

Wellington Regional Funders' Forum 30 October 2006

This is a summary of what happened at the forum including ideas about collaboration raised in group discussions, Out of an estimated 38 participants throughout the afternoon, 25 people completed the confidential evaluation form. Ten of these represented government funders; 14 represented private or community trusts; one did not self-identify.

- 80% rated the forum somewhat or very useful overall
- 96% rated the forum somewhat or very useful in strengthening or making new connections with other funders
- 52% rated the forum somewhat or very useful in sharing information about grant-making in the region
- 44% rated the forum somewhat or very useful in learning new or interesting ideas on collaboration.
- 68% were somewhat or very interested in coming to future similar events. The topics and formats of most interest for future forums were around learning about other funders, with reference to case studies, separate forums for government and private funders, workshops etc.

Attendees valued most highly the networking opportunities provided over lunch, drinks and the table discussions, and commented on the benefits of having opportunities for information sharing and learning about other funders.

A copy of the full evaluation results and presentations is available from info@philanthropy.org.nz

Note of proceedings

Opening

Robyn Scott, Executive Director of Philanthropy New Zealand welcomed everyone to the forum and introduced Luamanuvao Winnie Laban, Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector. The Minister talked about the important role that grantmaking plays in supporting communities and the value of collaboration. It was noted that this was the pilot for, and first of a number of potential regional funders' forums across the country, sponsored by Philanthropy NZ, the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector, and the Department of Internal Affairs.

The facilitator, Garth Nowland-Foreman, outlined the objectives and programme for the afternoon, and the resource material available in the participant information packs and on the resource tables.

Introductions & Funders Information Exchange

Participants introduced each other in table groups, briefly described funding provided by their organisation and any new or interesting issues they were facing as funders.

An alphabetical 'roll call' identified the organisations and funds represented at the meeting, around half being private and statutory trusts, gaming societies and other philanthropic organisations and the rest from central and local government.

What do we know about the Wellington communities?

Short presentations were made by a panel:

- Tammy Estabrooks on Statistics NZ local area information
- Paula Strickson on Family & Community Services Local Services Mapping
- James Stratford on Department of Internal Affairs Regional Profiles

Handouts were provided by each of the presenters. The facilitator also referred to information available in Long Term Council Community Plans, and especially the useful collation in participants' information packs by Grant Aldridge: *a Wellington Regional Snapshot*. Participants also referred to useful information in the Ministry of Social Development's *Social Report* and surveys by the Ministry of Culture and Heritage.

Getting Real about Collaboration among Funders

Garth introduced some key ideas on collaboration from a review of different funder's experience. He especially highlighted that collaboration was more of a continuum of working with others (not an either/or state), and the importance of thinking about collaboration outside the "joint funding" box. A handout, *It Takes Two: The Tango of Collaboration and Grantmaking* was provided to participants in their information packs.

Sonya Cameron from Child Youth and Family and Tui Tararo from Housing New Zealand Corporation and JR McKenzie Trust, outlined a mini-case study in collaboration among funders working to strengthen Pacific community organisations and service providers. They offered their (warts and all) lessons on what helped, what didn't and whether the impact of working together made the effort worthwhile, including the important role that a philanthropic trust (JR McKenzie Trust) can provide as catalyst and facilitator. A handout was provided.

In small groups the participants considered the realities of collaboration from their experience:

- What helps collaboration among funders
- What gets in the way or hinders collaboration

Their ideas are summarised below.

What helps collaboration among funders

- Relationships
- Communication
- Researching and understanding needs
- Common goals, objectives and vision
- Flexibility
- Realising its not a competition between funders
- Sharing resources and knowledge
- Wanting to achieve the same results
- Knowing what you can actually do
- Flexibility
- The right people – get them involved early on
- Recognising it doesn't have to be equal – can contribute resources as you are able
- A catalyst or facilitator for seed funding
- Being clear at the outset on agreed outcomes (but can adapt as proceed)
- Transparency of present and future partners
- Importance of ownership of applicant
- Clarity of goals of funders and applicant
- Funders' clarity
- Applicant's clarity
- Common or complimentary goals
- Personal relationships
- Existing skills and capability
- Decision-making authority
- Understanding processes
- Trust
- Having projects to focus on
- Recognising that organisations can offer different things that are useful, not just dollars
- Socialising and networking in short regular chunks (rather than big lumps)
- High energy levels and a desire to commit
- Knowing providers, people, and communities
- Know what others fund and closing dates, etc
- Meeting with other funders
- Sharing information, eg research
- Piloting collaboration – starting small
- Sharing similar outcomes, and community needs
- Information, information, information



What gets in the way of or hinders collaboration

- Time
- Money
- Organisations and people changing
- The wrong people – not willing to collaborate or be flexible
- Not being clear on outcomes
- Competing organisational priorities and principles
- Lack of commitment to see it through, seize opportunities, etc
- Time constraints
- Personnel and financial constraints
- Rules and regulations
- Lack of focus
- No network
- Changing personnel
- Lack of courage/ capacity to risk
- No confidence
- Too much focus on the dollars
- Time constraints
- Politics
- What's trendy doesn't necessarily reflect community needs
- Lack of time
- Lack of resources
- Lack of funding
- Not knowing who else is out there
- Not wanting to share – lack of trust
- Bureaucracy
- Competing agendas & knowledge hoarding
- Privacy Act
- Being too busy in own organisation
- Different funding timeframes

Where to next?

Participants were asked to consider if they saw a need for an ongoing group like this in Wellington, and if so what topics and/or formats would be most useful.

Next steps to increase or strengthen collaboration with other funders

- More networking
- More sharing of information
- Email networks of funders and funding administrators
- Shared databases for administrators
- Funders providing more detailed information about their schemes to other funders
- Looking at ways to help group members facilitate joint projects (that each organisation might do individually)
- Get joint information and knowledge of who each group is funding
- Develop generic formats to cut application workloads, and make it easier to approach agencies
- Interactive website to facilitate and provide knowledge of the environment
- Regular meetings of sector funders
- Continue networking and identifying new relationships
- Develop opportunities for partnership
- Address perceived barriers pro-actively
- Distil key strengths on offer
- Regular *short* get-togethers of potential collaborators
 - could be around an area of interest
 - float an idea electronically, exploring an idea (eg wet shelter), asking if anyone interested
- Research other potential partners
- Identify similarities
- Coordinate plans
- Meetings, meetings, meetings

