



Leading Learning
in Education and
Philanthropy

LLEAP Dialogue Series:
Cases companion document
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REFLECTION 3

Collaborate and learn, but do both better

Philanthropics have a lot of ability to drive change and bring partnerships together – bring government and business around the table. Be the arms and legs.
(Not-for-profit respondent)

I really think that it is about getting the relationships and connections with schools in public education. We have not had to get our head around this area before. I'd like to work in partnership with these groups.
(School respondent)

A genuine need within a community, hopefully that has been identified by the school community, should be the starting point for any engagement.
(Philanthropic respondent)

Issue

Collaboration is not the destination. It is one strategy to advance a project of mutual interest and maximise its impact. It is one reflection of engagement, signalling the importance of mutual commitment in the relationship. It is one forum where learning, informal and formal, can take place. It is the one issue that came up again and again in our fieldwork and reviews of other literature.

The issue people wanted to know more about was how could we better connect with one another around an area of mutual interest? Our view is that ‘form follows function’. Get this sorted first and who, when, where and how you might collaborate comes next.

Support materials and tools

- To support your thinking on this topic, in this section you will find:
- a framework for thinking about your current or potential collaborators. Illustrations of these factors can be found in this document.



A framework for effective engagement

Participants in the LLEAP project from schools, philanthropic grant making foundations and trusts, and not-for-profit organisations were asked:

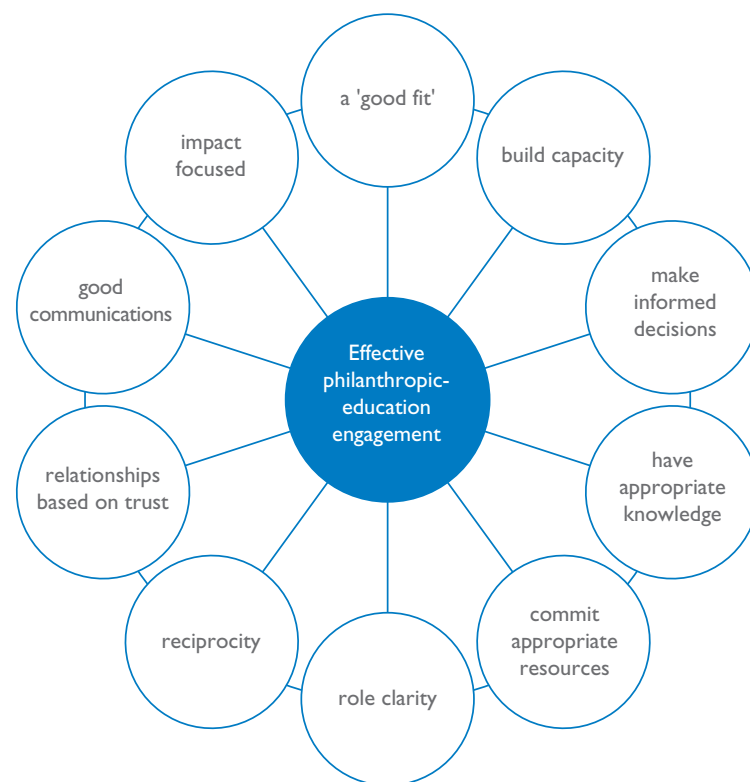
What do you perceive to be the key ingredients for successful philanthropic engagement in education?

More than 250 'ingredients' were identified. The 'ingredients' covered various aspects of grant seeking and grant making. A thematic analysis of the 'ingredients' was done, producing 10 success factors.

How these factors might be reflected in practice could vary in terms of context, for example:

- ▶ size of the grant;
- ▶ scope of the project;
- ▶ model of engagement (e.g. one philanthropist supporting one individual, compared to multiple foundations and trusts working with government and whole of community);
- ▶ level of experience of grant maker or seeker;
- ▶ stage of the relationship (e.g. pre-application, application, acquittal);
- ▶ the lens through which the success factor is being described (i.e. school, philanthropy or not-for-profit).

Ways these success factors may be evident in practice can be found in the table overleaf and in the cases.



Have you thought about ...

- 1 What might success factors look like from your perspective and context?
- 2 How might awareness of success factors impact on your grant making or grant seeking in the future?
- 3 What opportunities for collaboration does each success factor offer?

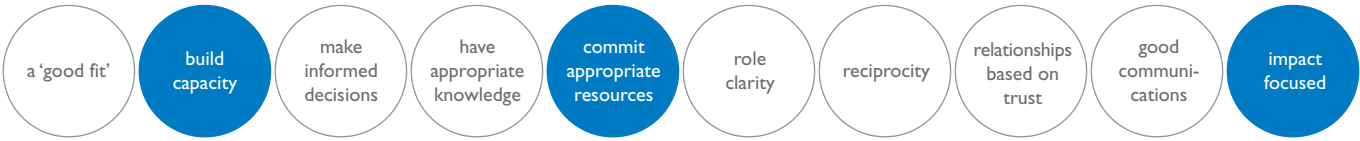


Effective engagement

Success factor	Ways this may be evident include ...
a 'good fit'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ aligned values ▶ aligned objectives ▶ aligned priorities
build capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ pooling funds ▶ assistance with networking and forming partnerships with eligible organisations (knowing who and how) ▶ assistance with the application process (samples, examples, mentoring, meeting locally to discuss project) ▶ improving the knowledge and capabilities of applicants
make informed decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ evidence-based identification of need ▶ track record ▶ ground-up identification of need ▶ needs that are appropriate, important and a priority for all who are affected ▶ weighing up the costs versus the benefits
have appropriate knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ knowing who are the philanthropic foundations or trusts interested in funding education ▶ knowledge about the issue, which is the focus of the grant ▶ knowledge about the community or context for the proposed grant
commit appropriate resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ longer-term granting relevant to the needs of the project or program ▶ pre-application phase: time, interest in discussing ideas ▶ sufficient funding within the grant for activities associated with partnering and preparation
role clarity	<p>partners in the project having:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ clearly defined roles and objectives ▶ working strategically in the government or policy context
reciprocity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ equally valuing the contribution of each partner ▶ two-way and give and take ▶ mutual benefits ▶ partners bringing their strengths to the relationship ▶ team approach to identifying and implementing
relationships based on trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ agreement over values and priorities ▶ doing what you say you will do ▶ perceptions of competence ▶ flexibility to respond to changing context or situation
good communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ communicating clearly and openly ▶ awareness of grants available ▶ simple and clear eligibility, application, acquittal processes ▶ awareness of potential partners available
impact focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ focusing on improving the outcomes for learners ▶ having clarity around what you are seeking to change ▶ careful monitoring of success ▶ some form of evaluation

Case I: Hands on Learning

(Foundation grant to a not-for-profit for a program with schools)



Priority areas: student engagement, transitions within school, post-school transitions, student retention

About: Hands on Learning

A government school teacher saw an unmet need and a way to address it. Russell Kerr was that teacher from Frankston High School in Victoria. Russell developed an in-school program, Hands on Learning, for secondary school students most at risk of leaving school early. Russell went on to become the CEO of Hands on Learning Australia, a not-for-profit charity.

Today, 13 years on, the Hands on Learning methodology runs in 17 schools across Victoria and Queensland. Two specialist staff work with 10 students from Years 7 to 10 for a full day each week. The students come out of the classroom to work on real world projects of genuine value to their school and community (e.g. building an outdoor pizza oven).

The program acts to change the experience of learning at school for students. By doing so, the program is boosting a student's confidence, school attendance and retention.

To learn more, visit: <http://handsonlearning.org.au/>

What we discovered

Build capacity and commit appropriate resources –

- ▶ put money into staff to build capacity within an organization.
- ▶ talk together about an idea: so don't be too fixed on what you want to do or what you will fund.
- ▶ keep supporters in the loop: developing capacity is a two-way dialogue.

Impact –

- ▶ gather data on the key things you are setting out to change so you can continuously refine what you are doing.
- ▶ find someone who is doing research in an area that is the focus of your project.

Build capacity and commit appropriate resources

The Hands on Learning story reflects different forms of capacity building - from the knowledge and skill development of Russell Kerr; the CEO of the not-for-profit, to improving a school's capacity to engage with the program, to changing the life and learning trajectories for students.

The evolution of Hands on Learning is itself an example of how the capacity of the program and those leading it has built over time. As a teacher at Frankston High School, Russell had been thinking about how to address the issue of students disengaging from school and learning. With the backing of the principal, a little bit of money from the school's budget and his own entrepreneurial skills and drive, Russell got going on an 'in-house' solution for Frankston. "But then you need to get a bit more support", recalls Russell.

Russell approached the CEO, Ellen Koshland, of the then Education Foundation in Victoria. He spoke at length with Ellen about the need and his vision for addressing the need. The Foundation provided Russell with some funds to develop a program at Frankston. Supportive of the vision, but reluctant to keep funding one school, Russell

remembers Ellen telling him that the program had to expand. Enter, The Myer Foundation and Sidney Myer Fund. Again, through

a process of meeting with the CEO to ensure there was a 'good fit' and putting in an application, Myer made a grant of \$60K to help get things going. Later, Ellen from the Education Foundation would continue to mentor Russell in the expansion of what would become known as Hands on Learning.

Moving from an 'in-house' program to a program for many was a challenge. The support from the Education Foundation and The Myer Foundation helped Russell develop and refine the thinking and practice of the Frankston program. But "how do you expand something when you're busy doing it?" says Russell. "I was highly motivated but I simply didn't have the energy to go further afield".

To address the capacity gap, Social Ventures Australia (SVA) became involved when Hands on Learning was a successful applicant of the AMP Youth Boost Fund. Through SVA, Russell was given access to a mentor, who told him, "Everything is in your head". The mentor provided advice on how to prepare a strategic plan and introduced Russell to other people who could advise him on financial and legal matters. A number of these people have since joined the Board of Hands on Learning. At this stage, central to building Russell's capacity and that of the program was the critical task of crystallising the Hands on Learning model and its potential to be replicated. "That's the key to it", explains Russell, "I needed to really understand the model and how to scale it up".

In 2005, SVA invested \$40,000. They saw that the program was a way to deal with the huge issue of student disengagement. But they did not provide the funds. That's not their remit. Instead, SVA removed the burden from Russell alone to seek supporters. SVA sought support on the school's behalf. That was a critical value-add in terms of time, knowledge and networks.

Russell remembers that to move the program from 'in-house' to other schools required evidence that the program could work in other settings. Working with SVA, the Frankston High School principal and other principals from the local area devised a way to run Hands on Learning in four other schools. "That's the power", Russell explains, "of principals working together from the ground up around a shared issue."

In order to free up some time and staff, they agreed to scale down the Frankston High School program to two days per week: a temporary inconvenience for what they proposed would be a long-term gain for the program, schools and students. This increased Russell's capacity to lead a demonstration of the program in the other local secondary schools. This provided cases of the program's success in other contexts, which was important to generating wider interest and refining the model further.

Find a mentor or mentors.

Enlist the support of others who share a common need and passion to address it.

Think creatively about how to free up time to expand your program.

Between 2005 and 2008, SVA incrementally built their support of Hands on Learning from \$40,000 to \$300,000. Over the life of SVA's involvement with

Others can assist in filling the gaps in your knowledge.

Hands on Learning to the present day, through their philanthropic and business networks, they have been able to source \$1 million

for the program. They have assisted Russell, as CEO, to navigate the complex legal and tax issues of setting up Hands on Learning as a not-for-profit organisation with Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) charitable status.

In 2010 Newsboys Foundation also took an active interest in Hands on Learning. Sandy Shaw, CEO of Newsboys, recalls meeting with Russell and others from SVA. At this stage, Hands on Learning had branched into other schools. Sandy became aware that the Hands on Learning program at Mornington Secondary College

had stopped operating due to lack of funding. As Sandy describes, "There was a frame for a hut that students had built

on the school site. But the building stopped when the money dried up. We thought that it was important for the students to be able to finish the building that they had begun. We funded Hands on Learning so the school could embrace the program fully. Now the program at that school is consolidated with other funders and is running extremely well."

Sandy was very impressed with the robust model that Hands on Learning had created and the effective outcomes for young people. She paved the way for Russell to present to a peer group of foundations and trusts: The Jack Brockhoff Foundation, The Ian Potter Foundation, the R E Ross Trust and Helen MacPherson Smith Trust. Staff from these foundations and trusts were invited to see the program in action onsite. Cameron Wiseman, Funding Manager, Hands on Learning, says this thinking and practice shows, "an enlightened giving and real leverage approach to giving".

Young people are the ultimate beneficiaries. But for young people to benefit fully, those leading and running the program need support too.

Later in 2011, through Newsboys, Hands on Learning was provided with some capacity building funding. But as Sandy explains, "So often, foundations won't offer grants to build

the capacity of an organisation. They want to see the grant go directly to the young person, which is fine,

the ultimate beneficiaries should be young people. But the young person won't get the benefits of the program if those leading and running the program aren't supported too."

In addition, Sandy introduced the team from Hands on Learning to the Newsboys Chairman and gave them the opportunity to present to the Newsboys Board. "It's important", stated Sandy, "for the Board to also 'get a feel' for the programs we are supporting". More recently, Sandy has introduced Hands on Learning to another philanthropic peer group. "It's not just the 'connecting' that's important" explains Russell, "it's the fact that in doing so, the foundation is saying to their peers that they endorse our organisation and that we have been put through their due diligence – they have taken the time to get to know us."

"At the school level, Hands on Learning provides a solution to a problem that principals do not know how to solve on their own," says Russell "School leaders love that we assist them to identify specialist staff to be employed in their school and training of their teachers and specialists. Both become very well equipped to run the program". Bridging this inside-outside relationship between school and community, adds Russell, "is what teachers and school leaders do not necessarily know how to do."

Members of the small team – a deliberate strategy to keep the operational overhead costs down – train teachers and specialist staff, share their knowledge in project management and offer ongoing support. For example, they work closely with the school and its networks to identify appropriate specialist staff (e.g. a builder) and assist the schools in seeking funding to run the program. "Meeting the staff and students on site is very powerful. You can only convey so much on a website or in a pamphlet", says Cameron.

To date philanthropic supporters have helped build the capacity, and refined and tested the program in action to ensure it is ready to be delivered in secondary schools across Australia.

Take the time to learn about those you are supporting or being supported by.

Find a way to bridge school-community relationships. This assists in building the capacity of teachers and school leaders.

Unexpected events can test your capacity. Innovating can be a roller coaster experience at times.

Hands on Learning has had its ups and downs. When the global financial crisis hit, "we went 'through the windscreen' or we would have, had it not been for the generosity of two private funders", recalls Russell. "They said to me, 'Russell, we're not going to let you go to the wall' and they gave us large donations to get us through the tough times."

Impact

Stay focused on who you are supporting and what you are trying to change.

With clear capacity building strategies in place and a bit of 'being in the right place at the right time', Hands on Learning has gone from a one-teacher initiated in-house program to a fully functioning not-for-profit program in 18 schools across Victoria and Queensland.

Apart from clear organisational and governance structures and processes, key to the success to date is remaining focused on changing the experience of learning for secondary students.

'Roll your sleeves up' – learn about the schools you are seeking to support.

Data gathered from participating schools on the impact of the program shows that Hands on Learning increases attendance of students at school (54% reduction in the number of absences). It reduces behaviour problems (83% drop in detentions). 92% of students have moved into apprenticeships or further study. The program, says Russell, "provides an incentive for young people to learn".

A range of student and parent outcomes and various ways to gather information is evident.

Principals are also finding that parents, who would otherwise struggle to engage with the school, are coming along willingly and enjoying doing so. As Cameron notes, "the young people are proud of their achievements and say to their parents, 'come and have a look at the pizza oven we have made.'" As Kim Day, the parent of Michael, a Hands on Learning participant at Mornington Secondary College, states, "Without Hands on Learning, Michael could so much have gone the other way. Every kid should have the chance to find something that they enjoy so they can grow and realise that they are capable of achieving and start to look at what is possible in life".

These positive encounters, says Sandy, are, "basically redefining education for these parents and their children. Students who were otherwise lost are now listened to and their thoughts are taken into account in the development of the program. It's not just about the 'building' or 'doing' of 'X'. It's about the young people also developing skills around menu planning, cooking and budgeting".

Students work on creative building projects that benefit the school and local community. In the process they develop confidence, new social networks of support and a sense of personal achievement. "Hands on Learning was the reason I came to school ... everyone treated each other with respect. It gave me confidence, brought me out of my shell and helped me make friends," says Sarah, former program participant from McClelland Secondary College.

In addition to the data the Hands on Learning team gathers, the program is part of a larger study being conducted by The University of Melbourne on early school leaving.

Really listen to those you are seeking to support.

Benefits to the student, school, local community are evident.

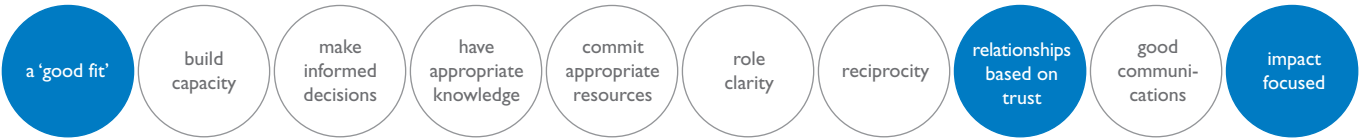


Postscript

Recently, Russell and Cameron caught up with people from the former funder of the Education Foundation. This philanthropist who had supported the Education Foundation was interested to know how Hands on Learning was travelling these days. Ten years on this same philanthropist was thrilled to see that Hands on Learning is now operating in 18 schools. The philanthropist could see the growth of the program and its journey. Through this reconnection, the philanthropist is now going to support the program again.

Case 2: STS – Young Endeavour

(Foundation grant to a university for individual students)



Priority areas: post-school transitions; leadership development

About the STS - Young Endeavour

Australian youth between the ages of 16-23 are eligible to participate in the Young Endeavour program. Under the guidance of the Royal Australian Navy, the young people learn how to sail the Young Endeavour and in doing so are exposed to learning and developing a range of life skills, team work and leadership.

The Cowan Young Endeavour Practicum Grants are valued at \$5,000 and include a 10-day berth on the Young Endeavour and additional travel expenses.

The Cowan Trust funds the University of South Australia (UniSA) which selects one to three undergraduate Bachelor degree students each year. The Cowan Young Endeavour grant is one of a number of scholarships supported by the Cowan foundation.

To learn more, visit: www.unisa.edu.au

About Cowan Grants Pty

Cowan Grants Pty is a Family Foundation established in 1994. The Trustee priority areas are financially disadvantaged youth with the ability to undertake tertiary education (primarily from rural or regional locations) and providing opportunity for personal challenge.

The Foundation is based in South Australia. Since its inception, the Foundation has provided \$1.8 million in grants. It funds five tertiary educational organisations, one of which is UniSA. The UniSA and the Trust negotiate funding for five programs each year.

To learn more, visit: <http://www.cowangrant.org>

What we discovered

Good fit – understand each other's needs.

Trust –

- ▶ set up an expectation of open and candid communication from the beginning.
- ▶ share what is not working so both partners can try and find a solution.

Impact –

- ▶ at the start think about how you will find out what's working and not working.
- ▶ create a process for getting direct feedback from student scholarship recipients afterward their scholarship experience. Allow the student to be candid.



On board the STS Young Endeavour

A 'good fit'

The Cowan Grants were set up by Bob and Gayle Cowan to support young people who may not have access to life, learning and leadership enrichment opportunities due to geographic and/or financial constraints. But finding a good fit with a group in education to distribute the funds was not as straightforward a process as the trustees first anticipated. "Who would have thought that it was going to be hard to give away money?" says Gayle.

Decision making is strengthened by involving those closest to the beneficiary of a grant.

How to select and distribute the grants was an issue. These facets of the grant making process are not part of what the Trust does. One of the

Trust's first decisions was that they could not personally select students using the "financial need" criterion. They thought it too intrusive for one individual to delve into another's financial circumstances. Gayle continues, "So we resolved that, though it is onerous, we would ask the organisation receiving the funds to do that. We also believe that they should know their own students' needs. This has proven true".

The Trust started with a small grant to check compatibility, building up one organisation at a time. Some organisations were not compatible for a range of reasons, which included that they couldn't do what was required, the CEO couldn't

agree to the requirements, or an agreement was discontinued with a change of CEO or when it was discovered that the funds weren't being used. In one case, an organisation missed out because they didn't ring back.

Finding the 'right' organisation to coordinate the scholarship grant program was partly serendipitous. However, it also related to finding a partner of relevance (for the Trust, intermediary and recipient). Timing was also fundamental in terms of the readiness of each of the parties. The UniSA became the site for the selection and distribution of the Cowan scholarships, but as Tiffanie Cowan (Cowan Trust trustee) recalls, "There is no way that I would have approached them, had they not approached us. I just hadn't thought of a university as an option for a Young Endeavour program".

Do's and don'ts of 'a good fit' e.g.

Do start small to check compatibility

Don't take on a grant if you do not yet have the processes in place to implement it properly

Think about how to embed a grant into the organisation. It may take some trial and error to get the best fit.

As a past student, Tiffanie received a letter from the University outlining a new program which challenged students by allowing them to undertake a placement in developing countries. This fitted the Cowan Trust objective 'to challenge students'. The letter invited graduates to think about how they might assist. With family roots in South Australia and the UniSA, Tiffanie sent the University a copy of the Cowan Trust's deed and focus, and invited the university to think about how the scholarship grants might work for them. Tiffanie says, "We gave scholarships for UniSA programs for four years and then I proposed the Young Endeavour program grant to the university."

A 20th birthday reunion of the original Young Endeavour bicentenary delivery crew prompted Tiffanie (one of that crew) to suggest to the Executive Director of the Young Endeavour Youth Scheme and the UniSA that the Cowan Trust offer grants to students to take part in the program. She knew from her own experience that the experience could have a life-changing positive impact on participants. "I would not have had the courage to sail around the world with my husband in our own yacht, without the confidence and skills that I developed while on the Young Endeavour. I thought, why not sponsor places on the Young Endeavour program?"

The Trustees felt that the Young Endeavour grant needed to be attached to a course within the University. Yvonne Martin-Clark, Deputy Director, Development at UniSA agreed. The premise was that if the grant was part of a practicum, then it would be of greater relevance to the young person and more embedded in their chosen course.

Two courses were selected by the University and Tiffanie was invited to give a talk to the students interested in applying for the grant. "Only five students turned up and only one fitted the age eligibility criterion. I can remember feeling quite deflated."

Don't be afraid to approach a foundation with an idea.

The opportunity was left open for several years, but offering the grant to just two courses was too limiting. The pool of applicants was too small, and many of the students in the pool were mature-aged and so outside the eligible age range for the grant. The funds were simply not getting spent. The Trustees welcomed a suggestion by Yvonne to throw open the grant offering to all students undertaking a bachelor degree at the University. Tiffanie says, "Grant making can be so much work and so to have an invitation from an institution about how to give away money, that's so helpful".

This was the moment that the Trust and University established that there was indeed potentially a 'good fit'.

Relationships based on trust

Relationships are important for effective engagement of philanthropy in education. But it is relationships based on *trust* that are really crucial. UniSA has a commitment to equity and diversity, and its core values support access for financially and educational disadvantaged groups, which fits with the Cowan Trust's criteria. Crucial to building that trust was the quality and nature of communication between Trustees, University and grant recipients.

The Trustees were explicit with the University that they wanted to learn whether or not the grant program was working, and if not, where improvements

Having clear expectations about wanting to learn what *is* and *is not* working helps build trust.

could be made. They also made it clear that they were in it for the long haul, which made it easier for Yvonne to make suggestions. Tiffanie sums up, "They will come to us and say, 'We have five programs that fit within your criteria - the international placement grants, the disadvantaged students, the regional campus grants, the computer repair program, and Young Endeavour. We recommend this division of the total funds, based on our assessment of needs'. Or they will say, 'We only got one application. Can we carry over the unused grants from this year and add them to next year's offerings?' That's how candid our conversations are. As Trustees we don't get it right every time or the first time. So the lesson for us was to listen and work with the university. What we want might not always be the best option."

Impact

Since the Cowan Young Endeavour grants began in 2008 at UniSA, five young people have been recipients of the grant, all of whom have completed the Young Endeavour program. All Cowan Grant recipients are expected to provide a written reflection to be forwarded to the Cowan Trustees framed around three questions:

Gather feedback that helps get students to reflect on how the 'experience' connects to their life and studies.

- How are you going in your chosen course?
- In what ways has the Young Endeavour experience helped you?
- How, if at all, has the scholarship helped you to advance your studies and your university experiences?

The Trustees gather feedback from Young Endeavour grant recipients. Because of their age and limited experience at sea, most find the physical aspects of the journey – sea sickness, sleep deprivation and climbing the tall mast – a key challenge. On the last day of the journey, the young crew is expected to take full control of every aspect of sailing the Young Endeavour. A watch leader is nominated per team for a total of eight watches over a 24 hour period. As Tiffanie knows from first-hand experience, “It’s a real achievement to lead and sail a vessel, let alone one that is worth about 10 million dollars”.

Student outcomes include the ability to apply the learning from one context and experience to another.

as dynamic”, says Tiffanie, as illustrated by comments from two grant recipients:

“The Cowan Young Endeavour grant was a great help for preparing for my exchange to Canada in cinema because the experience helped me to boost my confidence when meeting new people. I faced many challenges about sailing and about myself ... I am shocked that in such a short time I’ve become so confident in something I had no previous knowledge. ... I faced my fear of heights ... and taking the helm for three hours straight during our cruise command day was an experience I won’t soon forget.” (Media Arts student)

“The Cowan Young Endeavour grant has given me a greater understanding of different approaches that may be used in order to attain group success”. (Law student)

Tiffanie believes that the impact of the grant is different for everyone because “everyone’s experience is different”.

The feedback suggests that the overall impact of the program is that “perceived personal limits (working in a team, physical challenges or leadership) are exposed

Postscript

The networks around the Cowan Young Endeavour grant are expanding. Tiffanie’s direct experience of the Young Endeavour program, feedback from students and ironing out the wrinkles by Cowan and the university about where best to position the grant offering have led to a decision to expand the grant to other institutions. “I feel we are in a more informed position now to approach another institution and make it work there”, Tiffanie says.

The quality of the relationship established at the UniSA meant that Tiffanie had no hesitation in asking whether Yvonne would support James Cook University, Queensland, in introducing the grant program there too. This will commence in 2012. She is also contemplating approaching other community groups about the possibility of them funding Young Endeavour berths. While schools cannot apply directly or be the point of distribution for Young Endeavour berths, students (16 years and over) could still be recipients. Connecting with an eligible not-for-profit is the only missing ingredient.

Other outcomes include new and expanded networks and new models of distributing the grant.

Finding an eligible not-for-profit is the only missing ingredient for schools seeking to support students 16 years and over.

Case 3: Learning Neighbourhood Asia Literacy

(Not-for-profit grant to a cluster of schools for a program with teachers and students)



Priority areas: languages, ongoing professional learning, digital/online learning, school leadership development

About Learning Neighbourhood Asia Literacy project

A neighbourhood of four schools in New South Wales (NSW) received a \$35K grant from the Asia Education Foundation. The schools (one high school and three primary schools) wanted to use the grant to develop a project to focus on language and culture. The aims of the project were to build teacher and student understanding of Asian culture; and improve the teaching of Mandarin in the middle years of schooling (the last two years of primary school and the first two years of high school in NSW). Real-time video links facilitated the teaching of Mandarin across the schools. Other interactive technology permitted staff to collaborate and develop lessons for less experienced teachers of Mandarin.

To learn more, visit:
<http://www.rootyhill-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/>

About the Asia Education Foundation

The Asia Education Foundation (AEF) works in partnership with government and non-government education agencies, universities, philanthropic foundations (e.g. The Myer Foundation and Sidney Myer Fund) and the corporate sector to:

- ▶ promote and support the study of Asia across the curriculum
- ▶ develop Asia-related print and electronic materials
- ▶ promote the study of Asia through professional learning
- ▶ educate the broader community about the importance of young Australians engaging with Asia

To learn more, visit:
<http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/about.html>

What we discovered

Good fit –

- ▶ the school identifies the need and potential partners make it their business to understand the need.
- ▶ keep a wide enough vision when funding so schools are able to address a key locally identified need.

Commit appropriate resources –

- ▶ excite the community about the vision for the project then resources (human and other kinds) can flow.
- ▶ securing money isn’t the only requirement; the motivation, networks and connections with people can also make things happen.

Impact –

- ▶ for a relatively small financial investment, teachers will make a huge effort to make something work.
- ▶ teachers can carry forward lessons from projects, like the Asia Literacy project, for the rest of their careers.

A 'good fit'

Principal of Rooty Hill High School, Christine Cawsey AM was invited as a NSW principal delegate to an Asia Education Conference in 2009. Part of the conference included a briefing session on the Asia Education Foundation's (AEF) new grants program.

A relevant locally identified need

As Christine listened and talked with AEF staff, she could tell there was a very good fit between the AEF's objectives and those of Rooty Hill High School. "A very critical issue for us is Asia Literacy. 40% of our students are from an Asian background, although only 1% have a Chinese language background. Across Sydney, many students come from non-English language backgrounds and I believe 20% of Sydney's students have a Chinese language background."

At Rooty Hill, students were able to access Languages other than English (LOTE), but not until 2009 was Mandarin and a focus on Asia Literacy introduced into the school. This coincided with the school's involvement in the Western Sydney Region partnership program with Ningbo Province in China and the University of Western Sydney. Highly talented education graduates from China came to western Sydney to complete a Masters' Degree and acted as volunteers in classrooms in schools. They helped develop lessons; analysed student performance data to better track student learning; prepared resources and, most importantly, engaged with students, sharing language and cultural experiences. In this they were supported by John Meng, a teacher at Rooty Hill High School, who went on to lead the project described in this case study.

Through the Chinese government's Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) and the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), John led an AEF delegation to China in January 2011 and was given a DEEWR sponsored fellowship to return to China to lecture at Dalian Education University in January 2012.

Make connections between existing networks, activities and resources and your proposed project.

The staff at Rooty Hill could have put in an application, but the reality was it probably would not have made it past the first cut. The cluster program had three primary schools linked to the high school. Staff at these schools were also keen to find new ways of linking the middle years curriculum and two of the schools also had a Ningbo volunteer.

In NSW, all government schools are video-linked to each other through the Connected Classrooms program and can link to schools beyond the state, including international connections. As Christine highlights, "we are lucky that we have a connected curriculum culture, which means we could run classes in Mandarin by experts with students who did not have access to a teacher of Mandarin." The school already had connections with local primary schools, but the focus of the grant and the AEF's favoured way of distributing the grant presented a new opportunity to engage together.

Form partnerships for mutual benefit.

Rooty Hill High School formed an AEF cluster with the three partner primary schools, led by Christine Cawsey, Conny Mattimore, Deputy Principal and John Meng, Head Teacher of Mathematics / LOTE. John developed lessons for the primary schools and coordinated the professional links in the program. "John supported the teachers in other classes, who were not experts", says Christine who wrote the grant submission because at the time, others in the school had little experience in such endeavours.

There were other reasons too why the grant was a good fit for the schools. Christine goes on to explain, "We chose the middle years of schooling as the focus. This enabled all schools in the cluster to fully participate.

Commit appropriate resourcing

A grant size you can do something with is a crucial enabler.

"A crucial enabler was the grant size. It was substantial, \$35,000. This meant we had enough flexibility to spread the funding across

a combination of teacher release and the development of classroom materials". The latter Christine says was fundamental if a lasting legacy from the project was going to be created.

"Our data in 2008 indicated to us that we were not servicing our demography as well as we could", recalls Christine who then made sure Asia Literacy was embedded into the School and Learning Neighbourhood Plans (four schools together). The placement of Asia Literacy within this plan made sure it stayed on the radar as a key area of focus. With this important foundation in place, other resources were identified to support the project's success.

Christine explains, "The main thing we needed to do was create the teacher release time to collaboratively develop the resources that would be used online." The schools used combined school development (pupil free) days, after school meetings and on several occasions employed a casual relief teacher to give some time to the teachers working on the program.

Central to the program's development was an inter-school Teachers' Forum where John Meng and the Ningbo volunteers demonstrated online teaching resources and the teachers at the forum selected and categorised these resources onto a shared online Learning Management

System. It was the commitment of the teachers to making the program a success that really mattered. They gave a lot of their time when they realised they had \$35,000 to use on one key strategy.

The cluster anchored the program in what they knew from the research and from their teachers' expertise worked well with upper primary and first-year high school students. Each school committed to identifying an Asia Literacy contact. Rooty Hill's Mathematics/LOTE Head Teacher, who also teaches Mandarin, was the project leader. The schools committed other resources for catering and purchase of materials, and collaborative professional learning sessions were rotated between the schools as the project developed.

An area often overlooked when it comes to committing appropriate resources, is the resourcing before an application is even made. Christine and Deputy Principal Conny made sure there was a clear vision for the project and they wrote the submission. Christine notes, "Before the grant application, we had a conversation. We made phone calls to the AEF". Christine had more experience in grant writing than others in the schools. So she acted as a mentor to Conny in preparing the final submission. Christine also kept an eye on the monitoring requirements of the grant.

Get structures and processes in place to facilitate the implementation of a project.

If you have expertise in proposal writing, share your skills and knowledge with others to build individual and organisational capacity.



Principal, teachers and students from Rooty Hill High School

Impact

The project has had an impact at individual teacher, parent and student levels, as well as at a whole school level.

From the experience, the teacher and deputy principal leading the project developed considerable expertise in project management and budgeting. They received an education department regional award, in recognition for their leadership of the project.

Impact included for teachers: improved project management and budgeting. For students: increased confidence and appreciation of other cultural perspectives, academic outcomes.

Thanks to the project, primary and secondary students had access to experts in Mandarin and had a chance to experience culture through lessons, through visits organised by Hanban and through cultural immersion in the Chinese community in Sydney. As Christine recalls, "It was fabulous to hear back from students, of non Chinese background, that they now go to China Town with their parents with increased confidence because they can engage more fully". All of these experiences serve to plant seeds of curiosity and interest in Asian culture and the possibility of doing further studies in Asian languages. Rooty Hill has had three students who have completed Mandarin in their final year of schooling certificate. This was not the case prior to the Asia Literacy project.

There have been other unexpected positive outcomes from the project including invitations to present at conferences, involvement in wider professional associations and international requests to visit the school. Through the Hanban connection, Christine and John have been invited to functions held by the Chinese Consul General, and the President of Dalian Education University chose Rooty Hill High School to visit when he came to Australia to look at education in NSW. For a comprehensive high school in western Sydney these new networks have important benefits for students and the community.

Other positive outcomes include the development of new opportunities and networks, benefiting students and teachers.

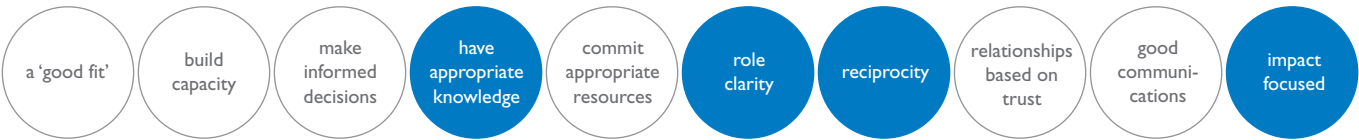
Postscript

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the project was that in May 2011, after the original AEF project was completed, the online materials were migrated to a new platform. This enabled 51 primary, secondary and tertiary teachers from all sectors in the newly formed NSW Chinese Language Teachers Network to share the resources, experience operating in an online wiki-like collaboration and grow the resources into a Web 2.0 environment where non-Chinese speaking teachers can give their students high quality opportunities to learn the language, no matter where they go to school.

A significant outcome was the production of online materials to be accessed and used by a wide number of NSW Chinese Language Teachers and non-Chinese speaking teachers.

Case 4: Education Benalla Program

(National philanthropic foundation and a state philanthropic trust with a Community Foundation for whole of community project)



Priority areas: school readiness; student wellbeing; transitions within school; post-school transitions; student retention

About Education Benalla Program

The Education Benalla Program is a large-scale community initiative in Victoria that works with Benalla and district families, all schools in Benalla, public sector agencies, small and large community groups and businesses. The program is in the second year of a planned 10-year implementation period.

The desired outcome is that by 2030 the education and training completion rates for Benalla 17-24 year olds will equal or exceed the Victorian state average. The program consists of four parts: 1. school readiness and early years (0 to 8 years); 2. wellbeing of students (focus on teenagers); 3. transition to tertiary education; and 4. community grants (small grants to community groups for projects that help address identified program issues).

Funding has been donated locally by private citizens and the Hume Region of the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and through philanthropic grants, including The Ian Potter Foundation, The R E Ross Trust, Yulgilbar Foundation, Rural Education Program, Perpetual Trustees and Newsboys.

To learn more visit: http://www.tomorrowtoday.com.au/?file=current_projects&smid=13

About Tomorrow:Today Foundation

Tomorrow:Today is Benalla district's Community Foundation, a philanthropic organisation formed and run by local people. The Foundation was established in 2002 and its purpose is to enable the people of Benalla district to create a stronger, more resilient and prosperous rural community.

Small grants to support local charitable projects are made annually (since 2003), thanks to the income generated from a permanent and growing Community Fund.

The Foundation includes the provision of a responsible and accessible way for donors and volunteers to resource a range of community development initiatives.

To learn more, visit: <http://www.tomorrowtoday.com.au>

What we discovered

Knowledge –

- ▶ Don't ask for anything until you know what you are talking about (clarity) and why you are talking about it (evidence).
- ▶ Make the most of existing networks; use the knowledge and expertise of others.

Role clarity:

- ▶ Document responsibilities and the assistance received throughout your project planning and progress.
- ▶ Be clear about why you want different stakeholders involved and in what way – what do you expect from them and what can they expect from you. The nature of development is murky. Accept the murkiness but be crystal clear within your own domain.

Reciprocity:

- ▶ Encourage diversity of opinion, discussion and debate. You can't know everything, so welcome input from others.
- ▶ Respect others' opinions and appreciate the different contexts in which they are working.

Impact:

- ▶ Planning long-term objectives and knowing how to measure them is fundamental, but you also may need to get some 'immediate runs on the board' in order to win community and funder engagement.

Knowledge

Knowledge and research underpins the work being done in the Tomorrow:Today Foundation's Education Benalla

Build your case around the 'need' with relevant research and/or data.

Vinson Report - *Dropping off the edge: the distribution of disadvantage in Australia* - "which looked at levels of social disadvantage and highlighted how poorly Benalla was performing in terms of educational attainment - a central indicator of disadvantage".

Make the most of existing networks.

A literature review, produced by Liz, soon followed. This work, and a subsequent paper, focussed on what research said about improving measures of disadvantage and sought to determine what role philanthropy could play in supporting education and complementing the work being done by government. Both were presented to the Tomorrow:Today Board, to inform their own knowledge and decision-making.

A significant advantage for Liz was her extensive experience and knowledge of the philanthropic sector as well as project management and, as she explains,

"My natural inclination was to be impact and results focussed". However, she admits, she did not necessarily know the right 'language' for dealing with the various education and community domains. To overcome this limitation, she continues "We brought in experts ... networking was critical". For example, it was fundamental to understand what work was already being done in the education sector. As a consequence, discussions were held between the Foundation and the Regional Manager of DEECD in order to gain a "green light" for further exploration. The Foundation also held workshops with external education experts (e.g. "critical friends" from Victoria University and the University of Melbourne).

In addition, a Community Advisory Committee was established, consisting of a range of key stakeholders and including a DEECD Regional Officer of some standing who could provide valuable input. The Community Advisory Committee consisted of representatives of local government, primary and secondary schools from different sectors, students, community workers from health and wellbeing areas, to name but a few. "This group was formed", Liz explains, "to articulate the educational issues and what programs needed to be addressed We looked at gaps between what was being done and what was needed in terms of supporting young people in Benalla. We focussed on the point of difference – where philanthropy could help."

Understand and learn the language of your potential partners.

As indicated, Liz already knew something about potential philanthropic supports – "I had known about The Ian Potter Foundation through previous work I'd done in rural Victoria and had a very favourable opinion of them. Like us, they were results focused – again it seemed like a good fit." Liz did not, however, know much about the R E Ross Trust, which was also to become a supporter. She was introduced to members of the R E Ross Trust through another colleague. Once again, networks proved critical. Before embarking on any serious conversations, Liz spent time preparing a brief in "the language of philanthropy" – explaining what Tomorrow:Today was, and what they wanted to achieve. She emphasises – "We didn't ask anybody for anything until we knew what we were talking about ... We had a clear etching of where philanthropy could sit".

Role clarity

Have a clear plan and build structures around it.

The implementation of the first five-year phase of the Education Benalla Program began in 2010 with a "foundation year" establishing systems and projects; and ensuring a 'dovetailing' with existing services. Once the program moved from the research and development phase to the implementation phase, the Foundation set

up the Benalla Program Committee of Management as a sub-committee of the Board. The Committee meets twice a year and consists of three Board members, and three major funding partners including a DEECD representative. The Board acknowledged that the program needed to be built within the appropriate policy context. "It was crucial to ensure that DEECD saw the virtue of what we were doing and recognised it as complementary to their work... we also wanted to ensure that schools were equal partners in the program", says Liz.

The program is also supported by a lot of in-kind assistance. "We have a range of highly qualified people working in range of functions. Their roles and support are all very clearly documented", says Liz.

Have a clear understanding of the roles and functions of staff in your program and document it.

Liz also offers a note of caution about being aware of how expert personnel can best be used, and not to over stretch them. "We need to protect precious staff", she explains. Liz provides one example of a particular staff member of one of the participating program playgroups who seems to be a focal point for people's questions and requests. "She is a terrific early learning specialist", says Liz, "who could well have provided valuable input into various working groups, but if we had taken her away from 'doing', the playgroup wouldn't achieve its goals." Being clear to others about her role was therefore critical.

Playing tennis with a community mentor



Reciprocity

Look for a diversity of opinions to help promote discussion and explore different ways of planning or implementing your program.

Mutual respect is a very important part of the program's ethos. Liz explains that those contributing to the project are valued for their knowledge of their respective sectors and their input – "It was important to keep diversity in the mix, it wasn't about getting people in who agreed with me, we wanted discussion and debate".

Respect and understanding is also important to the Foundation's work in schools and community groups. Liz explains, "In the beginning when we were really tiny, we were a broker working with people with 'real jobs' in the community who wanted to know why they should agree to help us. Initially we worked on the 'what's in it for you approach' (potentially additional resources for them). This helped 'get us in the door', but we really wanted to shift that mindset to encourage potential partners to want to be involved because this 'might actually help our kids'". We spent a lot of time 'selling the vision' and finding enough space in people's heads to acknowledge that current outcomes for Benalla kids were not as good as for other kids."

Without doubt there have been some tensions, particularly around how funds should be spent, but such tensions have been mitigated by continuing to build relationships and a shared understanding of objectives – the bigger, whole-of-community picture. Liz notes, "Being of the community makes a huge vision possible. We are building a 'fabulous naïve painting' to improve student outcomes, but it still works. Our community connections are built on personal relationships."

If there are sensitivities or difficult issues to face, try to see things from the point of view of others.

"Sometimes", Liz continues, "in the face of difficulties, you have to learn not to get 'miffed' – get tough when you need to, but choose your battles and try to understand where others are coming from".

Impact

The Tomorrow:Today Foundation has engaged the University of Melbourne to evaluate the program. The main purpose of the evaluation in Phase 1 is to track and report upon the program's ability to –

- ▶ be on track to achieve its desired long term outcomes, aims and objectives, and
- ▶ effectively implement the sub-programs.

This will then inform the Board of Tomorrow:Today in regard to continuing with the program into Phase 2 from 2015.

By the end of Phase 1, there will be good indication that the number of children identified as developmentally vulnerable in the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) data will decrease. Indicators of particular importance here are physical readiness for the school day and language and cognitive skills. Achievement levels in the NAPLAN data for reading, writing and language conventions at Grade 3 will show an increase. Parents reporting on importance of tertiary education/training for young people will improve. Young people reporting on aspirations for tertiary education and/or training will increase.

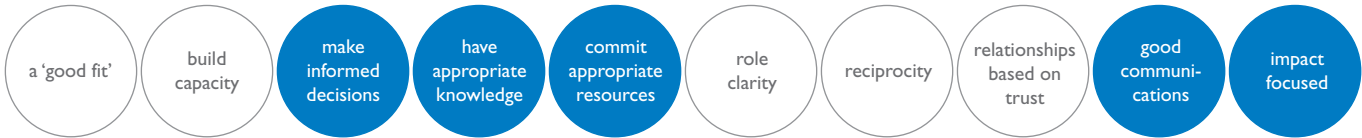
For the Foundation, Liz states, "This is an intervention program. We are looking for significant measurable change – a tectonic shift". Measures will be mapped against data such as AEDI, National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and figures relating to transition to tertiary education.

"In the end", Liz concludes, "if you want to start making an impact, you've just got to do it – you still have to continue to sell the vision to get funding, but the number one priority is to produce the goods: get your target groups engaged; and your activities need to develop with good numbers and signs of positive change."

Be clear about your objectives and how you will evaluate them. This will not only help you to report your outcomes, but also help keep you on track.

Case 5: Evolving Learning Program

(Philanthropic grants to a not-for-profit for a program with schools)



Priority areas: student engagement; student wellbeing; vocational education; post-school transitions

About the Evolving Learning Program

Evolve is a not-for-profit organisation that supports secondary school age students who, for a range of reasons, experience some form of disadvantage. The organisation has two properties, one in southern Queensland and the other in north-east Victoria, which are sites for residential components of Evolve's program offerings.

The Evolving Learning Program is a one- to three-year experiential and applied learning program. The program utilises one of Evolve's properties and provides participating schools with the in-school support, on a part-time basis, of an Evolve Program Coordinator.

The program provides young people with personal growth and development opportunities through educational and vocational engagement. In addition, it provides skills development of school teachers and leaders, and access to resources.

Overall, the program seeks to prevent early school leaving and/or engage young people into employment and vocational pathways. In doing so, a key objective of the Evolving Learning Program is to break the cycle of disadvantage for young people.

To learn more visit: <http://www.evolve.org.au/>

About various supporters

The major philanthropic foundations that have supported Evolve in the Evolving Learning Program are:

The Myer Foundation and Sidney Myer Fund. The Education program area supports projects that leverage the best outcomes in educational settings for young people aged 0-25. (<http://www.myerfoundation.org.au/>)

The Ian Potter Foundation. The Education program area is focused on strategic, whole-of-community approaches to education in order to make real, long-term improvements to education and employment outcomes in communities. (<http://foundation.ianpotter.org.au/>)

John T. Reid Charitable Trust. The Trustees place importance on the equitable distribution of educational resources, particularly in disadvantaged rural and Indigenous communities. (<http://www.johntreidtrusts.com.au/index.php>)

The William Buckland Foundation provides funding to support activities, organisations and projects which focus on the health and wellbeing, particularly of children and young people, and scientific and educational activities, particularly agriculture to create lasting benefit for the Victorian community. (<http://www.anz.com/personal/private-bank-trustees/trustees/>)

What we discovered

Make informed decisions – a pilot allows you to work through any challenges and be clearer about what is needed.

Have appropriate knowledge – build on ongoing relationships for intellectual and financial input to your program.

Commit appropriate resources – Extended multi-year funding and substantial grants (over 50K) mean corners don't get cut and schools access the full benefits.

Good communications – Build structured time into the project so misunderstandings can be clarified and improvements to the project can be made.

Impact – Have a research component to the project so you know what impact you are having (intended and unintended).

Make informed decisions

A big part of making an informed decision about what to focus on was the teams' use of research. The Evolve team used middle years of schooling research literature to guide the development of their programs. This literature presented 10 key areas of need for young people in the middle years, nine of which the program addressed: 1) engagement with a significant adult; 2) learning in places other than school; 3) flexible timetable 4) celebrating learning success; 5) a learner-driven curriculum that facilitates deep engagement; 6) flexible teaching and learning practices; 7) community engagement; 8) adult-like roles and responsibilities; 9) significant events of an engaging nature; and 9) opportunities for off-campus learning experiences. This research helped to frame the focus of the Evolving Learning Program.

How the team members were going to address these needs through an education program required more information. To complement the middle years of schooling research, the team investigated different ways to teach and learn. This included drawing on their own team members' knowledge and experience of teaching and running other programs in schools. It also involved reading

books, such as 'Enterprising ways to teach and learn' and; 'Understanding by design' as well as utilising philosophies from Reggio Emilia teaching practice.

A pilot program may be a useful first step to help you identify challenges and the resources required for a full program.

Have appropriate knowledge

A great idea for a program, with no idea of how to populate the program or who to approach to fund it, is a wasted idea. The Evolving Learning Program was a new idea yet to be road-tested by those it sought to support. Networks across education, philanthropy and the not-for-profit sectors have helped Evolve develop their knowledge base about who to contact, when and for what purposes. As the CEO of Evolve explains, "Prior to Evolve, I worked for Melbourne Cares, heading up their corporate-school partnerships. It was in this role that I first became aware of a particular school identified as being located within a disadvantaged area. When I became CEO of Evolve, the programs we were offering presented a relevant and meaningful way of rekindling this relationship with the principal of this school."

The first part of the equation for a pilot was solved when the then principal indicated an interest in some of their students participating in the Evolving Learning Program. Other schools also came on board. They did so because of their knowledge of Evolve's other programs and also because one of the schools brokered the introduction of Evolve to a further two schools. What eventuated was a proposed pilot of two Evolving Learning Programs. The Programs offered were the same, but one pilot was to run with one school and the other pilot was to run with a cluster of three schools. This left the second part of the equation to solve: who to approach about possibly funding the pilot.

The CEO notes, "The Colonial Foundation had given us support for another boys' program we were running. In turn, this gave us time to develop new relationships and develop our thinking further in the Evolving Learning Program". This was at a critical time in the life of the organisation, which wanted to diversify into new areas of program delivery and needed support and time to achieve this.



Students participating in the Evolving Learning Program at TypoStation

Knowing of The Myer Foundation and Sidney Myer Fund after checking what their key priority area was for their large grants, the CEO of Evolve made an appointment

Be prepared to network and discuss with potential partners in order to find a good fit.

to talk with the CEO of The Myer Foundation. The purpose of the discussion was exploratory, to see whether there was potentially a good fit with Evolve's idea and Myer's large grants focus. This turned out to be the case and The Myer Foundation worked with the Evolve team to develop a joint submission. This was then used by Evolve to talk with other prospective partners based on previous associations Evolve had with philanthropic partners.

Commit appropriate resourcing

To bring about substantial change within a school, the intention was for the Evolve team to work with each school for a long time – five to seven years. While this aspiration was not achieved, the CEO notes, "We looked at what the residential and in-school support might cost us and we secured funding to support the program for three years".

The pilot required a six figure sum to run each year. This support was secured from a combination of grants from The Myer Foundation and Sidney Myer Fund, John T. Reid Foundation, William Buckland Foundation and The Ian Potter Foundation.

Commitment of appropriate resourcing also involved thinking through and planning how to approach the program in the schools. This had implications for Evolve and the participating schools. Evolve employed one full-time coordinator to support each of the pilot programs. Each week, the Program Coordinator would spread his time across the two pilot sites. The physical presence of the coordinator in the school offered a just-in-time resource for the students and staff. It also meant that the co-running of program sessions with teachers was possible. An implication then for each pilot group was the allocation of a dedicated space for the coordinator.

The school principals also had to think about how they were going to organise the program into the timetable. In this regard, each pilot ran in different ways. The cluster of schools allocated single lesson times throughout the week. At the school not within the cluster, the Evolving Learning Program was allocated a full day on the same day each week. This allowed for a seamless flow to the day, without interruption or loss of time due to students moving from one class to another.

Good communications

The principal from the school not within the cluster played a significant role in the success of the pilot at that school. She made sure that all staff, students and parents understood what the program was about and why the school was involved. Leading Teachers and the Deputy Principal also played a role in the development and delivery of the program with students.

One of the best ways to deal with tensions between program partners is simply through conversation.

At times, there were tensions during the pilot. This was evident in a particular difference of emphasis between Evolve and its philanthropic supporters. The foundation was keen to know whether structural changes, as a result of the program, were being achieved; whereas Evolve were placing a greater emphasis on achieving student engagement outcomes, largely because of the timeframe of the program. The CEO remembers that, "Conversations, not just one conversation, helped overcome any tensions, as did a visit to a residential program by two staff from a foundation". Both forms of communication helped the foundation staff to develop a better understanding of the Program and its complexity.

With the schools, one meeting per term with key stakeholders was held. Students from the Program would also do presentations to parents, as a form of sharing and celebrating what they were learning. These activities were in addition to the day-to-day informal and formal contact between the Evolving Learning Coordinator and staff, students and parents. "Once we got into the second year of the project", recalls the Coordinator, "we had a clear idea of the shape of it. We wrote down the expectations of us and the schools. This really helped to clarify responsibilities and it helped people to recommit. So there was a sense of good will to overcome any differences. We weren't going to let things get too far down the track without addressing an issue."

On the other side of the relationship, the team and one of the school principals went along to a Myer Foundation and Sidney Myer Fund committee meeting. There they had an opportunity to present and discuss with the committee the early outcomes from the pilot.

Impact

A research project undertaken by Victoria University assisted Evolve in determining the ongoing outcomes of the program. The research found that teachers' participation in the program had developed their knowledge and skills in project based learning – that is, how to build a curriculum based learning program and how to measure, assess and bridge learning across the curriculum.

Look for research partners to support your collection of evidence for evaluation purposes.

Students learnt how to *drive* learning; whereas previously they may have thought of learning as a one-way pathway from the teacher to the student. They also discovered the power and importance of relationships.

The research also indicated that many of the comments students were making about educational engagement depended on the relationships developed between school teaching staff, Evolve staff and the students. Evolve's CEO notes, "We were able to show that dollar for dollar, if schools picked up the Evolving Learning Program as an early intervention for young people who were showing signs of disengaging from learning/school, then this was a more effective way of using funds."

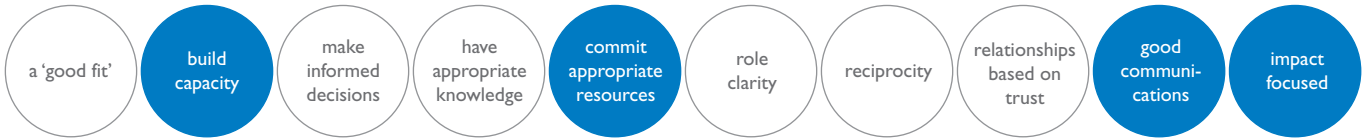
The pilot ran from 2008 to 2010 and led to Evolve being able to develop an educational arm to their organisation. The Evolving Learning Program has spread to other states and captured the interest of other schools. In summary, the Evolve's CEO remarks, "The pilot netted us credibility and further financial resources from business that have gone well beyond the original philanthropic support."

Postscript

More recently, the approach adopted in the Evolving Learning Program was used to inform the development of a natural disaster and trauma based program. As a result, Evolve have secured \$1 million over two years to run this program.

Case 6: Stonnington Primary School

(Philanthropic grant to a not-for-profit for a program with schools)



Priority areas: student engagement; literacy and numeracy; student wellbeing; parents

About the Support Project

Stonnington Primary School (SPS) has a student population of almost 200, with a diverse cultural and socio-economic mix. The school places a high priority on student wellbeing to facilitate high learning outcomes. Ardoch programs at SPS were developed in partnership with the school and include:

- ▶ Trained community volunteers providing learning and wellbeing support in classrooms
- ▶ Literacy Buddies (penpal) program for students in Grades 5 & 6 with corporate volunteers
- ▶ Lunchtime activities to support SPS students to overcome isolation and develop social skills, led by local secondary school students
- ▶ Healthy Eating program
- ▶ Family support work to encourage parental engagement at the school, as well as support parents with material aid.

The Ardoch Program at SPS received one year of funding in 2011 from The Ian Potter Foundation to support the costs of an onsite Program Coordinator.

To learn more, visit: <http://stonningtonps.vic.edu.au>

About the Ardoch Youth Foundation

The Ardoch Youth Foundation is a not for profit organisation that works nationally to make education a reality for children and young people. The Foundation has been supporting young people since 1988. They link schools, corporate organisations and communities, generating resources to support and facilitate projects that assist young people and their families, including those experiencing disadvantage, to be in school.

Ardoch believes that education provides the means for creating options and choices in life. The Ardoch Primary School Support Project is a community development project, which develops holistic early intervention and prevention programs at primary schools.

To learn more, visit: <http://www.ardoch.asn.au>

What we discovered

Build capacity and commit appropriate resources – Volunteer programs are not 'free' – we have to grapple with that idea – there are still oncosts, administrative costs and time costs to be considered.

Good communications –

- ▶ Communications need to be reviewed and need to allow for such things as leadership changes (e.g. a new principal) – don't assume that the new person will know about your program and how it functions. Communication needs to be continuous and flexible.
- ▶ Communication processes don't need to be formalised, but they do need to be open and ongoing.

Impact –

- ▶ Formalised processes can be implemented to help capture qualitative data (i.e. templates for volunteers to use).
- ▶ Volunteers need to have some direction and guidance – they want to see the difference they might make.

Build capacity and commit appropriate resources

The central vehicle for building capacity in the Ardoch Youth Foundation (Ardoch) and Stonnington Primary School (SPS) relationship is the body of volunteers that Ardoch sources and trains. Anne McPhee, Principal at SPS described the relationship with Ardoch as a ‘two-way street’ – with the school, Ardoch and Ardoch’s volunteers

There can be multiple beneficiaries in any one program, not just the intended target group. Program supporters and volunteers, for example, can learn a lot from their involvement.

all benefitting from the program and building their own capacity in the process. For the school, volunteer support helps ‘school staff to implement small group and individual learning activities; the Ardoch volunteers themselves gain huge benefits from the program, both in terms of personal satisfaction – the opportunity to ‘pay it forward’ - and the learning experience and community connections that come from working in an educational environment within identified areas of need. For Ardoch, SPS provides an opportunity to consider and model how programs can be developed in partnership, embedded and then devolved to the school. In essence, this involves moving the partnership into a cluster model of engagement; reducing Ardoch’s physical presence in the school and handing over elements of the program for the school to take forward. For The Ian Potter Foundation, which has provided funding to Ardoch, one of the benefits of this not-for-profit’s model, says Senior Program Manager, Caitriona Fay, is their “track record of moving programs into the fabric of the school”.

If circumstances change be prepared to review and adjust your program and resources accordingly.

To provide some background, Ardoch have been involved with SPS for more than ten years (pre-dating Anne’s time at the school). However, the nature of the programs implemented over those years had changed to reflect a shifting demographic in the school. Anne commented that the school was obviously still involved with Ardoch and still referred families to their support services, but that the need had ‘dropped’. In addition to the programs implemented at SPS, in 2011 Ardoch directed one year of funding – received from The Ian Potter Foundation – toward establishing a Program Coordinator position located on site at SPS for two days

a week. With the funding now expended and no budget capacity to continue the role, SPS are in a ‘transition phase’, with two of their teachers taking on the role of managing Ardoch volunteers (approximately twenty in total).

Anne explained that this is not new for teachers, who often manage work placements and volunteer parents in class. Managing Ardoch volunteers, however, brings a new *element* and helps further build capacity in terms of the diversification of volunteers with whom teachers are working. For Ardoch, however, the transition from on site Program Coordinator to their cluster model (which involves approximately 12 schools in a 10 km radius supported by a 1.4 EFT program coordinator) is something new. In this respect, Judi Stanton from Ardoch explains, “we are eager to learn from the experiences at SPS to see how the transition works for both partners”.

Anne is optimistic about the transition and comments, “Of course, it’s still early days and we know that there are always teething problems in new initiatives, but we think things should run ok. We have a timetable, but we have to be mindful that these coordinators are teachers not administrators, so there will be times of course when they are in class and unable to respond to calls or emails. The work also takes time away from their teaching”.

For both SPS and Ardoch, this is very much a trial period and they plan to ‘take stock’ in the middle of the year to see how well the off site cluster coordinator and the SPS teachers are working together.

Working with volunteers is seen as a shared responsibility for the school and Ardoch. Any issues that may arise with a volunteer are treated on a case-by-case basis and might either be handled by

Anne as part of her role and duty of care, or placed in the hands of Ardoch staff for action: “We trust in Ardoch”, says Anne, “we know that they have covered off on any issues relevant to volunteering, such as appropriate clearances and working with children checks.” Anne highlights the importance of privacy issues where volunteers are concerned – ensuring that they are not talking about individual students outside the school. To overcome such issues, the school runs PD sessions, which volunteers may attend, to cover particular topics. Judi also explains that

Work with your partner to determine how post-funding transition might be built into your planning.

Volunteers are an important asset, but they too must understand and appreciate the environment in which they are working.

Ardoch runs regular workshops and are implementing refresher training for their volunteers, many of whom have been volunteering for years, to ensure that they are have current understanding of such things as privacy and occupational health and safety.

“One of the challenges of working with volunteers in schools”, explains Anne “is in recognising that these are not ‘free’ resources; schools must still cover coordination and management costs to some degree”. This, says Anne, “can often be overlooked by philanthropics who don’t understand the intensity and demands of the school environment or their many other accountabilities”.

Good communications

When Anne first arrived at SPS, she admits that she didn’t have a full understanding of the Ardoch programs and how they functioned in the school.

Another concern for Anne, who notes she likes to work with a structured approach, was not knowing when the on site Program Coordinator would be at the school: “I understand of course the need for flexibility, but I found this a real challenge.” Judi adds that Ardoch has learned from this that “We need to increase our communications and explain who we are and what we are doing when there is a change of leadership”.

Anne also noted that later in her first year at the school, there were misunderstandings around the continuation of the Ardoch program and the funding needed. Initially, she thought the school was being asked to find \$35,000. Anne was a little confronted by this. However, after some discussion it was established that there was a funding gap that meant it would not be possible to continue the

program in its current form; both partners would need to re-evaluate the support required.

Despite these communication difficulties, Anne says that overall communication with Ardoch has been pretty good. “I don’t believe there is a formalised communication plan, I don’t think there needs to be. Communication is not a big deal; it just happens because we have a comfortable relationship with Ardoch.”

Communication does not need to be formalised in a plan, but it should be clear and open.

Impact

Judi explains that the initial interaction with a school involves a needs assessment, planning and appropriate matching of programs, volunteers and resources to meet those needs. The needs assessment is reviewed on an annual basis.

To understand how the program is having an impact or adding value, Anne explains that the school uses its student outcome data to look at any improvements for students gaining benefits from Ardoch programs. “We’re all here for learning improvement so that is obviously our goal. We still don’t have ‘hard core’ data, but what we do have provides us with some good indications of the value in the program.”

It may not always be easy to see how you might ‘measure’ impact, but use what data you have and explore opportunities to develop simple tools to capture the information you need.



One of the significant ways in which the school is seeking to ensure effective results is by emphasising the need for *directed* volunteering. Anne explains, “The volunteers are there to focus on student outcomes, not to be a child’s best friend. This is very important to us and we believe the volunteers need guidance and welcome the opportunity to see the difference they can make.”

Judi agreed, adding “volunteers don’t generally stay very long without this sort of direction”. To this end, one SPS teacher has created a volunteer template, which is completed by the volunteer after every session. These completed templates are useful tools for helping the teacher determine such things as levels of student engagement.

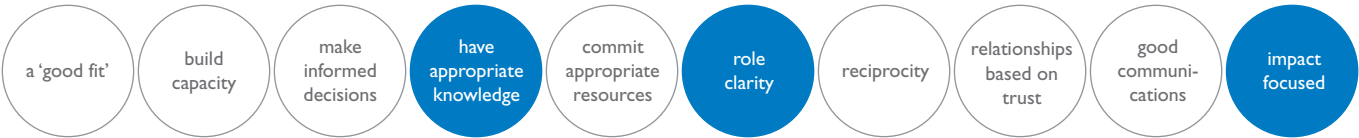
Judi explains that Ardoch are in the process of exploring new measures. “We value-add to what the school is already doing so there is some difficulty in teasing out what our impact is.” But Ardoch recognises that they, and the schools they work with, need to be able to demonstrate the impact of programs. Consequently, Ardoch are currently looking at what schools are measuring and any barriers to collecting relevant data. “It’s early days yet”, Judi continues, “but we are asking schools to provide us with de-identified data that we can correlate to Ardoch’s programs – we know that we can’t make direct causal claims, but with consistent data collection for all of our schools we may be able to see patterns of changes across and within schools.”

Anne concludes by stating that “when we are offered programs in our school, we must be absolutely clear what impact they will have on student learning outcomes and how we are going to measure impact”.

Ardoch and SPS are looking forward to continuing their partnership and working together to formally evaluate impact.

Case 7: Solving the Jigsaw

(Philanthropic grant to a not-for-profit for a program with schools)



Priority areas: student wellbeing; community education

About Solving the Jigsaw

‘Solving the Jigsaw’ helps young people learn to manage the threats of bullying at school and violence at home and in the community. The program was developed in 1997 by the Centre for Non-Violence (formerly EASE), a domestic violence support service based in Bendigo. Today it operates throughout Victoria and includes more than 80 schools. 27,000 children and 1,300 teachers have taken part in comprehensive training programs. (See the website below for program goals).

The R E Ross Trust made its first grant to EASE for ‘Solving the Jigsaw’ in 2001. Between June 2001 and June 2005, the Trust provided over \$395,000 towards the program’s continued expansion in schools, quality improvement and the development of a comprehensive training program, the grant was renewed in 2006 and again in 2009 for another three years. Since 2001, the Ross Trust has paid a total of \$994,149 towards ‘Solving the Jigsaw’.

To learn more, visit: <http://www.solvingthejigsaw.org.au>

About The R E ROSS TRUST

The R E Ross Trust is a perpetual charitable trust established in 1970 for charitable purposes in Victoria. The Trust makes grants in response to unsolicited requests and also by invitation to selected organisations to support Collaborations and Programs.

The Trust directs resources towards projects and other activities that: address disadvantage and inequity; encourage and promote social inclusiveness, community connectedness and health and wellbeing; and protect and preserve Australian flora and fauna.

To learn more, visit: <http://www.rosstrust.org.au/>

What we discovered

Knowledge –

- ▶ ... *about yourself and your own limitations*: be prepared for the consequences of engaging with the media in terms of the extra burden on resources; have ‘all your ducks in a row’ to respond with clarity about who you are and what you are doing.
- ▶ ... *about the sector*: schools are a ‘completely different beast’ to other organisations and their operating environment needs to be understood and appreciated.

Role clarity –

- ▶ *the right balance*: there is a fine line between being involved in a program and becoming a burden to the not-for-profit organisation.
- ▶ *beyond funding*: The R E Ross Trust role as a partner and facilitator has helped in their ability to share key lessons with others from a number of programs.

Impact – sustained impact and cultural change: ensure that any school-based program is curriculum-aligned and takes a whole school approach.

Knowledge

The R E Ross Trust represents one of a number of philanthropic trusts or foundations that have supported, and continue to support, the Solving the Jigsaw Program. Supporters have included (among others): The Portland House Foundation; The F. J. Foundation; The Tim Fairfax Family Foundation; The Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation; The Colonial Foundation; The Helen Macpherson Smith Trust; The Ian Potter Foundation; The Myer Foundation and Sidney Myer Fund, and The William Buckland Foundation.

The R E Ross Trust initially became aware of the Solving the Jigsaw Program through the Emergency Accommodation and Support Enterprise's (EASE) application to the Trust (as an open grant) in 2001. The first grant made was for \$100,000 over two years to develop training and develop materials to market Solving the Jigsaw to schools in Bendigo and other regional areas. This was followed by a grant in 2002 with the Trust providing direction and support for the organisation to develop its training model for facilitators. In August 2003, the Trust approved \$184,869 towards core program funding costs to continue to deliver the program in schools and further develop the facilitator program.

It was at this time the R E Ross Trust began its commitment to providing multi-year core funding to successful

organisations and programs and move away from funding only one-off new projects. As a consequence, Solving the Jigsaw became known as a Ross Trust Major Project, to reflect the Trust's ongoing commitment and the value of the program. In 2005, the Ross Trust undertook a review of its granting strategy, where the Trustees identified violence prevention and working to improve the lives and potential of children as priority areas. As a result the Trustees approved a grant to EASE with a grant of \$262,250, continuing Solving the Jigsaw as a Major Project.

In December 2006, the Ross Trust adopted new granting guidelines and redefined its 'Major' and 'Special' Projects as 'Collaborations' and 'Programs'. Consequently the Trust's granting relationship with the Solving the Jigsaw, became known formally as a Collaboration and no longer as a Major Project.

In 2008, EASE received a one-off grant from Helen Macpherson Smith Trust to develop a communications strategy. The grant was used to employ a communications specialist who led a number of media response planning meetings, which Ross Trust staff and a Trustee participated in and hosted on one occasion. This advisory committee provided input into the development of a media release, background materials for media and briefing notes for spokespeople about the program. This kind of participation in the program's activities meant

the Trust had an intimate knowledge of the challenges and experiences of EASE at this time and were able to provide strategic advice where needed.

A grant maker's direct involvement in a program can build their knowledge and may allow them to provide advice based on previous experience.

The Solving the Jigsaw concept, as outlined in EASE's original application, grew from an idea relating to the impact on the wellbeing of children who were living with their mothers in a women's

refuge. EASE's goal of developing the Solving the Jigsaw program was to tackle the problem of family violence not only through crisis support services, but also from an early intervention prevention perspective. This dual approach appealed to the Trust's guiding framework of balancing its grant making between meeting the immediate and basic community needs alongside longer term investments in prevention and early intervention.

A major objective of 'Collaboration' funding for Solving the Jigsaw was to build their capacity to source funding from others. This would ensure the program's sustainability beyond the life of the Ross Trust's support. Improving EASE's communications with potential investors was seen as a way to do that.

A simple 'prospectus' can help clarify your program's objectives and explain to others, including potential grant makers, what your goals and values are.

"To this end", explains, R E Ross Trust Program Manager, Lara Hook, "the Trust recognised that organisations need to be able to 'sell themselves' to potential funders". The development of an investment prospectus,

similar to what a company would prepare prior to going public, was seen as a potential tool for community organisations to promote themselves. Acknowledging the significance of this process in helping an organisation 'hone in' on their core aims, the Trust gathered together a group of organisations, including EASE, to be 'guinea pigs' for testing a prospectus framework that the Trust's then CEO, Sylvia Geddes had developed. Lara elaborates, "We realised that the 'prospectus' really helped organisations to know who they are and what they wanted to do – it could be presented in a coherent way rather than be an idea that was in an individual's head. The framework template is now on the website and freely accessible to all. Ross also provides communications and marketing peer support roundtables for a number of not-for-profits."

In February 2008, the Trust launched a Prospectus Development Small Grants Program to assist organisations to use the Framework. EASE has received a small grant as part of this program to pull together a 'prospectus', which helped clarify and articulate their objectives, as well as lay out key financial, organisational structure, and governance information. As part of this process, EASE undertook a 12-month review of its communication and marketing in 2011, which resulted in a name change from EASE (with a specific emphasis on emergency accommodation) to the Centre for Non-Violence (more reflective of the broader intent of the organisation and its initiatives).

As indicated, the Ross Trust designed the Prospectus Small Grants Program partly to help organisations focus on what they are and what they hoped to achieve. Lara recounts one incident where being clear about their core focus was vital for EASE. In 2008, a television documentary - *Kids' Business* – was released on the ABC. While the documentary represented a terrific account of work culminating over a five-year period, over 430,000 people tuned into the documentary. According to their annual report, EASE was "inundated by calls and emails from teachers, schools and welfare professionals across the country seeking assistance and resources" (EASE Annual Report, 2008-9, p. 34). This tested the organisation's ability to respond both with alacrity and, more specifically, with clarity about their intentions.

An integral part of participating in the Prospectus Small Grants Program are the quarterly roundtables hosted by the Trust, where marketing managers and CEOs of

participant organisations meet around communications and marketing support. As Lara explains, "because none of the members share the same client group, the conversation can centre on important strategic and sectoral issues as opposed to operational and service delivery matters. This has proved valuable for attendees". These meetings run for approximately two and a half hours and sometimes include a guest speaker (e.g. engaging with business). As further evidence of its commitment to capacity building, the Ross Trust hosts these meetings as a means not just of knowledge sharing but of peer support. As such, The Ross Trust's role in these forums is strictly focussed on facilitation and operational support.

Grant makers can help facilitate peer support and shared learning between community groups.



Solving the Jigsaw beneficiaries

Role clarity

As explained, the Solving the Jigsaw Program is being supported by Ross Trust as a 'Collaboration'. Lara notes that these types of grants were developed with the view that "funding organisations in a more intensive and supported way over the medium to longer term would assist organisations have a greater impact".

Funding over the medium to long-term can have a greater impact

Such collaborations are viewed as 'partnerships' between the Trust and the specific program. From the Trust perspective, an important role in the partnership is to support the organisation's capacity to source funds to keep the program sustainable. The Trust is cognisant that it is unable to support programs indefinitely and that not-for-profit organisations need to raise funds through a diverse range of sources – government, philanthropy and business.

Although the Ross Trust are now relatively 'hands-off' in terms of their direct involvement with the Solving the Jigsaw Program (their financial support for the Program will conclude in June 2012), Lara explains that the Trust and EASE staff worked together to develop funding proposals, key funding objectives and directions. Over the course of the relationship, Trust and EASE staff have met regularly and the Trust's support to the program has both been financial and strategic. In particular, the Trust provided advice to EASE to develop a training focus to ensure the programs sustainability. In effect, says Lara, "The Trust acts as a sounding board".

Grant makers can often offer more than financial support. Their experience, knowledge, networks and strategic advice can be invaluable.

Members of the Trust (both program staff and Trustees) have also participated in classroom activities. This was a wonderful opportunity for the Trust to really understand the program from the participant's (children's) perspective. It also allows for opportunities to talk about the program with the facilitators, parents and teachers, all of whom are able to share a unique perspective on the challenges and benefits of such a program first-hand - much more powerful than reading about it in a report.

Where appropriate, Trustees have facilitated connections and 'opened doors' to assist EASE in meeting their program goals. As an example, EASE hoped to form a partnership with a university to integrate Solving the Jigsaw training materials into pre-service teacher training. To assist EASE

with this goal, the Trust provided introductions to university education faculties with which they had existing relationships. As a result the Solving the Jigsaw Professional Development Program was aligned to the University of Melbourne Masters of Education program. The Trust has also facilitated a number of introductions to potential funders.

Impact

Schools have always been the key audience for the Solving the Jigsaw Program, particularly young people who have been exposed to family violence. But the program has become much broader, moving into anti-bullying initiatives and transitioning to a broader sense of community wellbeing. Lara explains, "While setting up a program in one classroom in one school might be worthwhile, the broader impact would be minimal. The Trust and EASE wanted to see changes embedded in schools, a real cultural change – hence the focus on teacher training and development. You can't just rely on one teacher or one principal, you need to make the change for sustained impact."

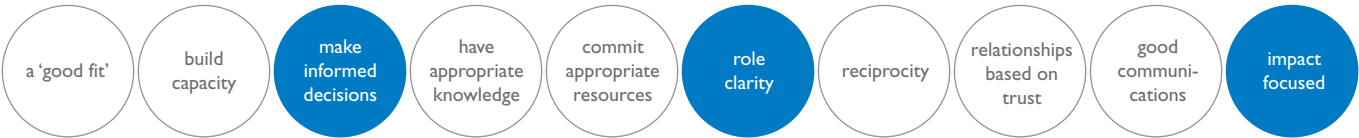
Throughout their relationship with the Trust, EASE members have reported every six months, as part of their grantee responsibilities. These reports are built on responses to set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and criteria, which were established jointly between EASE and the Trust, a characteristic of Ross Trust Collaborations versus Open Grants.

KPIs relate to the number of programs that have been established within schools and how much training has been provided by EASE directly and how much by others (who have been trained by EASE). However, a key component of these KPIs relates to accessing other funds, again relating to sustainability of the program and capacity building of program staff. KPIs are also designed to assess aspects of embedding cultural change through a review of the amount of teacher training and peer-to-peer training that has occurred.

The Solving the Jigsaw Program was documented in the Victorian Government *Plan to Prevent Violence against Women, 2010-2020* as a case study for what prevention looks like in the education and training setting. In November 2009, the program was designated by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) as one of the best practice examples and included in their *Respectful Relationships Education* report. It has also been documented and evaluated as a best practice model through the Australian Government *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence*.

Case 8: School Passport System

(Philanthropic grant to a not-for-profit for a program with schools)



Priority areas: student engagement, community partnerships

About School Passport System

The Community Development Foundation (CDF) initiated the School Passport System in low socio-economic areas where student attendance and parent engagement are serious challenges. The initiative seeks to increase the active participation and engagement of parents in school and increase student attendance. Parents can exchange an hourly commitment to the school in return for 'credits'. One hour equates to ten points, which in turn equates to one school dollar.

Activities are decided by the school and may include involvement on the Parents and Citizens (P&C) Committee; working with teachers in the classroom and on excursions. School dollars can then be redeemed on the school site for items such as school uniforms; food and drink at the canteen; stationary; to help pay for excursions/ incursions; and other items such as school photos or swimming lessons. A system for recognising students who reach attendance milestones is also part of the initiative. So far, sixty-three schools across Western Australia and South Australia participate in the initiative.

To learn more, visit: <http://thecdf.com.au/>

About Fogarty Foundation

The Fogarty Foundation was established in May 2000 by Annie and Brett Fogarty.

The Foundation aims to "deliver education opportunities that support people to achieve their potential and inspire community leadership".

They focus their investment, energy and skill on initiatives with a strong **education** basis. The Foundation aims to foster over a wide spectrum within the community a sense of **leadership**, and they look for maximum impact through the sharing and **dissemination** of knowledge and skills.

Financial investment is only one means of assistance and, as the Foundation matures, they believe they can also contribute by encouraging others to join in the spirit of philanthropy and share their knowledge and connections.

To learn more, visit: <http://fogartyfoundation.org.au/>

What we discovered

Make informed decisions – think how your initiative might be replicated. If you cannot share it, then forget it.

Role clarity – Parents give their time because that is what they can give. So build on that.

Effective communication – Sometimes it pays to shut up and listen. Start where people are 'at', not where you think they should be at.

Impact – Social change does take time. Build momentum through gathering information on what is changing. Supporters can then see that what they are putting in is leading to a result.

Making informed decisions

“For children to learn and succeed, you need parents *involved* in your school” asserts Jenny Day, Founding Director along with Barry Cable of the Community Development Foundation. With a background in research and about 13 years of experience behind her since starting the School Passport System initiative, Jenny Day knows that increasing the regular school attendance of students can be a major problem for many principals. In turn, when a student regularly misses school this can have lasting negative impacts on his or her learning and life outcomes. The School Passport System is an incentive-based initiative that seeks to address the issues of increasing parent or carer engagement and student attendance at school. It does so by putting parents at the centre of their child’s health, wellbeing, learning and achievement.

Always keep the end in mind. Stay focused.

“It’s hard to get a vision across to a five-year old that they need to attend school, when the parent does not necessarily understand or share that same vision.” Over the years, Jenny has encountered many reasons for this disconnect. For some parents this is because they believe that the school has all the answers and therefore they, as parents, do not have a role to play. For others, it is because they feel embarrassed that they do not know what their child is talking about and therefore how they can play a role in their child’s learning. Then there are those parents whose own experience of school was negative and so do not want to have a role. The bottom line, as Jenny concludes, is that “some parents don’t value school. So you need to create a concrete value so that parents or carers can associate a positive value with school.” This is an important premise underpinning the School Passport System.

Jenny says the concept for the School Passport System was also informed by “thinking and keeping the end in mind”. Three pillars support the growth and development of the Community Development Foundation initiatives: motivation, evaluation and recognition. For the School Passport System to succeed, Jenny says that it had to talk to parents and had to put in place ways of knowing what was working and not working in the initiative. Last, but not least, recognition of commitment and achievements had to be built into the fabric of the initiative. All three pillars, Jenny stresses, are necessary for beneficiaries and for those developing and running the initiative.

Taking the Passport System from concept to practice was informed by the experiences of a previous parent-school engagement project, called the Mother of All Sheds (MOASHs). Thanks to a grant from Lottery West, a place where parents could gather was built in 13 schools in Western Australia. “We did it”, says Jenny “because how many times have you been into a school only to find that there is no place where parents can sit, no cups that parents can use and overall, just no place for parents ‘to be’ and to be part of the school”.

From the MOASHs project, the School Passport System began in a small way with a couple of schools participating. “We started with the idea of putting a sticker of a star on the wall if parents of kids with poor attendance came along to the school”, recalls Jenny. The schools would use this form of recognition system because as Jenny says, “people love recognition and they like collecting things”. From here, the idea of the stars being traded in by the parent for a “second currency” was born.

Role clarity

A unique feature of the School Passport System’s adoption in schools is that the Community Development Foundation will not initiate an approach to a school. Ultimately, the decision to initiate the School Passport System and what the ‘passport’ focus will be rests with the parents of a school. Having this clarity around who does what and when is important for procedural clarity but it also reinforces the role that the Foundation believes parents play in their child’s education. “If the parents want it and they have identified a specific area of need where the school could be doing better, then we are all ears.” At least five new schools per week approach the Community Development Foundation.

The Community Development Foundation plays a key role in facilitating the development of products and processes that overcome barriers so that all parents can participate. An example is a Guide about the School Passport System. The Foundation has developed and had the Guide translated into twelve different languages. Another example is the Foundation’s role with the justice system. The ‘passport’ has been extended to include those parents who are incarcerated in correctional facilities. The Foundation has taken on this role so, among other reasons, they can assist in developing and strengthening the ongoing partnership between incarcerated parents

Projects can start small and be inspired by many things.

and their child’s school. The Foundation has devised, in collaboration with the correctional facility and school, ways in which these parents can undertake activities while incarcerated. This means they too can trade their hours on activities as currency for their child’s benefit.

Who sources the funds for the School Passport System is also clearly defined. It takes about \$15,000 per school per year to run a ‘passport’ initiative. “You need a combination of philanthropic, business and government funding” states Jenny. Each year, the Department of Education and Training in Western Australia provides a grant that supports the student attendance prong of the School Passport System. Jenny notes, “If the school sees the ‘passport’ as an avenue for addressing parent engagement and student absences, then they too get involved in seeking the funding”. Often this will involve schools connecting with their local businesses.

The Fogarty Foundation’s role with the Community Development Foundation extends beyond funding. They like to come out and see first-hand the School Passport System in action. Jenny explains that she meets every three months with Annie Fogarty, the Executive Chairperson of Fogarty Foundation. During these meetings, Jenny provides an update on the initiative’s progress and any new developments. The more that the Fogarty Foundation understands the initiative, “the more they are engaged” says Jenny and “the more they are able to play a role in networking us with others who might also be interested in supporting us.”

Good communications

At the local community level, word of mouth about the School Passport System is powerful. “Nothing”, says Jenny, “breeds success, like success.” Jenny explains how this works. “The parents from one school will tell another parent in another school about the initiative. They will also look at our website and see examples of what other parents are doing.” This learning from each other approach is an effective way to build capacity and also communicate about the initiative. As each ‘passport’ is locally driven, “it’s not a competition” reflects Jenny. “Instead, schools and parents can see ideas that others have tried and consider whether the idea might work also in their context.”

Between the school and the Community Development Foundation, the passports themselves are an important source of information. The information gathered in the passports assists schools with the compliance aspects of the initiative, such as accounting for the number of hours being claimed on an invoice that the school puts into the Community Development Foundation once per term.

‘Word of mouth’ is a very powerful communication tool; it can be an effective way of sharing experiences and lesson learnt, as well as an indicator of ‘success’.



Tranby Primary School, Western Australia

In the regular face-to-face catch-ups with the Fogarty Foundation and others supporting the initiative, Jenny is able to state clearly where the dollars they have invested have gone. She is able to do this because the Community Development Foundation has been clear about the issues they are tackling through the initiative and what outcomes they are seeking to see as a result. Furthermore, they have been clear about what and how information will be gathered to indicate improvement. As Jenny states, “we can say, 70 parents who never came near this school are now involved in the school doing X,Y and Z”.

Impact

All of the Community Development Foundation’s initiatives are externally evaluated by Dr Susan Young from the Social Work and Social Policy School at the University of Western Australia. The funding for evaluation comes from private sources. Each term both qualitative and quantitative information is gathered from the parents, principal and teachers of participating schools in the School Passport Initiative. The survey is easily accessible on the Community Development Foundation’s website. It includes questions about the number of parents involved in the initiative, what types of activities they are involved in and whether positive changes in, for example, the quality of parent-teacher relations and student attendance is evident.

Through these forms of feedback, schools from disadvantaged areas are reporting increases in student attendance, parent self-esteem, rapport and trust between school staff and parents. The feedback is indicating that parents are more actively engaged in the school than they were prior to the School Passport System. This is reflected in the number and diversity of activities (e.g. Breakfast Clubs and canteens can be run more often, a quorum is reached at the P&Cs), as well as evidence of parents now making resources for the school to use (e.g. reading resources for use at home as well as in school so children can catch up and improve their skills). Some parents have reengaged with learning by, for example, getting their bus license so now they can get their children to and from school.

The initiative is resulting in long-term sustainable changes in parent and student engagement in both regional and metropolitan communities. The initiative began in education but has expanded into other areas, such as into a Justice Link adaptation of the School Passport System in six correctional facilities. There is also the case of the initiative in one school being opened up to all parents, not just those with children who have a poor attendance track record.

Postscript

Jenny will be working with staff from the Melbourne Business School, who have funding from The Trust Company, to further track the impact of the School Passport System. The Trust Company appointed the Melbourne Business School to evaluate recipient’s grants awarded last year in their Engaged Philanthropy Program. The Community Development Foundation received a 3-year grant for their evaluation.

Surveys to capture data should be simple and easily accessible.

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