

LEARNING VISIT REPORT
Hackney Council for Voluntary Service 12247

1.1 Date of visit: 22nd September 2016	1.2 Name of visiting Grants Officer: Tanzeem Ahmed	1.3 People met with: Kishore Kanani, Senior Organisational Development Manager
1.4 Programme Area & Outcomes: Strengthening London's Voluntary Sector.		
1.5 Purpose of the award: £157,000 over three years for a capacity building programme helping frontline organisations improve their monitoring, evaluation and impact reporting, and their financial management skills.		
MONITORING INFORMATION		
2.1 Project Outcome 1: 60 FLO's (Frontline organisations) increase their skills, knowledge and ability to design and implement monitoring and evaluation systems Progress made: Hackney CVS has run “ <i>delivering change</i> ” for 2 years. The project has recruited 44 organisations onto the programme against a target of 40. Groups are recruited through promotional material posted on the website and leaflets. They are required to complete an application and are interviewed for their suitability. As well as those applying directly to the programme, the Local Authority also nominated 5 groups. Work is delivered through a series of seminars and one to one support over a year. Feedback is collected at the end of each training session as well as through an external evaluation which found an increase in confidence in all 5 areas assessed. The greatest benefit was seen in the categories “ <i>ability to design and implement monitoring and evaluation systems</i> ” (91% increase) and “ <i>ability to manage finances effectively.</i> ” The external evaluator found an 82% increase in this area.		
2.2 Project Outcome 2: 60 FLO's Recognise the role of monitoring and evaluation in learning and improving performance Progress made: During the learning visit, I observed a session on how digital methods are used to demonstrate social impact. The observed session was really engaging and participants were very complementary of the trainer and content. I spoke with one of the participants who was very positive about the sessions noting that it “ <i>made me realise that there are tools that I did not know existed before this session</i> ”. Another participant said she wanted to use digital tools but needed a little guidance so this course was exactly what she was looking for.		
2.3 Project Outcome 3: 60 FLO's Implement an outcomes approach to better demonstrate their social impact Progress made: Whilst many FLOs come to the project wanting assistance with fundraising, the		

project enables the groups to realise that effective fundraising relies on the ability to report on performance and demonstrate impact. Groups felt that the training and one to one session assisted them to measure and showcase impact to internal and external stakeholders. During the visit, the Project Officer provided several case studies where groups who demonstrated enhanced skills in this area had improved their income through fundraising. The external evaluator reported an 82% increase in skills in this area in the participating groups.

2.4 Project Outcome 4: 60 FLO's have greater impact reporting ability

Progress made:

Through the programme, groups hear from external speakers who are expert in the field of data collection, databases and Excel. The Project Officer acknowledges that the participants learn in different ways and so all training sessions are complemented with one to one sessions with the Project Officer, who helps groups imbed learning and apply this to their everyday work. Peer to peer learning is also encouraged as groups benefit from hearing from peers who already have new systems. The Action Learning sets were very positively received. The external evaluators also found that 82% of groups reported an increase of skills in this area.

2.5 Project Outcome 5: Community Accountancy Project (CAP) will deliver training and support to help groups strengthen their financial management systems.

Progress made:

CAP sessions take place once a month and cover areas such as Financial Health Checks, Budgets and Cash-flows, Business Planning, Taxation, VAT, Pension and PAYE. There is a set programme which groups work through. The external evaluator found that this was the area in which participants reported the greatest increase in skills, with 91% demonstrated an increase in confidence in this area. Groups commented on specific areas where they have been supported such as opening a charity bank account to managing their book keeping. The partnership with the Community Accountancy Project is working well.

GRANT OFFICER COMMENTS

Speaking to the groups and being able to observe sessions taking place gave the impression of a well- received service, even if some prompting is needed to encourage organisations to attend regularly. Groups were very complimentary of the Project Officer and his dedication towards them. The Project officer brings several years of experience of capacity building and has developed networks and resources which he has brought to the project.

Hackney CVS wants to change the delivery methodology and trial a method called Appreciative Enquiry. This model starts with the strengths and skills which individuals and organisations have. These are then used to set goals and milestones for achievement. This method will be piloted for the final year of Trust funding and it will be interesting to see if organisations are more receptive to this.