



The Lottery and Local Authorities

Learning from Good Practice at the Local Level

Discussion Summary

Is there a special case for investing in rural?

- Scale and how to take account of spatial component.
- Rural and urban issues may be similar but how they are felt and mechanisms required to tackle them may differ in the countryside.
- Cost differential between urban and rural areas – as well as differences in locality, access to services and transport.
- People don't understand rural so don't always make the case. Popular media such as Countryfile and second homes makes this more difficult.
- Rural is "under the microscope" and you need to provide the evidence to generate activity.
- Community Led Planning – this is an example of a rural social document that does have local buy-in and actions but how do we back this up with investment?
- Awareness of rural isolation.
- Focus from some funders on deprivation favours urban areas rather than rural areas.
- Market towns face particular challenges as they are not seen as urban centres nor are they sufficiently rural to be a village. But they suffer from withdrawal of public services which has a disproportionate effect on the broader rural hinterland towns serve.
- How can funders be clear on the level and type of demand and how can rural communities respond to funding opportunities?

Funding applications and project success

- Some groups are seeking/need continuation funding; other groups remain on the funding treadmill. How can we support groups to generate income, be less grants dependent and become sustainable?
- Successful projects have 2-3 inspirational people leading/supporting them.
- Success breeds success – if communities can see something going well in their local area or elsewhere it encourages them to join in and participate.
- If a group writes a good application it doesn't necessarily lead to a good project (how can funders get 'under the skin' of a project to see the impact it could have)?
- New 'open data' approach of the Lottery to share learning and good practice more widely.
- Viewing projects in the longer term beyond their funded period.
- Why do organisations feel they have to get to a certain point before applying for funding? Is it because they have built their capacity to apply? But this does affect a funder's reach.

Community participation and volunteering

- How can we encourage and support volunteers? Examples include Time Credits (creating community currency including the provision of pop up childcare).
- Volunteering isn't free and requires investment.
- How do we engage with the 'hard to reach'? Some people feel disenfranchised by the withdrawal of the state and feel unable to influence statutory services (top down).
- You need an 'unreachable programme' to shift perceptions and encourage involvement.
- How can you support project development in communities that don't come forward with ideas (who, what, where to access support).
- 'Sink or swim' – communities are being expected to do more for themselves and this requires investment and time from funders to support them so as to build capacity.
- Brining the community together and inspiring them (e.g. a Big Local area hired skips to clear up rubbish which brought people together, helped them to get rid of junk and improved the environment).
- It's not just about the money but the skills (confidence, self belief) that residents build in the process of applying for funding.

Future funding strategies and activities

- There's always a traceable trigger point that gets communities engaged (e.g. withdrawal of services, an event or crisis such as flooding). How can we get communities ready before the trigger?
- Moving away from 'funding' to 'investment' (e.g. community shares, crowdfunding).
- Supporting the voluntary and community sector by being 'demand led' not 'grant led'.
- Local authorities being clear on what their priorities are, not thinking in silos and thinking about rural investment in the round.
- Sustainability or growth (for projects and applicants)?
- Some people have a revolving door with funders.
- For funders it should be about 'access' and 'reach' not just money.
- Moving away from 'deficit led' funding to an 'asset based' approach (i.e., pumping money into what's already in place).
- The conversation is shifting: 'Investment' not 'funding'.
- Funders wanting to be more innovative, experimental and promote new ways of working yet have to manage risk (fear of failure among some funders, stakeholders and communities that is not always apparent in the private sector).
- Grey area for funders is where statutory provision ends (e.g. some funders are providing grants to domestic violence projects). The relationship between local authorities, voluntary and community sector, communities and marketplace is changing.
- Locally bred initiatives (rather than waiting for the idea and application to come forward funders are actively working with communities to develop a project and bid).
- How can funders and local authorities work together to jointly support locally bred initiatives?
- Funders need knowledge and evidence about where the real need is.
- Sharing learning through information advisors, peer mentoring and disseminating great stories from elsewhere.
- How do we know if our investment is making a difference? How do we measure that?
- Which comes first: funding or need?
- How long is 'long enough' to work with communities and build their capacity and skills?
- Funders should be asking residents 'what matters most to you'?
- How can funders get under the skin of projects and into the DNA of communities?

Further information

NAVCA Building effective local VCS infrastructure report <http://www.navca.org.uk/publications/belvi>

Big Lottery Fund 'your voice our vision' <http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/about-big/your-voice>

Big Lottery Fund 'power to change' <http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/powertochange>

Village Signposting, Outreach and Support <http://www.villagesos.org.uk/>