

Appendix 3

Annex 3 Best Practice and Consultation feedback

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1. Notes from CLOA (Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association) National Funders virtual roundtable hosted by Oxford City Council 22 June 2021



Exploring the new funding landscape Virtual round table, 22 June 2021

Background

To inform members about emerging trends in the rapidly changing external funding environment and the impact that Covid is continuing to exert on the sector, CLOA held a virtual roundtable discussion with a selected group of National Funders (Lankelly Chase, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Salix Finance, Sport England, The Good Exchange and ArtsWork) and CLOA Local Authority members. We wanted to understand the new funding landscape and to see how we could work better with national funders.

This short paper provides a summary of the key points covered by the discussion.

Learning keynotes/themes

Strengthen relationships between funders and grantees

The natural reaction of funders, seeing the impact of Covid on frontline, community-focused delivery organisations, was to enable and empower them. Many funders halted ongoing funding programmes to concentrate on supporting emergency response work – through trusted grant-supported 3rd sector partners ([Association of Charitable Foundation Survey Results, April 2021](#)).

Most relaxed grant conditions such as monitoring. Lankelly Chase have done away paper monitoring as far as possible; a natural progression for them, though an audit trail is still a legal requirement. Some fund Staff have been tasked with completing monitoring reports rather than asking hard-pressed grantees to do this. Another option to consider is requiring monitoring information to be included in annual reports and accounts e.g. as part of Public Benefit reporting.

Most Funders became more flexible about how money could be used. Some awarded those they had relationships with additional funds and support to cope with the emergency – for example [Lloyds Bank Foundation enhanced support grantees](#).

This lighter touch, more relational way of working demanded by the pandemic seems to have speeded up a trend across the sector; **away from competitive funding and towards longer-term and more learning-oriented engagement** (for examples: see [Lankelly Chase Covid 19 Crisis Response](#) and [Lloyds Bank Foundation – Community Responses](#) posted on their You Tube Channel).

New respect and collaboration

Rapid mobilisation in response to the emergency was impressive and all sections of society played their part. Communities and 3rd sector partners were effective at reaching and identifying needs that more remote agencies were not able to. National and local government, together with the full range of strategic partners, have found **new ways to collaborate, cooperate and support each other in creative ways that has significantly improved trust and respect** and the third sector been a crucial part of that emergency response. (See: [Small Charities Responding to Covid-19, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Dec. 2020](#))

Tackling structural inequalities – what role for funders?

As Covid funds begin to run out, partners and funders alike are still responding to growing demands for their services (more information on the sectors under particular strain are included in the same Lloyds Bank Foundation, Dec. 2020 report). **The pandemic has shone a light on entrenched structural inequalities**. For many there is a recognition that those most impacted by this inequality need to be part of more holistic understanding of ‘place’ but also to help create locally-rooted solutions (For example see: [Good Practice Recommendations for Funders in a Covid-19 Context. ACF, August 2020](#); and [Inclusive and sustainable economies: leaving no one behind, Public Health England, March 2021](#)).

To be successful, this requires **participatory grant giving which: listens, supports and empowers disadvantaged communities**. The National Lottery Community Fund succinctly explain [participatory grant making or PGM](#) is an approach to funding decisions and strategies that emphasises a ‘nothing about us without us’ approach. Practice is emerging across the sector – for example see [Practical Guide for Participatory Grant making](#). **Longer-term investment and joined-up partnership relationships at the local level are required** rather than a centrally planned ‘issuing of calls’. It requires trust based giving that encourages a frank dialogue about what has and has not worked, rather than a KPI driven approach. [Approach – Lankelly Chase](#) is driven by a conviction that those living and working closest to social problems are best placed to direct change. **This requires a culture change**

in national funders and a more open, less control based, less power based relationship and calls for participation as equals, rather than as funder and grantee.

Investing in leadership and community capital

For some funders the scale of emergency Covid funds, channelled through them, has allowed access to new audiences and this is likely to lead to ever more competition for open funding calls. Sport England estimate that around 80% of their emergency grants have gone to organisations that they have never funded before. [Initial evaluation work conducted by the National Lottery](#), which distributed £188 million through the Coronavirus Community Support Fund (CCSF), found that 75% of charities said that the funds enabled them to reach people that they had not worked with previously. Covid has exposed inequalities across society and ensuring ongoing equity, diversity and access to funding remain crucial to Funders. **Building the capacity and supporting leadership development within under-represented communities affected by Covid will be an ongoing issue** and this a role that some funders may find more difficult than others. This is recognised as key to ensuring that Sport England can deliver on the ambitious targets set out in [uniting the Movement](#) their new 10-year strategy; the [Tackling Inequalities Fund](#) is one approach being piloted.

A sector which played a crucial role during the pandemic facing an uncertain future

Funders have growing concerns: unsustainable levels of emergency funding, together with core funding (often commissioned) from Local Authorities, has also by-and-large been extended to cover the emergency period. This has to some extent allowed 3rd sector organisations to extend essential services and just about take the hit from loss of income from fundraising. Estimates from the sector itself suggest that the overall loss of income could range from £4.3 billion to £6.7 billion ([Hansard, 9 June 2021](#)).

The funding sector is exhausted by the impact of service innovation, the toll of the pandemic on staff and volunteers, and for some a continuing increase in demand coupled with continual competitive bidding calls from central government. Funders remarked on a lower level of applications that they are receiving on some of their annual funding programmes this year which seems to reflect anecdotal evidence of a sector exhausted by emergency initiatives. This is true not only for the 3rd sector but reflected across local authorities. The worry is 2022 when on-the-ground partners who have depleted resources, both financially and from their staff (and volunteers), will face **an uncertain post-Covid funding environment**. [Charity sector reactions to Budget 2021](#) suggest that whilst the sector welcomed some measures, they were generally disappointed at a 'missed opportunity'.

Thoughts for the future

Conclusion: better practice reinforced by emergency delivery

Covid has also forced a digital revolution – not only in terms of work-practices and the ubiquitous zoom meetings; there is also a collective awakening of the power of algorithms to help match funders and donors to projects and innovators. The Good

Exchange showcased the work of [Sovereign Housing which levered in additional funding](#). Collaboration between [Crowdfunder and Sports England](#) is driving a new way of establishing community engagement and raising match funding at the same time.

It is been a tough time for the sector, as it has for everyone, but again in common with others it is driving forward trends that have been emerging over the past few years. To address health and deprivation inequalities in an effective and equitable fashion we need to build long term local and community leadership capacity through learning led approaches, with certainty about medium to long term funding commitments, driven by community choices. Funders can act as a resource bridge between community, learning and capacity development. This focus on community and participation is also driving the importance of place as a lens through which to view funding (for example see: [Working in Place: Collaborative funding in practice](#) which reinforces many of the points already raised in this paper).

Just last week at Local Government Association’s virtual conference [Robert Jenrick, the communities secretary said there would be fewer competitions in the future](#), giving councils ‘more consolidated opportunities to access government funding’. That would be an achievement we would all enjoy.

Attendees

Lankelly Chase
Sport England
Lloyds Bank Foundation
Salix Finance
The Good Exchange*
Artsworks
Oxford South and Vale DC*
Barnsley DC*
Cambridge City Council
Oxfordshire County Council*
Oxford City Council

- Also interviewed individually

Best Practice

2. Local Funders

Oxford's Funding Landscape: What Have We Learned?

26 July 2021

Agenda

1. Welcome and introductions
2. The changing environment, challenges for funding and partnerships
3. New models and ways of working
4. Open discussion – ways to work together more effectively
5. Taking the agenda forward

AOB

(Attendees list at end)

Key Conclusions

There is shared interest in working together to maximise our understanding and share our learning about:

- Analysis of Need including equality gaps
- Improving grant processes (throughout from application to monitoring and evaluation) including using digital technologies and participatory methods
- Collaboration, particularly around joint bids

We agreed to set up a Google Poll to schedule meetings to consider these further and:

- Confirm who is interested in which topics;
- Enable partners to come ready with ideas and contributions;
- Consider involving others with a particular interest or specialism in the subject:

Detailed Notes

Working through the pandemic: all tried new approaches

- Reducing bureaucracy and process to 'get stuff done'
- The pandemic fostered innovation, in the way we worked and collaborated. It also embedded a digital revolution and has driven new ways of using online technologies.

Interaction with beneficiaries?

- Covid drove us to shorten application forms, and reduce additional documentation required (with known organisations). Trustees were happy to pay out grants on this basis.
- OCF were supporting relief grants to keep organisations going; now there has been a shift towards sustainability and recovery. Need to maintain an eye on core funds.
- [Catalyst](#) operated an [Emergency Relief Fund](#) – supporting organisations that played a key role in neighbourhoods, and this has led to a better understanding of the issues they face.
- Catalyst [delivered community well-being telephone calls](#). This could mean sign posting to local services or making emergency payments. Led to a better grasp of customer needs.

Participation

- Covid really exposed the extent of inequalities in Oxford. Do we need to change our approach to achieve meaningful changes – some partners are exploring new methodologies.
- Participation means sharing power and decision making, not just money.
- Questions approach on trust and control.

Measurement

- Discussion about what was meaningful and who for.
- Oxford Hub has been testing [storytelling as an opportunity for learning](#). Looking at how to measure impact led by communities rather than by the audit requirements of funding organisations.
- The new [Marmalade recipe book](#) hot off the press covers these themes (see also – [How we can focus on relationships?](#))
- Oxford City Council moved to a locality based way of working engaging closely with communities including knocking on doors. A learning point was what mattered most to each person was different.
- Across the University there has been a noticeable openness - University staff are used to always being the expert, now valuing community knowledge and expertise.
- [Science Together](#) - pilot programme testing new approaches to Public Engagement with Research (PER) by connecting researchers with [community partners across Oxfordshire](#).

Emergency funding has been a cushion. Challenges in the next 1 -3 years?

- OCVA supporting many small organisations with core costs.
- Income from e.g. room hire and events has been lost. Will these income streams be viable in an increasingly digital world? Recognition that in the short term there is a core funding gap.
- Discussion around 3rd sector collaborations e.g. premises sharing, role sharing, sharing admin and back office services.

- Adversity can drive innovation: Newbury Cricket Club starting premises sharing with [Loose Ends homeless support charity](#) increasing the use of a public asset. Collaboration helped raise funding for their two causes.
- Many organisations have exhausted reserves and need to look at how they will achieve core cost recovery – we need to ensure that organisations can be sustainable into the future.

Post-Meeting Break: focused on next steps

Needs assessment approaches

- Many approaches to needs assessment from statistics to participatory monitoring, budgeting and giving, were discussed.
- OCVA run sessions around protected characteristics e.g.: lived experience and evidence from support groups - visual impairment and hearing loss. Open to all ([register for an invitation](#)).
- [Oxfordshire Equality Framework](#) produced by Oxfordshire-All-In can help reflect on EDI as a journey.
- OCC – referrals monitored via customer contact centre – complex cases requiring more than one method of support.
- Partners are interested in further action on **EDI Needs and Monitoring**.
- **Sustainability**: Grant applications usually require some info but funding core activities is a real gap which funders need to consider covering.
- Environmental sustainability – needs to remain high on the agenda.

Our Processes

- Discussion around processes: streamline to help those applying but also to improve efficiencies in terms of management? Is there any learning to share with others?
- Collaboration: Where and how might we work more closely together? Of particular interest was collaboration to secure more external funding for Oxford

Participatory Budget Making (PBM) and Participatory Grant Making (PGM)?

- Sovereign have taken a [blended approach to service delivery](#); learning to change language as a business which didn't connect with the community on the ground. They have now invested in a digital platform to achieve a better customer experience ([Your Community Your Choice](#)). Budget doubled from £100k to £200k per year - participatory budget making but not grant making.
- Oxford Hub tested participatory grant making in different communities. Designed by residents in a deliberately ad hoc way (see: [blog by Emma – one of the local PGM Team](#)). With a budget of £40k now, and covering the [Community Infrastructure Zone](#) (CIZ). Oxford Hub are working with OCVA to record the process. Plan to develop a story-telling approach to illustrate impact, i.e. not conventional monitoring.
- Sovereign has moved everything online; equity issues emerge in achieving for all, when some have particular interests. Follow a weighted model with preference for people living locally.

- Traditional grant making hasn't always addressed fundamental disadvantage and this is an opportunity to try another more empowering way to reach into a community.
- Consultation on [Oxford City Council's Community Grant programme](#) open until 14 August 2021.

In Conclusion partners expressed interest in the following strands for further focussed discussion:

- Analysis of Need including inequalities
- Grant processes, and participation in decision making
- Collaboration, particularly around bids

Action: OCC to set up meetings - Google Polls and further information will be circulated shortly.

Attendees

(National Lottery) Heritage Fund
Stanton Ballard Charitable Trust
Catalyst Housing Ltd*
Catalyst Housing Ltd
Catalyst Housing Ltd
Sovereign Housing Association
Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP)*
MPLS (Mathematical, Physical, Engineering and Life Sciences), Oxford University
Oxfordshire Community Foundation*
Oxfordshire Community Foundation (OCF)*
The Good Exchange*
Oxfordshire County Council*
Oxford Hub*
Oxfordshire Community & Voluntary Action (OCVA)*
Oxford City Council

* Also interviewed individually

3. Local Government

Preston

Community led Wealth Building

- Preston has established a number of participatory community forums and processes – some specifically for minority groups – and hosts an annual community forum discussing solutions on social issues; it operates a Mayor's Community Hero Award, an annual award to community group/community organisation and/or individuals.
- In 2013, Preston Council conducted spend analysis that found of £750 million spent, only five per cent was spent in Preston. The Council set up **wealth building initiatives** including local purchasing policy, a community bank, investing pensions in local developments, development of the 3rd and cooperative sector to enable bidding for services and supplies contracts. In 2018, Preston was named “most-improved city” in the UK. Preston has been deliberately vesting property assets in some of the community initiatives it supports and has established a community right to use land and buildings, with associated guidance/process.
- Grant Funding and support is available to help local people take control of land and buildings, local services, neighbourhood planning and the local economy.
- Salford has replicated Wealth Creation model with success. LGA indicate that 20 councils are now testing/piloting community Wealth building approaches.
- <https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/inclusive-economies-preston-city-councils-approach-community-wealth-building>
- <https://www.preston.gov.uk/article/1339/What-is-Preston-Mod>

Wigan

Community Investment Fund.

- Wigan faced substantial budget cuts and as a result Wigan Council created The Deal, an informal agreement between public sector, citizens, community groups and businesses to create a better borough.
<https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/Strategies-Plans-and-Policies/Deal-2030.aspx>
The Deal is composed of several smaller deals on healthcare, children, social services and community funding. <https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/The-Deal/Deal-Communities/index.aspx>
- The Deal includes what the CEO calls a '**values led**' set of attitudes - a cultural in the way staff work. Every staff member has objectives to demonstrate relationships with people in hard to reach communities, community wealth building support and individual community engagement activities. These and other values carried into practice are '**Deal Behaviours**'.
- Wigan grants programme – Communities Investment Fund – comprises three simple streams: A match-fund of up to £1,000 for crowd-funded projects. Small investments, an annual grant for up to £2,000 aimed at community groups and tenants and residents associations; Big Idea investments, for up to three years funding of over £2,000 to £10,000, for innovative projects that demonstrate high levels of collaboration. Larger initiatives are possible but under stricter procedures.

- Funds processes involve attending pre-investment participatory seminars with funders, partners, Rotaract/businesses (seminars are characterised as marketplaces), and collaboration with partners and other funders. Learning meetings are held with all partners. All fund applications are visible to all council staff who are asked to comment and feed in ideas/connections and anything else that can help to make investments successful.
- Trust is essential – monitoring is via case studies or stories on an annual IT return with a random sample audited. ‘We gave up process administration for a focus on outcomes’.
- Some Community staff are ‘community capacity officers’ with a duty to focus on building PC/equalities groups at grassroots, in most deprived areas.
- Components: all IT led, participatory, one pot approach, includes asset transfer. Provision of advice, coaching, CRM system.
<https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Business/Finance-and-Grants/Community-funding/index.aspx>
- In 2019 The Centre for Public Impact published a case study on this work and found The Deal has achieved some positive results; the social return on investments is 1:1.58.

Bath and North-East Somerset

Local Community forums

- The Connecting Communities programme is designed to help public services and local residents to work better together. Five Area Forums streamline and simplify local engagement, made up of local community groups and residents, elected members, parish councils, local businesses.
- Forums advise on issues and priorities; projects and grants. (Engagement with grant applicants/coaching and **decisions** are for officers.) Forums share good grant applications. www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/neighbourhoods-and-community-safety/localism-and-community-planning
- BathNES are developing an **online portal** with simple forms this summer.
- They have developed a ‘giving’ system to draw in new money. This enables local people and businesses to donate to good causes.
<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/donate-community-contribution-fund>. £23,000 has been raised to date.
- Westminster Community Contribution Fund model
www.westminster.gov.uk/westminster-trust
- BathNES approved a Community Asset Transfer Policy in 2019 aimed at enhancing voluntary sector productivity and social value outcomes through transfer of premises. Wider community interests are safeguarded
- <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/neighbourhoods-and-community-safety/community-asset-transfers>

Bristol City

Bristol Impact Fund

In 2017 Bristol City Council brought together grant funds into the Bristol Impact Fund (BIF), bringing in key strategic partners and leveraging external funds.

For communities

- It has four-year grant funding with smaller grants for 18 months to encourage new ideas and involvement from more diverse communities.
- The second round (just started) aims to ‘**grow the power**’ of **local communities** (with a budget level similar to OCC), and specifically **targeting equalities-led groups**, and **people experiencing the greatest inequality** to: self-organise and pursue collective priorities, access empowering support, build strong organisations to take forward community priorities, collaborate to bring about meaningful changes
- It has a web based/IT based system. They provide face to face and online workshops over a month to provide advice and guidance to intended applicants, videoing and posting guidance online; signposting support on governance, bid-writing, surgeries, learning, and collaboration.

Plymouth City

Crowdfunder

- The City ‘Change Fund’ was launched in 2015. Its purpose is to support local projects for local people.
- City Council has chosen to distribute the ‘neighbourhood portion’ of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to support local projects through a partnership with Crowdfunder UK.
- Individuals, groups and even businesses can set up campaigns that they would like to deliver and raise money from ‘the crowd’ before delivering the idea.
- Once an eligible project has reached 25 per cent of its total costs the Council can pledge up to 50 per cent of the project cost (to a maximum of £30,000). Crowdfund Plymouth a Plymouth-only platform of the Crowdfunder UK website.
- <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/crowdfund-plymouth>

Other Good Practice

South Oxford and Vale of White Horse DC, Cambridge City and Oxfordshire County attended a CLOA good practice meeting with national funders hosted by OCC.

- At the meeting **Barnsley DC** identified new policy opening up all public premises and council facilities for hot desk access, for a digitally enabled community. This is in early process, is intended to make offices more accessible and comfortable for staff collaboration and networking, and apply to community groups initially, then individuals and business.
- Oxfordshire use in-house developed IT to help manage grants
- South Oxford and Vale are in the early stage of developing a simple database
- Other local authority models were investigated including Portsmouth, and information sought from the Local Government Association

York City was unable to be interviewed during the review¹, but provided documentation about their localisation process. York has a history of community

¹ Key departments undergoing reorganisation, and a maternity leave over the summer period, preventing this.

development, neighbourhood grants for social action and promoting active citizenship.

It recently adopted asset based approaches, recognising communities, people, connections, as assets and seeking to develop participatory 'co-production' for development. This is based on a Local Area Coordinator model that supports people, local groups and organisations to achieve their own goals, improve local service delivery, and build/broker community connections.

The way local authorities are approaching Grant Fund management/CRM software systems was reviewed.² Many of those interviewed were developing/building on relatively simple in-house software/systems rather than purchasing external systems. All were moving to improve digital platforms.

Learning Summary

Localisation, models for local participation in decision making, proactive approaches to equalities, increased coordination across agencies, enhanced use of IT and the internet, facilitating 3rd sector productivity and innovative approaches to fundraising are all considered good practice.

Good practice weighting / criteria emphasise/prioritise

- action on inequality/poverty
- equalities led groups or equalities led activity
- specific geographic community focus
- collaborative approaches
- coaching/partnering
- promotion of sector entrants/capacity building
- shared learning and case studies, over traditional monitoring
- IT/web based CRM development.

Interviewed councils: Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire and Vale, Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City, Wigan, Barnsley, Plymouth, Preston, Test Valley.

² For example see capterra.com or cipfa.org.uk (who have co-developed a grant management system) - or for social impact grant programme management <https://sourceforge.net/software/grant-management/uk/> (NB references are for information only, not indicative of recommendations).

Public Survey Short List Comments

We are very grateful for the support of Oxford City Council historically and especially during the challenging past 18 months. Efforts to support organisations through advanced payment, business rate relief and emergency funding have been an absolute lifeline - don't forget all the things you are doing brilliantly!

Huge thanks to Oxford City Council for its overall dynamic, proactive and supportive approach.

Please don't use umbrella bodies to do the community developed/grant support as this has not been helpful (at least it has proved the contrary to us) and takes money away from direct support to the community. There are lots of locally rooted capable voluntary organisations working directly in and with the communities they serve that could be supporting others to start up and deliver too.

Please put as much resource directly into the hands of locally based voluntary sector organisations who are proving themselves to be delivering successfully.

We really appreciate your support for Asylum Welcome and we find you great to work with! Your application and reporting processes are really good, and you are very friendly, supportive and helpful

Thank you so much

Thanks for support you have given us to date. It's enabled us to make a real difference to older people's lives and leverage in additional funding

Food for Charities is VERY grateful for all the support it received over the past 15 months. The city responded very quickly to the challenge, and we really enjoyed working more closely with city staff (e.g. Spike delivering food for us, Azul and Michael organising boots and socks, Carly exchanging food and nappies with us). I feel that the city's approach to covid has been really good

Thank you for getting us through Covid, otherwise we would have been a sinking ship

Thank you for your grant. You've been a life saver

Sometimes a new member of staff (like me) or someone new to the granting process isn't au fait with the usual terminology used on the website. It would be useful to take that into account when producing guidelines.

We appreciate you making the effort to consult.

Timing is really important

Make everything as jargon free as possible. Prioritise access over sophistication

I appreciate the flexibility granted to us during the COVID pandemic, and the continuity of funding, enabling us to spend time and energy totally focussed on service delivery at a time when resources were stretched (and still are) and the environment we were working in was very challenging (and still is!).

Thank you so much for your support it is very much appreciated and valued by Dovecote Children & Families Project

Mainstream registered organisations fare better? Unregistered groups with no premises are not favourably considered

Reasons for failure to receive funding not explained. No follow up or response back

There is a need to fund intergenerational community projects

We hereby express our appreciation to the Youth Ambition team for strengthening the hands of BAME communities.

Because of the impact of years of cut backs and the impact of COVID 19 many community groups are struggling or even closing. This makes the support available from the Council even more vital - Oxford has a good record in providing support compared with a number of other local authorities.

Thank you for the support over many years.

The Emergency Grants during 2020 were a great example of what can be done. The OCC process was straightforward, quick, supportive and light touch. Allowed us to focus on beneficiaries rather than pointless paper work.

While I consider the system is working it must not stop looking for other ways of improving. Look for up and coming projects.

Notes from Interviews with Third Sector Organisations

These took between 40 to 45 minutes typically, although several respondents had views that required interviews to last up to 90 minutes and in some cases a further meeting was also scheduled.

Interviewees were asked to be frank and were invited to say what they felt we should hear. Anonymity was promised where requested. A short list of sensitive issues raised where anonymity was requested is provided at the end, separated from the interviewees.

Interview structure focused on probing around four points/questions. These were:

- the respondent's overall experience of working with us in this area
- their views on what the grant model/process and the wider - linked - communities support should ideally offer, what we could do more, less or differently
- how respondents' business model was changing and likely to change over the period ahead, including approach to income and sustainability
- looking at exclusion and at specific groups, views on whether they, the communities grant model specifically, or the sector could do more or differently to address EDI.

As appropriate a comment was requested on for example, use of public premises, grant systems, or other specific issues, where required through review objectives.

The following organisations took part in the consultation meetings:

ACKCI	National Lottery Community Fund
Acorn Housing	OCCAC
AFI UK	OCVA
AgnesSmith	Oxeyes
Archway	Oxford Civic Society
Ark – T	Oxford Community Foundation
Arts at the Old Fire Station	Oxford Hub
Asian Cultural Centre	Oxford International Links
Asylum Welcome	Oxford Playhouse
Catalyst Housing	Oxfordshire County Council
Citizens Advice Bureau Oxford	Oxfordshire NHS
Cowley Road Works	Oxford Against Cutting
CUTTESLOW Community Association	PARASOL
Dominion (A2Dominion)	Pegasus
EMBS Community College	Pink Times/LBTQIA+/Oxford Friends
Experience Oxfordshire	Restore
Festival of the Arts (Magdalen College)	Sanctuary Hosting
Fusion Arts	SOFEA
Gatherwell	Story Museum
GLAM	SYRCOX
Justice in Motion	Syrian Sisters
KEEN	TANDEM
Makespace	Test Valley DC
MAO	The Gatehouse
Mandala	The Good Foundation
Museum of Oxford	Young Women’s Music Project

Meetings were also held with:

Group of Advice Centres, Oxford Inter-faith group, Stronger Communities group; Oxfordshire All In (on analysis and on 3rd sector mapping); Oxford Local Enterprise Company (on their own grants and 3rd sector strategy).

Feedback (in no particular order) was as follows:

1.

Overall pleased with relatively simple, open partnership process with OCC, and the named contact that has helped with continuity. The advice centres forum worked well and the attendance and support of OCC was important and should continue. Ideally they would want to see a long term funding agreement. Joint work was essential and we are looking at how to offer better services including e.g. working on ways to implement new shared IT systems. The support with development funding was very helpful. They have seen a significant shift in debt and housing support needs over the pandemic and the vast majority of worst-case clients will continue to need face to

face support. They were looking at pop up centres in deprived areas; would always need 'places' to operate from. Telephone and IT based support has increased.

Their impression was that communications and accessibility of services and of grants needed improvements to reach into the worst-off client group and raise awareness into EDI groups. That new or smaller social/3rd sector bodies needed specific support to stand up/get up.

2.

Rollover funds had been important during the pandemic as had mutual support in the cultural partnership. Important to maintain the cohesion and sharing approach offered through the Cultural partnership. This could be replicated in other sectors.

Young people and creatives' were constrained by traditional approaches. Better use of the web/IT and promotion of creativity would enable grants to reach further.

3.

Value support to date. Think that the written applications for support should be moved to IT systems. Over the pandemic they have been able to do more with web/IT and productivity has increased significantly. Multi annual core funding and flexibility would work best for the period ahead.

Foreign language accessibility and alternative ways to apply such as video or face to face are needed if community's grants are going to meet excluded groups. The OCA model was worth taking a look at (participatory decision making).

4.

Ideally would like to see longer term core funding certainty, and reduced administrative work in the grant. Important to target grant funds at smaller organisations and 'take new and small partners on', one way is through a buddying system with established partners, or support through the new Hubs.

5.

Feedback that there was confusion and uncertainty around multiple calls, unclear criteria, lack of clarity about fund availability, and language. That must be fixed. There is an ethical question about small bodies and excluded group led bodies that must feel bound in to the system including through grants. Telephone, video and face to face applications monitoring must be encouraged with languages support across the whole process. Individual or small group meetings should be used for the excluded groups who often do not feel comfortable with large forum environments. Suggest OCC use specific events to propel engagement with EDI groups such as visibility at Oxford Pride or in international disabled week/Asian week.

We have access to gardens, museums and halls and are very willing to offer space access to help facilitate any of these or other steps that can help the Communities department or 3rd sector.

6.

Grant visibility, clarity, website, languages were all constraints to accessibility and needed improvements. Better use of social media and youth ambassadors, particularly disabled/BAME/other EDI groups would improve inclusion.

7.

Advance notice, opportunity to express interest, uncertainty about funds were needed to improve the current grant system. Ideally long term core funding would provide certainty at a difficult time.

The anti-racism manifesto appeared to be fine words from white, middle class people. There needed to be visible action with the poor, excluded minorities in the lead for this to be meaningful.

8.

Grant funds very helpful. It would be useful to discuss tapping in to the youth cohort in a more structured way rather than reacting to a grant call.

The Good Exchange can feel like and it is not yet clear what the benefit is.

9.

Difficult to demonstrate change with human beings particularly children on the basis of short term funding. Monitoring and reporting should recognise that this is a long-term process. Face to face learning forum would help to share lessons, ideas and successes. Ideally long term funding certainty based on a published annual calendar would make the community's grants more accessible.

There is a gap in provision for youth aged 11 to 18, and it is vital that a systematic approach is adopted to engaging this group. Could grants be opened up for emerging youth groups? The pandemic has left them lonely with mental health issues and there are family challenges. Our clients are 25% on benefits and 25% without English. We have linked disabled young people with garden centres in order to promote outdoor social interaction. Needs creativity to reach young people.

A Foundation we work with spends time in communities, talks directly to people. Council staff should do the same.

10.

Well done on changing the reporting format. Keep this in place. But all grant calls and schemes are different, different criteria, different applications, different monitoring and reporting requirements. Ideally you should change to the three questions model – three questions for applications, three for reporting etc. Consistency and certainty around an annual timetable for funds would have been very helpful. Please adopt.

Languages support and networking outreach are needed to reach in to specific EDI groups. For most excluded it would be helpful to build travel costs in to project funds. Please be flexible.

11.

Current system has simplified and better targeted need over the last five years, but has some way to go to be clear, simple and better targeted. Purpose often unclear – are the grants for deprivation and disadvantage or some other purpose? Ideally more visibility is needed in a wider set of groups, and more funds should go into the grant post so that a greater reach is responded to with funds. Process admin should be absolutely minimal, including on the Councillor funds so that cash gets out as fast as possible.

Many community self-help and emerging 3rd sector groups that have come along in response to Covid needs have no visibility over the grants – have to question if these are really ‘community’ grants or ‘Oxford’ grants – must reach everybody. Most people seem to be continually funded – should aim to fund for a period and then enable others to apply – limit funds to no more than 3 or 4 years in 6?

12.

WeAreOxford was a good idea but failed. Please keep the networking, EOI, Advanced Time to Plan, Partnership, Buddying model. But provide clarity and certainty around funds in advance. We did not find it value for money. It was too requirement-heavy.

For EDI groups, visibility and accessibility is low. Languages support, face to face, video, mobile phone based applications and outreach are needed.

13.

Support throughout the pandemic has enabled us to reach people who struggled for a host of reasons. We think Trust based working and one-to-one contacts with the council have been helpful. Looking forward we would like to see more opportunities to participate with you in decisions around what is needed and ways to work together.

Languages support are crucial to reach the worst off groups and individuals.

14.

The current grant model is competitive. We do not think asking local social partners to compete is a good way to operate. Do more to bring partners together, act as a broker for local social partners and partnerships. #WAO model was moving in the right direction on providing a networking / brokering approach. We do not plan on any moves. (NB are occupying public space but have no agreement in place.)

15.

The council can do more to help build networks which are crucial for self-help particularly for excluded groups. A big shift is needed to focus on new and smaller organisations and bring them in to a more participatory and partnership based decision making system. Promoting diversity with EDI groups should involve mentoring and coaching their leaders and helping establish buddying partnerships between more capable and newer social partners.

16.

The existing grant system is great. Could be more effective if it was based on more networking and connections being built at the same time between social partners. Competitive grant giving and complex processes for application monitoring and reporting do not work for volunteer based bodies, particularly from EDI backgrounds. Please look at the OCF clear simple and effective engagement model for smaller bodies.

Vital to have EDI ambassadors visible in promoting grants, other support, anti-racism and similar progressive ideas. 'WASP' people from outside these groups are too visible.

17.

Grants need to be set in context of greater networking opportunities for Oxford's diverse communities to come together. Where this has taken place it has been immensely valuable in helping marginalised groups. Asian minority groups, particularly elderly and women, can be very shy.

Oxford has many excluded groups of women from different countries often without English, or with restrictive social conventions. It is important to have a women's development worker dedicated to engaging with these groups one to one and enabling them to access social venues/events and wider networks. An activist outreach approach is needed to reach these groups. Can you open up places as social venues 'safe spaces' on an ongoing basis for networking?

18.

Would like to see an alternative approach with grant funding and resource focussed on what we are learning, what works, and social exchange. Consider stopping doing 'small stuff' and focus on longer term, flexible and bigger picture issues only. Can smaller grants be outsourced? Then you can focus on fewer, bigger, longer term issues in communities?

You should fund and make visible black, LGBTQIA+, and disabled youth champions and groups, to promote engagement. All aspects of council work, including the grants should have modern people pronouns attached. The Cultural Anti-Racism Alliance for example could be led by the Global Majority – or could it potentially risk being irrelevant?

19.

There seems to be constant pressure to report, to change, to demonstrate improved working practices as a quid pro quo for a grant. What would be best is a continuation of the assistance we get from the OCC lead contact, but without these administrative challenges that seem to appear month to month.

With partners, working on a plan to better manage the increasingly more complex caseloads. These processes have to take place alongside actual work and most of us are not well-paid or in many cases paid at all to focus on vision and strategy – time spent away from cases is premium.

Long term core costs essential and risk-free premises where face to face work can be undertaken with the most challenged clients continues to be essential.

In making communities grants we should note that half of their clients don't have access to the internet, and that digital illiteracy is the new exclusion.

In the sector 121 outreach is vital even as Covid has propelled work onto the web and computers. The future is digital but we will have to work at enabling those without resources to engage.

20.

The recent change to light touch reporting applauded. We could not operate without support so any ways to reduce admin helpful. Would propose a new approach aligned more with national funders.

Drop the competitive funding, KPI based model, with focus on process management. Reallocate energy to fostering vision, partnerships, trust based collaboration, addressing common constraints. This requires a culture shift from seeing the funds as 'ours' 'public funds' and partners as 'to be watched/audited' (grantor/grantee) to a trust based partnership with mutual buy-in to the things 'we' are doing.

On exclusion, this has one risk – elitist capture. This is already a risk – many smaller bodies feel they cannot compete. How do we address this?

21.

OCC grants are a great asset to the city and the sector. Current model feels a bit reactive and thinking can feel driven by power relationships – 'we have the funds' you are an applicant/ 'supplicant' (– not for us but rather for the 3rd sector as a whole). Preference to see long term funding certainty based on buy-in to a common vision/objectives and mutual respect. All of us work on bettering the community.

We want to step up providing the platform for 3rd sector – advocacy, support services and development, and so on. We'd like to have a discussion with OCC about how we collaborate. This isn't about funds, but about how we come out of Covid with a thriving sector. That would also look at ways to enhance EDI groups' visibility, presence and leadership.

22.

Would prefer to see multi-annual funding, and fitting with the remit, a learning process about how we can improve life in worst communities, built in.

One of the major challenges Oxford faces is the positive engagement of those impacted by inequality, living in poorer areas of the city, facing access challenges, and non-traditional-English ethnicity (particularly youth and recent immigrants). Participation is essential – voting in local elections is lowest in these groups – communications is vital – reach into these groups is very limited. Need to positively discriminate (action?) for a period.

23.

Please be transparent about how much is available – volunteers and people driven by purpose - low paid service delivery ‘agents of change’ bring passion, but often find they are asked to ‘help others achieve their work objectives’ rather than offered transparency about funds available to deliver essential services to the target group. This is vital at a time that 3rd sector is increasingly delivering Government responses to social issues, including on Covid. #WAO was a good idea, but where were the funds?

Often the ‘usual suspects’ end up capturing the bulk of funds and support, and being the most visible. Some local foundations are trying to make it easier for small, and EDI groups, to access support, and funds, please look at how they are working.

‘Positive action’ for minorities, disabled and others should be visible policy, transparently put in place for 5-10 years, and alongside that an effort to enhance visibility, communicate with and engage these groups specifically, including if necessary a ‘special fund’ ring-fenced. Use the Oxford Mail/City News/targeted social media for outreach.

Digital exclusion/access is increasingly important. The City should promote and fund workshops and training for excluded groups in this area.

24.

Funds and other support, including the contact at the council, very valuable. Longer term funding certainty with flexibility would be most helpful, and please maintain the reduced monitoring/reporting administration. Is it possible to use our annual report round to collect data?

The #WAO networking approach was valuable – critical to have ways to share, learn and mutually support cross the sector. Please promote shared learning.

Languages are probably the most critical issues for our clients and for Oxford EDI. Digital literacy important too.

25.

Long term core funding certainty is most important. Opportunity to improve use of targeted social media, and to improve inter agency coordination, collaboration and support for the most intractable cases.

Promote shared learning based around case studies and the lives and steps in the ‘journey’ that people are on – let’s get away from ‘monitoring’.

26.

An ‘incubation’ model is needed for smaller and newer sector bodies. Use the brokering power we have a council to promote partnerships, mentoring support. Adopt a lead contact model so that key partners have a named person to work with.

27.

Feel that the competitive calls and applications, and the other aspects of the system are quite time-consuming and that longer term funding certainty with lighter touch

process management would be beneficial to the council, to staff, and to the sector. It would enable a focus on outcomes rather than process.

There appears to be a lack of criteria and focus on 'East Oxford', deprivation (the south and the east). To address EDI the funds should be aligned with very specific *identified people in particular locations* and the mediation of sector partnerships linked to the grant.

27 / 28 (interviews from the same person representing two separate bodies).

Helpful if the grant system could be based around proactive networking. Expression of Interest meetings could be held to facilitate networks and joint applications – and encourage consortia to form. Ways to encourage joint working also help newer, smaller and less mainstream groups to build confidence. Regular meetings would also enable learning.

For specific groups it is important to have targeted social media raising the profile of available funds and other support. For LBTQIA+ it would be helpful to have the availability of grants more visible at targeted events and activities like Pride week.

Use of the web/IT – could OCC please set up the grant process via google forms?

Drop in centre. There used to be a drop-in centre. Could a place for one be found? With limited funds to refresh the space and a café it could be helpful for several EDI groups.

29.

Suggest criteria for funding should include partnership working and council could hold webinars or call for face to face pitching to bring people together.

Mentoring for new and emerging leaders in EDI groups should be linked to grants and communities' work.

30.

The current funding rounds could be improved if there was an annual year in advance plan laying out what is available and key milestones. Then longer term core funding would make planning easier. There is a perception of some elite capture.

Women in Poverty, children in poverty, race in poverty are key areas that community work and grants should focus on but do not. A common vision values based and trust based should be the starting point for both communities and grants.

31.

Grateful for grant support.

New and emerging sector partners need help. One way is to make more public property available - even for short term occupancy e.g. if development/ redevelopment is planned. For example we asked to use premises that lay empty for three years – and were turned down. Actively promoting property to EDI groups would alleviate perceptions of exclusion.

We are open to work with the council and willing to share our very detailed database of needs, and of available property - of course this changes week by week. We are expanding to outside Oxford (in the shire) but keen to know more about OCC plans.

Our 'for purpose' status and governance system with a board of 3rd sector leaders means we are fully integrated into the 3rd sector.

32.

Like the relationships and would like to see certainty about long term core funding for the social value sector. Web and computer-based working poses a risk to difficult cases in the sector. Face to face working will continue to be required.

33.

The support to date has been extremely helpful in enabling us to generate additional funds and we have invested £1M in capital expenditure. Recognise we have received favourable support in developing the brand.

Communications with partners could be much better at a corporate level. We often do not know what is going on in the Council. Would a named contact regularly meeting us be an option? Monitoring and Reporting – frequently changes – not helpful. Can we keep it simple?

We are continually adapting. We lost incomes this year to 18 months and have been able to make it up recently by redoubling efforts around rich-individual giving in particular but also grants applications.

We are continually asking what more we can do in local communities and with specific groups, e.g. for disabled looking at ways to bring our products to these groups.

It is likely that the grant system is systematically biased but unconsciously. Ways to tackle this would include different languages and effort at deliberate outreach.

34.

Grant important for us e.g. we took a group of children from a low income neighbourhood to play sport internationally a year or so ago.

The system could be improved with clear communications in advance about how the grants and specific grants work each year. Alternatively, a named contact could be regularly in touch. Well done in changing the monitoring to the bare essentials.

Thanks.

35.

The reality for the worst off is harsh. In our case violence against women and girls is present in one in three of our cases. Long term core funding would be particularly helpful and a longer-term relationship with the Council to be developed on the basis of our existing helpful contacts.

36.

Thanks for rolling over the grants and reducing the burden on monitoring. We should adopt some of the National Lottery model and focus on what we have learned and sharing that with others.

Voluntary bodies fulfilling statutory tasks with lots of complex social needs require longer term commitments and flexibility.

37.

We cater to people with very specific challenges and risks. VAWG in ethnic groups for example.

We always feel that we get less than we request which makes it difficult for us to plan and you do not have a decent online platform which needs to be addressed. There is confusion around the Good Exchange. Please be clear about what the offer is and what we should expect.

Use Google translate! – so that information reaches those that are most excluded by ethnicity.

38.

Thanks for focussing on the basics. Please keep that in place to minimise admin.

Please implement a CRM system that stores details so that you have a single database of information about our work reducing duplication. We would like to be a longer term partner but our size means this is difficult.

Can you publish an annual or multi annual plan so that we can think ahead how to address requirements and access additional support?

We are a public performance arts body and find that compared to other councils Oxford has onerous requirements for public performance and festivals, including costs, e.g. Banbury has a much smaller percentage of administration and cash costs. We would like to apply for councillor funds for some of our work but this is just too complex (there seem to be 12 steps which is too much for a councillor to be asked to help on for a small amount).

We focus on excluded groups and are finding that schools outreach gives us access to a wide range of minorities. You should try it. City council must use google translate/ESOL methods, braille and audio transcription if it wishes to reach wider audiences.

39.

Oxford Hub is keen to maintain the good relationship it has and develop a wider and deeper partnership based on mutual trust and respect. There is a gap in sector coordination and cohesion and OH is willing to help OCC fill this, to partner on specific issues and on general strategy for communities, the 3rd sector, and on funding.

There is a perception that OCC generally is quite remote, and that the Communities department is unable to reach out to grassroots and individuals. OH is a relatively

new player that has rapidly responded with others, including OCC, in the pandemic, reaching out to individuals, small groups, locales, and grassroots in a way that OCC cannot. We work with a volunteering model to do that.

We are often dealing with support on basic necessities for families in crisis. OH is also developing a wider funding base and partnerships and has some degree of sustainability. The funding stream has enabled community grants and advisory and capacity support to be offered and this offer will continue to develop.

OH seeks to join a shared/joint working approach across the key overarching partners, looking more closely together at gaps, communities, issues, funds.

40.

We work with the City and others in joint working on targeting VAWG and participates in a coordination and joint commissioning approach on health. It also has a grant scheme. (From this it currently part funds OCVA, who also have a grant scheme.)

Very happy to continue to explore ways to partner on issues like health, but there is also a need for engagement at senior and political level to provide to more proactively collaborate.

41.

Very helpful to have the grant to enable work in some of the least accessible parts of the community – typically inward looking ethnic groups with strong cultural connections elsewhere. We work in and with schools, community groups and individuals and authorities. Support is individually tailored to the need.

Awareness of this issue has started to rise as has prevalence as the size/diversity of the community has grown. Ideally we would want (small but) long term support. We reach into schools and ethnic groups but our model has changed from just crisis interventions to provide education and learning as well. Often it helps.

Help from the council has been great. Please keep the process as simple as possible so that we can focus on case work.

42.

Support has been helpful – not just the funds but the good contacts and support from Councillors and staff. Looking forward we're working a lot with young people so funding that links to younger people and enables us to support them useful.

The grant process could be easier if online.

Particularly in this crisis lots of young people have been excluded and unable to progress. Keep support, advice and grants available for those that support the young and recognise there are a lot! Looking ahead covid impacts are going to be here for some time. Please keep support in place.

Youth, and intersectionality around youth and disabled and ethnicity for example are critical issues – schools links are one way to get outreach.

43.

Our housing association foundation funds community schemes in the areas we provide housing. This includes Oxford and they have received grants. It is policy to seek to work with others, and to apply for other available funds to support communities.

We established a community helpline managed full-time by staff, and then went beyond this to second staff into teams to individually call every 'customer' to understand how they were affected by the pandemic and what they could do. Families in distress and in debt spiked in the last 18 months.

We plan a network of community hubs where advice, information, support and a 'helping hand' is available in each area they work in. Currently these are in London but will be coming to Oxford.

Loneliness and digital exclusion have been other common factor. We want to build a network of digital champions in each community to help people get online and navigate the complexities of digital.

Happy to share more/have a dialogue about any of these areas.

44.

Have had community grant but also business grants.

Visibility, communications and outreach not as well organised as could be.

- visibility through wider social and local media (Oxford Mail, JackFM, etc) needed (get beyond the website). Often just a matter of a press release about future opportunities with someone to talk to the release on the phone
- utter clarity about conditions/who can apply needed
- more systematic approach to forward planning, advance notice of opportunities needed; takes planning to assemble a decent project and the more credible project proposals OCC gets the better the outcomes from funds will be
- CRM is a must have. We use MS 365 dynamic, enables us to retain info, use it for really targeted outreach and marketing, plus bring together other MS product info. Can now personalise, select audience, target, reach further and get better responses
- Two years ago, just did not know how to reach the right people; now have a better picture of the wider landscape., through the CRM
- Business model changing really quickly - digital marketing, social media campaigns, & remarketing using CRM data
- Where there is a fund/grant opportunity we should be asking: who is the (specific) audience for this, where are they and how can I reach them, what language should I use.
- Oxford labour market changing rapidly. 23000 on furlough now, and 14000 unemployed.
- Massive shifts taking place toward transferable and/or digital skills, market unstable, workers also discouraged. Messages unclear
- most businesses they deal with have desperate need for staff; 'Kickstart' really helpful over the next few months, but once furlough ends there will be

huge shifts; across local economy and in hospitality, retail, and other low income, high labour demand sectors

- Third sector bodies and communities will be overwhelmed with need for advice and support to those coming off furlough, and those needing to shift sectors of work, skills sets, and those needing re-motivation
- doesn't feel that local governments have a plan for this yet; forward planning/opening dialogue with the 3rd sector on how to handle and facilitate these big changes needed right now
- impacts will be most felt on people in low-income communities, again; communities service, wider council should be aware and thinking ahead, and communicating about it
- grants could have a role in helping transition
- Relationship with OCC improved over Covid period, now know who is who, can lift the phone to people; 'we are all on the same side'. Want to retain this sense of accessibility, and the closer working relationship with the Council just now.

45.

Based on a philanthropic model, members among the leading community sector bodies, and has mapped out a number of the 3rd sector bodies. Has own grant scheme and seeks to make that as accessible to grassroots bodies as possible. Sees homelessness, digital, age among key issues to manage. Covid an extraordinary period, with over £1m in Covid linked grants going out (normal year grants were c£1.25m total in 19/20).

Think OCC communities' grants an asset to Oxford. Helpful to be more closely coordinated on giving into the communities – some other grant makers and community focused bodies could be linked up with the OCC communities team, for communities but also to help third sector do more and better. Covid may have constrained some of this but has helped us all to see that we are doing the same things. OCVA or another body should be encouraged to offer to coordinate.

Covid has highlighted the basic needs agenda for children and low income households, which we must find ways to tackle more effectively.

50.

Declined to be interviewed – indicated they were far too busy. Made a commitment to respond to the public survey but were unable to do that before it closed.

51.

Willing to participate in coordinated approaches where it helps us to deliver benefits to our communities and look at shared funding on a project by project basis.

52.

Have an investment and giving strategy (gave c£20k to Blackbird Leys based bodies last year) and invest in the communities their housing is located in. Interested in the communities grants and in engaging further to see how best to work together.

53.

Already partner some bodies in Oxford including OCC communities grant team. Offer a way to join in crowdsource and crowdfund approaches for projects where the core tool is to register with them. Underpinned/backed as guarantor by a large Trust. They aim/suggest it should be possible to double available funds, through the links they have established with larger funders. Keen to explore ways to further collaborate.

54.

Focused on partnership model for prevention of and community treatment of and mitigation of health issues. Participate in a joint public health approach with other partners (Oxfordshire/OCC and others) to agree actions, projects and approaches, coordinate and maintain information flows. Keen to promote joint action on for example exercise, play, open spaces, and similar initiatives that are outside NHS powers, but can impact mental and physical wellbeing.

55.

Provide 'good causes' lottery services to over 80 local authorities, often aimed at specific themes like health. Work with Oxford City since 2018 but the performance of OCC 'good causes' has been less than expected. Comparative review of other similar local authorities suggests well over £100k would be achievable.

56.

Have removed administration to enable grassroots groups to work more easily with us, and used more web based online system with simplified process. Are looking at every possible way to reduce or eliminate unnecessary administrative requirements to enable the full range of possible partnerships from very local grassroots groups that may not have a formal structure to the larger bodies in the community - 'we are undergoing lots of changes looking at organisational structures including banking controls at the moment'. They do most work via web/online portal.

Have been asked to change model and engage stakeholders directly including coaching and helping individuals with applications by phone or web where merited and calling up applicants in PC categories where they are unsuccessful to offer advice. Very willing to continue discussions with us on our communities grants.

Sensitive Issues Raised

Some respondents noted

- a specific minority group spending appeared to be for individuals' rather than community benefit. Periodic sample 'for-purpose' audits were suggested.
- 'Elite capture' of funds was commented on by a small number of respondents. Publication of awards, purpose and progress stories/cases, and/or shared learning forums would mitigate this perception
- Cultural Partners can come across as an exclusive and daunting group 'in the know'. Informal channels and informal networking intended to bring in smaller or less confident partners may work if handled transparently.

- Councillor - Frustration at apparent lack of ability to access these funds.
- Council seen as remote. 'I didn't realise there were any normal people working at the council' 'we don't see much of them'.

Equalities Group Discussion Summaries

Equalities Group Meetings

Group meetings were structured around three key questions – experience of working with us, what we could do to improve engagement with the group or sector represented, and more broadly if beyond the grants and communities there were other partnership actions that would improve inclusion in Oxford. In most meetings this structure was not followed since partners had clear views.

Faith and Beliefs

Felt more effort to reach grassroots bodies and build engagement would fill a gap. Equally, minimal bureaucracy and maximised outreach would achieve more. Can the council build on what it's done in the last year – less papers and more local contact?

Young people - and different faith groups - deserve more focus. Faith groups reach in to all communities and tend to know who are most excluded. A good example of a mosque was provided showing how they reach into all sectors of the community, and offered door to door and in all sectors in the community in Covid response (irrespective of faith). Strongly feel Younger people have been challenged during Covid and a strong engagement is now needed – it has been 'worse than the war' - even then we could get out and be with each other.

Differently Aged

Core funding is extremely important particularly at this time when the impact of Covid has reduced alternative income sources.

Particularly for old people face to face contact is essential at a time of loneliness and isolation. Supporting activities that help people to meet on a regular basis in community settings is vital – anything that can encourage engagement.

In our view learning forums would be much more sensible - 'sincere' - than using a traditional monitoring and reporting model. The one casts an extra burden while the other provides a way to get people constructively engaged with each other.

A better online platform could minimise administrative costs for our largely volunteer led support.

There are a number of small foreign language only groups particularly in the older age group, promoting foreign language would be helpful. Please consider if the council can translate or at least signpost for support into the major languages groups. Example cited was older female Bangladeshis.

Health

Covid has seen an increase in the number of support groups and bodies. These newcomers need coaching and often languages support to enable them to access funds and networks.

Holding workshops in communities would be one way to get the interactions started between different groups and get mentoring started. Another way would be to commission council officers in their performance objectives, or council or grant partners to proactively network into different groups.

At a broader level, across the city as a whole, would the council consider getting a partner like 'Oxford Hub', for example, or OCVA, to facilitate this kind of networking based mentoring and / or languages support?

There are widespread health disparities between rich and poor in Oxford. Supporting activities that bring well-coordinated health interventions in to the worst off communities is essential.

Disabled

Rolling over funding has been really successful. Thanks.

Longer term funding and an improved IT platform would be very helpful for future funding rounds. But there is a digital divide and face to face or paper applications should be maintained.

Particularly for the disabled, both mentally and physically, the digital divide is already here. Disabled access is the single biggest constraint and unacceptable in Oxford. Finding resources and ways to tackle that is probably one of the single most important things the council can do to enable the disabled.

If the costs of physical access can only be found in the long term, at least champion digital access for the disabled.

Maternity/Pregnancy

The challenges in this group mainly affect women and can often be overlooked in the provision of support.

These challenges are particularly acute in the case of poorer women and women in poor neighbourhoods, and women in some excluded groups but these do not receive attention.

Ensuring support is available for a diverse third sector particularly for new, small groups that support women is critical. One way to do this is to help create partnerships in which stronger established agencies can be asked to help newer or smaller partners.

LGBTQI+

To make grants more visible and to engage more sector partners the grants team must do more to reach in to vulnerable groups and increase the visibility of and access to grants.

For this to work we should identify specific individuals in each community to reach out to, invite specific individuals by name and individual groups to attend meetings, events or apply for funds.

Use specific events to reach excluded groups e.g. Pride, Asian Week, Disabled Week, etc. Be visible as a grant fund, at these events. Bring together groups from different EDI communities, e.g. LGBTQI+ and Youth.

Finally there used to be a city centre open space with a café for the LGBTQI+ community. Can we identify a public space which can be accessible and promoted to all minority groups as a drop in centre/café/advice point?

The previous centre – a success - was closed for years. Surely we can be more creative?

Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic Communities

Groups in our sector are usually small, emerging and lack resources. Long term flexible funding would help. Languages are also important. Each group prefers not to be lumped into one mass.

We recommend outreach into schools for all minority groups and ethnicities and targeted social media to reach particularly young people in these groups.

Homeless

The client group can be the worst off in society. The simplest clearest and most accessible systems are difficult for them to access. Homelessness in its characteristic is a journey from street to shelter, shelter to assisted living, assisted living to temporary accommodation, and temporary accommodation to long term accommodation. Each step requires lots of resources brought in.

For us to do our job we need funding based on trust and flexibility so that no matter what stage people are at including the multiple other problems they have, we can support them. Most homeless people or groups cannot access grants. They do not have functioning bank accounts or places to do business.

Linked to the grants please promote 3rd sector and other organisational 'twinning' or partnering and please put some effort in to making the website slick.

Families

Thanks for the changes already made in reducing paperwork and rolling over funds. In the future please consider payment up front, face to face pitching for applicants, languages support, as these three things often constrain particularly families from minority communities and groups.

Take a look at the way *the funding network* 'operates'³ and see if the Council can work with them; in Oxford it's raised c£300k through giving appeals, with OCF. It has minimal paperwork, a focus on social change, and considers how it can enable the partner to deliver its priorities best rather than requiring evidence on conditions set outside the community.

³ <https://www.thefundingnetwork.org.uk/about-us>