



Interim Report



Big Lottery Fund: Community Assets Programme

Strand II Report

**Rocket Science UK Ltd
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Executive Summary

This report is the output of strand II of the evaluation of the Community Assets Programme, managed by the Big Lottery Fund on behalf of the Office of the Third Sector.

The programme has made £30 million available to refurbish local authority buildings and so to facilitate their transfer to ownership by third sector organisations. The overall aim of the programme is community empowerment, and this is supported by the following three outcomes:

- Local third sector organisations have greater security and independence, and are better able to meet the needs of the communities they serve.
- Communities have more access to better quality facilities that respond to their needs.
- There is more effective partnership working between local authorities and the third sector.

Strand I of the evaluation included a baseline survey, conducted with each of the projects in autumn 2008. The strand II survey uses the baseline analysis to pick up on key issues and themes identified in strand I and explores them further.

Headline Results:

- **57 individuals** were surveyed covering **32 projects out of 34** in total, very closely split between local authority representatives (28) and those from third sector organisations (29).
- The average score for **overall progress** was 3.6 out of 5¹.
- LAs and TSOs are both '**very confident**' about the future, with an average score of 4.6 out of 5.
- Nearly two thirds of LAs and TSOs reported that a key positive element of the project is the **partnership working well**.
- Unhappiness within the partnership was stronger amongst TSOs with **poor communication** the most frequently reported issue.
- **Length of partnership** was strongly correlated to satisfaction with the partnership.
- The **most frequently reported difficulty** overall was work running over schedule (22%) and two thirds of those who reported this were TSOs rather than LAs.

¹ Where a score of 1 is poor and 5 is excellent.

- **Business planning** was not seen as an issue for half the respondents. For those that sought assistance, the DTA was the most frequent source.
- Only one project reported it had accessed **non-grant funding** and there is deep-set resistance to loan finance.
- 45% of projects accessed **general support** (legal, HR etc) from Big Lottery Fund or DTA or both. **Satisfaction was very high**, with 69% of respondents gave the support the top score of 'very satisfied'.
- 63% of projects reported planning to expand services to '**widen appeal to the community**'.
- 65% of respondents reported **developing relationships** with other organisations and agencies through the Programme.

Conclusions:

Outcome 1

Local third sector organisations have greater security and independence, and are better able to meet the needs of the communities they serve.

- TSOs are very confident about the future. Having a new base for their activities makes them feel less vulnerable.
- Most are planning to expand their services and so to meet local needs more effectively. At the same time, the refurbishment process itself has often led to new relationships with local authority departments and other services. Many projects intend to become community hubs that can offer a range of third sector and statutory services under one roof. This approach should also assist referrals between services.
- But there has been limited evidence so far of increased financial security and independence. There is a continuing emphasis on grant funding and strong wariness about loan finance.

Outcome 2

Communities have more access to better quality facilities that respond to their needs.

- Projects are very positive about making better use of under-used buildings. The refurbishment process has also allowed them to improve standards and accessibility.



Outcome 3

There is more effective partnership working between local authorities and the third sector.

- The programme has generated new and deepened existing relationships. Both TSOs and LAs agree that supportive and engaged partnerships have been the key success factor to date. Longer partnerships have been particularly successful.
- Although the majority of partnerships were working well, TSOs were more likely than local authorities to report problems, with 17% of TSOs mentioning poor communication. TSOs also sometimes complained about the apparent lack of co-ordination across local authority departments.
- Workload and time pressures can inhibit even stronger partnership working.

Programme

In relation to the functioning of the programme:

- The economic recession was reported to have caused additional workload and delays but usually for positive reasons. For instance, construction costs came down, necessitating a reworking of budgets.
- Support provided by the Big Lottery Fund and DTA was regarded as very good by those who used it. The majority of those who did not seek help reported they did not need it or could call on assistance from their local authority partner. A smaller group wanted something more niche and specific that didn't seem to be available.
- A frequent comment was that as well as advice, projects would have liked extra staff to help deal with the extra work.



1. Introduction

This report is the output of strand II of the evaluation of the Community Assets Programme, managed by the Big Lottery Fund on behalf of the Office of the Third Sector.

The aim of Community Assets is community empowerment. The programme is working towards the following outcomes:

- Local third sector organisations have greater security and independence, and are better able to meet the needs of the communities they serve;
- Communities have more access to better quality facilities that respond to their needs;
- There is more effective partnership working between local authorities and the third sector.

The initial intention for strand II of the evaluation was to facilitate a workshop bringing together the projects that had successfully completed their capital delivery plans to share experiences and learn from colleagues' approaches to common issues. Gathering information about projects' experiences to date on the programme remained an important element of the evaluation, in order to inform both understanding of the programme and the support available as the projects enter the active construction stage of the redevelopments.

But after comparatively few projects registered to attend the workshop we replaced it with a telephone survey of both partners. It is likely that the very high participation rate allowed us to ensure that we received an even wider range of perspectives.

Strand I of the evaluation included a baseline survey, conducted with each of the projects in autumn 2008. Rather than repeat the full range of questions asked in strand I, this strand II survey uses the baseline analysis to pick up on key issues and themes identified in strand I and explore them further. These include:

- accessing non-grant finance,
- responding to an increasingly diverse community,
- working in partnership, and
- using assets to empower the wider community.

The survey also sought feedback on additional issues and opportunities that have arisen since the first round of reporting and since practical redevelopment work has begun. This report provides focussed commentary on these key issues rather than a comprehensive overview of progress against every element of the baseline. That will be the role of the final evaluation report.

A copy of the strand II survey is at appendix 1.

2. Survey Analysis

At the time of the survey, there were 38 projects in the Community Assets programme. However, we excluded four projects from the survey as they were still in negotiation with the Big Lottery Fund. Of the remaining 34 projects, we surveyed a total of 57 individuals covering 32 projects in total. The survey respondents were very closely split between local authority representatives (28) and those from third sector organisations (29).

Given that local authorities (LAs) and third sector organisations (TSOs) face very different challenges in undertaking asset transfer projects, and that an important objective of the Community Assets Programme is to encourage partnership between LAs and TSOs, the following analysis predominantly highlights similarities and differences in responses between these two groups in particular, but also examines other relationships where relevant.


2.1 Overall project progress

Asked how they felt about overall progress so far, respondents were largely positive, with an average score of 3.6². This was true of both local authorities and third sector organisations. The graph below shows the spread of responses:



Reflecting the positive responses, projects are very confident about the future, with the average score for both LAs and TSOs being 4.6. Importantly, more than two thirds (68.4%) of respondents gave the highest score of “very confident” about the future. Indeed, even where projects identified experiencing difficulties they were still extremely confident about the future; the hard work and commitment that many of them have put into the project was felt to position them well for the future:

² Score where 1 is poor and 5 great. This scale is used throughout the report.



Without a doubt I am sure it will continue, the commitment from the TSO will ensure it - they don't sit around at meetings, they just get things done and when it goes well everybody wants to be part of it (LA)

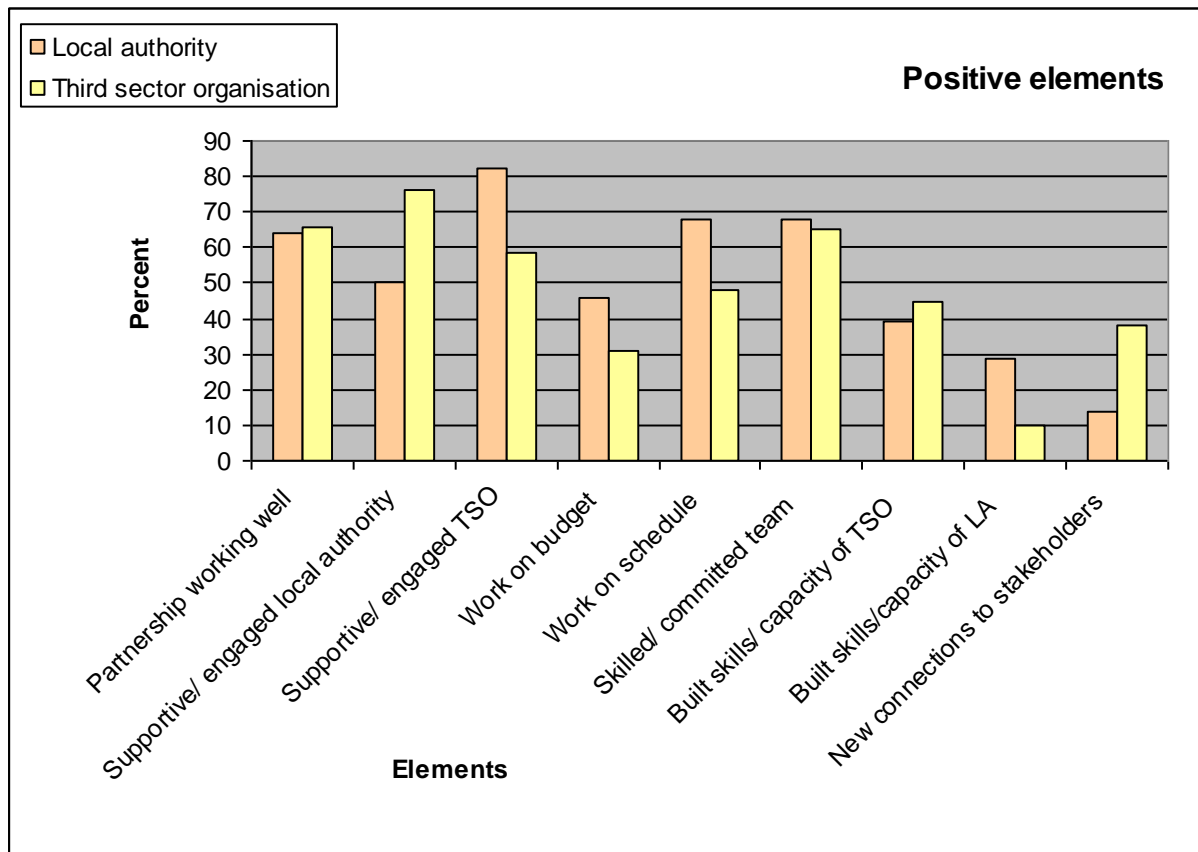
I'm fully confident that it will be delivered. It's been very well received locally and the practical side of it is going very smoothly. (LA)

We've factored the asset into other tenders and got an employability contract over the next three years. The asset is a key part of delivery; it gives extra dimension of benefits that we didn't envision in the beginning. (TSO)

What's going well?

In order to understand what has been working well, respondents were asked to identify the particular elements that underpinned their answer. One important finding is that there is close similarity between LAs and TSOs on the issue of the partnership: nearly two thirds of each reported that a key positive element is the partnership working well.

Building on that, for local authority representatives "a supportive/ engaged TSO" was the most frequent response (82%); for third sector representatives "a supportive/ engaged local authority" was the most frequent response (76%). Additionally, both sets of respondents identified a skilled and committed team as an important positive element. The graph overleaf shows the spread of responses.



Comments from respondents highlight some of these points:

There is good synergy between all the stakeholders. We are working towards the same goal – everyone has a stake in making it work. (LA)

We have nominated the local authority officer who put the bid together for a DTA award as somebody who has made an impact for community asset transfer (TSO)

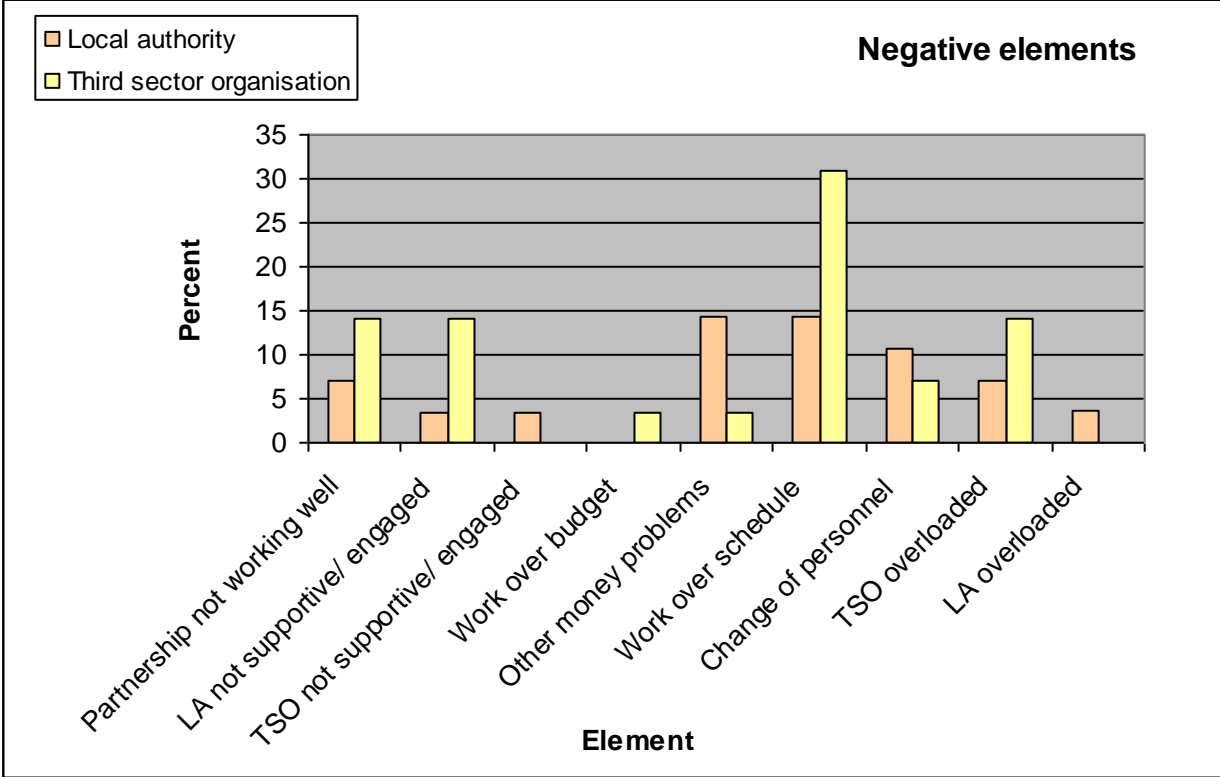
The engineer from the council gave us frequent reports and site photos. We've always been able to contact people within the council and had very good political support. (TSO)

What's not going well?

There was a much smaller number of responses when asked about what elements were not working as well as wished. However, there are some important differences between the local authorities and third sector organisations. The most frequently reported difficulty overall was work running over schedule (22%), but two thirds of those who reported this were TSOs rather than LAs. This may be because disruption and delay on the ground is experienced by the TSO rather than the local authority.



TSOs were also twice as likely (14%) as local authorities (7%) to report that partnerships were not working well. Further, TSO respondents were far more likely (14%) to cite lack of engagement by their local authority partner as an issue than were LAs likely to report lack of engagement by their TSO partner (3.6%). The graph below shows the spread of responses.



Comments from projects highlighting these points include:

Inevitably there were delays, but that's the nature of the beast. We're dealing with lots of different agencies all working to different deadlines. (TSO)

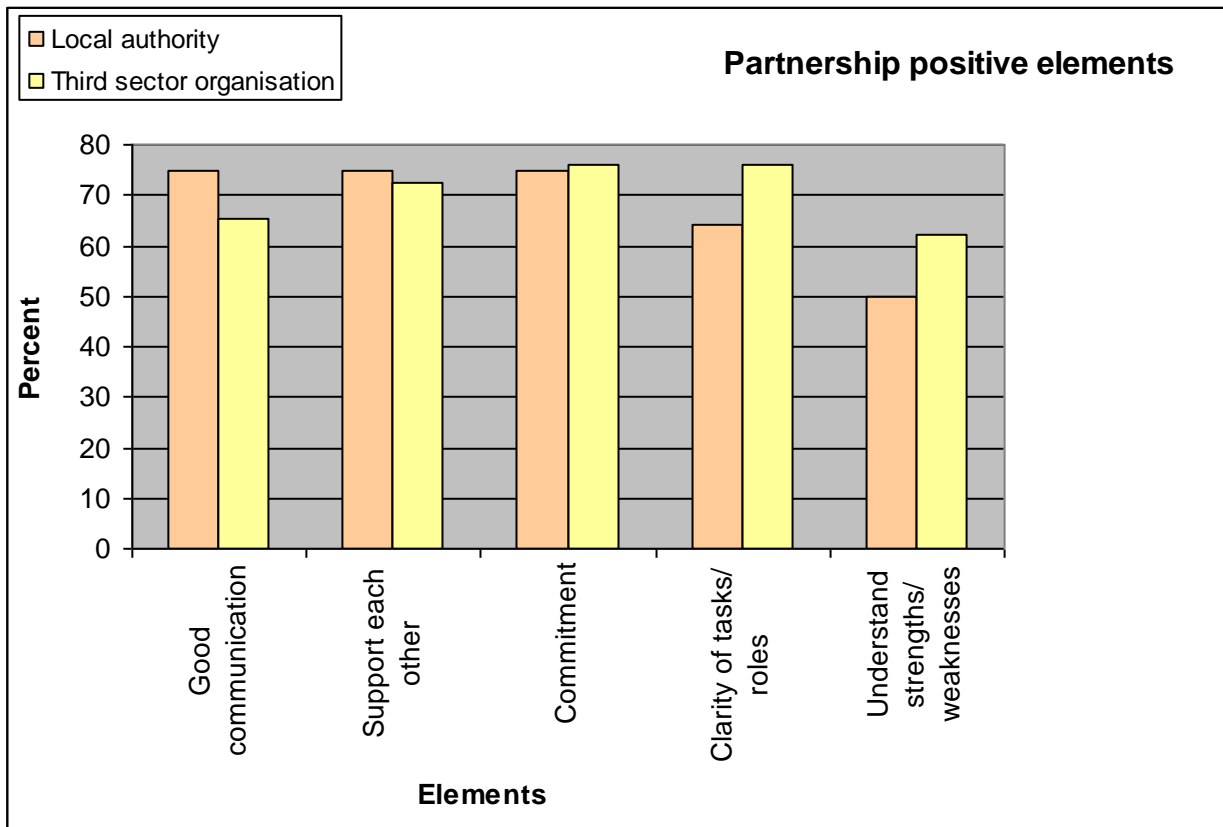
Practical work hasn't started. We had received tenders but there were technical deficiencies which has caused some delays. (LA)

A big headache was under-spending, largely due to construction being cheaper at moment, which meant we had to send an extra application to BIG to spend the extra money (LA)

Within the council there's been a change of personnel. We worked with our allocated worker in the community building team who was very keen, but then our contact was made redundant. (TSO)

2.2 Partnership

Given that partnership is a key objective of the Community Assets Programme, and an issue which was raised in the strand I baselining work, we were keen to explore the health of the partnerships in strand II. Both LA and TSO responses gave an average score of 3.7 out of 5 for how their partnership was faring overall. We also asked projects to describe the particular positive elements of their partnership. The spread of scores is shown in the graph below:



Some partnerships worked extremely well; both partners had great trust in each other, communicated well and achieved the tasks that each had set out to do. Understanding the different nature inherent within TSOs and LAs is also crucial to the partnership – understanding where each other’s strengths and limitations lie is very important. These strong positive responses are illustrated through commentary made by the projects, outlined below:

We have had our ups and downs, but there is good communication and commitment was maintained from day one. (LA)

The partnership has been great. Project management has been great. At first the division of tasks was quite difficult to get their heads round but with effective communication this has settled down. (LA)

Our partner has been 1000% awesome and brilliant. They have taken the lead in practice but worked in line with partnership team, consulted with

the appropriate person when they needed to and we've had every support we needed when we needed it. (TSO)

We know each other well and trust each other. (TSO)

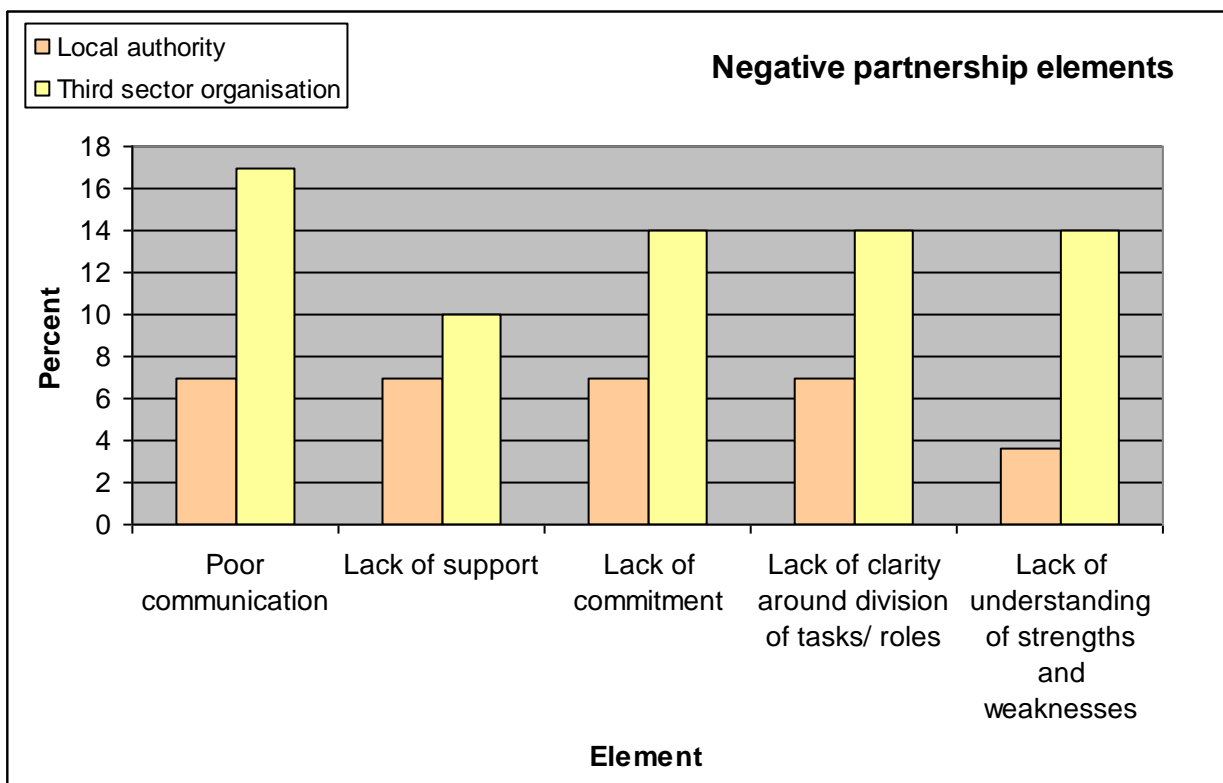
It's been a steep learning curve. We had close relationships beforehand but are closer now and the outcomes of the project will contribute to LAA outcomes. (TSO)

This is the best partnership of all of the partners we deal with - it can quite happily run itself no problems. (LA)

There has been give and take on each side. (LA)

We really are united in a common purpose with our partner. (LA)

Other projects, however, were experiencing real difficulties. Some reported they were overloaded and dissatisfied by the way they were being treated by the partnership organisation and others felt completely isolated from the decision making process. While the number of responses for negative partnership elements was far lower than for positive responses, it is important to note that unhappiness within the partnerships was stronger amongst TSOs, outlined in the graph below:





Comments made by the projects add further detail to the findings in the graph:

The partnership was going really well early on but as [activity got underway] it has been more strained. There's been a lack of partnership between other departments within the council and we get the backlash (e.g. between asset management and regeneration). (TSO)

It's been rocky and we've had some issues. We've used DTA to mediate differences of opinion. Change of personnel meant lack of TSO involvement for a time and lack of TSO management committee oversight. (LA)

We are on track now to achieve the outcomes, but it's been very difficult working with the council. (TSO)

The people in my committee have not been happy with the way council has worked with them, they want different things from the projects and it's difficult to manage these different views. (TSO)

A factor that seems to influence the nature of the responses is the length of the partnership. The average score for the overall health of the partnership for those projects whose relationship is two years old or less was 3.1; for those with a relationship of more than two years, the average score was 3.9. To illustrate further, only two respondents with a relationship of less than two years standing gave their partnership a top score of five compared to 15 respondents who gave that top score whose relationship was more than two years old.


As we conducted the survey, we observed that some TSOs found this question difficult to answer. For example, they may have a good partnership with certain individuals in the council but may face slight hostility or resistance from others elsewhere in the council. TSOs also commented on difficulties that they experienced getting departments within the same LA to work with on the same page as their colleagues:

We have a really good working partnership with sections of the council, but they are not always backed up by other departments in the council (TSO)

It would be good if other parts of the council would honour commitments made by those in the council with whom we have the partnership. The council has very siloed departments and we are suffering from this. (TSO)

Officer level is good, but Councillors have not been as positive and enthusiastic as we would want. (TSO)

Asked about what would have made the partnership more productive, the responses included both practical elements – such as additional external support – and relationship elements, such as trust and mutual understanding:



More money for a partnership worker would help - but we still managed without. (LA)

The council has asked if they can have a seat on the board; it helps us keep that relationship going for mutual benefit. (LA)

A general difficulty of the third sector is that a project like this falls onto the director of TSO and they are already dealing with so much - capacity issues. (LA)

We should have looked to get all partners together much earlier. Assigning duties to people happened too late. (LA)

We want one selected person at the council who is given the time and decision making powers to deal with this project. At the moment everything goes through the Chief Executive but he only looks at things at the last minute and makes last minute changes. (TSO)

We would like something to help develop a mutual understanding of each other's difficulties, maybe an external facilitator. (TSO)

We would have liked one individual that they could go to within the council for everything to do with the project - one single point of contact. (TSO)

2.3 Business planning

One of the outcomes of Community Assets is to increase community organisations' security and independence. Providing organisations with an enhanced asset from which they can generate sustainable income is critical to this. Earned income gives organisations greater flexibility and independence to respond to their communities in innovative and effective ways and can, ultimately, provide greater security away from grant funding cycles. With this in mind, we explored the need for and issues around business planning and financial sustainability.

Who did you turn to?

Half (28) of the respondents (17 TSOs and 11 LAs) did not see business planning as an issue and had not sought support. For the other half, the DTA was the most frequent answer by some margin, with 52% of respondents making use of their support either as the only source of advice or in conjunction with other sources. Far fewer (5%) had accessed mainstream business support via Business Link, from regional development agencies (3.5%) or had turned to the Big Lottery Fund (7%) for this kind of advice.

No respondents reported seeking advice from chambers of commerce or from the government support and investment agencies Futurebuilders and Capacitybuilders. Other sources referred to were:

- Community Matters
- Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations
- specialist consultants projects had worked with previously
- in-house business development within councils
- local foundations and trusts

How you have you used the advice?

Those who had accessed business planning support reported a range of actions they had undertaken in response to the advice they'd received, including:

Taken the advice on board and are developing our website, marketing and planning. (TSO)

Looking at our reserves and making sure that we are planning for rainy days. (TSO)

Developed a management agreement, terms of reference through work with Local authority and CAP. (TSO)

We developed a sustainability plan to say how we are going to survive. The DTA helped us translate this into a language that BIG could understand. (TSO)

They have been to see other community cafes on the DTA's advice. A successful cafe came and did a workshop with them which was really useful. (LA)


They've got a business plan and a service level agreement with two core funders and long-term commitments. They're making more of connections. (LA)

Took them to see another example of asset transfer and DTA has been mentoring them through financial and business ideas. (LA)

Why didn't you access support?

Of the 28 that had sought no business planning support, the vast majority (90%) reported that this was because they did not see any support that was relevant to their needs. However, in line with the finding that business planning is not seen as an issue by half the projects, many also commented that they are already very experienced – and indeed supported other TSOs – so did not need business planning advice:

We've already been going for quite a while so didn't need external support. The council is handling the money aspect so it's been business as usual really. (TSO)



We didn't need it; we're very familiar as an organisation with business planning and carrying risk. (TSO)

There has been plenty of support and advice available, but we have struggled to find time to take advantage of all on offer. (TSO)

We just used [the DTA] to check some things over. [The TSO] is a very mature and well managed organisation who can deliver business plans. (LA)

Some projects raised the issue that, while the support programme was appreciated, what they actually required was extra capacity through additional staff, in particular so that the current TSO staff could focus on the redevelopment project. Community Assets is a capital delivery programme, which restricts it from allowing funding to be used for revenue items, in particular staffing. Yet, this was frequently raised as the kind of support most needed.

It's great in principle, but we have in-house expertise so we didn't need it. It didn't really help the TSO director that much, because DTA couldn't take any of his workload. (LA)

I have been absolutely desperate for a project manager but funding for it is extremely difficult to find. I don't want more advice, I just need help getting things done. (TSO)

There is a lack of revenue with this budget and lack of ability to find budget elsewhere - it's costing the organisation money to pay me, and we don't have any income against it. Nobody's paying us to do it. (TSO)

2.4 Non-grant funding

We explored with projects the issue of whether they have sought and received any non-grant funding, as an indicator of the ability of the TSOs to generate income. Approval for a loan or investment is an important sign that the investing body has confidence in the community organisation's ability to generate sufficient income through trading activities to become secure and independent.

Respondents frequently misunderstood the idea of 'non-grant' funding. They often confirmed they were in receipt of non-grant funding and then went on to outline the grants they had received from local authorities or charitable trusts.

Only one project confirmed it has received Futurebuilders funding. At this point no project reported it has received finance from Adventure Capital Fund, venture philanthropists (e.g. Impetus Trust), Charity Bank or a community development finance institution.



It's not money, it's a mind-set

This may be expected given that projects are still in the construction phase and will only be able to develop a clearer picture of the income generation potential nearer to completion. Nonetheless, when asked why no non-grant funding had been sought, responses were overwhelmingly negative about the concept in principle. The quotes below are an indication of the strength of feeling on the subject:

We prefer to "make do and mend" rather than take out a loan. We know this may not be very business-like by today's standards, but we feel we would rather do without than get into debt. (TSO)

We've looked at it for years e.g. Futurebuilders, but we have always been terrified of this type of funding. Just thought it's too much of a risk and with the economic recession we are so glad we didn't. (TSO)

We want to develop a trading arm to help sustain it but we're not looking at loans at this stage. Our golden rule that what we spend we need to have a budget for. This [project] is a big income generator. (TSO)

I don't believe that charity should have these big liabilities on their balance sheet. We are expecting to raise funds through hiring of the hall. (TSO)

We've been looking into loans but the trustees are adamant they don't want a loan. (LA)

This organisation does not do loans. (TSO)


I don't like ethos of the loan agenda, would only go for a loan in a complete crisis, would rather have an overdraft. (TSO)

They couldn't afford to service non-grant funding. They have to get grant funding. (LA)

TSOs are not interested in getting a loan, who is going to take responsibility for this ongoing commitment is the key question. (LA)

The strength of feeling evident in the quotes above suggests that any non-grant funding is perceived as an unacceptably high risk for the TSOs. Very few of the projects reported having experience of applying for or receiving non-grant funding. Combined with the general hostility expressed towards the idea, this suggests there may be a lack of awareness and understanding about loan finance that could inhibit the projects' ability to accurately assess whether non-grant funding could be appropriate for them.

As the responses indicate, some organisations may always require grant support. This runs counter to the implicit and explicit intention of the current policy



approach, which seeks to move many third sector organisations off grant funding and towards earned income and self sufficiency. These perceptions and resistance towards alternative funding/income models will be important to explore in Strand III of the evaluation because 'independence' – which includes financial independence - is one of the intended outcomes of Community Assets.

2.5 General support

With such complex projects involving partnerships, business planning is not the only type of support projects need and so we returned to the topic of general support from the Big Lottery Fund and the DTA. In particular, projects were asked about their support needs in relation to:

- Legal issues;
- Partnership issues;
- Construction/ engineering; and
- Recruitment.

Who did you turn to?

45% of respondents had received support from the Big Lottery Fund or DTA or both. Of those, the DTA was more frequently cited as a source of support (25%) than the Big Lottery Fund (10%), with another 10% making use of both DTA and Big Lottery Fund support. Of the TSOs who are leading the projects, 60% made use of some kind of support, compared to only 33% of lead local authorities.

What support did you require?


Legal advice was the most frequently cited area of advice needed, at 53%. Only two respondents reported partnership as an area of advice and only one project nominated construction/ engineering and recruitment/ HR.

Satisfaction was very high with the support provided: the average score for local authorities was 4.3 and for TSOs slightly higher at 4.6. However, importantly, 69% of respondents gave the support the top score of five "very satisfied". No project was "not at all" satisfied.

DTA organised Community Matters support. Community Matters' sessions were barnstorming. They've been there, done that, got the t-shirt. They picked up all the relevant points, gave us top quality advice. (TSO)

It connected us to other people, they have been really useful. (TSO)

They gave us a lot of help on technicalities, research help, and networked us in with other partners when needed, they gave us a perspective on motives behind what BIG were doing. (TSO)



BIG Lottery have been really generous, demonstrated a lot of common sense, I have a great deal of respect for our grant officer, been very efficient and fantastically helpful. (LA)

We have found both organisations to be very approachable, helpful, and easily contactable. (TSO)

A very knowledgeable chap, he established good dialogue with the BIG grant officer who is a wealth of information, and he has provided us with good feedback and information on the whole procedure. (LA)

Why didn't you seek support?

The majority of respondents (54%) had not accessed any support at all. Most of these (60%) were local authorities. By far the main reason they gave was that they didn't see any they felt was relevant (80%). Local authorities were also more likely to give this response (68%) than were TSOs (32%). Exploring this in more detail, local authorities felt they already had the expertise in house. Some TSOs reported they were simply too busy to take up the offer.

So busy trying to do the work to run the project. Already on top of our work. (TSO)

Didn't need it; the council side have been very supportive and on the ball; they've given us all the help we need. They were so keen to see things work. Our biggest support has been through the council. (TSO)

I'm not aware of any more support than business planning. (TSO)

Haven't really needed it. We still have the days left. (LA)


We didn't feel a need but I'm sure the support was there if they did. (LA)

The services that are provided by BIG Lottery are not on any type of menu. I'm still not aware of the support BIG provide, they should promote this better. Their shopping list of services is not clear. (LA)

What support would have helped?

Asked what kind of support would have been most helpful, the responses reiterated some of the issues outlined above. A particular issue for TSOs was providing funding to allow the TSO to focus on the project, but practical, concrete examples were also given:

Would have been useful to have a template for partnership agreement and agreement to lease. We had to make it up ourselves. (LA)



Hands on support on filling in the financial claims forms, they were very complicated. (LA)

Staff development training. Future planning for sustainability. (LA)

A library of previous projects. (LA)

We wanted examples of places/ people who had done a similar scheme or who were running similar services to learn from their experiences. (TSO)

Issues to do with procurement. Understanding the procurement process at the outset would have been helpful. (TSO)

Would have liked more help in working with the council. We are a small organisation and find it hard to pressure the council. (TSO)

A paid member of staff. It is all very well being advised what you should be doing and how to do it... but we have often struggled to find the time to do stuff. (TSO)

A project manager. We need somebody to deploy to do all the things we have planned. (TSO)

Financial help to cover time the TSO are spending on managing the project. (TSO)

2.6 Services and Relationships

Two intended outcomes of Community Assets are that TSOs will be better able to meet the needs of the communities they serve and that communities will have access to better quality facilities that respond to their needs. In strand I of the evaluation, there was some indication that projects had not yet expanded their reach to empower and engage a wider range of people and groups in their local community. Given this, we have explored these issues further in strand II.

Did the support expand your reach?

By far the most frequent response to the question about whether the projects are targeting new service user groups was that they aim to “widen appeal to the general community” (63%). This reflects the finding from strand I about the nature of the redevelopments – many were creating 'community hubs' or resource centres. Nonetheless, increasing services to other user groups included:

- young people (26%),
- children (24.5%),
- families (17.5%),
- disabled (15%) and
- older people (15%).

Very few (9%) projects reported that they are not planning to expand their service user target audience.



Have you developed new relationships?

65% of respondents reported developing their relationships with other organisations and agencies in some way as a result of the programme. Developing new services and relationships go hand in hand. Third sector organisations were around twice as likely as local authorities to have both established new relationships and consolidated pre-existing relationships with fellow TSOs, as well as with public sector agencies.

One of the main outcomes of the project relationships has been to raise the profile of the TSO and the building. While relationship building is seen as an area that will develop once the building is complete, at this mid-stage it has brought new interest from other community organisations who are potential tenants and co-located service deliverers. These points are highlighted by the quotes below:

We have developed closer relationships with stakeholders like neighbours/police/school next door. The relationships will happen naturally when building is in use, but we will be doing advertising and having grand opening to which will invite potential users/supporters. (TSO)

We've now got a high profile and we've been approached by other organisations who want to use it and lots of public and private sector interest. (TSO)

We already have a fantastic array of relationships, but we're looking forward to developing relationships with private sector - e.g. BT are talking about using it for regional board meeting and local business. (TSO)

We've initiated new relationships, for example visits from directors of the PCT with whom we are in touch and we developed grant applications with the dean of social studies at [local university]. (TSO)

We have an emerging relationship with children and youth service at the council and we're getting idea of how they can help each other. (TSO)

We've been able to refer beneficiaries to other TSOs. (TSO)

There have been discussions for Jobcentre Plus or a PCT to go into the centre and we're also looking at the potential for enterprise (LA)

People were a bit more insular before, but now community organisations look outwards. Outcomes include more volunteers that are now active - set up two enterprises already using these volunteers that had not actually been involved before. (LA)



But it's hard going

35% of all respondents reported that they had not developed their relationships as a result of the project. The majority (60%) of those were local authorities. Indeed, some felt that developing relationships was not within their remit.

One frequent reason given for this was 'already having sufficient relationships'. Other reasons were it being too soon and the need to allow for the building works to be completed. A number of projects highlighted barriers to developing relationships (some of these were cited by projects that had successfully increased their relationships). The most frequent response (14) was that it was not relevant to their role, but lack of capacity (11) followed close behind. Fewer (3) reported that they are not interested and that they did not know who to approach.

2.7 What are you most proud of?


We asked the projects to reflect on their journey to date and offer some thoughts of their scale and scope of their achievements. The quotes illustrate the personal connections that partners have with the project, they also highlight the importance the project has within its local community, and the quotes also illustrate the 'can do' attitude amongst projects.

That after 5 years of intensive work by a small group of unpaid committed volunteers, we have created a new community led partnership organisation and that we will take on the new Centre on 1st September and open it for residents on 14th September. I am most proud of the group of people I have worked with. Perhaps I am biased, but this group of people really deserve recognition for their achievement. However, we could not have done anything without support from our partners, so, good teamwork, good result. Also, when I think of all of the complexities involved in the regeneration of the village, and the Centre is a key part of this, how amazingly good it is when government at the local and central level work well together. Good polices, well targeted and well implemented (TSO).

Looking forward to a 30 year rent free lease is a legacy. The future is big. Without CAP we would have been a very vulnerable organisation and the building was a liability to our future. Recognition for our hard work (TSO).

Such a beautiful building will belong to the community. There are very few buildings like this in Tower Hamlets that are for the community. We want to open the doors to the community (TSO).

Being successful in the BIG bid. Work through the application and the project. The team get excited passing every milestone. The learning has been like climbing Mount Everest and we're all really proud of what we've achieved (TSO).



Working closely together and moving reasonably swiftly, got a project where everything has gone to plan - it's been a real partnership thing - different parts of council involved its a really good example of productive partnership between LA and TSO (LA).

We have saved a building of local historic interest from being demolished and can now provide much needed facilities for local people for many years to come (LA).

Putting the team together right at the outset, and has delivered on time and on budget. It being exactly what the association wanted. We have not had to make compromises. They have fundamentally what they wanted (LA).

Pleased with the way on which the partnership with the TSO has blossomed. Without a huge amount of input from us the TSO [lead partner] has done extremely well. (LA)

The partnership. Everyone is on the same page and the project will make a lasting legacy. I have been doing this for ages but this is the best project I have worked on. This will be the highlight of my career (TSO).

Just getting this far! We've been working on this project since 1999. It's been a big portion of my life and career. To actually see it open before I retire is great. I'm going to be a trustee on the group so can keep involved (LA).


Proud that developed a lot of local community support. The community are 100% behind it (TSO).

Partnership working has been good - receiving such a large amount of funding is definitely something to be proud of achieving aspirations of TSO to become a hub, gives them a better facility and alternative facility as they were going to be displaced (LA).

2.8 What lessons can be shared with others?

We also asked projects to offer some lessons for others thinking about going down the asset transfer route. Again the responses are varied and highlight issues including the need for mutual understanding and open communication; pragmatism and careful and precise project management; and perseverance and belief.

I think it has been a good and challenging project, but you definitely need a good working relationship with your partner – can't do it without this. BIG need to make it easier for the groups to achieve this kind of project and provide more support. We need somebody to help throughout the whole project at every level. (TSO)



Communication is the key. You have to be in contact with the other side and being able to respond quickly to situations when they arise. (LA)

Have a project manager – project management is key to delivering this type of project. (TSO)

Flexibility between the two organisations has been key to success, must maintain a flexible attitude to each other, full understanding of each other's need (LA).

Not to give up; keep going. It's been a steep learning curve; learning experience has been tremendous (TSO).

Not taking relationships for granted and working on them actively. It relies on the people - it can really rock the success of a project (TSO).

That it takes a lot longer than we originally thought. Vital that you have right legal arrangements in place. It is very complex. Timescales and varying knowledge of starting point of partners on what community asset transfer means. Steep learning curve (LA).

That it is partnership not a committee. You need a leader. Bloody minded determination is required (TSO).

Revenue should have been part of the project (LA).

Never assume things will go as planned (TSO).

Need to think about ongoing revenue costs of running a centre. It's a huge responsibility that will take a lot of our time and resources. We should have put more thought into planning for this from the outset. (TSO)

Miracles can happen if you work hard enough! (TSO).

Make sure that you have that commitment from the trustee board to dedicate time to getting the job done. Be realistic about time you can commit to a project and do what you say you are going to do (TSO).

If you want to make change in your community you need good people around you (TSO).

No matter how much you think you can do something yourself there are times where you have to recognise your weaknesses and the strengths of key partners – you can't do everything yourself (TSO).

Definitely look at practical models of things that have gone before you; Learning from them and getting ideas (LA).



3. Conclusions

The survey represents a mid-programme snapshot of experience to date and has sought to look more closely at some of the key issues that emerged from the first round of baselining in autumn 2008. While some issues and concerns were raised, the results provide a largely positive overview of experiences in the Community Assets Programme to date. Conclusions from the results have been grouped under the three outcome headings:

Outcome 1

Local third sector organisations have greater security and independence, and are better able to meet the needs of the communities they serve.

- TSOs report very high levels of confidence for the future as a result of reducing their vulnerability by securing a base for their activities.
- A high percentage of projects are planning to deliver new and expanded services from the refurbished premises, which strongly suggests they will be better able to meet the needs of their local communities.
- The redevelopments have led to the development of new relationships between TSOs, departments within local authorities and local service deliverers (e.g. the Police, PCT). This means TSOs are more able to meet community need by facilitating service delivery through co-location. In this way they are also able add value by acting as a hub for the network of local service deliverers.
- The redevelopments have raised the profile of the TSOs within the community generally as well as with other organisations. This suggests that projects will potentially improve referral routes from other service deliverers, as well as improving public awareness of where to go for help.
- Evidence to date is less strong in relation to the TSOs developing greater levels of security and independence from a financial perspective. There is an emphasis on continuing grant dependence and a strong reluctance to use loan finance to support income generation.

Outcome 2

Communities have more access to better quality facilities that respond to their needs.

- Projects are very positive about the facilities that will be available as a result of the redevelopments. Many report that the redevelopment will bring an under-used building into full use for the community.
- Of particular note, projects report their satisfaction at having a building refurbished to a high standard and fully responsive to the clients' needs – for example becoming more accessible for disabled people.



Outcome 3

There is more effective partnership working between local authorities and the third sector.

- Strong evidence from both TSOs and LAs that the programme has generated new and deepened existing relationships.
- The importance of a supportive and engaged partner was recognised by both LAs and TSOs as the most important element in contributing to the project's progress to date.
- Length of partnership has a significant bearing on the health of the partnership during the project – long-standing partnerships were very much more likely to give their partnership a top score than those whose relationship was relatively new.
- TSOs were more likely to report problems with the partnership than local authorities. Poor communication was the most frequently cited negative element of partnership working (17%).
- Some TSOs also reported frustration due to a lack of clear direction caused by disagreements between local authority departments (e.g., regeneration and asset management).
- Workload and time commitment are challenges to developing even stronger partnerships.

Programme

In relation to the functioning of the programme:

- The economic recession was reported to have caused additional workload and delays but usually for positive reasons, for instance, construction costs came down necessitating a reworking of budgets.
- Support provided by the Big Lottery Fund and DTA was regarded as very good by those who used it. The majority of those who did not seek help reported they did not need it or could call on assistance from their local authority partner. A smaller group wanted something more niche and specific that didn't seem to be available.
- A frequent comment was that as well as advice, projects would have liked extra people to help deal with the extra work.



4. Next steps

Strand III will commence in spring 2010 and be a thorough summative evaluation examining the achievement of Programme objectives. In particular, it will revisit the baseline survey conducted in autumn 2008 to monitor progress towards the Programme's outcomes.

It will be important to bring the projects together. We propose holding a day long workshop that will provide an opportunity for projects to learn from each other, share ideas, as well as feeding back on issues and experiences. We will use facilitated discussion at the workshop as a key evidence base to inform recommendations about the Programme.



Appendix 1: Project Survey

Name
Project
Local authority TSO
Lead yes/ no

Overall the project has been going:

1. Badly
2. OK
3. Good
4. Very good
5. Great

Comment: _____

Overall good elements

- Partnership's working well
- Supportive/ engaged local authority
- Supportive/ engaged TSO
- Work coming in on budget
- Work on schedule
- Skilled/ committed team
- Built the skills/ capacity of the TSO
- Built the skills/ capacity of the LA
- Made new connections with local partners/ stakeholders

Comments: _____


Overall bad elements

- Partnership not working well
- LA not supportive/ engaged
- TSO not supportive/ engaged
- Problems relating to money
- Construction problems
- TSO can't cope/ overloaded
- LA can't cope/ overloaded
- Change of personnel

Comments: _____

Confident about the future?

- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Quite
- Fairly
- Very



Is the lead partner on paper leads the project day to day?

- Yes
- No
- Both equally

The partnership had existed for:

- 2 years or less
- More than 2 years

The partnership is functioning:

1. Badly
2. OK
3. Good
4. Very good
5. Great

Partnership good elements

- Good communication
- Fully support each other
- Commitment
- Clarity around division of tasks/ role
- Understanding strengths and weaknesses

Comment: _____

Partnership bad elements

- Poor communication
- Lack of support
- Lack of commitment
- Lack of clarity around division of tasks/ role
- Lack of understanding strengths and weaknesses

Comment: _____

What could have helped make it a more productive partnership?

QuestionPro: Comment: _____

Has financial planning is an issue

- Yes
- No
- To an extent

Have you accessed support? Was it only from the DTA or other agencies like Business Link as well?



What were your business support sources?

Not accessed any - see question below

Just the DTA

The DTA

Big Lottery Fund

Business Link

Regional development agency

Chamber of commerce

Futurebuilders

Why didn't you access any support?

No funding to do so

Didn't know where to go

Did have time

Didn't see any help that was relevant

Comment: _____

What action have you taken on the advice and support and how has that worked for you?

Comment: _____

Accessed non-grant funding?

Yes

No

If yes, who did you access non-grant funding from:

Futurebuilders

Adventure Capital Fund

Venture philanthropist (e.g. Impetus Trust)

Charity Bank

CDFI

Name the CDFI: _____

Other: _____

Why do you think your project has not accessed much non-grant funding?

Comment: _____

Have you accessed support from either DTA or BIG since CPD was submitted?

Yes both

Yes DTA

Yes BIG

No



What kind of support was it?

- Legal
- Partnership
- Construction/ engineering
- Recruitment/ HR

Other: _____

Comment: _____

If you did get support, how satisfied were you with it?

1. not at all
2. somewhat
3. reasonably
4. satisfied
5. very

Comment: _____

If no, why not?

- No funding to do so
- DTA support allocation used up
- Didn't have time
- Didn't see any help that was relevant

What are the kinds of support that would have been most helpful in the last few months?

Comment: _____

Have you developed new relationships with other community organisations, local government or other public services (e.g. PCT, police) in your area?

- Yes consolidated with other TSOs
- Yes consolidated with local government/ public sector
- Yes new relationships with other TSOs
- Yes new relationships with local government/ public sector
- No – see below

Comment: _____

What's the outcome of these developments in your relationships?

Comment: _____

If no new relationships, why not?

Comment: _____



Has your work to develop your building led you to deliver or plan to deliver facilities for new user groups?

- Young people
- Older people
- Families
- Widen appeal to general community
- Children
- Disabled
- No new groups

Other: _____

Have you run into any barriers in terms of developing new relationships with other groups and agencies?

- We're not interested
- They're not interested
- We'd like to but don't have capacity
- Not relevant
- Don't know who to approach

Comment: _____

What are you particularly proud of?

Comment: _____

What one lesson have you learnt?

Comment: _____