

This was the final workshop in the programme. As well as using the learning in your organisation, you can use it as evidence when applying for the [Lasting Difference Symbol](#).

1. Exit strategies

At what point do you start thinking about an exit strategy? Too early and you risk losing urgency. Too late and you risk losing everything. Risk registers and income generation strategies should be in place throughout and exit strategies should be considered as early as possible. The Lasting Difference toolkit suggests steps you can take at any stage in the lifecycle of projects, organisations and funding.

Themes from our peer support conversations:

Learning and planning

Now is a good time to pause and reflect on your options. Long term planning is needed – what sorts of services will be needed and funded in the event of further austerity? Transfer learning across your organisation, bringing people together and removing silos.

Retain focus on the core

Never lose sight of service delivery – the funding is important but service delivery is what makes the difference. Review projects and roles to identify which should be part of the organisation's core work. This includes administration and business development roles. Focusing on the core will help organisational survival, though it may mean saying 'goodbye' to some important commitments. It's worth identifying whether you need different exit strategies for different parts of the work – what's core and what's not?

Partnership work

Partnerships are a key element of sustainability (see the Involvement part of the Lasting Difference toolkit). Remember funders can be partners before, during and after the funding period. Having a joined-up approach to national issues can be powerful – e.g. for influencing policy, campaigning and fundraising. Covid has also highlighted the value of joined-up service delivery from a mixture of mainstream and specialist services. Some work is very specialist and cannot be mainstreamed, but improved partnership responses are always possible.

Impact

Being able to show the impact of work is important and having an evidence bank is useful. Organisations in this fund have become better at gathering and using evidence – this became a core theme within the workshop programme.

Positives to retain

During Covid, the voluntary sector has been valued for its community support. Money has been directed to the families we support. Teams have pulled together, really stepping up, learning and adapting quickly. We've been creative, mobilising support and managing change. There are opportunities in the challenges we face – when one door shuts, another opens.

2. Who could affect or be affected by your potential exit from a piece of work and how will you manage this?

Exits affect staff and volunteers and through them, the people and communities they serve. There's a possible secondary effect on our partners and the wider sector.

Share exit strategies with all stakeholders so they know how and why decisions are being made. Having strong relationships in place e.g. with service users and partners makes a big difference when things need to change. Likewise, if we're concerned that funding decisions will be made without fully considering the longer-term impact, we should do everything we can to ensure the work of the sector is understood.

Involve boards and staff in sustainability and exit strategies (see Part Three of the Lasting Difference). Once strategies are identified, we should prepare and support staff and manage the dangers of losing specialist knowledge.

“We're thinking about getting together as a team – some kind of away day. There's lots of conversations going on. COVID-19 has really drawn together all the different strands/discrete projects of our work into our strategic priorities, a unifying whole.”

The constant churn of activity and seeking funding makes it difficult to find time to focus on exit strategies. But this is the important time to stop and reflect on what works and what doesn't. Longer term planning and funding are vital but can only take place once we have time to focus and think about what really matters.

Summary of our straw poll on preferred exit strategies:

- Mainstreaming or integrating: 10 people (34%)
- Re-funding: 15 people (52%)
- Restructure: 3 (10%)
- Transferral: 1 (3%)
- Legacy materials: 0

[For more information on what these mean, see the Lasting Difference toolkit p49]

3. Sustaining learning and impact

Learning seems less urgent than funding, but it is crucial for sustaining funding and impact.

Themes from our peer support conversations:

Evaluation and evidence

Use evaluation to learn what needs to be sustained. Protect capacity for this and involve others. Sharing positive feedback can be very powerful – involve the people you support, your board, staff teams, social media etc. It helps everyone to see the big picture of the organisation and its impact.

Partnership

Forums to share learning are very useful. Collaborations can help to find and access funding. Look beyond the obvious – there may be orgs doing something completely different to you but who could help with something specific. It can also be useful to ask external partners (e.g. from outside the sector) for help sustaining resources.

Policy influence

Links with local and national government officials have been important, as have links with local partners where resources and connections are shared to facilitate collaboration. Charities can work together to ensure voices heard e.g. children and young people.

Sustaining change

There have been unexpected benefits to some of the changes that we've had to make under Covid. It has also validated the 4-5 years of learning from the Fund while also challenging us to think about things differently.

4. How can Corra Foundation help?

- Share learning and impact with Corra and other funders.
- Influence other funders, sharing the importance of funding core costs. Other funders asking orgs to strip down core costs to 5-8% of application.
- Think about the frequency of reporting – trust your funded organisations, but remember regular reporting helps identify knowledge.
- Support networking across the fund.
- Funders need to recognise that we have limited capacity for fundraising, writing applications etc right now.
- How will the flexibility from funders during Covid-19 continue?
- How do families / individuals get access to the information about who is funded? Practical guidance not just signposting.
- Question back to funders – 'what are you doing with all the info charities supply you with'?

"We're looking at next financial year – which is where the huge unknowns are.

There is huge uncertainty about what's going to be possible in terms of activities next year. We're a bit clearer about what we might be able to do in the next few months but not next year."

See below for the various links and resources provided during the workshop.

5. Relevant links and resources

Lasting Difference resources

Toolkit: <https://www.thelastingdifference.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/The-Lasting-Difference-2020-5th-Ed.pdf>

Lasting Leadership: <https://www.thelastingdifference.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Lasting-Leadership-Toolkit-WEB.pdf>

Session 2 notes: <https://www.thelastingdifference.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/The-Five-Capabilities-workshop-notes.pdf>

CYPFEIF and ALEC-related resources

Children and Young People's Voices Evidence Bank: <https://evidencebank.org.uk/>

CYPFEIF & ALEC Fund resources: <https://tinyurl.com/yd23mrtx>

Other resources – Working with funders

A rebalancing act how funders address power imbalance
<https://www.thinknpc.org/resource-hub/power-dynamics/>

IVAR Duty of Care report <https://www.ivar.org.uk/our-research/funders-and-funding/>

'Principles for positive partnership' developed with Third Sector Unit of Scottish Government. Many aspects of it are relevant to funding relationships.
<http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk/our-work-partners/our-work-scottish-government/positive-partnership/>

Other resources – Finance and fundraising

Economic Recovery report: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/towards-robust-resilient-wellbeing-economy-scotland-report-advisory-group-economic-recovery/>

From response to recovery: fundraising strategy and covid-19 <https://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/guidance/research/from-response-to-recovery-fundraising-strategy-and-covid-19/>

Facilitator note: Our thanks to everyone who participated and contributed to the workshops. We hope you found them useful for sustaining your work and its impact into the future. Keep in touch with our developments and resources via the lasting Difference website www.thelastingdifference.com