

Lasting Difference - notes from VAF workshops January-March 2018

The practices sustainable organisations might use to address the paradoxes and principles of sustainability

Sustain *elements* of your work

- Take different exit strategies for different parts e.g. resources, community groups, partnerships
- Pilot, do small tests of change, take risks, tolerate 'failure' as long as it helps you learn and be prepared to let go of things that don't work.

Review your systems and ways of working

- Are you doing the right things in the right ways? Are you the best people to be doing this?
- Review approaches to membership; charging policy; income generation strategy; staffing (hours, contracts, roles)
- Evaluate and evidence what you are doing – remember to analyse and interpret data before presenting it in reports - what does it *mean*? What can be *learned* from it?
- Take time to reflect and learn about what worked, what didn't, and why. Then share that learning.

Know *what to say no to* – where to draw the line

- Stay true to yourself individually and organisationally
- Respond to forced change from policy and commissioning
- Anticipate and 'own' change
- Campaign, influence, advocate, educate.

Consolidate

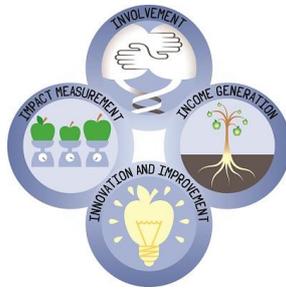
- Identity – who we are, who other people think we are
- Funding
- Focus
- Mission, aims and values. Make sure staff and board perceptions of these are aligned (do they mean the same things to people?). Embed them and bring them to life in your work.

Learn about different sources of income

- How to tender, trade, partner with businesses etc.
- Be clear on why you are applying for any new money – not for its own sake.

Support internal expertise and skills

- Work out if your teams have the skills they need. If you are diversifying, give people opportunities to develop their skills.
- Don't dilute your work or lose your specialisms
- Your work relies on the goodwill of colleagues and teams - look after them and their wellbeing.



Bring in external expertise

- Pro bono consultancy in IT, finance, marketing
- Volunteers
- Students
- Corporate partnerships
- Train staff, volunteers, trustees

Networking

- Joint promotion with likeminded organisations
- Consortia/joint funding bids
- Influence policy and commissioning via membership bodies

Reporting

- Be honest with funders, including challenges, learning and unanticipated outcomes.
- Help stakeholders to connect with your work by arranging visits and events.
- Know your audience – how do they like their evidence?

Plan

- Weigh up the value of projects, events and tasks before doing them (for examples of how other organisations do this follow, visit: <http://www.thelastingdifference.com/resources/innovation-improvement/>)
- Hold meetings to explore new ideas, informally, with staff, users and trustees. These can build ownership, test ideas and assess risks. This can help managers to 'let go' of control and share the load. It is also useful for report planning.
- When involving staff in thinking about sustainability, be careful to anticipate any anxieties they might have.

Graeme's note – this is just a short write-up of the notes from our three workshops in January to March 2018. For more ideas about practices that support sustainability, download our Lasting Difference 'Implementation Guide' from www.TheLastingDifference.com.