

Learning visit report
Small Charities Coalition 14143

1.1 Date of visit: 05/02/20	1.2 CBT representatives: Jemma Grieve Combes William Hoyle	1.3 People met with: RC		
1.4 Programme Area & Outcomes: Strengthening London's Voluntary Sector <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More organisations with improved capabilities in monitoring, evaluation and impact reporting• More organisations with improved skills in financial management				
1.5 Purpose of the award: £100,000 over 2 years for the delivery of the Building Resilience programme in London.				
Grant start date: 01/10/2017	Grant end date: 01/10/2019			
Project progress and difference made				
2.1 Project Outcome 1: Charities in London will have increased skills, knowledge and confidence in different areas and will be more confident to apply their learning.				
2.2 Project Outcome 2: Charities in London will be better equipped, more informed and have gained more connections to support their charity.				
2.3 Project Outcome 3: Charities in London will be stronger, more resilient, have increased sustainability and be better governed.				
Progress made: Over the last 2 years SCC has: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Run 88 training sessions on a range of topics including fundraising, marketing and comms, GDPR and HR.• Made 95 mentoring matches, the most common requests for support were for fundraising, strategy and planning and bid writing skills.• Responded to 1144 email and telephone enquiries, the most common queries regarded setting up and registering a new charity, governance and finance.				
The charity has a range of feedback mechanisms in place to understand the difference it makes. For example, in year 1 80% of charities said they improved their understanding of the subject in a training session and 79% of charities reported enhanced skills and knowledge in the subject area following mentoring. It regularly surveys its members through longer surveys and vox pops to ensure it is meeting needs.				
Impact and learning: CBT comments				
We met with the CEO at the organisation's offices in Lambeth at the end of its 2-year grant.				
1. Impact: The Small Charities Coalition is a small organisation with a big reach. The work funded by CBT has been important in providing bespoke support and advice to small and emerging charities which may not have their needs met by more generic services.				
The organisation has seen a period of change during the duration of the grant				

with a change in CEO and staffing. At times this led to periods of slight under-delivery against original targets, but the organisation has been able to compensate for this, over-delivering at other points and reaching higher numbers through individual events.

The current CEO started in summer 2019 and has been leading the development of a new organisational strategy to be in place by April 2020. This includes redefining SCC's role to focus on very small charities with incomes up to £350k (currently it focuses on those up to £1m); expanding its reach outside of London; and increasing its voice for small charities.

One of the strengths of SCC has been in forging partnerships across sectors. For example, they worked with the NCC to run a cyber security session and made 553 referrals to other support providers through their helpdesk. The new strategy aims to further strengthen links with other providers, making it clear that SCS will provide foundation and basic support and signpost to providers like NCVO and FSI as charities grow.

2. **Learning:** At the meeting we reflected on how to measure whether training has made a difference in the longer term. SCS is trialling a postcard method where trainees write what they will change on a postcard and 6 months later SCS calls to check whether they have achieved it. They are also looking at improved feedback systems to capture demographic analytics and explore the possibility of sharing call line data with other bodies.

The organisation has made a number of adjustments during the grant in response to learning. It had originally intended to redevelop its website as a community portal but there were difficulties with the development and on reflection it was felt to be too complex for member's needs. Instead staff are holding more regional face-to-face meetings and have improved the effectiveness of their helpline service by putting in better boundaries with designated opening times and expanding the service to 6 days a week, recognising that many small charities are volunteer-led in people's spare time.

3. **Knowledge:** new trends in local giving and placemaking are not always understood by small local organisations and there is a risk they are left behind or encouraged towards new methods that may not be (example of Crowdfunding given). There is a need to better communicate this and SCS is thinking about how to do this.
4. **Total assets:** SCS and the organisations they support would value use of free premises and asked whether there are any guides to free spaces in London. They also suggested a scheme to support bulk buying and recycling.