Foundation Key Learnings

Dr Squirrel Main
23 July 2018

Contents

Key Learnings for the Foundation

Below are the distilled lessons from over 1000 Science, Medical Research, Health & Disability, Education, Arts, Community Wellbeing and Environment & Conservation grants acquitted by The Ian Potter Foundation between 2009 and 2017.

Learnings are organised by timeframe ('before', 'during' and 'after' the grant) and grouped by themes.

Before: Groundwork on people and project

Has this been done before?

- While the occasional gamble on innovative programs is an integral part of philanthropy, if previous similar projects have failed--and no alterations have been made--there should be little reason to think that a project will succeed. Enquire if previous similar (especially overseas) projects have failed.
- The cost of expansion to remote/rural areas is not directly proportionate--ensure organisations have factored in adequate costs (travel, food).
- Establish a clear baseline need (e.g. the number of blind children in regional Victoria) to gauge (a) proof of problem and (b) outcomes.
- One Alcohol and Drug counsellor suggested that (IPF-funded) training was not necessary, as training has been a major government focus over the past two years. Assess with other sector organisations and government to gauge utility of professional development endeavours.
- One youth volunteering project was modified from the international model to include 'prizes' as opposed to being purely volunteer-driven; participants reported this was not ideal. Deviations from well-tested international models should be well-justified before endorsed.
- One grantee received advice that a traditional learning management system would not be best due to the direct competition from an international organisation. This was unfortunately after the grant was funded.
- One grantee avoided duplication via exploring partnerships prior to expansion. Highly recommend for any organisation expanding into another region.

Who's on deck?

- Applicants should either have recruited qualified staff OR outlined a clear plan for attracting the right candidate.
- Community reference groups are useful during development phase of projects.
- School-driven projects succeed more than NGO-driven projects in schools; ensure Grantees have worked through the logistics with individual schools, for example:
    - Have ethics clearance (or a CLEAR indication of a strong relationship)
    - Train teachers adequately
    - Inform teachers about time requirements before program launch
    - Provide funding for reliever teachers to allow time for teachers to participate in evaluation
    - Ensure administrative support to survive teacher turnover
    - Have letters of parental interest for projects that involve parents
    - Do not fund art-school events during exam time
    - Fund in-school programs for 2–3 years to build skills and trust to confidently build participation into their annual calendars
    - Conduct due diligence on the schools involved (as well as the NFP) to ensure there are no issues (e.g. administration under review for misreporting student attendance).
- If critical elements are heavily volunteer-reliant, ask for letters of support from key volunteers stating the intention/plans to contribute.
- If a grantee claims large amounts of matching funding, confirm with the other funder. When funding 'seed' grants, ensure that developing a plan precedes approaching future funders with the developed business plan.

- Ensure multilingual projects (e.g. distributing health information) use accredited translators.
- One organisation delivered a project on-time, on-budget. A sharp contrast to their previous grant. Second chances--particularly in niche markets--may be more important than in saturated markets.
- When recruiting for fellowships, it is better to enable organisations to select for quality than to 'force' a pre-determined target.
- Consider contingency plans if key staff depart. Having a part-time project officer enabled one project to proceed even when the primary officer had breast cancer. Underscores need for training/succession in every grant.
- If a prison/corrections department should be referring to a program, obtain a letter of support in advance. In one instance, the Department of Corrections was unable to refer.
- For conference grants, if the CVs are not provided by the speakers (e.g. they are copied from LinkedIn), this should be a warning flag about the speaker's commitment.
- Include young people in project design, including evaluation; one grantee found their highly-structured questions were regarded with suspicion by the at-risk youth.
- If a company is $100,000 in debt, it may go under the year after a 'mentorship' grant. Then there are no employment opportunities for the young artists. For large projects, conduct due diligence on company financials. Also consider having 2-3 organisation sponsor mentees to ensure a robust experience that can withstand the vagaries of arts funding.
- Programs of a 'drop in - drop out nature' lose momentum in isolated communities without local champions
- Volunteer-run organisations tend to have lower capacity than staff-run organisations.
- Youth unemployment efforts that partner with local governments may be more viable in the long run than those that partner with state or federal agencies.
- Applicants should either have qualified staff OR outline a clear plan for attracting the right candidate.
- It is essential to fund position of case management in employment-based social enterprises.
- One award was made 'subject to' a letter confirming government funding. No such letter was on file, Government funding was withdrawn and the project failed. Seek confirmation of government funding.
- Staff training can enhance ownership of a project and translate into positive uptake of changes.
- Ensure staffing of new capital works facilities takes a long-term expansionist view (e.g. not just the bare minimum for six months).
- If an art company intends to include non-artists in the design, ask them their basis for assuming that non-artists will participate.
- University withdrawing support is a risk that should be listed in the initial application of every grantee collaborating with a University.

The devil is in the detail…
- For research grants, ask about data availability. In one grant, the required data was not made available to the researcher.
- Consider setting an upper limit to the percentage of funds directed to the grantee's Board (versus project/staff salaries).
- If a grantee has a non-traditional application, still work with them to set specific outputs and goals.
- For equipment purchases, enquire about the choice of products (is it top-of-line? why or why not?)
- If targeting low socioeconomic schools, check the ICSEA and demographics of any school-based project on the MySchool website, their ICSEA score should be below 1000.
- When one grantee was questioned about airfare (business 'fully-flexible'), airfare costs were halved (as were the speaker's fees when similarly questioned). Policies re: business class airfare and speaker fees should be clear on the Foundation's website.
- Ensure architecture firms have relevant experience for major capital works projects.
- AEDC scores incredibly helpful--consider using in all place-based early childhood grants.
- Numbers (such as the 500 young women) need to have sources cited or be confirmed. In a follow-up conversation, even the grantee laughed at the high figure (stating 'When I was hired, I thought that looked unrealistic'). Would the project have been funded if the figure was 35 from the outset? If so, then the miscalculation is irrelevant. If not, then the accuracy of the baseline figure is important.

- While there is no doubt that individual weekly tutoring sessions is beneficial, the 'positive' result (75% achievement) is lower than the national achievement average for indigenous students. Ensure grantees have baseline OR regional comparative statistics before assuming their outcomes represent success.
- Ensure that project ideas are OH&S compliant.
- Ensure the type of CRM listed in the application budget is sufficient for the project's data requirements.
- An overly-brief application can be a warning sign.
- One grant was rejected because the request was for 'core' funding. Yet do we really want small non-profits deviating from their core business?

Budget
- CRMs for a small non-profit cost about $27,000 in the first year and $5,000 ongoing.
- The pro-bono capacity of legal firms has diminished because of changed economic landscape. IPF should keep in mind when funding programs with large pro-bono commitments from corporate organisations.
- Consider if other foundations are >50% of the project budget, should the award be 'subject to'?
- Consider coordinating grants into staggered phases so the grantee has some promise of ongoing funds.
- Recommend that all large, multi-year projects have budgeted at least 10% for external evaluation.
- Ensure grantees have accounted for staff salaries in their budget/in-kind projections so that they are adequately resourcing their projects:
    o Project management for a new business/financial counselling course can be 1200 hours (0.5 FTE for a year).
    o Consider funding costs such as overnight watchmen, etc., for museum exhibitions.
    o Need to be clear if 'salary' in budgets includes superannuation.
- Regional/remote projects may have a higher proportion of their budget allocated to staff/facilitators' salaries as well as increased cost of service provision, consumable and transport.
- Newer organisation may under-budget or neglect to pay staff/actors. Work with organisations who reach the second stage of the EOI process to ensure their final application budget is adequate. Smaller grantees may need coaching in budgeting--consider a 'Budgeting 101' workshop like the dissemination workshops.
- Important to double-check if you believe the program has capacity to pay for infrastructure, in this case, the surmised (by the first reviewer) profit margin simply was not there.
- Government funding can be withdrawn--discuss contingency plans with applicants in advance.
- Ensure that a social enterprise has a clear 3–5 year business plan prior to funding general operations. Pay close attention to the projected/actual cash flow of social enterprises, particularly if renewing a grant.
- Travel subsidy should be targeted at primary schools. Secondary school students can more easily make their way by public transport.
- Cost of materials can fluctuate with a drop in value of the Australian Dollar. Given the high prevalence of overseas equipment purchases--ensure that the 'new price' reflects an accurate exchange rate.
- Non-profit applicants need to be encouraged to include their 'other' costs (admin, travel) when applying for a grant; consider suggesting a (generous) range for administration, coordination of services, etc. 25% seems reasonable.
- Closely examine the original budget of any professional acting/dance company to ensure that performers' pay is in line with industry standard. Work with grantee to ensure they are not cutting salaries to be 'competitive'.
- Gathering feedback and careful planning of IT endeavours is critical, and may lead to an abolish-and-redesign rather than upgrade approach. Consider asking for pricing in both scenarios if an applicant is updating a database, etc.
- Important to set scope of anticipated usage (e.g. number of posts to be moderated on a website) to determine if the budgeted amount is reasonable. In one instance, $18,500 was budgeted (initially and on acquittal) towards moderation of a site with 14 posts total.
- Travel costs can increase on a short timeline.
- Early career researchers may vastly underestimate the costs (and timeline) of their first large-scale field research.

- Ensure that budgets are realistic:
  - Box office budget projections are realistic and the method of calculation is clearly denoted (e.g. Full house? 75% capacity?)
  - Adequate provision for the number of trainers/instructors needed (4 instructors for 600 students x3 sessions is ambitious)
  - Full cost of electrical upgrades have been accurately estimated by builders

Pre-planning/groundwork underway?

- Ensure all applications for new technology/equipment purchases include a clear training program.
- Check that certain items--an information systems roadmap, staff training and Board approval are in place prior to CRM installation and use. These items cost approximately $20,000 and should be funded/in place prior to funding the purchase of a CRM for a new non-profit organisation.
- Ask capital works/restoration grantees about disability requirements, heritage permits, and appropriate land and permits from the council.
- Ensure remote field work has safety and risk plans in place prior to undertaking field trips.
- Ensure all newer organisations have thought to purchase public liability insurance for their volunteers.
- One grantee's strategy of beginning with the 'easier' geographic locations and expanding appears to be sensible, as operations will be consolidated prior to tackling more difficult environments. This strategy is counter to the traditional strategy of 'start where the need is greatest', but may be worth investigating.
- Ensure solid legal contracts between NGO and film-makers and clear demarcation regarding the ownership of the footage, film.
- Ensure that a pilot website has high visitor numbers before rolling out nationwide. An incubation and improvement period may be prudent.
- Assess plans to obtain pre-approvals for the instrument space and technical support in order to progress research as soon as funding is received.
- Before an organisation can implement mental health support, it is important that staff are equipped to avoid vicarious trauma. Investigate staff readiness before funding a client-based support program.
- Wider system reforms can render a pilot redundant. Be knowledgeable enough regarding upcoming political/community changes to query if they will impact a pilot.
- Be mindful of the audience interest (one grantee performed works a regional audience –they were unfamiliar with the art form and did not attend workshops). During the planning stage, require letters of interest from participating organisations/communities.
- Enquire if the method of gathering data is the most robust: 'Low numbers meant that no strong scientific conclusions were able to be drawn. [Ex-post-facto] consultation with other ecologists experienced in using tiles to monitor reptiles and frogs explained that the low numbers are a typical result of this monitoring method…' So why fund tiles in the first place?
- Ensure all organisations conducting research have Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) level of ethical clearance (e.g. if a grantee says 'I've obtained ethics clearance', and they are not from a University, ask 'What was the level of risk and who reviewed?')
- Ensure that a social enterprise has a clear 3–5 year business plan (with risk analysis) prior to funding general operations. Consider the financial security of the major partnering organisations (e.g. café hosts).

During: Relationships and flexibility

Timelines: Realistic and flexible

- Ensure the grantee has created a realistic timeline (consider asking for a peer review or comparing to similar previous projects).
- Ensure grantees do not schedule surveys/focus groups over Christmas holidays.
- Small art events should not be timed with the opening of large festivals (e.g. Melbourne festival).
- Work with external evaluators to ensure that proper evaluations are delivered to government on time.
- Set final reporting deadline AFTER date major performance/evaluation report will be launched.
- Set final report dates after projected fundraising targets will be met. Medical Research grants need at least 18 months for the final report to contain useful information.

- Multi-year grants can be highly effective as they
    - Allow time to develop manuals and procedures for volunteers
    - Allow lead time to coordinate (e.g. visiting scholars)
    - Reduce administration for IPF and offer more attractive career packages for grantees to recruit qualified staff.

Create timeline estimates from experience
- Collective, national umbrella organisations (with a number of member organisations) starting from scratch may take: ~12 months to have staff and operations in place; ~18 months until MOUs are signed; ~18 months until baseline data collected and sector-wide targets are developed; ~24 months before developing a shared a shared measurement framework.
- Ensure enough time for accurate data to be collected. For instance, the average 'duration' until female recidivism is 27 months, follow-up studies need to be at least for this length of time.
- Small social enterprise able to turn profit in first year, but most take 5–7 years before being self-sustaining.
- Species eradication takes three years from the last sighting. Funding needs to continue through that time to continue monitoring and abatement projects.
- CRM implementation takes approximately 18 months.
- Justice re-investment projects require a 5-7 year commitment to demonstrate any positive impact.
- In one instance, IPF arbitrarily reduced a timeframe. At grant closure, IPF staff were disappointed with results, but the grantee originally said this would take three years to commence.
- As the 'political life cycle' is around 4 years, consider longer (3–5 year) support for grantees working in the advocacy space.

Delays
- When setting deadlines, factor that data linkage with government takes at least a year.
- Be aware that reliance on volunteers can delay a project.
- Remember that IT-based applications (websites/databases) often have six-month project delays.
- Delays in ethics approval can lead to overall delays, check-in at six-months.
- One organisation did not expect their IPF funding to be delayed (applied in October, received funds in March). Clarify it often takes six months from EOI to EFT transfer; especially to smaller grantees.
- Weather can affect tracking of marine animals. Enquire with researchers about contingency plans if tracked animals do not move as/when expected (e.g. is there leftover contingency funds in the budget).

Flexibility
- Flexibility (such as extensions due to illness or bushfire) does not prevent grantee achievement, be prepared to be flexible.
    - Extend timelines to allow grantee enough time to recruit the right person into the role.
    - Remember that illness (e.g. an outbreak of gastro in a nursing home) can lead to delayed timelines.
    - Grantees may hit unforeseen legal/financial stumbling blocks.
- Synchronise arts grants to align with the 'Plus1' campaign between October and May.

KPIs: realistic, SMART and flexible
- Short-term outputs (KPIs) should match the budgeted project (if the project is about ticket subsidies, the KPIs should be about subsidies); longer term goals, such as program growth, should be considered under long-term outcomes.
- KPIs should be achievable within the funding timeframe. If an applicant submits broad goals and is awarded a grant, work with them to create more specific goals that are achievable within the timeframe.
- Discourage unrealistic targets. The target of 100% participation, while admirably ambitious, may be high when looking at youth unemployment programs.

- Mentorship targets cannot be developed simply with the mentees in mind. Mentor capacity must also take into consideration in order for the program to be viable.
- Continue to work with grantees to have clear, achievable KPIs. Vague KPIs on first-time grants make it difficult to assess if the agency is capable of 'handling' larger grants.
- Clarify KPIs with the organisation to ensure the children with the greatest need are receiving the tools/computers (not just 'easy-to-access' children)
- Remember that flexibility is key.
    - In one instance, a project was flexible and creative (by encouraging group learning when mentor numbers were not available). Outcomes were achieved (increased school attendance) even if outputs were not as stated.
    - Another example of flexibility occurred when a grantee asked to modify open source software (a move which has attracted positive Commonwealth attention) rather than purchase a non-suitable software package.
- For medical research equipment, be explicit about asking for (weekly) machine use statistics and/or collaborations.
- Allow grantees to set a high bar for quality instead of remaining fixated on their original target (e.g. only accept the top 15 applicants from a pool of 30 even though the target was 17).
- Job Services' 13-week employment outcome is 48%, do not allow employment pilots to set bar any lower.
- Work with grantees to review KPIs at project start (especially if funding has been reduced) in order to ensure that their plan for reporting outputs/outcomes is both comprehensive and manageable.
- Attendance rates is an ambitious metric, stated number of performances is a reasonable first step.
- Request targets/ranges for study recruitment if human subjects are part of the studies conducted via medical research equipment (i.e., how many people will be research subjects--how big/small is the study?)
- While stringent KPIs may be an asset in dealing with projects or unknown institutions, consider allowing Fellows--particularly those from institutions with long-standing relationships -- more latitude.

Stay in touch

- Communicate all 'subject-to' conditions in the award letter.
- Site visits are critical for engaging with grantees and facilitating success. Take the time to meet the relevant staff (e.g. marketing team, program manager, CEO). Trust your gut.
- Communicate more with grantees. A death should not be known only at the final report.
- In one instance, the grantee assumed there was one goal: hire station manager (stated in application) and the Foundation had another goal in mind (dissemination to 1000 aged care facilities). Need to be 'on same page' from the outset.
- Be clear on the amount of time it takes from submitting an expression of interest to EFT transfer (at Potter this is six months). This timespan may be of importance to smaller grantees.
- Ensure that all correspondence is recorded in database, this is helpful in the event of staff turnover.
- All grantees should have an opportunity to meet with Board member(s) at least once, preferably at initial site visits.
- Interesting Grantee feedback 'We were occasionally unsure about how much information you needed or wanted during the project, as opposed to at the end.' Worth clarifying.
- Important for the onus of the check-in to be on the foundation, and to focus on elements critical to the foundation.
- Consider holding grantee workshops to clarify data collect expectations from the outset of the grant.
- Individually alert less experienced/high-risk grantees if the project manager is going on leave for more than six weeks. Include the contact details of an alternate contact within the organisation who can also ensure that any project, output or budget revision is appropriate.

Six-month phone check-ins

- Direct conversations with grantees often help clarify communication errors. Increase the amount of contact that the program manager has with grantees (e.g. initiate a phone call at the grant mid-point).

- Grantees often shift the geographic focus without alerting the program manager--mid-year check-ins would assist with this matter.
- Continue to check-in on multi-year grantees, especially those that have not yet garnered ongoing funding. Midpoint check-ins after year one should be made in person if possible.
- Use precise questions if requesting additional information from Grantees. In one instance, a grantee took a while to provide specific figures when requested at the six-month mark, but when given _specific_ questions to answer was much more forthcoming.
- Ask 'How's the evaluation going?' as an informal question for the six-month check-in phone calls.

Progress Reports
- Limit progress reports to four questions and enquire about challenges/surprises.
- If participation rates are low at a progress report, encourage grantees to seek information about why and alter the program/workshop.
- Support sensible goal abandonment.
- Grantee staff turnover plus project change is a red flag. Check-in immediately (within one week) with grantees who report both of these events in their progress report.
- Grantees may become overly-familiar, or complacent, with reporting outcomes. Follow up for necessary information, even from familiar grantees.
- Follow up participant withdraw in progress reports. Why are they withdrawing and does that point to larger issues or is that simply an expected part of the program?

Cultivate stakeholder relationships
- Promote early stakeholder involvement. Note most dissemination/government meetings occurred far too late. Ensure all grantees have contacted their 'next funder' during the first year of the grant.
- If fundraising is part of the KPIs, use progress report budget to assess if a fundraiser/grantwriter has been hired as intended. If not, work with grantee to ensure adequate resources are devoted to sustainability.

Local councils
- Council funding can be withdrawn--ensure letter of support from council.
- Begin early if navigating local council 'red tape'. Council permits delay projects for six months.
- Cultivate council relationships (particularly with the councils in highly-funded/high-need areas).
- On-sells to City Councils, particularly in Melbourne and Sydney, should not be overlooked, particularly in the community wellbeing program area. Make explicit efforts to foster the relevant connections.
- Recommend local government involved in ALL small grants (which will be a diminished number moving forward), and the foundation works toward the sustainability of all grantees, including small.

State/federal government
- If government adoption is the endgame, ensure key government officials are 'on board' from the onset.
- Consider that federal government turnover can delay capital works expenditures
- Work with Grantees from the beginning of their grants to make connections with federal and state government. In one case a highly successful pilot took a year post-grant to achieve government funding.
- Make strong interstate government contacts to increase the likelihood that government support (be it physical plant, infrastructure or salary) is ongoing for projects.
- Regulatory approval by the State government of Tasmania is essential for all in-class curriculum projects.
- Hone a key government contact in program area sub-specialities (homelessness, water management, etc.)
- One program was well-received by Minister XX during a forum at another foundation. With future grantees within a given sector, consider opportunities to facilitate similar meetings with appropriate DHHS/DoC officials, as such meetings will ultimately facilitate the uptake of such programs.
- In future medical research grants, assess if the equipment is part of that which would be required for an ARC-LIEF grant (in other words, will it add-value to the lab beyond the immediate project?)
- Government collaboration can add 12 months to the timeline of a land management program.

Other stakeholders

- Single donors (funding partners) can pull out of projects. If relying on as major project partners, keep in close contact.
- Meet co-funders in order to continue partnerships with future grants.
- Involvement on the Advisory Committee for one project proved valuable, continue for similar large-scale collaborative projects.
- If funding a state arm of a national organisation, ensure that the effort (website, professional development, etc.) is not redundant.
- High degree of involvement from Aboriginal elders and strong presence in the community can lead to a high level of success.

Effect of not funding the requested amount

There is strong evidence that not funding the full requested amount of a grant can impact project delivery, processes and compromise outcomes. Once committed to an organisation, full funding of the requested amount leads to higher rates of achieved outputs (74% versus 54% KPI achievement for smaller grants). The following are some examples of the consequences of not funding the full amount:

- Cutting staff training. The project then under-delivered due to staff resistance to new technology.
- Staff hours and client incentives were cut.
- Cut services to the most disadvantaged, difficult clients.
- Reduced number of impacted clients, shorter campaigns, fewer participants.
- A 12-month delay.
- Key staff employed two days per week, rather than three.
- Dissemination of tutoring manuals-was eliminated.
- Staff had to absorb the load of work on top of the part-time employee. There were delays.
- Board split $30,000 among three NILS organisations, but considerable administrative time was spent chasing the acquittal signature (which was not received). Consider a single loan to the most effective organisation (or the geographic area demonstrating the most need).
- Flow-on effects for the most disadvantaged (i.e., subsidised tickets were cut). When projects 'soldier on' with reduced funding, it is often the most needy that suffer.

Final note: Are poor projects underfunded because they were not as good from the beginning or do they perform poorly because of underfunding? Remember correlation is not causation.

After: Reporting and reflection

Outcomes matter

Work with grantees to ensure that long-term outcomes are measured (and short-term outputs are clear and SMART); gather trends on who is/is not collecting long-term data.

Support grantees who are new to outcomes measurement

- Organisations just beginning on RBA will often suffer from 'too much' reporting ('data dump')
- Encourage grantees to measure outcomes, for example:
    - Student achievement, not just growth in attendance.
    - Academic and social outcomes via direct measures (NAPLAN, SDQ scores).
    - Specifics around the number of client end-users (not just case managers)
    - Ensure websites analytics are set up
    - Infrastructure grantees should collect user estimates
    - If funding learners' permits (or other activities) that have the underlying goal of employment, work with Grantee at the time of final report (and at beginning of project) to ensure that data re: job attainment is quantitatively collected.

- Small grantees can have strong outcomes measurement. 'Number of referrals' is a good proxy metric for soft-entry programs (such as a homeless lunch). Instead of proportions of bookings (e.g. new clients versus old), obtain number targets as this is more meaningful data at the conclusion of the grant.
- Education outreach programs targeting more regional/diverse schools may not show a dramatic increase in audience numbers, but instead an increase in _school_ numbers (as many regional schools have smaller student numbers).
- The YMCA's RBA evaluation framework enabled strong reporting (and government leverage). They agreed to share their data gathering reporting mechanisms with other grantees in the homelessness sector. This 'mentorship' model may be an effective way for large grantees in similar sectors and different states/organisations to share best practice.
- Requiring average weekly user rates would enable a better sense of the frequency of research lab use.

Conduct follow-up collection of long-term outcomes data

- On-the-spot workshop surveys are not an indicator of change.
- Fund for staff time to collect all usage/income/participant numbers at baseline, after one year, and, where feasible, after a few years.
- Long-term follow-up (5+ years) for employment outcomes is critical for mentorships, fellowships and training programs. Ensure there is funding to maintain and update a client contact database.
- Track leverage of capacity-building grants (before and after, annual returns).
- Important to follow-up if exhibitions went on tour, if historical restorations increased visitors.
- Short-term success can be difficult to translate into long-term outcomes (reduced family violence) due to privacy policies around the data. Partnerships with police and other government bodies can be helpful.

Refine survey collection

- Short surveys minimise survey fatigue.
- Based on several of our previous grantees' accomplishments, it is reasonable to expect small (<$20,000) grantees to conduct post-workshop and one-month-post-workshop surveys and discern key information.
- Recommend that grantees include a six-month follow-up survey, after the 'buzz' of the course has subsided.
- Encourage smaller grantees to use Survey Monkey.
- Encourage grantees to be persistent in collecting data. One grantee chose to administer the surveys in focus groups. While this technique meant that response levels were somewhat low, it was a good technique for ensuring responses within a traditionally hard-to-engage client group.
- Encourage grantees to report on negative response in surveys, to flesh out these stories and learn for the future.
- To gather data on animal prevalence, fund standardised trends. For example, in Australia, the most commonly used standardised survey types for terrestrial birds are '2ha, 20 minute surveys' and 'Area searches' within a defined radius from a central point (most commonly 500m).

Use cost-benefit analyses

- If cost/benefit analyses are required by key stakeholders, ensure these are in the initial evaluation plan.
- Feasibility studies can assist in finding the most cost-effective option, and can be a good introduction to high-value grants. Feasibility studies commissioned should include cost-benefit analyses.

Final reporting

- Ensure KPIs have clear targets, as vague KPIs can be easy to achieve. Hold initial grantee workshops to review goals/KPIs—grantees working in pairs can provide fantastic ideas for one another. Re-state these targets on final report so that grantee accurately explains the completion of the project goals.
- Include the original goals/KPIs and prompts in the final report for grantees to provide exact numbers of trained users, lab usage, publications and collaborating institutions.
- Determine if acquittal signature (or e-signature) is truly needed for auditors. Simplify as much as possible for the grantees.

- Final report dates need not always be exactly 12 months after the grant was given:
    - For arts grantees, set final report dates for at least 3 months after the final performance/launch date to allow time for small organisations to process audience numbers and reactions.
    - Medical research reports contain more information on usage rates and trained users if set for six months after equipment is first used.
    - If a grantee states that their project lasts 48 months, set the final report date to be after their project is complete to receive more outcomes data.
- Work with grantees to ensure baseline data reflects the intentions outlined in the application.
- Close all grants within a four-week window of receiving the final report; if information/exact numbers are missing from the final report, pick up the phone and ring the report author as soon as possible.
- Questions that may seem simple to the Foundation often cause grantees much confusion. Continue to simplify the reporting, and consider making short videos to assist Grantees with their final report.
- Be clear from outsets/in workshops that anecdotes are great for case studies, but clear data around the outcomes is the priority for reporting.
- Consider having standard reporting measures
    - Number entering into employment (instead of percent increase in employment)
    - Consider having a standard set of Google Analytics for reporting. Recommend following up all digital projects 18 months after product completion.
    - Number of workshop participants. If relevant, request demographic information about attendees to ensure the project is reaching those most in need (e.g. if this was the intent not just those most privileged).

Learn from the patterns

See what's successful

- Website enhancement grants of $20k can increase school-age viewers five-fold.
- The method of offering a workshop, then selecting and training volunteers from workshop participants appears to be highly successful. This concept has surfaced in several successful grants.
- Centrepay repay is effective for No Interest Loan Schemes (NILS).
- Mentorship is heavily influenced by the personalities of the mentor and mentee and whether or not they are complementary. Ask how the matches will be made.

Improve grantmaking decisions

- In one instance, a project did not meet expectations, and was re-funded in subsequent years (and continued to under-perform). Consider if a grant is fully-funded and capacity is not there the first time, capacity likely will not be there in future times. Perhaps other, more capable organisations should assist with a strong project idea.
- Consider the pace of diffusion of innovation: The categories of adopters are innovators (2.5%), early adopters (13.5%), early majority (34%), late majority (34%), and laggards (16%). When working with community-based change, it appears the uptake occurs in waves: innovators (1-2yrs), early adopters (2-3yrs), early majority (3-5yrs), etc. Fund through the early adoption phase (i.e., until a critical mass-say 16% of a network/group/population-have adopted a practice)—IPF is considering 3 years. Collection of baseline data and evidence of change critical. Government funding can work with the early and late majority.
- Compile a list of high-performing and low-performing organisations, to be updated every two years.
- If the Foundation wishes to fund DVDs/websites suggest included a pooled evaluation for the next 3-4 projects to ascertain if such funding is generating value.
- One grantee wrote that budgeting $1500 for the mentor's time in a $45,000 fellowship was not enough. Looking at all past successful budgets, the average was 10%. Use this heuristic to assess application budgets.
- 50% seedling success in riparian restoration is a fair target for 'success' (or at least 250 stems per hectare, which forestry states as the minimum).

Compare ideas/delivery

- Virtual learning appears to consistently be less successful in regional professional development programs.
- There is a range of quality in NILS schemes. If delving back into this area in the future, consider either looking at the need of a geographic area or the effectiveness of the program based on the reports. NILS interesting concept, should have amounts down to science (i.e. how much funding does an organisation need, exactly, to be self-sustaining).
- As in many other cases, programs that provide individualised (and persistent, well structured, caring) support to vulnerable individuals seem to work. Programs serving small numbers with effective results are preferable to large programs.
- Is 10% a high 'first time visitor' percentage for an arts performance? Other reports have said 40%. Suggest consulting with industry experts (e.g. Creative Victoria) to determine a reasonable target.
- Asking the grantee to record the installation of the exhibition can be a really useful, effective reporting mechanism.

Learn what's difficult

- Achieving target number of volunteers seems a difficult trend.
- In a few cases, researchers had difficulty recruiting from a CALD community. This seems to be a theme in the health/disability sector.
- Notably, pro bono support as good as it is, often generates delays beyond the control of the grantee.
- The skills/geographic location of volunteers can make scalability difficult--something to be kept in mind if funding the up-scale of future volunteer projects.
- An e-resource (as opposed to a hard copy) is easier to update when changes occur in the curriculum.
- Drug use at the LGA level is difficult to obtain (indeed, not gathered beyond hospital admissions) outside of Victoria.
- Ensure that pilot programs with a singular 'cut-off' date have a clear, tapered exit strategy so that vulnerable young people are not abruptly deprived of support.
- Virtual learning appears to consistently be less successful in regional professional development programs.

Embrace failure, but avoid what doesn't work

- University projects seem to fall through at a high rate – evaluate this trend.
- Simply offering museum ticket subsidies does not appear helpful.
- Funding outside guidelines leads to lower outputs and outcomes.
- It is interesting to note that suicide rates have increased during the past 18 months in a particular region. Would prevention (rather than support) be a more appropriate funding avenue?
- In the early stages of medical research (e.g. when first transitioning from animal research to human research), pilots will fail. Important not to penalise research groups for reasonable research.
- Failure to meet a KPI may be due to scientific discovery or intelligent alterations. Leading-edge experiments will always have this element of risk, and 100% KPI achievement rate is not always desirable.
- Simply having musicians tutor students for a weekend does not mean that (1) skills will improve (fly-in-fly-out often poorly pitched) and (2) that the most-disadvantaged students are targeted.
- Changing the fellows' stipend (or at least the advertising of the stipend) was a major decision made after submitting the budget. After increasing the fellows' stipend from $20,000 to $30,000 there was only a negligible increase in applications. Therefore, a $20,000 stipend is sufficient.
- When funding one-quarter (or less) of a piece of medical equipment, the grant should be 'subject to' the confirmation of other funding as past grantees have struggled to raise amounts greater than 75% of the total project cost.

Use appreciative enquiry to determine what worked

- Analyse top 10 most successful grants over the past five years within a program area to determine what works (type of project, funding amount, project length, focus).
- IPF found professional development/capacity building had higher rates of outputs and outcomes than project-based initiatives (for example, training student nurses was more effective than leaflet drops).

- o Database improvement is not glamorous, but can be a highly effective tool for capacity-building.
- o CBI program (mentoring in grantseeking) was more effective with emerging organisations.
- o Capacity building focused on one person needs to have organisation-wide dissemination in order to continue to have value past the tenure of the person.
- o Volunteer coordinator roles good investment, also potentially redundant after 2-3 years once volunteers are coordinated.
- Community Sector capacity building projects have high leverage and should be considered more and more as an integral part of IPF's grant making strategy.

Evaluation

- A poorly-conducted positive evaluation is a waste of money (and not worth quoting).
- If an external evaluation is being conducted, encourage the grantee to incorporate long-term, quantitative data into the evaluation. And ensure the Foundation receives a copy!
- High-quality evaluations take multiple years. Hold a check-in evaluation workshop/meeting halfway through the grant
- Consider evaluation design:
  - o Strong recruitment – mail surveys to low-income victims of family violence does not have high return rates.
  - o Accurate data – ensure access to data is possible before commencing evaluation.
  - o Control groups – utilise even in small studies e.g. the neighbouring classroom at the very least
  - o Fractal analysis, even when well-done, is not robust/quantitative enough for IPF purposes.
  - o Use simple pre- and post- surveys (e.g. SDQ) to demonstrate effectiveness.
- Discuss evaluation plans with grantees at the outset, so that they are not left piecing together a framework at the eleventh hour. Work with all grantees at early stages of evaluation to avoid poor evaluations (i.e., survey design, sample sizes)
- Evaluations need clear executive summaries that summaries learnings.
- External evaluations are extremely helpful for major grants, preferably reporting both mid-way and at the end of the grant period. Plan _before_ the project starts to collect robust baseline data.
- As high-quality reports are received, develop a pool of skilled evaluators.
- Pre- and post- reading tests critical, cost approximately $150/child/test (individually administered and marked, children under 6 years). Ensure this is properly budgeted in reading-related grants.
- Ask grantees to submit a timeline of specific actions to address each recommendation found by evaluation.
- Ensure that learning outcomes can be measured in all project-based education grants.
- Schools with transient populations will have difficulty measuring long-term impact (this does not mean that such measurement is impossible, just difficult).
- There are four points of 'intervention' in an evaluation: Terms of reference, Tender responses, Initial evaluation plan, and Draft report. 'Check-in' on the evaluation plans in a minimum of two checkpoints these four checkpoints (especially the plan and draft for those from unknown external evaluators).
- Consider using Culture Counts with arts grants (and film/museum grants outside the arts program area).
  - o Ensure organisations have budgeted staff time to complete the endeavour
  - o Ensure multiple members of the same organisation are trained by Culture Counts
  - o Conduct six-month check-ins to ensure that the evaluation is taking place.
- In one instance, the 'evaluator' was the chairman of the organisation. NOT appropriate, but this was made transparent in the evaluation proposal project. The PM failed due diligence here (the evaluator had no evaluation background--while this may be fine given their sector experience, this would warrant further investigation).
- Ensure filmmakers know that effective evaluations should be brief; conducted prior to and 12-months post-screening; and include those that view a film as well as those that do not. They should strive not to solely survey the 'converted'.
- Ensure that major, multi-year grantees are being evaluated by a 'big four', a University and/or one of pre-designated panel.

- A grantee's decision to use the same consulting firm as their parent organisation enabled them to leverage previously existing data to evaluate their effectiveness. Encourage more grantees to piggyback on parent organisation (where applicable) for evaluation.
- The evaluation was originally meant to have education, social inclusion and employment outcomes, but in the end focused only on employment. For contracted evaluations, staff should touch base with a grantee to offer help order to ensure document quality.
- When surveys include information about salaries, ensure clarity around the 'pro rata' and 'superannuation' are included.
- Know the sample size when interpreting findings.
- Leverage partnerships with universities (for instance, students in The University of Melbourne's Centre for Program Evaluation) to conduct low-cost external evaluations of medium-sized non-profit projects.
- In future projects where police and government are funding bodies, prompt the applicant to ask these organisations for data that will assist outcomes measurement.
- Work with external evaluators to ensure that evaluation reports are delivered to government on time.

Measuring outcomes

The following are some good tools for measuring outcomes in a standardised manner:
- General self-efficacy scale (GSES) (Schwartzer & Jerusalem, 1995).
- Child/adolescent resilience-CYRM is a 28 item scale (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011).
- The WHO 5 Well-being Index is a 5 item measure of subjective well-being over the past two weeks (World Health Organization).
- The Diabetes Management Self Efficacy Scale is a 20 item measure designed to tap respondents' sense of self-efficacy regarding the management of type 2 diabetes (McDowell, Courtney, Edwards, & Shortridge-Baggett, 2005).
- Connectedness to school (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002).
- Loneliness and social dissatisfaction (Cassidy & Asher, 1992).
- Depression, anxiety and stress scale – DASS21 (Psychology Foundation of Australia, 2013).
- Perceptions of peer support (Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1996).
- Forms of bullying scale (Shaw, Dooley, Cross, Zubrick, & Waters, 2013).
- Life Effectiveness Questionnaire – Youth-at-Risk Program Evaluation Tool (LEQ-YARPET).
- Measure number of users if looking at infrastructure projects.
- Addenbrook's Cognitive Examination is a freely-available measure of cognitive functioning.
- The DREEM is a validated self-report instrument widely used to evaluate the coherence of a health service with recovery-orientated principles (e.g. 'The service promotes learning, thriving and growth').

Refine survey collection

- Short surveys minimise survey fatigue.
- Based on several of our previous grantees' accomplishments, it is reasonable to expect small (<$20,000) grantees to conduct post-workshop and one-month-post-workshop surveys and discern key information.
- Recommend that grantees include a six-month follow-up survey, after the 'buzz' of the course has subsided.
- Encourage smaller grantees to use Survey Monkey.
- Encourage grantees to be persistent in collecting data. One grantee chose to administer the surveys in focus groups. While this technique meant that response levels were somewhat low, it was a good technique for ensuring responses within a traditionally hard-to-engage client group.
- Encourage grantees to report on negative response in surveys, to flesh out these stories and learn for the future.
- To gather data on animal prevalence, fund standardised trends. For example, in Australia, the most commonly used standardised survey types for terrestrial birds are '2ha, 20 minute surveys' and 'area searches' within a defined radius from a central point (most commonly 500m).

Use cost-benefit analyses

- If cost/benefit analyses are required by key stakeholders, ensure these are in the initial evaluation plan.
- Feasibility studies can assist in finding the most cost-effective option, and can be a good introduction to high-value grants. Feasibility studies commissioned should include cost-benefit analyses.

Sustainability

Ongoing funding

- Work with successful grantees—beginning from the application discussion--to ensure sustainability/on-going funding. Commit through the next funder.
- Consider how to assist grantees with demonstration projects that have promise, but the initial results show more time/tinkering/demos are needed. Government widespread adoption is not the answer, but perhaps adoption in one regional area.
- Local councils can be a strong leverage source for smaller grants/projects.
- Encourage/require ARC, NHMRC or equivalent application as a grant condition of science, health and medical research grants.
- Local business/women's clubs can be a source of support, particularly for programs assisting young women.
- Capacity to fundraise comes prior to capacity to evaluate (especially if evaluation timeline is multiyear).
- In several cases, grantees have been unable to raise 'balance' of funds a la challenge grant. Are challenge grants effective?
- Leverage can be exceptionally high when there is involvement by a champion.
- Consider how to assist large-scale, multi-year Arts grantees in securing corporate sponsorship.

Social enterprise

- Social enterprises need to have a strong foundation in order to scale geographically. One grantee was not in such a position (perhaps after the loss of two key contracts). Continue to gain a clear sense of what degree of 'client input/contracts' represents a strong enough foundation to begin expansion.
- One social enterprise was fully self-sustainable in June 2015. Perhaps a 'sweet spot' for funding is in the 18-24 month range? IPF should track its successful social enterprise grants to ascertain if 'seed' funding or 'sapling' funding generates a higher proportion of positive, financially viable outcomes.

Other

- If an evaluation finds a program to be ineffective, do not try to 'sell' that program to government. However, learn from the mistakes when funding future programs. Strive for excellence. The worst enemy of great is 'good enough'.
- If a one-off project demonstrates an area of need, delve deeper. Do not unearth issues and leave organisations under-funded to deal with the new demand. Partner them, alert government or fund further.
- Consider that highly-qualified, specially-trained workers in a well-structured organisation are much better suited to such 'high-risk, high-needs' projects. How to replicate without losing the quality?
- Does qualitative evaluation hinder government uptake? Also, remind grantees to have full costing ready for Government 'scoping' meeting.
- Ensure that pilot programs with a singular 'cut-off' date have a clear, tapered exit strategy so that vulnerable young people are not abruptly deprived of support.
- Using the donations towards the top 10 NGOs in a sector (as per The Cause Report) is an excellent proxy to assess the growth in philanthropic giving within a particular sector.

Dissemination

- Does a grantee's dissemination plan (YouTube, webinar, cross-organisational training) ensure knowledge is promoted beyond the closure of the project/organisation? Is this included in the budget?
- Use social media and stakeholder contacts to assist with disseminating key ideas/calls to action.

- Do not fund projects that refuse to disseminate:
  - Without dissemination/advertisement, a new library will not be used. Do not fund library creation/expansion without a marketing plan.
  - Event promotion (and attendance) should come with all events
- How does one measure knowledge dissemination? Need to design a way to measure the long-term outcomes (beyond conferences).
- Webpage/FB advertising for an event should aim to 'virtually' target approximately 43 times the desired physical audience.
- In-kind marketing donations often do not eventuate or are delayed/limited. Consider fully supporting (i.e., funding) marketing salaries/commissions.
- Is international travel truly the best networking? Would networking with potential Australian donors bear more fruit for Australian-based social enterprises? Likewise, it's an interesting concept that 'International' CW grants could also be 'Australian', particularly for practitioners serving rural/regional areas.
- What is the role of the Foundation if a funded manual is not up to standard?
- Impact enhancement to improve communication can be worthwhile, but in place-based projects it can be difficult to recruit a qualified, on-site communications officer. The Foundation needs to continue to seek PR/Comms expertise (e.g. ThinkHQ).
- Consider enhancing grantee dissemination strategies with workshops and other assistance. Perhaps having sector-wide roundtables would facilitate better communication among our grantees so that services are not overlapping/duplicate.
- Dissemination key for funded documentaries--ensure grantee has initial conversation with ABC or similar.
- Google Cultural Institute (GCI) may be a reasonable online tool, however, one grantee did not market their launch internationally and the audience was very low with only 72 views. Ensure future grantees have clear launch strategies if they plan to use GCI.
- Publish research and evaluation work on Issue Lab.

Meta: The Foundation and the Sector

Sector collaboration

- Streamline final/progress reports to have similar wording to others in the sector.
- Consider working with other funders to uncover/develop indicators of success.
- Share your failures.
- With future grantees within each focus area (homelessness, early childhood), consider attending/facilitating meetings with appropriate state government officials as well as other funders, as such meetings will ultimately facilitate the uptake of such programs.
- Ensure good ideas (that do not yet have ongoing funding) are disseminated to other foundations prior to the end of the grant in order to assist sustainability and avoid gaps in service provision.

Database/reporting systems

- Important to have a system for follow-up on reporting when a grantee states that a final evaluation report will be available in one year's time.
- Need to give explicit assistance and clear instructions on a high-quality final report. Consider posting an example on the Internet for remote/regional/interstate grantees to access.
- The actual survey was not included in the final report. Recommend adjusting the wording on final reports to include 'please include a copy of any survey given' into instructions.
- Program managers should ensure that KPIs are updated if a program evolves.
- Perhaps a note can be made on the budget temple to please comment if there have been any changes or a question added into the report form about changing costs/income.
- Skimming a final report/evaluation can lead to overlooking key details. Ensure program management staff have enough time to read thoroughly.

- Multi-year grants should be made for multiple years, and reviewed at the progress report (a much simpler and less administratively intensive process than re-applying). To achieve this, progress reports that are unsatisfactory need to be treated seriously (i.e. the remainder of the grant cancelled).
- Half-year projects result in large amounts of administrative work. Suggest funding all projects for a minimum of a year.
- Hard copies are difficult for small organisations to supply, consider transitioning to request only electronic copies.
- Important to open and ascertain file is electronically readable within a fortnight of submitting final report.

Interested in more sector cohesion and idea swapping á la measurement and evaluation? Contact squirrel.main@ianpotter.org.au for the next Philanthropy Evaluation and Data Analytics (PEADA) meeting.