations to help them understand the project and gain their support and involvement.

Networks and relationships

In many instances, the projects made use of existing networks and relationships, in order to make some aspect of their project happen. This ability to call on other people and organisations helped in a practical way, for example by finding people to get involved in an activity or project. In other cases, an important part of the work was building new relationships, which could then be used for the benefit of the project.

Taking ownership

Ownership of a project or activity was seen to relate strongly to people's sense of involvement: it was important that they had real input into shaping it. Support was vital, but this had to be given without being prescriptive about the direction or end-point. Many comments were made about the value of being able to take on the unique local flavour.

Paid and volunteer input

Considerable value was attached to having staff posts funded for organisational and project activities. This was because of the volume of work required, which would not be possible on a purely voluntary basis. In some cases specialist skills were contracted in, for example fundraising officers and facilitators. This enabled the input of skills not otherwise available to the project or organisation.

A very high value was placed on the work done by volunteers, without whom the organisations or projects would simply not have happened. They played a huge variety of roles, including as steering group

members and technical advisors, and in service delivery, administration and organising activities.

It was noted that the faith or vocation underlying the staff member or volunteer possibly added to their contribution, meaning that they would give more time or effort.

Policy messages

We asked all the case study interviewees to think about their messages for policymakers concerning the sort of work they were doing. In summary, four main points were made:

- **Funding:** continue to make funding available for faith-based organisations.
- **The contribution of faith-based organisations to civil society:** recognise the role that faith-based organisations play in civil society, in particular providing services and contributing to community cohesion.
- **Working at grassroots:** recognise the value of organisations that work at the local, neighbourhood level, where small changes can have a significant impact.
- **Celebrate the extra dimension of faith:** recognise that people working and volunteering for faith-based organisations also bring the background and positivity of their faiths to their work in the wider community, which can add an extra dimension to what they offer and how they offer it.

2 Fostering confidence to bridge and link

Introduction

In this theme, the following case studies are presented:

Patiko Bakers Fort

- Giving young people the confidence, skills and understanding about other faiths to play a greater part in their community (page 14).

Lighthouse Education Service

- Strengthening the organisation's leaders and project managers to give them confidence to deliver their work in the community (page 19).

Birmingham Progressive Synagogue

- Strengthening the synagogue's leadership in readiness for its move into a new building (page 24).

Wessex Jamaat

- Giving Sunday School teachers (mostly women) the personal understanding and confidence to link the Sunday School better with the whole organisation (page 28).

A few key messages

- The development of individuals is fundamental to the development of their organisation. With improved skills, knowledge and confidence, the organisation is strengthened to be able to take action (see Patiko Bakers Fort Project).
- The development of confidence is closely linked to newly acquired knowledge or skills. As can be seen with the Birmingham Progressive Synagogue, a mix of increased organisational self-awareness, improved organisational structures and leadership skills has given the synagogue leaders the confidence to move forward and feel well placed to deliver work in their community.
- Work to develop relationships can be significant internally as well as externally, for example Wessex Jamaat, where the Sunday School teachers are now confident to contribute to the direction of the wider Jamaat.
- Through building the capabilities of their leaders (paid and voluntary), each of the organisations was building up a long-term resource. Although step-changes in individuals were often noted, it was also recognised that confidence building is a long-term process.

ORGANISATION:
Patiko Bakers Fort

PROJECT NAME:
Young People's Leadership Project

Background

When Patiko Bakers Fort started it delivered community creative arts. With Round 1 funding from the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund (FCCBF), it had worked with young women, which had raised its awareness of young people's potential for activity in their communities.

Project aims and activities

The project aimed to provide a platform for young people of different faiths to become community leaders and active citizens. This was to be achieved through:

- leadership and volunteer training, for example in public speaking, conflict resolution, budgeting and team working
- learning about what happens in their communities and how decisions are made
- providing a regular event for young people to come together for ongoing debate and discussion about what they could do to make changes in the community
- family lunches, where a young person would visit a family for lunch, help with the cooking and sit down to eat together.

The project began with outreach work to recruit young people between the ages of 16 and 25. With 60 young people involved, twice-monthly training sessions began. These were very interactive in order to maintain the young people's interest. They involved very practical skills, for example DJing and face painting, which could be taken out into the community, as well as exercises designed to enable the young people to think about their existing skills and explore how

they could be used, and consider the meaning and value of volunteering. Participants also thought about how they could volunteer in another faith's community, for example a Christian Afro-Caribbean DJing in an Asian community centre.

A weekly Friday discussion session was set up, which gave continuity between the training. Initially it was planned as a social occasion, but with time for discussion. It has also grown into a platform for young people's contribution to decision-making, as a variety of organisations has visited to gather young people's views on particular issues, for example anti-social behaviour.

Twelve young people have been supported to observe and contribute to a ward-based community forum meeting. A pre-meeting training session helped the young people to understand what to expect and how to have their say.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Personal and skills development: Young people have gained a wide variety of practical and soft skills (for example, communication and inter-personal skills) which they are beginning to put into action in their community.

Organisational confidence: Patiko Bakers Fort Project is now feeling more confident about its ability to help young people turn ideas into action.

Ideas and solutions: The various activities have enabled the young people to think about ideas and solutions to issues they raise, with support from project staff and their peers.

Inter faith outcomes

Opportunity for faith debate: The project has created safe spaces to talk about faith. In a society where young people self-differentiate on the basis of faith, they now have the opportunity to face the 'fear factor' of mentioning faith to one another.

Greater understanding: In a number of ways, the project has enabled individuals to learn more about other people's faiths.

Specific outcomes

Increased knowledge about community decision-making: Local young people now have a much better understanding about how decisions are made and how they can play a part in decision-making. They know how to find out about what's going on.

Young people's contributions to community improvements: Specific ideas raised by young people during the project are now being developed, for example ideas for healthy living activities within a local get fit campaign. Also, young people are participating in the local decision-making process, for example by attending community forums or giving input to a consultation.

Barriers and overcoming them

Some young people's parents raised objections to their participation in the project, which project staff tackled by trying to build the parents' trust and confidence. Women trained by Patiko Bakers Fort through its women's project visited the parents, particularly mothers, to explain the project. The message was sometimes reinforced by explaining the project to other people in the community whom the mothers trusted, and who then explained the project to the mothers, so that the message was reinforced. The mothers were also invited to the women's project, so they could see the organisation for themselves.

On a practical level, there was a need to supply transport for some young people to events (either paying bus fares or providing a minibus), so that people from low-income families could take part.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- making the training informal, fun and creative – not at all like school or college

- having committed volunteers and leaders, so that the young people could be confident that the same people would always be there
- being versatile and creative
- always having the coordinator available, which was important in gaining the parents' trust.

With hindsight

The budget should have included more funding for transport.

After the project funding finishes

The Friday discussion group will continue, as the young people are now in demand for consultations and are also well known as an inter faith group.

The young people who have been trained are keen to continue to contribute to consultations.

There is considerable interest from other young people, so the organisation is applying for further funding to extend the project. A new aspect will be using the young people from this project as mentors to the new participants.

'The most significant thing about this project has been ...'

'... seeing young people inspired, confident and getting their ideas into action.'

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they've been doing, it would be:

'Continue to fund and support more projects that enable young people of different faiths to shape their own community, and make the funding available for three to five years.'

Organisation: Patiko Bakers Fort

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Staff resource: One part-time outreach worker (20 hours/week) and three volunteers (two to three days/week)

Grant value: £15,000

Grant category: Inter faith

ORGANISATION:
Lighthouse Education Service

PROJECT NAME:
Planning and Training Project



Background

The Lighthouse Education Service is a Christian-based organisation in south London providing a variety of services tackling problems of deprivation, social exclusion, low attainment, crime and anti-social behaviour, including community events and festivals, a Saturday School and an online homework club. The organisation was concerned about the quality of organisational leadership and project management. It felt it needed more clarity about its vision and strategy, and that management committee members and staff needed more training to support them in their role of leading and managing the organisation. In this way, the organisation would be better able to reach out to its target beneficiaries and to work effectively for their benefit.

Project aims and activities

The project had two main aims:

1. to develop an action plan for the organisation and its projects and encourage its adoption throughout the organisation
2. to provide the management committee and staff with training.

A consultant was engaged to work with the volunteer project coordinator (a management committee member with responsibility for development and training). They worked together to plan a two-day residential action planning event for the management committee, based on an assessment of needs.

The residential weekend comprised the following sessions:

- ‘celebrating success’, which looked at what was working well in the organisation, and what was not working so well
- organisational context, for example local government policies and practice
- key messages for the organisation from the review of its context, for example the local agenda for change, the outlook for finance, the need to work with others
- identifying issues – internal and external matters that were preventing the organisation from moving forward
- learning from project case studies in the organisation
- identifying organisational priorities and developing the basis for the organisation’s action plan
- follow-up actions for each project and management committee member.

The participants worked in small groups, using key questions to consider the issues and brainstorm potential solutions.

Following this residential, the consultant and management committee worked together to produce a short, targeted action plan for the organisation.

A second event was organised, this time for the management committee and all staff, with the aim of cascading the plan down to everyone, thinking about how the vision could be implemented and providing training. The morning sessions focused on explaining the vision for the organisation and all participants working on practicalities. These included what staff would be needed and what things in the organisational context would affect the organisation. The discussions included topics such as the local authority’s move towards contracting out and commissioning work, the need for quality standards, and partnership working. The afternoon comprised workshops on the following topics: ‘who are the real customers?’, quality standards; monitoring and evaluation; child protection, health and safety and risk management; effective meetings; effective communication; effective time management; and funding.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Culture change: There has been something of a culture change within the organisation, in terms of a new focus on delivery and people management.

Stronger leadership: The leaders are better informed about their operational strategic context, and in particular the role the Lighthouse Education Service plays in delivering government policy priorities.

Common understanding: Management committee members and staff have developed a common understanding of key organisational requirements such as quality assessment, health and safety, and child protection.

Personal development: Individuals have increased their personal effectiveness skills.

Specific outcomes

An action plan for the organisation: The organisation now has a focused action plan in a form that shows the key points clearly, including key actions.

Barriers and overcoming them

Time was an issue, in that most of the organisation's leaders are volunteers and so it was difficult to find two days for the residential that suited everyone. This was also true for the part-time staff. To tackle this, peer mentors were briefed to talk to people and persuade them of the value of attending.

Also, there was generally a level of uncertainty in the organisation, as this was something completely new. For example, some people, never having had training, didn't see the need for it. However, it helped that the training included elements of personal skills development, so that people could more easily see the benefit to themselves.

Key success factors

A number of elements were noted:

- the organisation ‘really, really wanted to do it’, so there was buy-in from the leaders and senior management
- the residential was described as ‘massive’, in that it enabled the management committee to concentrate on the planning process from start to finish and, in the process, begin to see themselves as a whole team
- having an external facilitator, who was crucial in providing an external view and in asking questions that people involved in the organisation wouldn’t have dared ask.

With hindsight

The second event might have been more effective if it had been delivered separately to project managers and other, more junior staff. It is likely that people would have felt more comfortable to talk openly, which would have led to richer discussions. Also, the training could have been more targeted.

After the project funding finishes

The management committee is monitoring progress against the action plan. Two follow-up events are being planned, one for organisation leaders and one for staff, in order to assess what is moving forward and what needs more work. Further funding is being sought to support these events.

‘The most significant things about this project have been ...’

‘... that everyone in the organisation now knows a bit more of what the organisation is about ... there is more awareness of their role in helping the organisation to achieve what it has set out to do.’

If you were to give one piece of advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work you’ve been doing, It would be:

‘Policymakers need to find a way to work directly with faith and community groups, rather than going through third parties such as local authorities, if they are going to achieve their policy priorities.’

Organisation: Lighthouse Education Service

Contact details

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Staff resource: Voluntary coordinator

Grant value: £4,800

Grant category: Capacity building

ORGANISATION:
Birmingham Progressive Synagogue

PROJECT NAME:
Leadership Training



Background

The organisation had undergone considerable change in its leadership and was also preparing for a move into a new synagogue building. The leaders felt the need to ‘rebuild their collective confidence’ and improve the leadership and communication with their members before the move. In particular, the leaders identified a need to develop a shared vision which looked beyond the synagogue itself towards a wider purpose, embracing possibilities for inter faith and shared citizenship in the community.

Project aims and activities

The project aimed to give the leaders more clarity about their roles and more confidence in what they were doing so that overall, the organisation was ready to achieve its vision for the new building and wider work in the community.

A trainer was engaged, whom the synagogue knew from previous work. A working group came together to guide the project, which enabled the Rabbi to step back. The trainer began by conducting interviews with the synagogue’s leaders in order to begin to understand their needs. Members of the congregation who attended regularly but who weren’t in leadership positions were also invited to give their views, focusing on the organisation’s strengths and weaknesses and communication.

The trainer then ran a meeting for the Council (the synagogue’s voluntary leaders), carrying out a skills audit to see what skills the leaders could bring and what skills were needed.

A small working group was set up to focus on leadership roles. The group first worked on clarifying the roles and responsibilities of key positions – the chair, treasurer, secretary, administrator and Rabbi.

Other activities were carried out as part of the project. Organisational procedures were reviewed and a manual prepared. Also, a members' information manual was begun, so that members knew what to expect, for example in relation to bar mitzvahs and funerals.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Organisational clarity: There is now clarity throughout the organisation about roles, responsibilities and activities. There are new job descriptions for all the key posts (voluntary and paid); the role of the staff is clear; and there is straightforward information for members about the services offered.

Support: With a much better understanding of roles, the staff are now receiving strong support from the Council.

Specific outcomes

Skills audit: Increased knowledge of the leaders' skills has enabled the organisation to make better use of them, for example in drawing up the policies and procedures manual.

Preparation for the move to the new building: Having openly discussed roles, the Council has a better understanding of its responsibilities for the work involved in the new building, a process which was described as 'transforming' for the staff. Overall, the leaders now feel more ready for the move and the new work they hope to take on.

Barriers and overcoming them

A small number of leaders were antagonistic towards the project originally, as they were not sure about the need for the work. However, members of the working group guiding the project persuaded them of its value, and the fact that the Rabbi stepped back so that the Council leaders led the project also helped.

Key success factors

A few particular elements were noted:

- having the right trainer – someone with an understanding of working with voluntary organisations and who understood the synagogue
- having someone from the outside who could look at the organisation dispassionately
- willing members, who brought in relevant skills, for example governance
- attending the Community Development Foundation-run workshops (for organisations funded by the FCCBF), including fundraising.

With hindsight

It would have been better to involve all the leaders at a very early stage of the project, when the funding application was being made. That way, when they were successful in gaining the funding, the early part of the project would have been smoother.

After the project funding finishes

The job descriptions are in place, as are the members' information pack and procedures manual. Although there is still work to be done to adopt the materials fully, the foundations are there.

The trainer is finishing off small parts of the project without extra payment, for example completing the paperwork.

The organisation is likely to seek funding for community projects.

'The most significant thing about this project has been ...'

'... being able to step back and look at our leadership structures and improve how they work.'

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they've been doing, it would be:

'It's worth funding this type of work, as it really helps organisations like this to work more effectively in the community.'

Organisation: Birmingham Progressive Synagogue

Contact details

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Staff resource: Consultant/trainer

Grant value: £5,000

Grant category: Capacity building

ORGANISATION:
Wessex Jamaat

PROJECT NAME:
Emotional Intelligence Training



Background

The governance of the Wessex Jamaat's Sunday School, or Madressa, had been problematic. The teachers (almost all women) felt disempowered and believed the Madressa was not progressing. Although the women were contributing regularly, they felt they were not benefiting from any personal development.

Project aims and activities

The aim of the project was to turn around the difficulties faced by the Madressa and its teachers, so that there was a clear picture of what they were trying to achieve and to ensure the Madressa was working effectively within Wessex Jamaat. Also, the project was aiming to unlock the teachers' potential, for their own benefit and that of the Madressa.

An initial needs analysis with the Madressa teachers, facilitated by the volunteer coordinator, was unsuccessful in identifying the issues and possible solutions, so an alternative approach was sought. A visioning day (which all teachers were invited to attend) was held, which enabled the teachers to come up with a powerful vision and mission statement about what they wanted to achieve with the Madressa. As part of this process, the teachers identified the elements that were and were not within their control. It became clear that an important element over which they did have control was how they behaved.

Following considerable research, the coordinator proposed using the Myers-Briggs test tool, developed by a mother and daughter to understand and interpret personality. The test results showed the women their strengths and potential growth areas and gave them a

better understanding of their personalities and behaviour. The results also enabled them to understand that they each had very different perspectives on the Madressa issues as a result of their personalities, which had resulted in conflict amongst themselves and with the Jamaat Council. With this knowledge, they were ready to look at how they could best handle their own behaviours.

An emotional intelligence course was seen as a useful way to enable the teachers to take control over their behaviour and to choose their own actions and responses. An external trainer was engaged. The first session focused on explaining what emotional intelligence is and how it can be manifested in one's own skills. The second session involved the teachers applying emotional intelligence skills in the Madressa classroom, with observation and support from the trainer.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Personal development: The women teachers are now more confident to play a role in the management of the Madressa. Trust and friendship amongst teachers are being developed in the academic arena.

Growing into a position of influence: As well as feeling able to play a role, the women are now actively influencing the direction of the Madressa and, more broadly, activities in the Jamaat. The teachers are taking ownership of the change in the Madressa themselves.

Taking on new roles: Within the Jamaat and beyond, several of the teachers involved in this programme are now taking on new activities, including becoming Jamaat members, standing for election to the Jamaat Executive Committee, becoming mentors, taking part in leadership training, and beginning formal teacher training. More women are showing an interest in becoming teachers or getting involved in the Madressa.

Specific outcomes

Reorganisation of the Madressa: The structure of the Madressa has changed, with a new Madressa committee comprising a number of

teachers acting as department heads and the Jamaat's Council President. With the President involved, there is now better accountability for the Madressa and improved linkages with the Jamaat Council.

A stronger Madressa: The Madressa is thriving, with more pupils and teachers and children purposefully engaged in learning. There is a better atmosphere; as the project manager notes, 'The Madressa feels like a good place to be at.'

Barriers and overcoming them

This project was something completely new for the organisation, so initially there was considerable resistance from some members of the executive committee. This was overcome by persevering in talking to them in detail about the need for change and the reasons for this choice of approach.

The initial needs analysis did not work; so another approach was sought and found. One of the reasons for choosing the Myers-Briggs test was because it had been designed by women, and this was found to resonate with the teachers, who were mostly women.

Later on, there was a problem with people other than the Madressa teachers wanting to take part. However, it was made clear that at this time the programme was limited to just the Madressa teachers.

The budget was too limited to allow for some of the follow-on activities the participants wanted, such as mentor training and leadership training. The teachers organised fundraising events at the mosque, such as cookie sales, and the participants also contributed.

Key success factors

A couple of particular elements were noted:

- ownership of the project by the Jamaat's committee
- the teachers achieving consensus on what they wanted to achieve for the Madressa – 'once they had the vision, everything fell into place'.

With hindsight

It would have been easier had there been a full project plan in place right from the start of the project.

After the project funding finishes

The new structure for the Madressa is in place and working well. The teachers will continue to work in the Madressa.

The model is likely to be adopted and similar training offered to other members of the Jamaat community, if more funding can be found.

‘The most significant thing about this project has been ...’

‘... realising that the only way to change things is to change yourself.’

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they’ve been doing, it would be:

‘Don’t underestimate all of the immeasurable things that emerge when you develop people.’

Organisation: Wessex Jamaat

Contact details

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Staff resource: Volunteer co-ordinator; contracted trainer.

Grant value: £4,900

Grant category: Capacity building

3 Developing structures and processes which facilitate interaction and social action

Introduction

In this theme, the following case studies are presented:

Religions for Peace

- How a national organisation encouraged and provided training for individuals to take social action (page 34).

Somerset Churches Together

- The creation of a county structure for inter faith working (page 38).

The Lighthouse Cradle

- How a small church became a stronger organisation through creating a sustainability plan and trustee training (page 42).

Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group

- Delivery of a variety of activities to facilitate local inter faith interaction (page 45).

The Good Shepherd Mission

- The development of an information technology strategy to enable the organisation to operate more effectively (page 51)

Paul & Barny's Place

- How local church volunteers were given the skills to improve their social action work (page 55).

A few key messages

- The internal development of an organisation's basic building blocks, for example a constitution, policies and procedures and IT system, is fundamental to creating an organisation capable of fulfilling its aims for social action (see The Lighthouse Cradle). Similarly, it is important to provide the organisation's workers (paid and voluntary) with the skills and confidence they need (see Paul & Barny's Place and the Good Shepherd Mission).
- In some cases the first step is actually to create the organisation. Having the right organisational structures in place makes two things possible: people can build the space they need to think about how they can take action and/or they have the necessary framework and mechanisms in place to take action (see Somerset Churches Together).
- A structure for action need not be permanent. The Religions for Peace project shows how temporary local organisational structures can be created. The value is enabling a targeted response to a need at a particular time.
- Interaction between faith organisations is often enabled through inter faith bodies, such as the Somerset Faiths and Beliefs Forum. There is a need to support the creation and strengthening of these bodies, so that they can also achieve their aims for inter faith interaction and social action (see Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group).

ORGANISATION:
Religions for Peace

PROJECT NAME:
Inter-faith Co-operation



Background

Part of an international network of organisations in more than 70 countries, Religions for Peace was set up in 1970 to bring people of different religions together to transform conflict. The underlying tenet is to move beyond dialogue and into action. Religions for Peace (UK) was particularly concerned by the July 2007 London bombings.

Project aims and activities

The project's aim was to encourage and support local people to begin to get involved with inter faith work in their communities, either in the form of social action or advocacy. This would lead to the development of a sense of shared citizenship, based on acceptance and respect.

The project was run in ten locations across England, including London, Leeds, Portsmouth, Sandwell and Wolverhampton. Through the Interfaith Network for UK, the project coordinator made local contact and found someone who was interested in the project and willing to get involved. The local worker then worked on practical matters, including arrangements for the workshops and invitations to attendees. In each location, the intention was to hold three separate workshops, aimed at women, young people, and faith leaders. Overall, over 25 workshops were held, with a total of more than 300 participants.

The same six-step approach was followed in each workshop:

1. **diagnosis** – getting people to sit and talk together, focusing on what they think the conflict is and what they'd like to do about it

2. **dialogue** – telling one's own stories in small groups so that, through words, a common understanding is reached
3. **dianoia** – 'through self' – where individuals take time for personal reflection, meditation or prayer, to consider what their own faith says about the issue and what could be done
4. **diacrisis** – an important step where people recognise that they want to do something to bring about change and so come to think in terms of what they are going to do about it
5. **dialectic** – where the group comes back together and chooses the issue or issues it is going to tackle
6. **diagenesis** – 'through creation' – getting people to think about what they need to do to make things happen. This includes considering what support Religions for Peace could offer, such as action planning or fundraising.

After the workshops, Religions for Peace offered ongoing support to the local groups.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Desire to take action: People now want to play a part in activating change, whereas previously most of them would not have become involved.

An opportunity for women and young people to make a difference: The project deliberately held workshops aimed at women and young people, so that these groups could participate in a way with which they felt comfortable. In this way, it is believed that women and young people were empowered by realising that they can make a difference and through being given the tools to become active.

Inter faith outcomes

Building relationships: Often for the first time, people of different faiths but living close to one another had the opportunity to meet. As

work has continued on activities, friendships have formed. People of many different faiths have met – Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs and Zoroastrians.

Development of mutual understanding and respect: The process of talking and working together has increased individuals' understanding of other people's faiths and has led them to realise that they can get on with and work with other people; also that there is value in a multi faith approach – each faith can bring its own valuable contribution.

Discovering the power of positive action by working together: By focusing on projects about issues of mutual concern, people of diverse faiths have discovered the power of making a positive difference *together*. Also, the work has brought religious and civic leaders together.

Specific outcomes

Development of project ideas: A wide variety of ideas for social action and advocacy emerged from the workshops, including fundraising for orphans in Uganda, a multi faith chaplaincy, forming a local young people's inter faith group, inter faith football and dancing.

Benefits of shared citizenship: The process enabled communities of faith to take positive action on issues of concern to the wider community.

Barriers and overcoming them

The project found it hard to engage with young people. It was recognised that they have many other pulls on their time, but that with involvement from peers, more young people can be persuaded to get involved.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- An established national inter faith network, which gave the organisation access into groups across the country.

- The existing Religions for Peace network, which provided a useful ‘signposting’ resource, as well as credibility.
- Facilitators who were able to get people enthused.

With hindsight

The organisation would engage a small team of young people to act as facilitators right from the start.

After the project funding finishes

Religions for Peace will continue to offer support to the existing groups which, it is hoped, will continue the work they’ve begun through this project. Further funding will be sought for this and to develop new groups.

‘The most significant thing about this project has been ...’

‘... to develop an approach to moving beyond inter faith dialogue to multi faith action, which can be scaled up throughout the UK, Europe and beyond.’

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they’ve been doing, it would be:

‘Provide longer-term funding to enable communities of different faiths to develop their capacity for multi faith action.’

Organisation: Religions for Peace (UK)

Contact details

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Staff resource: One part-time coordinator, as necessary, and four facilitators

Grant value: £29,000

Grant category: Inter faith

ORGANISATION:

Somerset Churches Together

PROJECT NAME:

Somerset Faiths and Beliefs Forum

Background

Somerset Churches Together had been working with *faithnetsouthwest* (FNSW) about the possibility of establishing a Faith Forum for Somerset. FNSW exists to support all faith groups in the South West, and has helped establish a number of other faith forums in the region.

Project aims and activities

The aim was to set up a Faith Forum for Somerset which would:

1. give faith a representative voice in the county
2. break down prejudice and promote harmonious relations between people of different faiths in the county.

The work began by bringing together a number of organisations: Somerset County Council, Taunton Interfaith Forum, South Somerset Faith Forum, FNSW, and representatives of various faiths including Quakers, Muslims, Bahá'í and humanists. Together they agreed the aims for the Forum. The project administrator worked with the members to draw up a constitution, build up a mailing list, construct a website and carry out any general project management requirements, for example reporting to funders.

There was a formal launch of the Forum, at which there were several presentations on topics including the role of the Faith Forum, the perspective from different faiths and the support to be offered from the County Council's Equalities Department.

The Forum members were keen to begin with a positive activity and decided to create a mobile exhibition which would show the

contribution the diverse faith groups make to life in Somerset and explain the different faiths. The Forum succeeded in obtaining funding for this from the County Council and Somerset Police. Local art college students contributed their time free of charge to design the exhibition. Forum members collected material through interviews with people from various faiths – Bahá'í, Muslim, Quaker and Christian.

The Forum has begun representational work, sitting on Somerset County Council's Community Cohesion Network and the county's forum for equality and diversity. It has also contributed to the council's corporate equalities plan.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Existence of the Faith Forum: The Forum is now constituted and operating.

Faith is on the agenda: There is now a vehicle by which the faith-based element of Somerset's community can formally be consulted and included in decision-making.

Inter faith outcomes

Raised profile: There is now more understanding within other organisations about the role that faith plays in community cohesion.

Specific outcomes

Mobile exhibition: The exhibition is now ready and will be used at various local events, beginning with the high profile Bath and West Show.

Barriers and overcoming them

As a predominantly rural county, with people of different faiths in small numbers and located sporadically across the area, it tends to be more difficult to get people of faith involved in activities. However, Forum members all helped with their own network of contacts, so that people of different faiths could be interviewed for the mobile

exhibition. As expected, not everyone was willing to be identified in such a public and high profile way; however the Forum members persisted and looked for other people who would be happy to tell their stories.

Key success factors

A couple of particular elements were noted:

- the experience of FNSW in setting up faith forums, which enabled FNSW to focus on the main building blocks needed, for example the constitution
- the involvement of people in the county who could bring experience from other forums to feed into the design of this forum.

With hindsight

It would have been useful to have had more time to devote to identifying the key individuals in the county and building up trust with them.

After the project funding finishes

The Forum is now in place, with all the necessary basic administrative tasks completed. A small general grant has been obtained which will enable the ongoing running of the organisation.

The mobile exhibition is ready for use and an additional grant has been secured which will be used to develop the exhibition further and to take it out to more audiences.

‘The most significant thing about this project has been ...’

‘... setting up a forum of different faith groups for the whole of Somerset, with a strategic perspective.’

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they’ve been doing, it would be:

‘Remember that each area is different and that the energy and the model for a faith forum needs to come from the people themselves.’

Organisation: Somerset Churches Together

Contact details

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Staff resource: **faithnetsouthwest** development officer on part-time contract to the project

Grant value: £4,000

Grant category: Inter faith

ORGANISATION:
The Lighthouse Cradle

PROJECT NAME:
Organisational Development



Background

The Lighthouse Cradle is a very small church organisation, with a manager working just seven paid hours a week, and so is largely run by volunteers. The board recognised the need to professionalise the organisation, but lacked the capacity to do so. The organisation provides a number of services to the local community, including social activities to reduce the isolation experienced by some people, and training to enable people to play a fuller role in the community, for example English as a second language.

Project aims and activities

The aim of the project was to strengthen the organisation as a whole, including its structures, management, policies and procedures and financial sustainability.

A consultant was engaged to support the organisation to prepare a sustainability action plan. The consultant worked first with the manager to identify the main issues and some possible solutions, and then with the board to draw up an action plan.

The manager adopted the PQASSO quality management system, and used this to review and improve the group's policies, including equal opportunities, health and safety and recruitment, and its operating procedures, for example how it worked with other local organisations.

The manager also attended a number of networking events, including local events organised by Redbridge Council for Voluntary Service and London events organised by the Community Development Foundation (CDF). She also attended training on social entrepreneurship.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Organisational sustainability: The board has approved a sustainability action plan, which will help the organisation seek core funding and hopefully reduce its dependency on project funding. Overall, the board and the manager have a much better understanding of organisational sustainability.

Organisational operations: There is a much more robust set of policies and procedures in place. This reduces dependency on the manager, as the information is now recorded and available to others. The organisation is better able to deliver its work in the local community.

Specific outcomes

PQASSO: The organisation has achieved Level 1 PQASSO.

Barriers and overcoming them

The organisation's administration and project activities are not based on one site, which means that the manager and volunteers have had to be very careful about managing the paperwork and having procedures in place to deal with unexpected events.

Key success factors

In particular:

- goodwill from within the organisation, so that there was good support for the project.

After the project funding finishes

The new policies and procedures are in place and being used, with the PQASSO accreditation.

The sustainability action plan has been approved and the organisation is ready to begin to use it.

As yet, no further funding bids to continue the extended hours of the manager funded by the FCCBF project have been successful.

‘The most significant thing about this project has been ...’

‘... the opportunity it gave us to build our capacity and grow as an organisation. We are in a relatively stronger position as a consequence.’

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they’ve been doing, it would be:

‘Make access to funding for grassroots organisations a priority, because many of the people they reach cannot access mainstream provision, at least not initially. These organisations help such people in their journey towards integration within their new community.’

Organisation: The Lighthouse Cradle

Contact details

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Staff resource: Part-time manager (14 hours/week)

Grant value: £13,000 (as part of overall grant of £15,300)

Grant category: Capacity building

ORGANISATION:
Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group

PROJECT NAME:
Dialogue, Faith and Community Cohesion

Background

The Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group (WHIFG) was established in 2004, at the instigation of the District Council's Chief Partnerships Officer, who wanted to introduce a 'faith voice' within the local strategic partnership (LSP). The Group later became independent (although maintaining its links with the LSP). The Group has members from a variety of faiths, with the intention of reflecting the different faith communities in the area – Christianity (various denominations including Roman Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, United Reformed Church/Free Church, charismatic/evangelical, non-denominational), Quaker, Judaism, Islam, Hindu and Bahá'í. There is currently no Sikh or Buddhist representative, but members are being sought.

The two aims of the Group, weighted equally, are to promote dialogue between faith communities in order to promote community cohesion, and to bring a faith perspective to bear on civic affairs (at local, regional and national levels).

The ideas for this project came into being as a result of members identifying a series of activities they felt would contribute directly towards meeting their aims.

Project aims and activities

The aims of the project were developed from the organisation's own aims. They were:

- to promote dialogue

- to increase understanding, and therefore trust
- to recognise the common ground between faiths, but also to respect the unique contribution that different faiths can make
- to promote recognition of people's spiritual needs
- to raise the profile of faith communities in the civic arena
- to find out how faith communities can influence government decisions.

There were four main areas of activity.

1. **Essence of Faith:** A series of six events, each one sharing the core beliefs, faith perspectives and practices of a single faith. The Group thought it was important to go back to basics to ensure that people could move away from preconceptions of other faiths and, instead, build an informed picture of other faiths' beliefs, perspectives and priorities. Each faith created its own evening event, in its own style, and in a venue it chose. Most were held in neutral venues such as community halls, so that everyone felt comfortable to attend. The project coordinator described the events as 'a tapestry beyond verbal education', with the presenters showing artefacts and describing their worship.
2. **Rites of Passage:** A series of four events aimed at enabling people to break down barriers between communities by tackling people's lack of understanding about other faiths. Choosing to focus on key matters that were relevant to everyone – birth, initiation (the move from childhood to adulthood), marriage and death – meant that the topic resonated with every faith but also that the different faith perspectives could be shown. Each event focused on a different topic, planned as a panel discussion. Representatives from six faiths each gave a ten-minute presentation on the topic, followed by a plenary discussion. For the Christians, one denomination gave the main essence of the topic and other denominations were able to 'tag on' other Christian perspectives if necessary.
3. **A multi faith meal:** This was a purely social event, where people from each faith brought and shared food typical of their faith. WHIFG provided additional food to ensure that people of some faiths with particular dietary requirements were provided for. Entertainment was provided, including a Bible quiz, Thai dancing and choral singing. The aim was to give people the chance simply

to be with one another, meeting on an individual level in an informal setting.

- 4. A public meeting in the council offices:** Entitled 'Faith in government?', this was a formal event with high profile speakers – the Bishop of St Albans, Stephen Timms MP (Labour, MP for East Ham, responsible for faith communities) and Alistair Burt MP (Conservative, MP for Bedfordshire North East). The meeting began with a drinks reception and introductions about WHIFG and the event itself. An independent Chair was used for the main part. Each speaker presented their views on the question of whether faith communities could influence parliamentary decisions. There was then an opportunity for questions from the floor.

All the events were publicised widely, including through the WHIFG email database and members' contacts, advertisements in the local newspaper and the LSP's website, newsletter and email network.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Organisational profile and reputation: The project has raised the profile of the organisation, as well as increasing its credibility and authority, for example with the local authority, MPs and the LSP.

Organisational confidence: The organisation now feels more confident about its role. The work has acted as a catalyst for it to go beyond its activities to date, for example stretching out to build a relationship with the nearby Watford Interfaith Group.

A model for community cohesion: The organisation has been able to move forward to develop activities that could act as a working model for community cohesion. The activities have helped to show others that the Group does as it says in relation to community cohesion.

Inter faith outcomes

Building bridges: The activities have built bridges in various ways – within each faith (especially Christians), between different faith communities and between faith communities and the wider local

community. This was possible because of the atmosphere underlying the events, where people felt comfortable and positive.

A forum for dialogue: The activities provided an opportunity for formal and informal dialogue from many perspectives. They enabled people to overcome what may have been a fear of offending others, so that people were able to talk about things that they probably would not otherwise have contemplated, for example practices around death. The social atmosphere of the meal enabled people to meet at a human level without focusing on faith or a particular issue.

Deepening understanding: The activities challenged people in a positive manner to learn about other faiths' perspectives.

Specific outcomes

Participation: The Rites of Passage and Essence of Faith events regularly attracted between 60 and 80 people. More than 100 people attended the multi faith meal and more than 200 people were at the council event.

Faith and the civic arena: The council event prompted constructive debate about faith communities and government decision-making.

Barriers and overcoming them

In relation to the council event, the organisers were limited by the Bishop's availability, which meant that the only possible date clashed with a full council meeting. Although there was then a danger that one of the key target audiences – councillors and senior council staff – would not attend, juggling with times meant that some were able to come after the council meeting.

Refreshments were served at all the events in order to help to create the right atmosphere, but the organisation was concerned about providing appropriate foods. The organisations were careful to discuss this with people in advance and get their advice.

Key success factors

A number of elements were noted:

- commitment from a small team of three volunteers, who took on the bulk of the organisational work
- funding, which enabled the Group to create suitable settings for the activities, for example large enough rooms, refreshments and IT equipment
- paying attention to the detail of what they wanted to achieve, for example providing speakers with a clear brief, so they knew what was expected of them
- publicity.

With hindsight

The burden on a small group of volunteers would have been reduced if the Group had been able to pay for someone to take on some of the organisation and administration, particularly for the council event.

After the project funding finishes

The activities were discrete and have been achieved as intended. The Group continues to meet and will now focus on developing existing relationships and extending relationships further into the borough's faith communities. This is likely to include more social events, so that the communities can increase their knowledge about each other.

'The most significant things about this project have been ...'

'... helping the cohesion of the community and breaking down mindsets and discrimination.'

If you were to give one piece of advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work you've been doing, it would be:

'Listen to us, use us, enable us to do what we do best. Government, and especially local government, must embrace faith groups and understand that it is the faith that motivates people into community action. Recognise the valuable resource of faith organisations. Don't compartmentalise faith from all other activities in life.'

Organisation: Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group

Contact details

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Staff resource: Volunteers

Grant value: £4,500

Grant category: Inter faith

ORGANISATION:
The Good Shepherd Mission

PROJECT NAME:
Information Technology Strategy



Background

The Good Shepherd Mission is a Christian charity providing a variety of services to the local community in Bethnal Green and Whitechapel, including parenting groups and children's and youth clubs. The organisation's administrator was aware of the growing importance of IT to the voluntary sector, but realised that the organisation's IT capacity and use had grown in a very piecemeal way and that staff had varying levels of IT skills.

Project aims and activities

The aim of the project was to take advantage of IT to help the organisation to work more effectively, both internally and externally.

The administrator worked closely with two volunteers from the church fellowship who had considerable IT experience and knowledge. They helped the administrator and a group of volunteers conduct a review of IT within the organisation in order to identify IT priorities, and then to put the different elements into place. The administrator coordinated the project, with church volunteers leading on specific tasks.

The main areas chosen for improvements were:

1. carrying out a stock-take of hardware and software
2. data protection, for example passwords
3. more effective use of the organisation's IT resources, for example file sharing
4. creating a website.

The website was identified as the main priority. One volunteer agreed to build the website; a graphic designer who belonged to the church did the design work at a reduced cost. The administrator pulled together content from staff and volunteers.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

IT awareness: There is a much greater awareness amongst staff and volunteers of the opportunities offered by IT.

Organisational effectiveness: In many ways, the organisation can now operate more effectively. Internal communication is faster, as people no longer have to reply on hard copies. Internal information is improved, due to the peer-to-peer networking. The administrator can direct people to the website to get basic information about the church such as its aims or activities, which saves him time in responding to queries.

Local awareness: With information about the church more readily available, there seems to be greater awareness locally about the services offered.

Specific outcomes

Website in place: The website is up and running, providing basic information about the organisation and its activities. People from the church who have moved away use it to keep up with the church's activities. Queries are coming in via the website and it is now possible to publicise church events and activities.

IT system improvements: It is now possible to share files between computers, so that internal communication amongst staff and trustees has improved. A new Google Group has been set up, which enables trustees to send documents to one another, which has helped with governance.

Barriers and overcoming them

The administrator notes that it was a challenge to keep the focus of the project and make sure the timetable was followed. The external requirement from the funder to meet its timetable helped.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- volunteers from within the church who were very knowledgeable about IT, who helped find the right level of solutions
- the graphic designer's in-depth understanding of the church and its context, which meant that his approach and the material produced were appropriate to the church's needs.

With hindsight

It might have been possible to involve more people in the project, for example by contributing material for the website, which would have given a broader range of views. However, given the limited time available this might have made matters difficult.

After the project funding finishes

The IT capabilities remain within the congregation. The website and system changes remain in place and will be maintained using volunteer input. The group is continuing to consider IT improvements, for example changing its internet service provider, which could save it money.

'The most significant thing about this project has been ...'

'... seeing the potential of IT harnessed in a very specific way to the long-term advantage of the Mission.'

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they've been doing, it would be:

'Appreciate the value to a voluntary organisation of technical knowledge and expertise, particularly when it is coupled with a clear understanding of that organisation's needs.'

Organisation: The Good Shepherd Mission

Contact details

Mike Mitchell

The Good Shepherd Mission

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Staff resource: Administrator (eight–ten days in total)

Grant value: £4,000 overall; £2,000 for this project

Grant category: Capacity building

ORGANISATION:
Paul & Barny's Place

PROJECT NAME:
Listening and Communication Training

Background

Paul & Barny's Place is a local church, but as it did not have a building, instead began by renting a shop, which it used as a meeting place and cafe, whilst building its community activities. There was steady development, with the support of a growing number of volunteers. The church recognised the need to increase its professionalism.

Project aims and activities

The project had two main aims:

1. to increase the skills of volunteers and community members
2. to develop low cost, high quality volunteer training which it could open up to other people, for the benefit of other organisations and the wider community.

A series of training courses was developed, which began with two foundation sessions on listening skills and other faiths. These were intended to build the base for a culture of tolerance and respect. There were then a further 11 sessions (mostly on Saturdays but also some evenings) on topics relevant to the work done by the volunteers in the community. These included understanding Alzheimer's, learning disabilities, mental health, alcohol addiction, drug addiction and caring for carers. The project manager aimed for each session to be run by a specialist in that field. Most of the time this was successful; on a couple of occasions, the project manager stepped in at the last minute.

The funding was used to pay for trainers' fees and expenses, venue and equipment hire, refreshments and marketing.

Each session attracted about 15 volunteers, with a total of 169 participants. Volunteers attended the sessions in which they were particularly interested; most went to more than one and some went to nearly all of them. About a third of attendees came from other local organisations, including churches, non-faith and other faith-based organisations.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Individual learning: In many areas, volunteers picked up new skills. Feedback refers to individuals 'having their eyes opened' to particular topics and feeling more aware of how they interact with others, including their own assumptions and the language they use.

Application of skills: The volunteers are applying their skills in many arenas – the church, the community and the family. They talk about feeling more confident when dealing with customers in the cafe and drop-in.

Increased awareness: Overall, volunteers are now more aware of the need to adapt to a wider cross-section of society and understand more about the challenges faced by others. This has increased their tolerance and respect towards customers, especially in the cafe.

A model for volunteer training: There is now a model in place for further training, with a format and style that is a recognisable Paul & Barny's Place brand.

Specific outcomes

Marketing: The organisation has broadened its contact base as a result of work to market the training, to include local shops, local organisations, other churches and wider ecumenical and non-church networks.

Barriers and overcoming them

Planning the training programme from scratch involved a huge amount of work; the project manager found it easier to arrange the first couple of sessions and then work on planning the others.

The need to meet funder deadlines put pressure on the project manager, when he had to catch up after taking unexpected time off due to illness.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- an appropriate selection of topics. This was based on informal sampling by the volunteer community worker, who had asked other volunteers and users what would be most helpful. The topics chosen therefore reflected the organisation's needs
- an appropriate venue, which was local, accessible and informal, so that people enjoyed coming together there
- people on the training sharing their real-life experiences of the topic.
- having a team for planning and delivering the training, which gave the project manager support.

With hindsight

The project manager notes that he should probably have started the work sooner, so that there was more time for it within the funding period. Also, more publicity with posters might have been useful in attracting more local people and raising awareness about the organisation's work.

After the project funding finishes

The project manager is getting requests for more training sessions. With the team further topics have been identified, for example refugees and asylum seekers, self harming and restorative justice. The team will look for more funding to support the work, but will do its best to deliver the training anyway.

‘The most significant thing about this project has been ...’

‘... for me, more than capacity building for the organisation, it’s the individual stories about people being changed and increasing their capacity to be good neighbours.’

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they’ve been doing, it would be:

‘Remember that “small is beautiful” – work with individuals, at the local level. Also, continue to make small amounts of funding available to small organisations.’

Organisation: Paul & Barny’s Place

Contact details

Paul & Barny’s Place
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Training: Colin Darling

Tel: 0121 686 1983
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Day-to-day: John Todd

Tel: 0121 686 1983

Staff resource: Part-time project manager

Grant value: £3,200

Grant category: Capacity building

4 Improving opportunities for learning that build understanding between communities

Introduction

In this theme, the following case studies are presented:

RAIS Academy

- Putting together a booklet about the customs of different faiths and holding a food festival celebrating the foods of different faiths (page 61).

Bristol Buddhist Centre

- Developing materials for schools about western Buddhism and facilitating sessions in schools to promote dialogue about faith (page 65).

Milun Women's Centre

- Supporting weekly discussion groups for Muslim, Sikh and Hindu women, running activities to learn more about different faiths, and social activities to get to know one another personally (page 69).

Quaker Social Action

- Facilitating local residents to organise street parties, to enable people of different faiths to meet one another informally (page 73).

Conflict and Change

- Creating a Muslim Mediation Service in Newham, working with Muslim and other faith communities (page 77).

Kalapremi

- Organising a multi faith conference for global peace, based on Hindu sacred texts (page 81).

A few key messages

- Building understanding between communities is not possible without the foundation stone of people getting to know one another as individuals (see Milun Women's Centre). The important thing is that people have a common focus, which then acts as a catalyst for discussion.
- Also, it is crucial for people to feel comfortable with one another, so that they are happy to begin a dialogue. Social activities often help to create that feeling (see Quaker Social Action). Involving food can act as a stimulus to debate because of different faiths' attitudes to food (see RAIS Academy).
- The enhanced understanding these projects demonstrate is based on people increasing their knowledge about other people's faiths. Knowledge can be gained simply by talking to one another, or through written or other materials (see RAIS Academy). Often the organisation has made an effort to be proactive, to go out to individuals or groups (see Bristol Buddhist Centre).
- At times, it is appropriate to set up formal structures specifically designed to facilitate debate and dialogue (see Kalapremi and Conflict and Change).

ORGANISATION:
The RAIS Academy

PROJECT NAME:
Respect



Background

The RAIS Academy aims to increase people's understanding about Asian culture, arts and faith, often using arts-based activities to promote dialogue and understanding at a neighbourhood level, with the ultimate goal of improving community cohesion. This project grew out of a realisation that there was a lack of information to help people understand other people's faiths, and often an uncertainty about approaching people and mixing with people of other faiths.

Project summary

The overall aim was to raise people's awareness about the different faiths of Asian and European people in Rochdale, focusing on Christianity (Anglican and Roman Catholic), Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism and Judaism. This was done in two ways:

1. a food festival, where local people of each faith cooked festival food typical of their faith. Each faith had a stall, where visitors to the festival could taste the different foods, pick up written information and talk about the faith informally. People were asked particularly to find out about similarities between the different faiths, for example food laws
2. a booklet about customs and laws of the selected faiths, and Buddhism. Three workshops were held with local residents of each faith in order to draw out material for inclusion in the booklet. The target audience was libraries, schools and social care workers, as well as local places of worship.

Outcomes

Inter faith outcomes

Knowledge about other faiths: The food festival gave participants a direct opportunity to find out about other faiths. In particular, people talked of learning more about rules concerning food and about customs for interacting, for example how to greet people of another faith and/or culture. It is still early days for the booklet, which is currently being printed, but the people involved in the workshop talked about how their knowledge had increased, including about their own faith.

Confidence: With greater knowledge about other faiths, people felt more confident to interact. They were less scared about unintentionally causing offence. Individuals gained self-confidence as they took their cooking out to a wider audience for the first time.

Community cohesion: The food festival acted as a creative catalyst for around 250 local people in the Deelish area of Rochdale to meet and talk to one another, thereby providing a first step towards breaking down barriers and developing positive cultural exchange. Women involved in the process of developing the booklet continue to meet and discuss inter faith issues.

Specific outcomes

Taking inter faith awareness work into local statutory bodies: Although not an intended outcome, local health bodies and the local council have picked up on this inter faith project and have asked RAIS Academy to develop the work within their organisations, including faith awareness training for social care staff.

Barriers and overcoming them

Not everyone approached to cook for a stall at the food festival understood the importance of other faiths' food laws, for example using Halal meat so that Muslim participants could taste the dish. This was overcome by approaching different people who were more understanding but still encouraging the original invitees to attend.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- getting committed local people involved in preparing food for the festival stalls – they used word of mouth to get their own friends involved. Also, they were very enthusiastic about the idea and open to learning
- proactive publicity for the food festival – using community radio, flyers and visits to local places of worship
- gender sensitivity – at the workshops women were happy to express their feelings more freely when there were only women present
- only having local residents (that is, not including faith leaders) in the workshops. It was felt that discussions could be more open and vibrant
- accuracy of information – a faith leader from each of the faiths included checked the draft of the booklet.

After the project funding finishes

The booklet will be a lasting document, available to any organisations interested. Its content is being used for the training work now funded by the local primary care trust and the council; the project manager sees scope to develop this further for other social care workers, if more funding can be found. Several of the women involved in preparing the booklet continue to meet regularly, continuing inter faith discussions informally and developing their social network.

The project manager is keen to develop the model of the food festival, taking it ‘on tour’ to other locations, if further funding can be found.

‘The most significant thing about this project has been ...’

‘... more than 200 local people found out that there are so many similarities in each other’s religion.’

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they’ve been doing, it would be:

‘Support the provision of European culture awareness training for Asian people’.

Organisation: RAIS Academy

Contact details

Dr Abdul Shakool
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Rochdale OL11 3TA

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Staff resource: Volunteer coordinator

Grant value: £4,500

Grant category: Inter faith

ORGANISATION:
The Bristol Buddhist Centre

PROJECT NAME:
'Vitarka' Schools and Educational Outreach Work

Background

The Centre had, for ten years, been carrying out work in local schools, but the approach and materials were quite ad hoc, depending on the varying interests and experience of individuals in the 'sangha' (congregation, spiritual community). There was demand from teachers for materials that would contribute to the citizenship and religious education syllabus, relating Buddhism to other beliefs and faiths.

Project aims and activities

The project focused on creating practical foundations for the Centre's outreach work with schools, and then increasing its work with schools. The intention was that the work would contribute to greater community cohesion, by enabling children and young people to learn more about faith and increase their understanding about people of different faiths.

A part-time schools and educational coordinator with experience as a teacher was employed. Her first priority was to create the resource pack for schools. The material was based on what teachers had been asking for, including a guide to Buddhist festivals, meditation and 'stilling' exercises, a form of sitting meditation.

The coordinator also built up a database of local primary and secondary schools to which she could then send a mail shot explaining what the Centre could offer. This included lessons, assemblies and materials, for example a Buddhist Shrine Kit.

A number of volunteers from the sangha got involved, each one taking on an activity with which they felt comfortable. Often, a volunteer would support the coordinator on a school visit. Schools were able to visit the Buddhist Centre, or the coordinator and/or a volunteer would visit a school, leading a variety of activities. For example, in secondary schools the coordinator facilitated discussion sessions relating Buddhism to the pupils' faiths, including helping them consider how Buddhist meditation compares with Christian prayer. In primary schools the coordinator led stilling exercises. Follow-up material was made available for the teachers, placed on the Centre's website.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Engaging and strengthening the sangha: Working together on the project has strengthened the connections between individuals in the Centre. They are more confident about working within the wider community and about explaining how the Buddhist faith relates to other faiths.

Organisational capacity: The Centre has built an additional dimension, in terms of what it can offer the local community. More volunteers from the Centre are happy to do outreach work and a variety of appropriate materials is available for the work.

Local awareness: The profile of the Buddhist Centre has increased.

Inter faith outcomes

A presence at inter faith events: The Centre has taken part in local activities, for example a children's inter faith event, where the coordinator led a reflection session and helped facilitate discussion sessions.

Participation on the Bristol Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education: The coordinator has attended meetings, advising on Buddhist content in the local school curriculum.

Opening up inter faith debate: The school sessions have enabled pupils to talk about their faith, which has given them confidence to have their own voice. With the supporting materials, some teachers feel more confident about teaching Buddhism.

Providing a role model: The Buddhist teachings are seen as being very relevant, in that they show how tolerance and spiritual beliefs can work together, which is applicable to the organisation's ability to contribute to social cohesion and inter faith dialogue.

Barriers and overcoming them

The most significant challenge was meeting the demand in educational work from local schools. The coordinator was employed for only one day a week and although volunteer support was invaluable, it was sometimes difficult for volunteers to find time to offer to the project.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- the interest in Buddhism and meditation from the local community, especially from teachers, so that they were receptive to becoming involved
- support and commitment from the sangha volunteers, based on the belief of the importance of working with the next generation, which provided a vital resource
- the coordinator's skills and experience, particularly her background in education, her understanding of Buddhism and her skills in time management and project management.

With hindsight

The coordinator thinks it would have been helpful to have invited school teachers to the Buddhist Centre to discuss religious education, Buddhist resourcing needs and the challenges they face in managing diversity in their classroom. This would have enhanced the partnering with schools and helped to develop stronger relationships. Linked to this, she would also have offered meditation teaching to teachers,

partly to help them manage their stress and busy schedules and partly to increase their confidence in teaching stilling to the pupils.

After the project funding finishes

The Centre is carrying on with the outreach activities, including school visits, working with volunteers from the sangha. The work will be at a lower level as there is no longer external funding for the coordinator, but it may seek further funding to enable specific activities to take place.

‘The most significant things about this project have been ...’

‘... giving children and young people a voice for talking about faith and making sense of how to live in today’s world ... encouraging children to acknowledge and respect other people living in different ways, whilst living together harmoniously.’

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they’ve been doing, it would be:

‘Prioritise social cohesion at a grassroots level. Listen to communities and enable them to identify for themselves what tolerance means for them. Also, fund innovative ways for faith communities and inter faith groups to work in their communities.’

Organisation: The Bristol Buddhist Centre

Contact details

Kalamani
The Bristol Buddhist Centre
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Staff resource: Part-time schools and educational coordinator

Grant value: £4,400

Grant category: Capacity building

ORGANISATION:
Milun Women's Centre

PROJECT NAME:
Women's Inter faith Discussion Groups

Project background

The Milun Women's Centre was set up as an informal group in 1985 and was registered as a charity in 1988. Its aim was to give Asian women the opportunity to meet one another through social, recreational and educational activities. In Urdu and Punjabi, 'milun' means togetherness. One of the activities is a Muslim women's discussion group that meets weekly to discuss common issues such as parenting or aspects of faith. However, the Centre is not just for Muslim women, and women in the Centre wanted to have a similar group for Hindus and Sikhs.

Project aims and activities

The aim of this funded project was to set up a weekly discussion group for Hindu and Sikh women, and then to run a variety of activities for the two discussion groups to spend time together, both formally and informally.

The first step was to find women who wanted to join the Hindu/Sikh discussion group and then identify women who were happy to take a lead part in the discussions or help to prepare group activities.

The first joint activity for the two groups was a social event – a visit to Scarborough with their children – so that the women could get to know one another. Other activities included visits to a local church and a local Gurdwara, religious festival celebrations, for example Eid, Vasaki and Christmas, and learning to play the Indian drum and the harmonium.

The groups were facilitated and run by the women themselves, who decided on the discussion topics and the activities. The Centre's staff helped with organising the activities.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Strengthening women's confidence and abilities: With support from the Centre's staff, more women are now happy to facilitate discussions and help plan activities.

Organisational links: Through the various activities, the Milun Centre has strengthened its links with other local faith organisations, for example the Baptist Church, where several events have been held.

Inter faith activity and relationship outcomes

Increased knowledge about other faiths: The women have learnt about many aspects of one another's faiths, including places and practices of worship and purpose and content of religious festivals.

Opportunity for formal and informal inter faith discussions: The group discussions offered formal opportunities, but the informal activities were also extremely valuable, for example when the women visited Scarborough, the differences in dress code they observed led to animated conversations on the subject whilst enjoying their picnic.

Breaking down barriers: The women who took part had probably previously seen one another in the Centre, but had not talked. The project meant they met one another, and it was suggested that they 'broke down unseen barriers between the faiths'. For the first time they were able to discuss their faiths openly.

Understanding the similarities and being inspired by the differences: The discussions enabled women to see where their different faiths had significant similarities, but also to appreciate the differences and think about how they could apply some of the things they had seen themselves.

Increasing interest in other faiths: Some women said they hadn't previously had any interest in finding out about other faiths, but this had changed through developing personal relationships with women from other faiths.

Specific outcomes

Establishment of the Hindu/Sikh women's discussion group: This new group is now active, with 10–15 women regularly attending.

Visiting places of worship: The project provided an opportunity the women wouldn't otherwise have had.

Learning new musical instruments: The process of learning to play the instruments was an unexpectedly enjoyable way for the women to learn about the role of music in faith, which also took into account the cultural backgrounds that were common across the faiths.

Barriers and overcoming them

In the original project plan, the intention was to hold monthly activities. However, in practice, this required too much organisation. So the decision was taken to hold fewer, but bigger, events, which was felt to have worked well.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- being able to buy musical instruments, so that women could have a go themselves
- visiting the places of worship, so that the women could meet people there and talk in-depth about practices
- the discussions being led by the women, but with support from staff.

With hindsight

The project manager noted that the project would have benefited from stronger planning right at the beginning.

After the project funding finishes

Both discussion groups are continuing to meet. The women are now aware of the need for funding to enable activities to continue. The musical instruments remain and are being used.

Milun is in the process of merging with another local charity, with the aim of achieving more financial security to enable all their activities to continue.

‘The most significant thing about this project has been ...’

‘... the integration of women from different faiths, who came together and benefited by learning and respecting the views of others, and by doing so, we hope, promoting tolerance in their own homes and therefore in the wider community.’

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they’ve been doing, it would be:

‘Provide resources to educate those in the community who can make a difference amongst their own immediate families and their communities, and consider holding a national faith/community cohesion day.’

Organisation: Milun Women’s Centre

Contact details

Mrs. Nasreen Akhtar
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Staff resource: Two part-time staff, as necessary

Grant value: £5,000

Grant category: Inter faith

ORGANISATION:
Quaker Social Action

PROJECT NAME:
Knees Up



Project background

The organisation is well-established, dating back to 1840. It now runs five projects across east London, including furniture recycling, micro-credit, business advice and financial and emotional literacy. In Bow, the organisation recognised there was a need to break down barriers within the community and enable people to get to know one another. The approach was based on a belief that there was a lot to celebrate about the community and that it was a neighbourhood with potential, not problems.

Project aims and activities

The overall aim was ‘to empower Bow residents to build communities that are safe, secure, sociable and mutually supportive’. The way that Quaker Social Action (QSA) chose to do this was by facilitating local residents to organise street parties. The intention was to give people a way to see that positive change in their community was possible and that they, as residents, could have the power as individuals and groups to make that change happen. As the project officer noted, ‘If you can utterly change the place where you live for a day, then you can see that you are able change it in the longer term.’

Four street parties were held. The same process was followed for each one. The QSA community development worker went around the estate knocking on doors, asking people if they would be interested in getting involved in a celebration of their community through a street party. He estimates that, in each case, around 10% agreed to get actively involved (another 80% said they’d come to the event, around 10% were not interested or somewhat hostile). Three or four meetings were held in the run-up to each party with these residents to discuss and plan the party, initially facilitated by the QSA worker, but with

less and less input required. With each meeting, the numbers attending grew as interest spread by word of mouth, and people brought along others they thought could help, for example with music or food. QSA supported each event with resources, such as bunting, large barbecues and a bouncy castle, and with advice, for example how to do a simple risk assessment. Although each party was different, they all involved residents bringing food to share.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Confidence: The process of organising the events was striking in terms of the confidence it gave local residents, knowing that they could bring about change themselves.

Positivity: People gained optimism and faith in their own power both as individuals and as a group.

Inter faith activity and relationship outcomes

More mixing: Simply by coming together to organise parties and through people's participation in the events, there was a lot more mixing between the different ethnic communities on the estate – white British and Bengalis being the dominant communities.

More tolerance and understanding: At the parties people realised how much they could share, even if language was limited, so tolerance has increased. Through meeting informally and getting to know one another, people gained the confidence to discuss issues they were particularly curious about, in particular faith.

Anecdotal reports show how individuals have bridged gaps and that there is a feeling that communities can happily co-exist.

Specific outcomes

Ongoing community work: Residents have worked with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust on personal safety issues and with Living Streets on ideas for improvements in the built environment.

A local organisation to sustain community activity: Residents have come together to form a local charity to carry on work in the

community, including English as a Second Language classes and youth clubs.

Barriers and overcoming them

Summer 2007 was notable for its bad weather, so two events had to be postponed. Whilst difficult, the process of residents having to work together to re-schedule the parties was ultimately beneficial. As the project worker said, 'Negotiating a way through this was some of the most important work.'

Also, there was some initial hostility from a small proportion of residents. However, if they changed their minds once they saw the parties in progress, it was relatively easy for them to join in, for example just for a quick bite to eat, which was the first step to a more positive outlook.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- at every stage, there was a focus on the events being resident-led
- it was an unusual idea – approaching people with a positive attitude about their community (rather than focusing on the problems) and with a memorable project name
- there was a great need for positive community work and an appetite for it
- there were a few key people, who were generous and willing to get stuck in.

With hindsight

The project manager notes that although the basic model is sound, improvements could be made, particularly through better evaluation.

After the project funding finishes

The underlying idea is that Knees Up acts as a catalyst for community development through building relationships and the capacity of a few key individuals, but that following a year's involvement, more long-term provision is set up in other ways. This then frees up the

community development worker to take the model to new places. A small publication has been produced, available as a web download, for others to use and learn from (see www.quakersocialaction.com/documents/KUpublicationweb.pdf).

QSA's trustees were very happy with the project's successes in building community cohesion and are supporting further use of the Knees Up model through their own funds. Also, they have been successful in winning two years' unrestricted grant aid, part of which will be used for Knees Up.

At a local level, residents are developing a variety of community activities and have set up their own organisation to support this.

'The most significant things about this project have been ...'

'... seeing people move from a position of mistrust and with a lack of understanding to a position where they're taking forward initiatives and driving things forward themselves ... seeing individuals talking to their neighbours, feeling safe to help their neighbours.'

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they've been doing, it would be:

'Set in place a national standard that makes it easier to use public space.'

Organisation: Quaker Social Action

Contact details

Edward Mackay
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Staff resource: One part-time worker

Grant value: £22,700

Grant category: Capacity building

ORGANISATION:
Conflict and Change

PROJECT NAME:
Muslim Mediation Service



Background

The organisation suspected that there was an issue with conflict between individuals and families within the Muslim community, and that Imams did not have the capacity or skills to tackle the problem. The organisation conducted a survey to find out if there was a perceived need for mediation services, which suggested strongly that there was.

Project aims and activities

The aim of the project was to set up a stand-alone organisation to provide mediation services for the Muslim community in Newham, with the ultimate goal of reducing conflict both within the Newham community and within families.

Conflict and Change staff began the work to set up the service, initially as a project within the organisation. A steering group was established and a case worker employed. Together, they received training on how to run an organisation, for example governance, policies, fundraising, financial management, monitoring and reporting.

The steering group and case worker then drew up a three-year business plan, including a fundraising strategy, and put in place key operating systems.

Volunteer mediators were recruited, and supported through eight days of training. This included observing an experienced mediator, followed by acting as a trainee mediator, then taking the lead but with observer support from the experienced mediator, before being ready to work alone.

The project advertised for cases using leaflets. It handed them out in the street, put them in councillors' pigeon holes and left them in shops. It also tried out email networking.

As cases came in, the project began to work in a variety of situations, including families and neighbours (Muslim and non-Muslim).

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Respect for Conflict and Change: There is more respect for the organisation from within the community, as it understands how the cases are handled and sees that the approach is not undermining other work in the community. The organisation is now receiving cases referred by local mosques.

Skills and confidence: All the volunteers on the steering group have gained confidence and skills from the training, which has enabled them to be more effective as a steering group and to take on other roles in the wider community.

Trained mediators: There are now about 20 trained volunteer mediators, with a variety of skills and backgrounds (Muslim and non-Muslim).

Inter faith outcomes

Disputes involving other faiths: Several neighbour disputes involving Muslims and people of other faiths have been resolved. The organisation is now also receiving approaches from other faiths.

Specific outcomes

Dispute resolution: The project helped resolve about 40 disputes in the first year. It has also shown how the mediation approach can be used as an effective way to deal with conflict.

Establishment of the Muslim Mediation Service: Work is well progressed towards establishing the Muslim Mediation Service as a separate organisation, for example it has achieved charitable status.

Barriers and overcoming them

The greatest problem was the unexpectedly high demand to become volunteer mediators, whom the project did not have the capacity to train. The organisation has retained a list of interested people whom they can contact in future.

Also, in the early stages, there was an issue with some people within the Muslim community, and some domestic violence organisations were wary of the mediation approach. However, as the project has progressed, people have become familiar with the organisation and have observed its work, which has helped to overcome this problem.

Key success factors

A few particular elements were noted:

- having both Muslim and non-Muslim mediators, which meant that both parties in a dispute felt the mediators understood them
- having support from all stakeholders in the project – the ‘parent’ organisation, the training organisation, volunteers, funders, management committee members – so that everyone was working to make the project a professional organisation
- the training, which gave the management committee the confidence to deliver the funded project.

With hindsight

The case worker notes that the volunteer recruitment should have been better targeted, aiming at a very local catchment and being very clear about the commitment required.

After the project funding finishes

More funding has been won, which will enable the work to continue and increase the number of disputes that can be worked on. The organisation is also investigating ways of broadening its fundraising potential, for example through individual donations.

‘The most significant things about this project have been ...’

‘... the ability to bring understanding into people’s lives – to families and the local community – and so reducing the tensions that exist ... empowering people to believe in themselves and go out and make a difference in their community.’

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they’ve been doing, it would be:

‘Recognise that dealing with a neighbour dispute at an early stage can save time, effort and money which would otherwise be needed to deal with longer-term economic and social effects. Similarly, recognise that the way family-based issues are dealt with has an impact externally in the community, for example at school, or in relations with the police.’

Organisation: Conflict and Change

Contact details

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Staff resource: Part-time case worker (28 hours/week)

Grant value: £5,000 (plus other funding from charitable trusts and foundations; total project cost approximately £29,000)

Grant category: Inter faith

ORGANISATION:

Kalapremi

PROJECT NAME:

Faith and Global Peace Conference



Background

Kalapremi is an arts organisation founded in Indian culture that recognises that art, culture and faith are intertwined. The organisation has been involved in various inter faith activities, for example in schools, using art to create a dialogue between communities. One of its board members was also involved with the International Gita Foundation Trust, an organisation that promotes the teachings of the sacred text, the Bhagawad-Gita. This text has a central message of universal peace and harmony. The Gita Foundation was planning to hold its 2007 conference in the UK, and Kalapremi saw a value in co-hosting the event. Not only would it help to promote dialogue between communities, it would also help to strengthen Kalapremi as an organisation.

Project aims and activities

The project was to plan and run a weekend faith and global peace conference. The underlying aim of this was three-fold:

1. to create a dialogue to look at the similarities between Hinduism and other religions, and also to appreciate the differences, and thereby show that there can be peaceful co-existence
2. to bring together representatives of several faiths
3. to increase young people's respect for, and understanding of, other faiths.

One of Kalepremi's staff became a part-time coordinator for the conference, working with a voluntary steering committee comprising a variety of organisations including Kalapremi, the Church Regional Commission, the Hindu temple, Durham County Council, Tyne and

Wear Interfaith Council and local community leaders. The steering committee met monthly, guiding decisions on speakers, the venue, marketing and overall project planning.

The intention was to bring in respected international speakers who would be happy to encourage audience participation and discussion. There was considerable work involved in organising the conference logistics, for example venue, accommodation and food. The conference was promoted using the steering committee's contacts and networks in the UK and overseas. The steering committee also sought letters of support from a wide variety of religious and community leaders.

A professional PR consultant was engaged to market the conference, which resulted in coverage in newspapers, radio, the web and TV. A souvenir guide was produced, including letters of support, the programme of conference activities and relevant articles, for example on the Bhagawad-Gita, Hindu thought and peace in Islam.

There were around 300 delegates, from the UK, India, Germany, Switzerland and USA. A variety of faiths were represented, including Christians, Hindus, Jews and Muslims. The first day focused on the universal message of peace and harmony of the Bhagavad Gita; the second focused on inter faith discussion and young people.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Relationship-building: The process of organising the conference, and the conference itself, enabled Kalapremi to build relationships with a variety of regional, national and international organisations.

Inter faith outcomes

Dialogue about peace and religion: It was the first time that there had been this sort of initiative in the region, which facilitated dialogue about global peace. The event gave people the chance to talk about the way that religion has become imbued with political meaning and, more importantly, to think about ideas so that people do not feel afraid to say that they are a member of a religion.

Understanding about peace: The discussions enabled participants to find out what peace meant for them, for example in the home and within their local community.

Ongoing PR: Many participants were enthused by the event and can now act as PR agents for inter faith dialogue.

Specific outcomes

Listening to young people: The conference was an opportunity for adults to listen to what young people had to say. Many participants took inspiration from their comments.

Barriers and overcoming them

There was a huge amount of work involved in organising the conference, which the organisation had underestimated. It dealt with this by carefully considering the particular roles and sharing them out amongst the steering committee and coordinator. The steering committee decided to ration its input, based on sometimes having to say no.

Key success factors

A few particular elements were noted:

- bringing in speakers who were well respected and very motivating in their speeches and who took part in effective discussions with conference participants
- careful time management at the conference, so that everything ran to time
- the right type of food at the right times. As the coordinator noted, 'Food is really important, in terms of how it affects people's attitudes'
- including key community leaders on the discussion panels.

With hindsight

If doing something similar again, the coordinator thinks the organisation might make it a three-day, two-night conference. This would give more time for discussion and, in particular, allow time for

people to think about actions they could take in order to make a real difference to peace and inter faith work. This would take the event beyond talk and into action.

After the project funding finishes

This was intended as a one-off event. However, Kalapremi will be continuing its inter faith work, including with schools, dialogue with other faith organisations and work with young people.

‘The most significant things about this project have been ...’

‘... seeing the honesty in doing something to make the world a better place, it was truly inspiring ... the positive support of all the speakers and the people who conceived the idea and took it forward.’

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they’ve been doing, it would be:

‘Recognise that every religion is important, and that the word “religion” should not be negative or scary. It’s important to appreciate the differences and similarities.’

Organisation: Kalapremi

Contact details

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Staff resource: Part-time coordinator

Grant value: £30,000

Grant category: Inter faith

5 Supporting shared spaces for interaction and social action

Introduction

In this theme, the following case studies are presented:

Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy

- Supporting workers and visitors to the O2 arena through multi faith chaplaincy (page 87).

thefai~~th~~works

- Work to prepare the organisation for its move to a new-build community centre (page 91).

Luton Council of Faiths

- Creation of an outdoor space for faith (page 95).

A few key messages

- The concept of shared space can be interpreted in many ways. The projects covered include outdoor space where the space is shared between people of different faiths and no faith (see Luton Council of Faiths), a faith-based organisation which is sharing its space in order to provide services for the community (see the**faithworks**) and a secular space which is the focus for a multi faith organisation to provide its services (see Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy).
- The space provided by a faith-based organisation can play an important role both in that organisation's interaction with the local community and in supporting the activities of that organisation for the community (see the**faithworks**).
- These organisations show that the space itself plays an important part in shaping the activities delivered there (see the**faithworks**). There is an underlying intention of long-term activity, where the space itself may be the hub of a wider spread of activities (see Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy).
- There is a value in the process of creating a space, either at an internal level for an organisation (see the**faithworks**), or externally in terms of the relationships created or strengthened between participating organisations (see Luton Council of Faiths).
- These projects show how faith-related activity can take place in a great variety of spaces, whether or not they were originally intended for that purpose.

ORGANISATION:
Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy

PROJECT NAME:
Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy



Background

The development of the Greenwich Peninsula provided the opportunity for creating a building for different faiths, which could be used for separate worship and for joint dialogue and events and shared resources. However, the building's construction is part of wider physical infrastructure developments in the neighbourhood, which have been subject to development delays.

Whilst waiting for the building, the chaplaincy continued its own development, focusing instead on the existing O2 arena (the former Millennium Dome), where the chaplaincy team had already begun work.

Project aims and activities

The aim was to establish a chaplaincy team for the completed O2 arena, offering a multi faith service to users and businesses which would help to meet their religious, pastoral, educational and social needs. This would be developed from the existing multi faith chaplaincy that had worked on the O2 construction site.

The coordinator expanded the three-person team to a total of 11 volunteers, including two Sikhs, one Muslim and eight Christians of various denominations. The recruitment was done using the Greenwich Multi-Faith Forum as the local representative body, as well as other faith networks. Applications were sought, people were interviewed and references were taken up.

The volunteers completed a varied training programme, including working through case studies provided by the Industrial Mission Association (the coordinating body for workplace mission), role plays,

peer mentoring and visits to working missions in the workplace, for example Bluewater shopping centre.

The volunteers work in pairs, each allotted to particular parts of the O2 arena, such as restaurants. The volunteer chaplains make themselves and the service known, visiting regularly and staying longer as relationships build and more people want to talk to them.

There is regular top-up training and social events, some of which are useful catalysts to discussions, for example a trip to the Tutankhamun exhibition (at the O2 arena), which raised a number of questions about faith.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Chaplaincy team at work: A competent chaplaincy team is now in place, visiting 17 of the 19 businesses in the O2 arena at least once a week. The supporting equipment and systems are also in place, for example 'uniform' fleeces so that the chaplains are recognisable, and production and distribution of regular newsletters.

Personal development: The chaplains now have more confidence in their roles and have developed their listening skills. The training has enabled them to use the resources of their faith traditions to help with discussions, such as the issues facing a business or an individual.

Increased profile: There is now a higher profile for faith communities in Greenwich.

Inter faith outcomes

Increased understanding: Having been through training together, the volunteer chaplains have a better understanding of one another's faiths. Being clear about the differences between faiths has helped the chaplains to work together; understanding the differences within faiths has also been important.

Contribution to wider inter faith activities: The chaplaincy team has worked on a variety of other relevant initiatives. The team compiled a multi faith position paper on what each faith within the

chaplains say about gambling (in response to the proposed casino in the area). A multi faith conference relating to the Greenwich Peninsula development was organised, with contributions from the Leader of Greenwich Council, the developer and O2 management.

Specific outcomes

Support to individuals: The chaplains have provided support to people visiting or working in the O2 arena.

Barriers and overcoming them

The development of the chaplaincy team has worked well. Some businesses within the O2 arena have been more welcoming of chaplaincy than others, but the chaplains have been sensitive in their approaches, working with business managers to do what they are comfortable with.

However, the problem of the lack of a multi faith building remains. The chaplaincy has worked to maintain the relationship with the developer and Greenwich Council, which is publicly committed to the provision of a multi faith building through a Section 106 Agreement (a legally binding agreement between the council, as the local planning authority, and the developer).

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- a very good board of trustees, who work well together and are committed to the project and whose diversity is a visible sign of multi faith working
- placing an equal value on all faiths within the chaplaincy (regardless of the fact that Christians are more heavily represented), where the different strengths of the different faiths are valued
- the positive attitude of the developer, combined with a full-time community development worker who has worked with the chaplaincy team from the beginning. Also, a positive attitude from O2 managers, who have wanted to work with the chaplaincy
- the support of Greenwich's faith communities

- committed volunteer chaplains
- having clear rules for the work, and not worshipping together.

After the project funding finishes

The chaplaincy team is continuing its work at the O2 arena. Its work in the area will be expanding, including covering a new construction site and a supermarket. More chaplains will be recruited. Further funding will be sought to support this work.

‘The most significant thing about this project has been ...’

‘... the way in which people of different faiths have worked together to serve the needs of people working on the Greenwich Peninsula. Doing a piece of work together has been a very effective way of building relationships between different faiths.’

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they’ve been doing, it would be:

‘Make funding available for multi faith, not just single faith, working. There will be a need for a lot more of this sort of work in increasingly metropolitan, multi faith communities.’

Organisation: Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy

Contact details

Revd Malcolm Torry
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Staff resource: Part-time coordinator and volunteer chaplains

Grant value: £16,400

Grant category: Capacity building

ORGANISATION:
thefai**th**works

PROJECT NAME:
Development work for new-build
community centre

Background

thefai**th**works is based in an old cinema building, which is very expensive to run. For the last five years, the organisation has been providing a variety of activities on site, including a mother and toddler group, events and training courses. The opportunity arose to work with a local developer, which would enable thefai**th**works to build a new community centre.

Project aims and activities

The long-term aim for the project was to create an accessible and attractive community venue, which was fit for purpose and practical to maintain. However, it was recognised that there was a need for considerable development work, including long-term planning around sustainability and capacity and strengthening the organisation's management capabilities.

The project work covered several elements:

- working with a funding consultant to map out the organisation's strategic funding needs, identify potential funders and make funding applications
- capacity building of the Church's leaders, including training courses on visioning, strategic planning and project management
- ongoing discussions with the developer regarding the existing site.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Clarification of goals and steps towards achieving them: The visioning process has enabled the Church leaders to clarify their objectives and understand the necessary steps towards those objectives, in a more thorough way than had been previously possible.

Creating time and space for planning: The funding and use of the money for training has given the Church leaders the time out from their daily work they need to be able to focus on the project planning effectively.

Targeted training: The discussions during and after the training courses have enabled focused reflection on current practices and have given individuals more confidence with particular elements of the planning process.

More confidence: Church leaders have more confidence in their own skills as a result of the training, but also because of support from the funding consultant.

Specific outcomes

An improved approach to fundraising: There is now a more systematic approach to fundraising, with a long-term plan, clearly targeted potential funders and better material to put into applications.

Funds raised: thefaithworks has attracted £30,000 towards the new-build, as well as an additional £37,000 for ongoing community work.

Barriers and overcoming them

In terms of managing the project, the short-term nature of the funding – just a year – caused problems in relation to getting staffing in place. Although it took time to build up momentum, there was a greater concentration of work in the later months, which ensured that the planned work was completed.

In terms of prospects for the new-build, the developer has recently raised concerns relating to the state of the housing market, which will affect its ability to take the project forward. Whilst the underlying problem is out of the developer's control, the **faithworks** is maintaining discussions with it, looking at an option for the developer to help the organisation remain in the existing building until the housing market improves.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- dedication of the staff towards making the project work
- the additional management time funded by the project, which made effective planning possible
- effective training courses, appropriate to the Church leaders' needs.

With hindsight

The project coordinator notes that it would have been helpful if it had been possible to get the project up and running faster, in particular if the funding consultant had started work earlier in the year.

After the project funding finishes

The organisation will continue with the planning, although on a smaller scale in the light of the housing market problems. Fundraising will continue, using the existing plan, but with the work done on a voluntary basis. Community activities will continue, with new funding.

'The most significant things about this project have been ...'

'... the time to think, reflect and strategise and the use of consultants and training to support that process.'

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they've been doing, it would be:

'Recognise that voluntary organisations are providing venues for the benefit of local communities at much lower cost than statutory organisations, and that policymakers need to provide the practical

and financial support to enable these voluntary organisations to acquire and run these venues.’

Organisation: thefaithworks

Contact details

Andrea Fogg.
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Staff resource: One part-time worker (about one day/week)

Grant value: £10,200 (community centre element of grant; total £16,000)

Grant category: Capacity building

ORGANISATION:
Luton Council of Faiths

PROJECT NAME:
Creating the Faith Woodland



Background

The concept underlying the project came from the coordinator seeing other projects that combined faith, creativity and the environment, in particular, the Whipsnade Tree Cathedral. Luton Council of Faiths enthusiastically took up the idea and a process of developing the concept into what is now the Faith Woodland project began.

Project aims and activities

The project aimed to bring people of different faiths together and educate them about the different faiths and how they relate to the environment. Another aim was to encourage people to venture out into their local countryside and woodland environments, perhaps for the first time.

The first task was to find an appropriate woodland site. It had to be welcoming to people who might not be familiar with the outdoors, but also accessible, rich in wildlife and with the owner(s) or manager(s) open to the idea. Following considerable research, a woodland site halfway between Luton and Bedford was chosen – Maulden Woods, owned by the Government's Forestry Commission.

A steering committee was formed, including the Luton Council of Faiths, the Bedford Council of Faiths, the Forestry Commission and the Greensand Trust, a local charity. Meetings and site walkabouts were held to discuss ideas. From this, some clear thoughts emerged.

A site within the woodland was chosen as 'the sacred space', which could be used for prayer, quiet contemplation, meditation or other faith-related activities. Three benches were put up around a central oak

tree, to enable people to focus either on the tree or externally towards the wider woodland. A simple information board explained the purpose of the space. A waymarked route was created from the entrance to the woodland, leading people to the sacred space. A labyrinth was made next to the sacred space. This is an ancient idea, which involves providing a set route as an aid to a walking meditation; by not having to decide on your route, you can allow your mind to focus on other matters.

A number of activities and events have been organised, such as picnics, guided walks, story-telling, circle dancing, shared prayer, chanting and periods of silence.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Bringing organisations together: The two Councils of Faiths had not previously formally worked together. The project also brought these inter faith bodies together with non-faith organisations which had complementary goals.

Extending the faith organisation into the natural world: A number of the faiths using the site have begun to think about how it can strengthen and add value to their worship, for example the Sukkoth harvest festival for Jews.

Inter faith outcomes

Increased communication between people of different faiths: Between the two Councils, the project included Bahá'í, Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims and Zoroastrians. The unusual focus on the environment stimulated many discussions about the relationship between faith and the environment, from which the representatives discovered numerous common perspectives within their faiths.

Inter faith events: The site has been used for a variety of faith-related events, open to people of all faiths or none. These have often been celebrations, attracting up to 100 people at a time.

Specific outcomes

Introduction to the local environment: Anecdotal evidence from visitors and workers on the site suggests that many more people from minority ethnic backgrounds are visiting the site, often for the first time.

The value of the environment as an analogy for faith, belief and values: Discussions while in the woodland showed people how what they were seeing in the natural environment could be seen in their lives and their faiths, for example migration from one place to another, and the cycle of birth, life and death.

Barriers and overcoming them

Whilst the owners of the woodland, the Forestry Commission, was very supportive, its size and operating practices meant that it sometimes came across as inflexible. The project coordinator overcame this in part by building personal relationships with individuals and getting them involved, for example in selecting a suitable site. Also, the project has been developing materials, such as templates for site event risk assessments, so that the faith organisations can more easily meet the Forestry Commission's rigorous event planning requirements.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- support from all the faiths. Talking to all the faith leaders very early on in the project meant that their ideas were built into the design of the project, and the whole involvement process meant that the project became theirs, and not the project coordinator's
- having project staff in place, so that there were people with the time dedicated to setting the project up and facilitating all the elements of the process, for example meetings with government bodies
- finding a 'friendly' wood. in other words, with good access, rich in wildlife, and plenty of light.

With hindsight

The project manager noted that the overall process had worked well, but that a larger staff time budget would have been helpful,

particularly for Bedford Council of Faiths which was supporting the project entirely through volunteers.

After the project funding finishes

The Councils are looking for further funding to help more people use the Faith Woodland for additional activities. However, the main structures are now in place and material is available to people via the web and on-site to support people's use of the site. The option of a Friends Group is being investigated, to ensure there is a group of people who can continue to keep the work going after the end of any external funding.

'The most significant things about this project have been ...'

'... a whole group of people who are now good friends ... hearing people from different faiths talking in a way they never would in a hall or room, hearing the buzz of concentration, ideas and conversation.'

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they've been doing, it would be:

'Recognise the resource that exists – committed individuals in faith communities who are interested in society and who want to play a part in society. Reach out to these people – the leaders who are community-minded, as well as having faith.'

Organisation: Luton Council of Faiths

Contact details

David Jonathon

Grassroots

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Staff resource: Part-time project coordinator

Grant value: £30,000

Grant category: Capacity building

6 Women and young people

Introduction

In this theme, the following case studies are presented:

Bristol Muslim Cultural Society

- Establishment of a women's chaplaincy in local higher education establishments and hospitals (page 102).

Pulling Together

- Creation of a 'faith tapestry' as a means for women to learn about one another's faiths (page 106).

British Sikh Women's Organisation

- Social activities to reduce isolation amongst Asian Sikh women and enable them to mix with people of other faiths (page 110).

The Citizenship Foundation

- Setting up a national young people's inter faith forum (page 115).

South Craven Community Action

- Working with young people to create school resource packs about different faiths (page 120).

High Street and Derby Youth Group

- A residential for Christian and Muslim young people aimed at increasing mutual understanding (page 124).

Youth Voice

- Working with young people to create 'digi-stories' about faith and daily life as a young person (page 128).

Aik Saath

- Development of a training module for young people about identity, faith and conflict resolution (page 133).

National Youth Agency

- Enabling youth workers to feel more confident to work across faiths and with young people of faith (page 137).

A few key messages

- The projects presented here are not fundamentally any different to any others funded by the FCCBF, in that they are aiming to increase knowledge about other faiths, encourage inter faith activity and strengthen the capacity of people to be active in faith-based organisations and wider civil society. The only difference is that these projects are targeting and working with young people or women.
- Often, the role of women is guided by their cultural background, which means that they may lack confidence and experience in playing an active community role. Projects such as Pulling Together and the British Muslim Cultural Society's Leadership Development for Muslim Women Project can give women the confidence and knowledge they need to be able to become more active.
- Where a project is just for women, it can give them the space they need for self-development, in that it is both culturally appropriate and creates an environment where they can feel comfortable to learn.

- There is added value in the way that women's learning and growth in confidence enables them to contribute more at several levels – their families, their faith community and their neighbourhood.
- There are the same benefits where projects are just for young people, but the projects can also be targeted in ways that make them attractive and appropriate for young people, for example being fun to do and dealing with the issues that are of most concern to young people (see Youth Voice and the Citizenship Foundation).
- The projects show that young people have the same live interest in inter faith knowledge and activity as amongst adults, and that they feel the same kind of benefits (see High Street and Derby Youth Group).
- The projects also show the value of investing in developing leadership and representational roles amongst women and young people. Both groups may lack confidence and skills to take on such roles, but with support and appropriate training they can do so (see Bristol Muslim Cultural Society and Youth Voice).
- As with any grouping of people, relevant material is very valuable. The booklets prepared by the South Craven Community Action team are targeted at young people and presented in a format that links with curriculum material for teachers. The same is true for the conflict resolution training developed by Aik Saath.
- In common with many of the other projects showcased in this book, these projects show the value of the beneficiaries themselves taking responsibility for the direction of the project, for example the young people choosing the topics and designing the workshops for The Citizenship Foundation's conference.

ORGANISATION:
British Muslim Cultural Society

PROJECT NAME:
Leadership Development for Muslim Women



Background

For some time, hospitals and other institutions have had Christian chaplains for pastoral care; in some cases there has been inclusion of other faiths as well. However, the Cultural Society noticed that there was a lack of Muslim women seen as leaders or people with knowledge, able to work in a chaplaincy role.

Project aims and activities

The aim, therefore, was to fill this gap by offering female Muslim chaplains, complementing existing services such as those offered by Imams, and by strengthening the contribution of Muslim women to inter faith activities, especially in terms of media presence.

The first step was to recruit suitable women. The project was keen to have one representative from each of the main Muslim groups in Bristol – Somali, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Arabic and South East Asian. It was also important that the women could commit to the full training programme, and that they understood the principles of chaplaincy, for example that they were comfortable working in a multi faith environment and realised that they would not be proselytising. A number of approaches to recruitment were used: word of mouth, email networking with organisations, mobile phone networking to mosques and advertising in community magazines and on the back of event flyers.

The five women chosen embarked on a chaplaincy training course run by the Markfield Institute of Higher Education in Leicester, an organisation with considerable experience which offered an accredited

course in community chaplaincy. This comprised several one-day training courses in Leicester and 60 hours' placement in a community chaplaincy, under supervision of that institution's multi faith chaplaincy. The students took up voluntary placements in the two universities in Bristol and in city hospitals, each working two to three hours a week.

All the women have contributed to various inter faith activities and media opportunities, for example TV and radio interviews, co-chairing a regional Muslim forum event, attending local inter faith festivals and visiting schools.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Role of men and women: There is more of a 'buzz' about women's role in Islam and more awareness that they can provide help. Also, there has been more thought about how men can get involved in tackling certain issues that have previously been seen as purely women's issues, such as domestic abuse.

Women's self-confidence: The women now feel they have more authority and can have more of a say in some issues, such as forced marriages and the opening up of community facilities.

Women's interest in contributing: There are now more women actively engaged in chaplaincy and community activity, including identifying further ways in which they can help.

Inter faith outcomes

Increased capacity: More people are now willing and able to meet the demand for visits to mosques or presentations. Also, it is now possible to respond when a female perspective is requested.

Specific outcomes

Chaplaincy: All the women graduated from the course and are now working as voluntary chaplains, as well as contributing to local and regional inter faith initiatives and events.

Media profile: The women chaplains have contributed to a variety of local, regional and web-based TV and radio shows.

Barriers and overcoming them

The recruitment process was successful; one person pulled out at the last minute, but a replacement was quickly found from the reserve list.

A few of the women's husbands were initially unsure about the idea, but these concerns were overcome by the project manager taking the time to explain the project and answer any questions.

Key success factors

A few particular elements were noted:

- finding women with the necessary qualities. These included: a good understanding of Islam; good listening skills; and being non-judgemental, open to multi faith settings and articulate
- serious commitment from the women, who were keen and proactive in looking for opportunities
- the project being run by an organisation which was well respected within the Muslim community, so that the women's families were able to trust that the work wouldn't harm the women's reputations.

With hindsight

The budget had not allowed for the cost of car hire to Leicester, which was sometimes required in order to allow for all the women to travel together, with a female driver.

After the project funding finishes

The women have now established themselves in their roles as chaplains in various institutions in Bristol and will continue this work.

The organisation is seeking funding for another round of training, in order to spread the load of chaplaincy work and to establish the role of female chaplains further. It already has a list of women interested in taking part. Ideally, the training course will be Bristol-based; given sufficient numbers Markfield College may be able to run a bespoke

course. Other funding options are being considered, such as women contributing a proportion of the course costs.

‘The most significant things about this project have been ...’

‘... that we now have a team of five qualified female chaplains in Bristol ... that it works and is continuing ... that we now have a tangible resource with learning and experience, wherever they are.’

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they’ve been doing, it would be:

‘Realise that chaplaincy work in general is important and that in the Muslim community, there is a need for professionalisation of this kind of work, which will require support and a vetting process to get the right people.’

Organisation: Bristol Muslim Cultural Society

Contact details

Omer Williams
BMCS
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Bristol BS5 6NQ
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Staff resource: Project coordinator

Grant value: £29,800

Grant category: Capacity building

ORGANISATION:
Pulling Together

PROJECT NAME:
Faith Icons Tapestry Project



Background

The group provides a range of weekly arts and recreational activities for young Asian women (aged 11–18), in order to tackle isolation. Most of the women who attend have ‘some sort of faith’ and had discovered many similarities through informal discussions.

Project aims and activities

The project aimed to use the activity of creating a tapestry of religious symbols to celebrate the women’s faiths, learn more about one another’s faiths, learn new skills and increase their confidence.

More than 15 women from various faiths got involved – mostly Muslims, but also Sikh, Hindu and Christian. Weekly workshops were held, where the development worker and an artist worked with the women to develop ideas for the tapestry and helped them to create it, with different panels showing different faiths. In order to learn more about the faiths, there were visits to several places of worship, including a Buddhist temple, a mosque, a Hindu temple, a Sikh temple, Manchester Cathedral and also Manchester Jewish Museum (housed in a former synagogue).

Once finished, the group held a final celebration and the tapestry was put on display. A professional photographer was engaged to take photographs of the tapestry and each participant, which were framed and presented to them.

Participants were asked to complete a quiz-based evaluation sheet before and after the project, to assess how their understanding about other religions had changed.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Pride in creating something: The pride in working together to create the tapestry was valuable to individual participants and the group as a whole; in practical terms, it seemed to help people cross language barriers.

Personal confidence: Many of the participants became more confident about speaking in front of their peers and elders as a result of explaining their ideas and work to other members of the group.

Gaining project management skills: Several of the women learnt more about how to plan and carry out a project, through taking on a particular part of the work, for example inter-personal skills, gained through making contact with the local church to arrange a visit.

Inter faith outcomes

Increased knowledge: Through the research (using the internet, books and other information) and their visits, the women have learnt much more about other faiths, for example the meaning of particular symbols.

Recognising similarities: With a more detailed understanding of other faiths, the women discovered that there were many similarities between their faiths, for example the respect for elders and the need for ritual.

Specific outcomes

Learning new artistic skills: The women discovered and acquired new sewing and design skills.

Making friends: Through taking part in the group, participants talked of making new friends and having fun together.

Barriers and overcoming them

The project coordinator found that the project worked well, without any major problems.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- women of faith who were really interested in taking part
- the visits to different places of worship, so that group members could get information directly from people of that faith
- practical support, including transport, a crèche and multilingual workers and volunteers
- support from faith institutions.

With hindsight

The development worker comments that it would have been good to have had someone involved ‘without a faith’, to get their perspective. Also, it might have been useful to have had more time with the different faiths, for example through more visits or more wide-ranging discussions.

After the project funding finishes

Several of the women involved have been encouraged to do short art-based courses at the local college and community centres.

The tapestry is on display at the organisation’s office and will continue to be offered for display in community venues and events.

The group has been successful in getting more funding, which will enable a new arts-based project for women of faith.

‘The most significant thing about this project has been ...’

‘... the understanding and appreciation of similar values around, for example, the role that community, parents, children, education and health play in all faiths.’

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they’ve been doing, it would be:

‘Provide funding to support this type of grassroots project, which is key in developing strong, cohesive communities, who respect differences and want to celebrate and achieve more together.’

Organisation: Pulling Together – Young Asian Women’s Group

Contact details

Robina Sheikh
Old Trafford Community Centre
Shrewsbury Street
Manchester M16 9AX

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Staff resource: One part-time development worker and a sessional artist

Grant value: £4,200

Grant category: Inter faith

ORGANISATION:
British Sikh Women's Organisation

PROJECT NAME:
The Synergy Project

Background

The British Sikh Women's Organisation (BSWO) was set up by a group of Sikh women in order to empower Asian women through offering a variety of activities. The idea for the group came from a visit to London's Capital Women event (an annual conference organised by the London Mayor for women to come together to discuss issues affecting them).

The organisation had run a variety of activities, but wanted to expand what was on offer and reach out to those Asian women isolated in their homes.

Project aims and activities

The aim of the project was to support Asian Sikh women in various ways – to give women a reason to come out from home and get involved in activities, to enable Sikh women to engage with people from other faith communities, and to help women to focus more on themselves for a short time every week.

Underlying the project was the belief that if people do things together, the process of taking part in the activities gets participants talking; over time people develop friendships and, in so doing, learn about one another and their culture and faith. The whole process creates synergy, hence the name of the project.

Five main activities were planned and advertised:

- a series of 20 yoga sessions. A trainer in Kundilini yoga led the lessons, basing the mix of yoga and meditation on Sikh principles

- a series of 20 stress management sessions. The trainer helped participants to think about what stress management means and taught a variety of stress management exercises and other coping mechanisms
- ten diversity awareness and inter faith workshops. A diversity trainer led participants through discussions and exercises on various areas of diversity, including legal aspects, appreciation of other cultures, perceptions of diversity and different sorts of diversity. The workshops were intended to attract different people to each session
- two inter-community food events. These took place at the local badminton centre, where the training courses were held. The women's group also provided food and drinks to volunteers at the annual centre 'clean up' day, and also hosted a Fairtrade event at the centre
- a Fairtrade walk through Feltham, jointly with members of local churches, and Fairtrade stalls in the Hounslow Sikh Gurdwara and Asda supermarket.

The project funding was also used to hire a website designer to create a basic website for the organisation.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Organisational development: The organisation is now stronger, with more of a sustained group of people interested and involved in organising activities. Trying different activities has helped the organisation to think about how best to grow, building on what it already has. It now feels in a stronger position to help itself, for example with fundraising.

Personal relationships: Several of the women have begun to make friends with other women attending activities, which has helped reduce isolation and give a purpose for some women to leave their homes.

Inter faith outcomes

Building relationships: Through activities attended by non-Sikhs, the Sikh women have got to know people from other faith communities. They have had the opportunity to discuss issues of common interest, for example Fairtrade, and are becoming more comfortable with one another.

Understanding similarities: The women have greater understanding that people from other communities are ordinary people, like them. Doing things together enabled people to retain their sense of who they were, without thinking about the differences.

Specific outcomes

Stress reduction: Women talked of feeling less stressed and being better able to sleep after the yoga sessions and the stress management training.

Website: The organisation now has a website, which provides simple information about the organisation and its activities.

Barriers and overcoming them

It was difficult to find an affordable venue locally, but the group found the local badminton centre. This had added benefits, as people from the centre started to get involved in activities as they saw things happening there regularly.

Some participants were shift workers and couldn't attend sessions regularly. The organisation kept up the advertising of the activities, in order to attract new participants.

The website creation was expensive, so only a simple site is in place at present. The women intend to have some training so that they can maintain and extend the website themselves.

Key success factors

A number of elements were noted:

- having support from a core of members, who helped the organisers with the activities
- people taking the time to attend activities regularly and getting members involved in activities, for example cooking and playing badminton at the centre
- word of mouth from members, who recommended the programme to others.

With hindsight

The organisers note that the project would have benefited from more advertising, for example by doing the website first, so that it could have been used to publicise activities. Also, they might have been able to get some voluntary help from an IT student at the local college in order to develop the website, which would have given the student relevant experience and given BSWO new ideas.

A part-time coordinator would have helped with the demands of organising the activities and the bookkeeping.

After the project funding finishes

The yoga sessions are continuing, by popular demand, with the women now paying themselves; the sessions also include elements of stress management. The group is continuing to promote Fairtrade and in June 2008 ran an event for Love London. It may look for more funding to run more activities.

'The most significant things about this project have been ...'

'... to make connections with the local community ... and to enable the women to divert their attention away from stress, to do things differently and to think in a different way.'

If you were to give one piece of advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work you've been doing, it would be:

'Provide local venues to communities to develop small projects.'

Organisation: British Sikh Women's Organisation

Contact details

Ms Satnam Kaur Khalsa

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Staff resource: Voluntary coordinator

Grant value: £5,000

Grant category: Capacity building

ORGANISATION:
The Citizenship Foundation

PROJECT NAME:
National Youth Interfaith Forum



Background

The Citizenship Foundation had been leading the partnership project Diversity and Dialogue, working with a number of national charities, including Christian Aid, Islamic Relief, Jewish Council for Racial Equality, Oxfam, Muslim Aid, World Jewish Relief and Save the Children. The project facilitates meaningful interaction and community cohesion between young people from diverse backgrounds, with the aim of addressing discrimination and empowering young people. Some work around faith and belief had shown that there were few opportunities for young people involved in inter faith and social cohesion work to come together and share ideas and experiences.

Project aims and activities

The project aimed to set up a national youth inter faith forum, organised and led by a group of young people from different faiths and backgrounds. The forum would work to identify and explore a small number of key issues, which would provide the basis for a national youth conference.

The first step was to get a youth committee together, which the organisation achieved by drawing on existing contacts. Eight young people aged 17–20 came forward. They were all from Greater London and included Christians, Sikhs and Muslims.

The group met every two weeks, getting to know one another, and then began a series of discussions to enable them to choose the key issues. To spark ideas, they attended two plays about citizenship. The discussions were facilitated, to enable a wide variety of issues to be

raised and considered. The young people shared their thoughts and found common ground, which then enabled the group to make consensus decisions. The five topics finally agreed on were: climate change; unwanted sexual contact; post-16 transitions in life; gun gang violence; and 'preventing violent extremism'/anti-terror laws.

One person took the lead on each topic and worked with the facilitator to design a workshop for the national conference. The conference was widely advertised through the Diversity and Dialogue partnership, the Citizenship Foundation network and other avenues. The target group was 16–19 year-olds at colleges and youth clubs. Although the conference was advertised nationally, most attendees were from London. Around 80 young people took part. The day started with an interactive theatrical performance, highlighting the five topics. The youth committee then introduced the day's programme, before moving on to lead the workshops. The concluding part of the day involved the participants deciding which of the issues they were most interested in, then joining a debriefing workshop on that topic to consider potential future actions.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Personal development: The young people were very excited at their ability to plan and play an active part in running the conference, for example for many it was their first experience of facilitating a group of peers. The planning process was a valuable learning experience, for example understanding about planning and running effective meetings.

Inter-personal skills: The young people's abilities to work with other people grew, including learning about appropriate ways to talk and behave.

Inter faith outcomes

Finding commonalities: In choosing and exploring the topics, the young people's focus on the issues took them away from thinking about the things that might divide them.

A safe space for dialogue: The forum provided new ways of discussing important issues, where the young people could begin to look beyond their own identity as expressed in faith terms, and think more broadly, with community cohesion as the real focus. The support from the facilitator meant that the ground rules were followed and people felt comfortable to talk.

Faith perspectives: As the young people discussed each topic, they considered it from the perspective of different faiths. Where necessary, additional information was given so that any gaps in their knowledge could be filled.

Specific outcomes

A successful event: The planned workshops were felt to have worked well, with a good variety of approaches to each topic. There was a good diversity of backgrounds amongst the attendees.

Barriers and overcoming them

The practicalities and time constraints on planning the conference meant that a lot was asked of the young people. To minimise their time commitment, the facilitator tried to get people who could potentially help with the workshops, such as possible panel members, to come to the Forum's bi-weekly meetings, rather than needing the young people to find time for additional meetings. Where this was not possible, the young people and the facilitator visited the potential participants at their place of work.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- commitment from the young people in sticking with the intensive conference planning
- support from Citizenship Foundation colleagues, particularly at the conference, for example helping with registration, photography and leading groups
- a responsive venue provider, who was flexible during the preparation and on the day

- having a facilitator so that there was someone with the time to provide ongoing support to the whole process.

With hindsight

The facilitator notes that the group might have benefited from working with three topics, rather than five, as this would have given it more time on each. However, it would have made it harder to make a selection, and would possibly have come at the price of people's ownership of particular issues.

At the conference, the day's schedule was packed, which meant that the closing workshops lacked the time needed to think effectively about potential action points. With fewer issues, and therefore more time, the closing session might have been stronger.

The original aspiration for a national project was not met, as the feasibility of working at a distance was realised. Any future project would need a larger budget to cover travel and accommodation costs to allow for the face-to-face working and longer timescale, which are essential for a project on a national scale.

After the project funding finishes

The Citizenship Foundation is developing a related programme aimed at schools and youth clubs to empower young people and staff to facilitate constructive debate about controversial subjects, using a youth-led model, drawn largely from the experience of this project.

'The most significant things about this project have been ...'

'... the youth committee developing the product that they did and delivering it on the day ... moving from ideas to actualisation.'

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they've been doing, it would be:

'Be aware of, and make use, of young people's desire and an ability to engage with relevant and challenging subjects: we risk exacerbating confusion and tension around these issues by not engaging with them.'

Organisation: The Citizenship Foundation

Contact details

James Sevitt
Citizenship Foundation
63 Gee Street
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Staff resource: Part-time facilitator (three days/week)

Grant value: £24,600

Grant category: Inter faith

ORGANISATION:
South Craven Community Action

PROJECT NAME:
Craven Connecting Communities



Project background

The project was focused on the rural area of Craven where there have been individuals of different backgrounds scattered around, rather than established black and minority ethnic community groups. However, the picture is changing and cultural diversity is increasing. Also, in this rural area, it was not easy to find information about cultural diversity.

Project aims and activities

The project's overall aim was to enable local people to accept this diversity, to overcome their fear of difference and of change and to tackle their lack of understanding and their concern for loss of identity. The idea of producing resource packs for primary schools was born.

A part-time worker and the project manager worked together to raise interest in local primary schools and with young people. Through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, four young people from different faith backgrounds met the project worker weekly. Together they helped to collect material for the packs, for example by visiting local places of worship and interviewing local people of different faiths. The project was launched through a story and poetry competition in local primary schools, with winning entries being included in the packs. The project manager pulled the material together into the finished packs, one each for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism, and also for travellers and Wiccans. Each pack has three main sections:

1. information – including a potted history, local places of worship, holy days and festivals and local resources, for example contact

- information for local places of worship and details of religious artefacts available to borrow from South Craven Community Action
2. two types of stories – from relevant literature and personal stories
 3. activities – for example word searches, pictures to colour in, recipes and things to make.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

A sense of involvement: Children and young people became actively involved, including contributing their own stories, which helped them build a sense of their own changing community.

Inter faith activity and relationship outcomes

Increased knowledge and understanding: As the young people worked on the project, they learnt more about the faiths of other people in their local area, as well as learning more about themselves.

More tolerance: The children's experience of writing their own stories and hearing other people's has 'got them thinking' and helped them to understand that other children whom they might have perceived as different are the same as them.

Closer community relations: Learning more about individuals in the same community has helped to build understanding and individual relationships.

Specific outcomes

Packs available in local schools: The packs are available to local schools, targeting children aged 6–11.

Barriers and overcoming them

The main barrier was the tightness of the school curriculum, which made it difficult to engage primary school teachers, particularly at the beginning. The continued efforts of project staff got the school competition up and running in four schools, which raised interest. Also, the project staff worked hard to fit in with school timetables.

Initially, there was little interest from young people. The project staff overcame this by working with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Once young people were engaged, the project staff aimed to keep their interest by making the work very active, for example, through visits and photography and by interviewing local people.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- telling local people's stories, so that the information in the pack had immediate local meaning to the users
- getting support from other staff in South Craven Community Action, for example with design and production, so that the packs became a team effort.

With hindsight

The project manager noted that they had been ambitious about what they could achieve within the project budget. Also, it is likely that more publicity at the beginning would have helped kindle and maintain interest in the project.

After the project funding finishes

The packs are now finished and are being promoted to local schools. South Craven Community Action will support the work by continuing to produce packs when they are requested.

The project manager would like to source more funding to be able to roll out the project into new places.

'The most significant thing about this project has been ...'

'... the pleasure and the learning that we all got from it.'

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they've been doing, it would be:

'Make funding available so that more of this work can be done, thereby giving a local flavour to faith awareness, so that more areas can have ready access to locally relevant resource material.'

Organisation: South Craven Community Action

Contact details

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The Bungalow
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Keighley BD20 7RL

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Staff resource: Part-time project officer

Grant value: £26,100

Grant category: Inter faith

ORGANISATION:
High Street and Derby Youth Group

PROJECT NAME:
Interfaith Residential

Background

The Youth Group had been running for about ten years. It had recently run a residential weekend, which it felt had been very successful in terms of giving young Muslims a chance to do something completely different, in a new place, with new people. A similar residential was planned, but in a different location, focusing specifically on meeting young people of another faith.

Project aims and activities

The aim was to give a group of 15 young Muslim men (aged 13–19) the chance to mix with young people from different communities and find out for themselves about their similarities and differences.

The High Street and Derby Youth Group would be joined by young people from another youth group located near the site of the residential, in Scotland. The Scottish group was found using contacts provided by the YMCA.

By going on a residential, it was hoped that the young people would enjoy a memorable, intense experience, where there was potential for strong bonding because the environment and activities were so different to home. The residential included a wide variety of activities, such as kayaking and cycling.

The structure of the residential was planned around the theme of citizenship, with the aim of providing accredited activities (with AQA, the UK awarding body for general qualifications, as the awarding body). The youth leaders wanted to create an environment for open discussion, with activities during the day and conversations evaluating the day in the evening. One day was devoted entirely to the cohesion

theme, with the title 'Breaking Down Barriers – Understanding the Differences'. There was facilitated discussion about inter faith issues, looking at cultural backgrounds and what they meant for young people growing up with different faiths.

The young people were encouraged to contribute actively to the planning of the residential, so that they could take some responsibility and ownership. This included thinking about what activities should be included and what needed to be done to make everything happen.

During the residential, the youth workers and volunteers helped the young people to make an informal video diary, which was edited by staff, volunteers and youth group members after the event.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Interaction and communication skills: Many of the young Muslim people had not had much experience of interaction with Christians. The residential kindled their interest in the interaction and improved their communication skills.

Inter faith outcomes

Enabling dialogue: The residential enabled all participants to discuss topics that often were not discussed because they were concerned about saying the wrong things. The facilitation created the right environment for discussion. Discussion focused on issues that were relevant to young people and of common interest, for example how the media portrayed faith and what difference faith made in everyday life such as football support.

Personal perspectives: The inter faith discussions were focused on how participants felt about different faiths. This made it easier for them to understand one another, as they began to understand that the other participants were young people very like themselves.

Seeing the commonalities: The discussions increased the young people's awareness of the commonalities between Islam and Christianity. This changed their perceptions and made them more aware of how the similarities could play out in everyday life.

Specific outcomes

Local learning from the residential: The difference the residential made to young people in Bolton is being cited in the young people's section of a report about community cohesion in the city.

DVD of the residential: The video diary has been used to promote inter faith working, for example at a Christmas get-together of several youth groups in Bolton. The youth workers noted that seeing things visually had more impact on young people, as well as giving other youth groups ideas about what they could do.

Rumworth Together Day: The group was a key partner in planning a fun day in Rumworth, which is one of the town's community cohesion initiatives.

Barriers and overcoming them

Some young people were unsure about the idea of leaving Bolton to go away for a week. However, those who had gone on the previous residential helped as mentors and explained about the time away.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- people who were receptive to the concept behind the residential – helping young people to understand more about people of another faith
- having plenty of experienced youth workers and volunteers involved in the youth group, who contributed ideas and contacts relating to the planning and delivery of the residential
- careful preparation by the youth workers, which meant that the young people quickly gelled once on the residential.

With hindsight

The project manager notes that the model could be improved by the youth workers for the two groups working more closely together at the ideas stage, so that the topics tackled during the residential would

be better balanced to the needs of both faith groups (rather than having a greater emphasis on the issues raised by the Muslim group).

After the project funding finishes

The youth group continues to meet three times a week. Some of the young people from the residential have developed their interest in inter faith working and have begun to make links with other youth groups. They are starting to plan joint activities that focus on issues of interest to both groups, for example an event around gang culture.

Another residential is planned, this time in France, with the same idea of increasing understanding about other places and cultures.

‘The most significant thing about this project has been ...’

‘... the change that it’s made to some of the young people ... the way they look at life and the way they conduct themselves now.’

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they’ve been doing, it would be:

‘Give young people opportunities like these, to which they wouldn’t otherwise have access. Also, provide funding support for voluntary and community groups that work at the grassroots level to provide broad inter faith work.’

Organisation: High Street and Derby Youth Group

Contact details

Farook Atcha
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Staff resource: Four paid workers, an administrator and one volunteer on residential

Grant value: £3,000

Grant category: Inter faith

ORGANISATION:
Youth Voice

PROJECT NAME:
Digistories Project



Background

Youth Voice was set up around ten years ago by teenagers in Leicester, in order to have something for young people to do, and owned and run by young people. Starting with cricket on the street, the organisation grew. There are now three main aims:

1. To get young people together on a social basis, as a way to initiate discussions about issues that matter to them.
2. To get young people mobilised to lobby for local change, for example policy on leisure centre opening hours.
3. To support young people to move into training and employment.

Recently, young people in the group had an informal discussion with the organisation's director, explaining how MC music described their lives and the issues they faced. This led into discussion about media stereotyping of young people and the young people's feeling that they had no voice in the media. The director already had some connections with BBC Radio 5 Live and could see the potential to develop the skills that the young people had from their MC music into radio and Web media.

Project aims and activities

The aim of the project was to bring to life the experiences and day-to-day social issues which were faced by young people of different faiths. Using web-based media, they could bring their stories to a wider audience and enable more people to develop an understanding about young people.

Twenty young people were recruited from amongst existing Youth Voice members, and by their word of mouth, to others. They took part

in a series of activities, leading to the production of a digistory, telling the story of a young person's day, using a combination of photos and recorded interviews. The idea was to produce digistories of people of different faiths, focusing on how faith played a part in their everyday lives: for example, how going to the mosque related to their social lives, what it was like growing up in their culture. Youth Voice also made contact with young people's groups in other cities (including London, Derby, Blackburn and Peterborough) to include them in the project.

The first step was a residential training weekend. The time was used to explore the issues that could be tackled through the digistories and also for training in how to interview people to get their story, how to record the interview and how to edit the content in audio form. In five teams of four, the participants each took the lead on particular roles: identifying the topic, finding a young person who was happy to work with the group to tell their story, taking the photos of the young person at the centre of the digistory, and editing the digistory.

The team worked together to create their digistory and to review it, once the main editing had been completed.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Technical skills: The participants have developed technical media skills, for example editing, photography.

Personal skills: The young people have also developed a variety of softer skills, including interpersonal skills.

Creating a voice: Young people have found a way to express their views and explain the issues facing them that are accepted by a wider audience. This has opened up doors for dialogue and engagement.

Local engagement: Young people are now more engaged in local decision-making, as the project has raised their profile and local councillors have seen the value of listening to young people.

Creating organisational relationships: The project has created lasting relationships between Youth Voice and local schools.

Interfaith outcomes

Opening up about faith: The project enabled young people, especially Muslims, to begin to talk about faith outside their own community.

Specific outcomes

Creation of digistories: Twenty stories from each region have been completed and Youth Voice is working to arrange their uploading onto BBC regional websites.

Increased understanding about the media: The young people are now more aware that the media isn't a homogenous entity and they understand that there are some parts of the media which are interested in working with young people of different faiths (and some parts which aren't).

Support from local leaders: The project has captured the imagination of the local authority, which has funded the establishment of a sound recording facility for young people. This is now being used by young people to record podcast audio messages to councillors.

Barriers and overcoming them

As with all young people, this project was one demand on their time amongst many. The Youth Voice co-ordinator developed partnerships with the schools so that some of the work could be linked to the citizenship curriculum and then done in school time.

Also, some parents were cynical about their children's involvement. This was overcome through the youth worker (who was already known in the community) talking to the parents and trying to reassure them about the project. With the permission of the young people, parents were also invited to sessions, so that they could see the work for themselves.

Key success factors

A couple of elements were noted:

- Having the project co-ordinator role, so that the volume of organisational work required could be completed: for example consent forms, reporting.
- Support from CDF, in particular the training workshops on funding and sustainability.

With hindsight

A systematic monitoring and recording system would have helped to track progress throughout the year. However, the experience of this project has helped Youth Voice to develop a system for the organisation which will provide a single information template to use, for example to report back to multiple funders.

After the project funding finishes

The digistories will be put online and will be promoted. The sound recording studio is now in use, with support from local councillors. Youth Voice hopes to encourage other organisations to do similar work, for which the young people who have been trained through this project can act as mentors.

‘The most significant thing about this project has been ...’

‘...young people realising that the media is not a single entity and feeling confident to articulate their messages to a media which is interested to listen.’

If you were to give advice to local, regional or national policy makers about the sort of work you’ve been doing, what would it be?

Firstly, thank-you ... it’s wonderful to have the money for something like this. ... Come and visit the project. This is hard but rewarding work, but work like this needs to be sustained, for example through funding and links to mainstream organisations.

Organisation: Youth Voice

Contact details

Youth Voice

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Leicester LE1 6GD

Tel: 0116 223 9177

Email: info@youth-voice.org

Grant value: £30,000

Staff resource: Part time co-ordinator, three days/week

Grant category: Inter faith

ORGANISATION:

Aik Saath

PROJECT NAME:

Faith and Identity Training



Background

Aik Saath (meaning Together as One in Punjabi, Hindu and Urdu) was set up in response to racial tensions in Slough between the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities. The core of the organisation's work is carrying out training in conflict resolution and anti-racism with young people. With recent changes in the political climate, it became clear to the organisation's staff that there was an increasing need to look for common ground around faith. For young people, faith was becoming a more important part of identity and social life.

Project aims and activities

The aim of the project was to develop a training session specifically using faith to look at identity and conflict resolution. This would then be used in the organisation's regular training programme for young people (aged 12–20).

Two members of the organisation began work on the project. Their first priority was to develop the training material. There were several elements to this:

- drawing on their own experience of seeing other people working with faith in relation to conflict resolution
- web-based research and other desk research to identify extracts from religious texts from different faiths (Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism) that could be used as the basis for discussion
- discussions with local faith leaders to confirm the appropriateness of the text extracts.

Next, the staff piloted the session with a group of young people and made changes as necessary. The session was then taken out as part of Aik Saath's regular training programme: a series of four to six one-hour sessions delivered in schools, colleges and youth centres.

The session design was intended to introduce faith in a way that young people would find fun and would also lead them to find common ground. The session focused primarily on togetherness and the idea of community, but also looked at non-violence and racism. It took the participants through three main steps:

1. a debate about identity and faith, particularly how the young people felt about their faiths in relation to their lives in the community and in school
2. an exercise to 'guess the text', where they were each given an extract from a religious text and asked to guess what faith it came from. This led into the third stage
3. a discussion examining each text, finding out its source and considering the underlying messages.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Organisational development: The work has helped to develop the organisation's capacity to talk to young people about faith and identity.

Personal development: The young people have become more confident about themselves and the people around them.

Inter faith outcomes

Enabling dialogue: The session helped to open up debate about faith and identity in a way that went beyond messages the young people might have absorbed from the media.

Breaking down barriers and tackling stereotypes: The session has helped young people of different faiths to learn about one another and has 'opened their eyes' about other people whom they already

knew but weren't necessarily friends with. With increased understanding, there was a realisation that people tend to follow similar values and have similar wishes, for example for tolerance, peace and understanding.

Specific outcomes

Session participation: Nearly 300 young people have taken part in sessions.

Barriers and overcoming them

The session was designed to fit into an existing programme which Aik Saath was experienced in delivering, so there were no major barriers. However, as expected, it was time-consuming to get schools on board with the programme, due to the need to build relationships and follow the required administrative processes.

Key success factors

A number of elements were noted:

- getting the young people's feedback at the pilot stage, which helped to ensure that the session was something they really enjoyed
- previous experience of designing training for young people, so that they were more confident about choosing appropriate text extracts and then making them comprehensible to the young people
- having the input of local faith leaders to check over their choices of text extracts.

After the project funding finishes

The session is now an established part of the training programme and is being used regularly. Aik Saath is interested in expanding the session, if it gets the opportunity. Fundraising is ongoing to enable the overall training programme to continue.

'The most significant thing about this project has been ...'

'... watching young people develop a sense of identity for themselves and gaining confidence.'

If you were to give one piece of advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work you've been doing, it would be:

'This sort of training works best as part of a wider programme about identity, conflict, stereotyping and racism.'

Organisation: Aik Saath

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Staff resource: Two part-time staff

Grant value: £12,000

Grant category: Inter faith

ORGANISATION:
National Youth Agency

PROJECT NAME:
Interfaith Youth Work



Background

The National Youth Agency and the Church of England had been working together on research to look at how to incorporate the spiritual dimension into youth work. This was related to feedback from youth workers about their concerns around confidence to work across faiths and with young people of faith, and awareness of the rising agenda for social cohesion and inter faith working. The work had led to the production of a workbook (*Sense of Respect*), which was well received. However, it became clear that there was a need to support users and potential users of the material through training and networking.

Project aims and activities

The aim of the project, therefore, was to support people to use the workbook and so increase their confidence and ability in inter faith youth work. The project also aimed to give people a means to share their experiences of inter faith youth work, as well as learn more about what was being done in their local area.

Four workshops were run across England: in London, Leeds, Birmingham and Manchester. A part-time consultant was engaged to plan and deliver these events. She worked with the Church of England's national youth advisor, who helped her to identify Diocesan youth advisors who would be interested in the project. The consultant worked individually with each advisor to prepare their local workshop. The intention was to bring together up to 25 youth workers of different faiths and Christian denominations, in order to introduce them to the workbook and showcase and discuss youth inter faith projects. Each event was different, reflecting local circumstances and wishes, but they used the same basic framework:

- an introduction to recognising one's own spirituality
- presenting and running two exercises from the workbook
- discussing the value of a local network
- presenting and discussing local inter faith work with young people, from ideas and nascent activities, to well established and successful projects.

The events were well attended, with people from Christian (various denominations), Confucian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Zoroastrian and humanist backgrounds and people of no faith.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Local networks: Networks that focus on inter faith youth work are beginning to come into being, for example in Leeds there is an email-based group whose members share information and invite one another to events. Other established networks are growing, with more people getting involved in the other three areas.

Organisational development: The National Youth Agency's website now includes information about inter faith youth work. This sends out an important message about its legitimacy to youth workers across the voluntary and public sectors.

Inter faith outcomes

Confidence for inter faith working: The training has enabled some youth workers to feel more confident and competent to work with young people on inter faith issues or in inter faith situations.

Awareness-raising about local inter faith work: The events presented a new opportunity to find out about local inter faith work, so that people could learn from local experience and link up with existing work.

Increased and different inter faith work: The Church of England Diocesan youth workers have added an inter faith stream to their work. Other youth workers have talked about gaining new theological perspectives on their work.

Specific outcomes

Use of the workbook: More youth workers now feel confident to use the workbook, particularly having had time to reflect with colleagues about how to use the resource. Attendees at the workshops have cascaded their knowledge to others.

Barriers and overcoming them

There was concern about being able to attract people to the events, particularly as the focus was inter faith work, which the organisers thought people might be suspicious of. They overcame this risk by taking the time to talk to potential participants and build relationships, and by giving them plenty of information.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- the Diocesan youth workers' local knowledge and contacts , which helped with publicising the events
- trust in the consultant, which meant the Diocesan youth workers were more willing to get involved
- making clear to the Diocesan youth workers the project's aims and expectations. There was a process of negotiation so that people could find a mutually agreed way of working
- using experienced facilitators at the events, who had a good understanding of faith and inter faith work and could work perceptively with the groups
- the mutual support between the Diocesan youth workers and the consultant, which enabled the smooth planning and delivery of the events.

With hindsight

The project took up more time than had been estimated so, the coordinator notes, they should have budgeted for this.

After the project funding finishes

The networks are continuing locally. The National Youth Agency's website includes a section relating to spiritualism and faith, which will

be updated regularly. The examples of good practice gathered during the events and since are gradually being written up and made available to youth workers.

The National Youth Agency will continue to look for funding in order to run more events of this kind. It has ongoing background support from the Church of England's youth officers.

'The most significant thing about this project has been ...'

'... the way that it has validated and encouraged inter faith work.'

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they've been doing, it would be:

'Make sure that the policy and practice is ready to take account of the increasing importance to young people of faith, and spirituality for those who don't have a faith.'

Organisation: National Youth Agency

Contact details

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Grant value: £29,500

Grant category: Inter faith

Contributing to civil society

Introduction

In this theme, the following case studies are presented:

Hope UK

- Raising awareness about the role faith-based organisations can play in drug and alcohol education (page 143).

Futures Unlocked

- Establishing an organisation to provide multi faith chaplaincy for ex-prisoners (page 147).

Evangelical Alliance (Gweini Division)

- A study to quantify the contribution made by faith organisations to civil society in Wales (page 151).

A few key messages

- In many ways, faith-based organisations can be seen to be contributing to civil society. This section picks out just three. The Faith Community Capacity Building Fund (FCCBF) enabled Hope UK to strengthen an existing service and contributed to the establishment of a new organisation – Futures Unlocked. Both projects offered opportunities for volunteers from the wider community to get involved, now and in the future.
- Gweini's project is a new piece of research, trying to quantify the value of the activities of faith-based organisations to civil society in Wales. The research has provided valuable evidence which can now be used by the faith sector and others to demonstrate the sector's contribution to civil society in several key areas – providing community services, providing community spaces and contributing to the economy through tourism.
- It is not only the projects shown in this theme that are contributing to civil society. In all sorts of ways, faith-based organisations are making a difference to their wider communities, including services to vulnerable people, education and training and activities for children and young people. FCCBF funding has enabled volunteers and beneficiaries to become better equipped to be active in their communities, some of them for the first time.

ORGANISATION:

Hope UK

PROJECT NAME:

Drug and Alcohol Education Programme

Background

Established originally in 1855 as Band of Hope, this Christian organisation has always been children and young people focused, with a holistic view of health and community. For the last ten years, Hope UK has been developing a volunteer-led drug and alcohol education team and running an Open College Network accredited course. Volunteers might be Christians, people of another faith or of no faith. The FCCBF-funded project stemmed directly from this work.

Project aims and activities

The aim internally was to build Hope UK's capacity to improve its drugs and alcohol education work. This included putting in place an action plan for the programme's development, working more effectively and efficiently and getting more volunteers trained. Externally, the aim was to reach out to people in other Church networks in order to raise the priority of drug and alcohol awareness within their activities.

The internal work began with a residential event for Hope UK staff and volunteers, in order to begin the work on developing an action plan. There was further input to the action plan through the annual Educators' Conference, which included people from outside Hope UK. At both events, the work included an element of volunteer training. The organisation's executive director took on the work of producing the action plan, with support from external facilitators from another charity. Its development was integrated with concurrent work on the development of Hope UK's overall strategy.

The external work focused on communication with the organisation's target audience – other Church-based organisations and potential

volunteers. The funding enabled Hope UK to produce written material and an exhibition kit to promote the drug and alcohol education programme. Staff and volunteers attended a number of Christian conferences. The other element of this external work was attracting new volunteers. The organisation tried out a new approach – advertising on Premier Christian Radio, available in London via broadcast wireless and nationally via the web.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Clearer goals: The process of producing the action plan has given the organisation a much clearer view of what it is trying to do. Having previously needed two sides of A4 to describe its work, it now uses just one sentence.

A defined workplan: The action plan has given Hope UK a much clearer view of what it will need to do to achieve its goals for the drug and alcohol programme. It now has defined targets and milestones.

A stronger programme: The existing volunteer educators have increased their work, with a 50% increase in the number of sessions provided. Fifty-eight new volunteers have been recruited.

Specific outcomes

Training of Church leaders: The project has reached out to leaders of other Churches, which has helped to increase the profile of drugs and alcohol awareness education.

Relationship with Premier Christian Radio: The relationship with the radio station has strengthened, so Hope UK is now more often called on to contribute programme material about drugs and alcohol issues.

Radio advertising: The adverts led to 15 serious enquiries about becoming a volunteer educator mostly, but not all, in London.

Barriers and overcoming them

Persuading Church leaders of the value of drugs and alcohol awareness is not easy, as it competes with many other priorities. The project staff found that attendance at Christian exhibitions, where they could meet and talk to people, was very valuable. Using fun activities to attract people into conversation was important, for example getting people to put on beer goggles (which distort the vision, in an attempt to simulate the effects of drunkenness) then try to walk along a white line.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- staff and volunteer unity and commitment to a common goal
- the ability to meet people face to face at conferences and exhibitions
- having a good 'product' to tell them about
- the underlying faith dimension, meaning that there is an added value commitment from people because the work is part of people's lifestyle and vocation.

With hindsight

The project manager noted that he would have attended more conferences and exhibitions.

After the project funding finishes

The action plan for the drug and alcohol awareness programme is in place, integrated within Hope UK's overall organisational strategy. The plan is being used and the organisation will continue with the programme.

Individuals who have been trained as educators will take the work out into the wider community – their own localities, not just their congregations.

'The most significant thing about this project has been ...'

'... the boost that it's given to building the capacity of the UK Church to provide drug education and prevention activities.'

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they've been doing, it would be:

'Focus more on the voluntary sector, recognising its potential for effective drug education and prevention work.'

Organisation: Hope UK

Contact details

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Staff resource: One part-time staff member (hours as necessary), and an external facilitator

Grant value: £15,000

Grant category: Capacity building

ORGANISATION:
Futures Unlocked

PROJECT NAME:
Community Chaplaincy



Background

The chaplain explained that when people leave jail, they experience an enormous discontinuity in terms of practical, emotional and spiritual support. Although there is support during someone's time in jail and soon after leaving, there is a gap in the crucial first few hours and days. In Leicester, there was no service or organisation that could fill this gap.

Project aims and activities

The aim of this project was to set up a new organisation in Leicester to provide community chaplaincy to two prisons – HMP Leicester and Glen Parva Young Offenders Institution. It would give holistic support to offenders throughout the process of preparing to leave prison, leaving prison and after leaving until they felt able to stand on their own feet.

The chaplaincy liaised with the Prison Chaplaincy, the Prison Service, the Probation Service and other organisations, signposting the ex-offender to services and, importantly, just being there to talk through issues with them. Another significant activity was helping them to find appropriate places of worship where they could feel welcome and cared for; this also involved working with places of worship to prepare them for bringing ex-offenders into their community and helping them to understand their needs.

Volunteer mentors provide the chaplaincy services. Fourteen mentors were recruited initially, from several faiths – Christian, Hindu, Muslim – and without a faith. A volunteer professional trainer delivered a two-day training programme, covering subjects such as the issues facing

offenders, breaking down communication barriers, the role of the mentor and assessing offenders' needs. Further ongoing training was provided on specific topics, including housing and drugs.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Growing trust for Futures Unlocked: Other organisations and services working with offenders and ex-offenders now understand the purpose of the community chaplaincy and are happy to work with it, for example a working protocol has been agreed with the Probation Service. Prisons outside the area but releasing offenders into Leicester are making referrals to the organisation.

A growing role in the sector: Futures Unlocked is now working regionally with the National Offender Management System (NOMS), including setting up a consultative group to advise on how faith communities locally can work with NOMS. Nationally, the organisation is contributing to the development of a consensus of standards and aims for community chaplaincy.

Inter faith outcomes

Awareness-raising about faith: There is more awareness about prisoners with a faith, within the prisons and within other organisations supporting offenders and ex-offenders. Also, several places of worship have become better equipped to bring ex-offenders into their community.

Profile-raising: The work has raised the profile of faith-based organisations, demonstrating what they can achieve in the sector.

Specific outcomes

Organisational establishment: The organisation is now established and up and running. It has its own office, based in the community, which enables better access for its clients, mentors and partners. There are two full-time and one part-time staff members and a growing team of mentors. It has good working systems, for example monitoring and evaluation.

Holistic support to offenders: In the first year Futures Unlocked has worked with more than 30 men.

Barriers and overcoming them

Some places of worship were initially reluctant to get involved, perhaps because they lacked experience with ex-offenders in their community or were unsure about Futures Unlocked as a new organisation. The chaplaincy team worked to overcome this by continuing to explain its work and keeping up the links, particularly with key local networks such as Churches Together.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- having representatives from all the main faiths on the board. This had three main benefits: showing that the community chaplaincy wanted to work with all faiths and none; giving the chaplaincy access to a wide variety of appropriate contacts; and acting as a source of knowledge for project workers
- running an event for the East Midlands to contribute to the NOMS consultation on the faith sector's contribution, which greatly increased the organisation's range of contacts and its capacity to deliver.

With hindsight

The project worker would have had more faith in himself!

After the project funding finishes

More funding has been won, including funding for a part-time project manager. This will free up one of the existing staff members to do more community faith group work and further work in prisons.

However, the organisation recognises that more funding will be needed if it is to meet the growing demand for its work from the prisons with which it is already working and others that have approached it.

'The most significant thing about this project has been ...'

'... the difference it makes to individuals.'

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they've been doing, it would be:

'Invest in mentoring and community chaplaincy. Also, believe that faith-based organisations can deliver; recognise the value for money of the services they provide.'

Organisation: Futures Unlocked

Contact details

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Staff resource: One full-time chaplain, one part-time administrator

Grant value: £9,100 (plus other funding from charitable trusts and foundations, total project cost approximately £55,000)

Grant category: Capacity building

ORGANISATION:
Evangelical Alliance (Gweini Division)

PROJECT NAME:
**Faith Communities' Contribution
to Civil Society in Wales**

Background

Gweini suspected that the value of the faith sector's contribution to the voluntary sector in Wales was being undervalued, but there was no existing information to back up this suspicion.

Project aims and activities

The aim of the project, therefore, was to carry out a statistical study of the contribution the major faith communities make to civil society in Wales. The intention was to make estimates at a national level and at unitary authority level, if there was a sufficiently uniform and good response rate.

The study was based on an audit of several elements:

- the premises and accommodation offered to the local community (free or rented)
- the voluntary work being done which was open to the wider community, including type of work, for example lunch clubs or employment training, and amount of work (i.e. estimate of the number of hours)
- paid staff – number, capacity and role
- faith tourism – nature, volume.

An advisory group was set up to offer the project manager support on the statistical and analytical methodologies. The project manager also worked closely with the Wales Faith Communities Forum, getting its support for the work and working with it to reach out to worshipping congregations across Wales. Seven faiths are represented on the Forum

– Bahá'í, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. The Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) was engaged to carry out the administrative work of mailing out the questionnaires and data entry.

A questionnaire was devised and piloted. Considerable work was done to identify the worshipping congregations to which the questionnaire should be sent. A response rate of 49% was achieved, which enabled analysis at a unitary authority level as well as nationally. Standard economic techniques were used to estimate the financial value of volunteer and staff time, the use of buildings and faith tourism.

Outcomes

Capacity-building outcomes

Evidence-based information: Reliable information now exists about the contribution made by faith organisations to civil society, across Wales and at a unitary authority level.

Raised awareness: A high profile launch, with support from a Welsh Assembly Government minister, enabled the findings from the study to be circulated in the UK national press, on Welsh TV and the BBC website, thus raising awareness across a potentially large audience.

Local confidence: Congregations from all faiths can now be more confident about the role they are playing in their community, as the value of their work is now visible in 'terms that the world understands'.

Strengthening Gweini's networking: The information is being used as part of Gweini's mission to serve the Christian voluntary sector through networking, representation and information.

Specific outcomes

A value placed on the role played by faith organisations: Statistically sound research is now available which has established that the faith sector contributes over £100 million to wider civil society in Wales. Data is also available at unitary authority level, for example the sector contributes £10 million in Cardiff. There is anecdotal evidence

that unitary authorities and Welsh Assembly Government are using this information.

Barriers and overcoming them

Overall, it is felt that the project went well. However, this project was just one part of WCVA's operational agenda, so Gweini had to take an approach that was flexible to WCVA.

Key success factors

A number of particular elements were noted:

- a very good working relationship with WCVA, which allowed each organisation to make the most of its particular strengths
- the advisory group, whose input brought in technical skills that complemented those of the project manager
- a supportive manager within Gweini, whose financial management and general support made the project manager's work much easier.

After the project funding finishes

The research is now completed and is available for public use.

Also, it is being used as a resource for further analysis, including the value of the faith sector's contribution to civil society within each unitary authority area (work not covered by the original funding) and Gweini is now assessing the financial value of each major Christian denomination in Wales. The research data is being made available to the other major faiths, so that if they wish they can conduct analysis relating to their own faith.

A spin-off of the research is taking shape – a similar survey studying the Church's contribution to relief and development in other countries.

'The most significant things about this project have been ...'

'... the positive reaction from all parties concerned and the way the objectives were met – stemming partly from the excellent response rate.'

And finally, if project staff were to give advice to local, regional or national policymakers about the sort of work they've been doing, it would be:

'Recognise that work like this is valuable, but also that it requires a serious input of time and resources to be able to arrive at information people can believe.'

Organisation: Evangelical Alliance (Gweini Division)

Contact details

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Gweini

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Staff resource: One part-time consultant plus a contract with WCVA for administrative work

Grant value: £26,700 (plus £20,000 Lloyds TSB Foundation)

Grant category: Capacity building

Conclusion

The projects presented in this book demonstrate a remarkable array of activities, which together have helped to make significant differences to the organisations themselves and their wider communities.

As the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund (FCCBF) originally intended, faith-based organisations have been strengthened and are now better positioned to contribute to civil society. Management committee members are now more confident and better skilled to lead their organisations. Many organisations are better equipped to operate efficiently and deliver activities in the wider community. The breadth and quality of activities has increased, as the Fund has enabled organisations to improve existing activities or to start up new ones.

There have also been major contributions to inter faith activity, with valuable work at an individual level and a very local level and also regionally and nationally. Organisations have taken significant steps towards community cohesion, as individuals and groups have increased their understanding about other faith groups, which has in turn led to increased respect and tolerance. A key factor was enabling individuals and groups from different faiths to begin a dialogue. Faith was described as an increasingly difficult topic for people to talk about, but the projects broke down barriers through providing structures and spaces for safe, comfortable communication.

There have been notable outcomes for women and young people as a result of the FCCBF-supported projects. Often, for women, the projects have enabled them to overcome cultural mores and increase their involvement in social and community activities. Also, training and support has made it possible for women to take on formal and informal leadership roles, as they have acquired new confidence and skills. The projects have had similar personal development benefits for

Chapter 8: Conclusion

young people. For both groups, a variety of inter faith activities have brought them together with women and young people of other faiths, often for the first time, and initiated through social interaction.

Overwhelmingly, the projects show the value of the contribution of faith-based organisations and inter faith working to improving community cohesion, particularly at a grassroots level. The successes of these organisations should be celebrated and their approaches embraced.

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