



Leading for a Lasting Difference

CYPEIF & ALEC funds

Workshop notes August 2018

We began by asking what the illustration above (see p5 of [the Lasting Difference®](#) toolkit) tells us about our sustainability challenges. Points included: the lack of coordination; capacity (the cart is full); the continual process of change and renewal; risk and where it is noticed.

The main challenges for sustainability were presented as a set of paradoxes (see pages 7-10 of the toolkit). We explored these in small groups, asking what organisational and leadership practices would follow if the paradoxes and principles are true. Here's what we came up with. As one group noted, there's a lot of crossover because organisational and leadership perspectives are closely linked.

The Change Paradox - Only by changing can we stay the same.

Organisational practices

- Drivers of change can be from the group up or from external environments and systems.
- Change how projects are managed to succeed in changing environment
- Involve and listen to clients.
- Use strong evidence of need, either to change or stay the same.
- Core values don't change – all staff should be inspired and motivated by them.
- Come up for air – take the opportunity to make good decisions.
- New knowledge can influence practice – remain open to change.
- Involve staff in the process for change – trust is important, communication is key.
- Organisational change is about system change.

Leadership practices

- Get 'buy in' from staff affected.
- Generate clarity about what the change looks like and why it's necessary.
- Be comfortable with the emotions staff have invested in their roles, strong feelings are good.
- Find the right balance of what ideas and information to share with staff when speaking about change.
- Importance of emotional intelligence, understanding yourself, self-care, e.g. what support do leaders need?

[Note: See 'Personal power' on p43 for more ideas]

The Yes/No Paradox - The things that an organisation needs to survive can also kill it. Saying 'yes' to everything is fatal.

Organisational practices

Being asked to take opportunities that fit with core work at short notice, without ready capacity.

- Find ways to have impact without being there – liaising with partners, creativity, trust.

Potentially wide remits and local priorities – has the potential of diluting but can also generate responsiveness, opportunities and creativity through people-led local leadership.

- Responsiveness helps sustainability.
- Clarity of process for reflection and moving forward – dynamic, not rigid
- What are you losing by taking something else on?
- Managing and communicating with people involved about how (far) you can consult and engage

Needing to say 'no'

- No doesn't mean it can't happen, but the limits of what you can do to be involved or support. [W&G note: or when. 'I'm not saying no, but I'm not saying now']

Fear that if you say no, someone else may step in (might it seem you weren't needed?)

- Recognise that your organisation's contributions feed in in other ways e.g. previous work, liaison with partners.

Easier to get funding for frontline services, but core gets overstretched – doesn't promote good organisational functioning.

- Change narrative to fit funders' objectives? Strategic work with funders? Collective voice? Finding a path between vision and practicalities.

Leadership practices

Throwing money at an issue doesn't grow capacity to make it work.

- Need to understand your own core delivery mechanism and the cost to your organisation of developing your capacity.
- Takes time and energy that can detract from service delivery/quality
- Good practice to involve wider groups in fundraising/developing proposals/understanding/communication?

Challenge funders when they offer 'one-off' opportunities that fall outside organisational strategic plan – providing opportunities but introducing risk of mission drift. Opportunities may meet your vision but not your current strategy.

Be lean but flexible, recognising and using the strengths and qualities of your team.

It's easier to say no when capacity is clearly defined (e.g. no. of beds).

Recognise where the expertise lies – likely to be within you not the funder, so you both need to be informed and realistic about what can be achieved.

Systematic approach to risk assessment.

- Recognise the personalities you are working with – risk takers v risk averse?

Staying still is not healthy – we need to stretch. But what is a reasonable degree of stretch? Evidence based, continual learning

Maintain your standards and recognise when you are putting these at risk.

It's all underpinned by relationships – within your organisation and funders.

The Octopus Paradox - We need to reach out in new directions to grow. But growing in too many directions pulls us out of shape.

Organisational practices

Have a clear framework for decision-making.

Have clear principles and parameters.

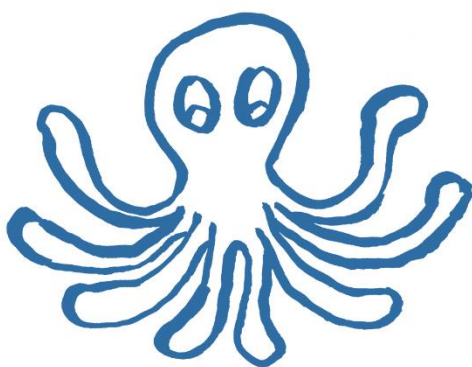
Considerations when no-one else can provide a service you could: do we need to grow? Evolve? Being sure you are able to fulfil objectives.

Diversified income does reduce risk in comparison to having just one or two streams of funding.

Good communication and information sharing so that staff know the organisation's position.

Being honest and transparent, showing your workings.

Invest in the organisational 'centre' and its support structures, including fundraising



There's nothing wrong with being an octopus if that's what you choose to be!

Leadership practices

Need clearly defined core purpose and integrity and commitment to this.

Develop fully integrated strategy which: allows space for innovation and change; acknowledges funding needs and seeks sustainability; values people and operational delivery; is viewed as a live document, a 'guide'*

Have a clear theory of change* so you know if you actually do need to reach out to grow.

Strive not to respond to the whims of donors.

Being empowered and informed – both by the organisation and by your own confidence to say 'no'.

Consult with staff: collective decision-making and consensus building, 'vision, values, mission'.

Everyone being accountable, not just leaders: breakdown 'parent/child' culture; nurture an environment that encourages this.

Q. does the infrastructure support good leadership?

What duty of care to end-users can leaders influence donors to adopt?

How can we make it a level playing field for small and large organisations?

Diversify income – might be what is funded or who the funder is.

Handle any disagreement about what the core purpose actually is.

[W&G note: 'Theory of change' approaches see strategy as a theory to be set out (usually in a logic model) and tested (in evaluation). Complexity theory encourages strategic plans to be understood as 'provisional'.]

The Efficiency Paradox: Efficiency preserves resources but can impair development.

Organisational practices

Become more business-minded.
Develop and manage reserves (and people!)
Develop skills with succession planning and business continuity in mind.
Recognise the true costs of service delivery – strive for full-cost recovery.
Develop open and honest relationships with funders.
Develop innovative practices to utilise existing resources differently. Learn to say no.
Consider income generation from selling services.
Discipline – refocus on priorities.
Be open to new and more efficient processes and systems.

Leadership practices

Build in time and space for thinking.
Give permission to others to do 'nothing' – read papers, reflection.
Sharing ideas in team meetings, chat.
What's the new equivalent of the 'smoking room'?
Encourage simple solutions.
Trust:

- Flexible working.
- Using What's App as a conversation catch-up tool.

Model behaviours:

- Manage by walking about.
- Be visible in whatever communication style / format is needed.

Take informed risks.
Know your territory.

The myth of perpetual motion - Work can continue when funding stops.

Organisational practices

High turnover of senior staff would be devastating. Nurture less experienced staff with training so they are prepared to move up and fill gaps.
Deploy staff in other areas (e.g. if their project ends).
Don't put off difficult decisions.
Weigh up risks.
Plan for shifting resources.
Protect yourself from the ebb and flow.
Identify unique selling points, e.g. as a unique source of knowledge and expertise.
Explore other ways of sustaining knowledge and skills? Technology?
Plan diverse funding.
Develop strong funding relationships.

Leadership practices

Diversify funding/seeking new funding long before the funding stops.
Using learning to develop the service sustainably.
Evaluation and proving the benefits of the service to raise profile before the funding ends.
Tweak services based on evaluation and need – innovate but keep the core.
Long term planning and understanding the landscape.
Investment in marketing and profile raising to put spotlight on our success/evaluations.
Using learning and sector knowledge to campaign for change.
Honesty when time are tough and reacting quickly to those.