

Why Community Foundations?

Building capacity in local voluntary and community organisations

Good intentions need more than money to become a reality, which is why community foundations also provide a wide range of support to small voluntary and community organisations so that they become more efficient, effective and better equipped to face the challenges they hope to meet in their local area.

By providing a place of learning that brings people together, community foundations play a far larger role than simply grant making. The broad package of support on offer helps to build the capacity of small voluntary and community organisations so that they can extend their successful activities, help more local people and achieve more than they thought possible before encountering their local community foundation.

How do community foundations help to build capacity?

Community foundations provide extensive support to their local voluntary and community sector.

- ◆ Some help local groups to write funding applications, providing advice on the telephone, in person and at funding advice workshops; over 95% found this 'helpful' or 'very helpful'.
- ◆ Some help organisation to receive support and access funding streams, like Birmingham's work with small grassroots groups.

- ◆ Some are proactive in supporting the local voluntary and community sector during difficult times, like Leeds' efforts to articulate their concerns to major funders².

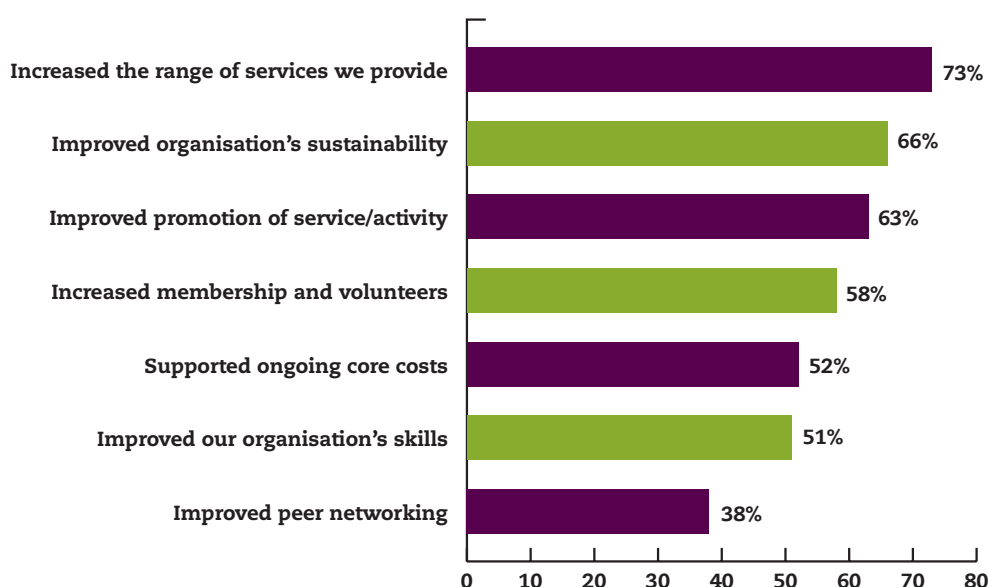
Why is capacity building important?

Whilst finding money is a core concern for community activists, it is not the only challenge they face. They also need assistance with management and administrative issues, recruiting volunteers, training staff, getting publicity, involving the local community and learning how to work with the local statutory bodies.

How do we know community foundations help to build capacity?

Research conducted by Community Foundation for Greater Manchester in 2006 found that grant recipients gained a lot more than money from their involvement with the community foundation:

Types of capacity built by community foundation grant recipients



CASE STUDY

Surrey Community Foundation

SPACES is a small local group that provides free weekly drop-in sessions for young parents and their pre-school children in a high need housing estate in Haslemere. Surrey Community Foundation provided a grant to fund its running costs at a critical time when the parents were starting to develop their confidence and skills and taking on the running and development of the group. Building capacity and skills can take time. Support from the community foundation has enabled both the parents and the group to grow and develop.

CASE STUDY

Capacity building for long-term benefit

It is hard to focus on the long term when there is too much to do today and there are bills that need paying. Community foundations can help small organisations to take the steps they need to ensure they are around to help local people in the years to come.

The Essex Association of Boy's Clubs was a small organisation that initially had modest aims, seeking £800 in 1998 to assist the participation of lower income families. After eight years of support and encouragement from Essex Community Foundation, EABC applied for, and was awarded, £10,000 in 2006 to extend its clubs into rural areas of the county.

CASE STUDY

Developing useful skills at Quartet

Like most community foundations, Quartet has an impressive package of support to develop the skills of activists. This includes expenses, a training programme, funding to attend conferences, visits to projects doing similar work, consultation events and sessions to raise awareness of relevant issues³. A national evaluation of Quartet's grant-making for children and young people's activities found, "There is no doubt that the pool of skills, talents and experience has been deepened and widened in these communities and this will have an impact which knocks on into other areas of community life. Some adults found that their experience in working with groups provided them with enough self-confidence and experience to help them into the labour market. It seems reasonable to assume that, in the same way, these skills and experiences would be, for many more adults and parents, transferable into other local community activities, such as running tenants groups or becoming more involved in other organisations and generally enhancing their level of political skills"

Community foundations also increase capacity in local communities and neighbourhoods

The Greater Manchester 2006 survey also found that grants had a substantial positive impact on the capacity of local neighbourhoods, including the creation and improvement of local community facilities, new opportunities for volunteering and the creation of local employment opportunities.



Community
Foundation
Network

Registered company no. 2651777;
registered charity no. 1004630
www.communityfoundations.org.uk

- 1 Greater Manchester Community Foundation survey summer 2006
- 2 Report into the future funding of Leeds' voluntary sector, January 2005
- 3 Small grants and strategic priorities, Lin Whitfield, 2005, p19