Shared Insights a year on:
Further lessons from the internal and external evaluations of the Weston Anniversary Fund programme

Summer 2020

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Introduction

by Philippa Charles, Director of the Garfield Weston Foundation

As part of our 60th Anniversary celebrations in 2018 we launched our first time-limited grants programme, the Weston Anniversary Fund (WAF), which offered grants worth between £30,000 and £150,000 to improve or create facilities of benefit to local communities across the UK. The unprecedented number of high-quality applications prompted our Trustees to more than double the initial commitment of £5 million, granting a total of over £11 million to 156 organisations across the UK. WAF grantees are located in every region of the UK, from Orkney to Plymouth, with most being new to the Garfield Weston Foundation, which was a great result.

We are keen to understand the impact of our work and to share insights that might be useful to the wider philanthropy sector. I am therefore pleased to introduce this second evaluation report, which contains an update on grantees’ progress, and the extent to which this funding is meeting our primary goal to make a tangible and lasting difference in communities across the country.

The findings highlight common challenges faced by grantees, notably the challenges experienced by small, volunteer-led organisations in delivering new projects whilst maintaining delivery of normal services. Funding is only of value when combined with the commitment and energy of volunteers, so we are proud to be part of such energetic and impactful partnerships across the country.

Our findings also highlight common positive experiences, in particular that the benefits go beyond the monetary value of the grant. Many grantees describe the awards as a much-needed morale boost and affirmation that their work is worthwhile. Other benefits include greater peace of mind about the organisation’s future, gaining new skills and confidence, and attracting new donors and volunteers. Grantees also note benefits for the wider community such as improvements to previously ‘eyesore’ buildings and grounds, providing business for local builders and plumbers; and the purchase of community vehicles which need adaptation, providing business for local garages. The long-term benefits to the mental, social and physical health of local communities is also noted.

This report includes six case studies that paint a more detailed picture of the challenges and benefits experienced by organisations whose projects are completed. We are grateful to the people involved in those projects for letting us share their stories, and we look forward to sharing further stories from projects that complete before the final Shared Insights evaluation report is published in spring 2021.

We continue to wish all Weston Anniversary Fund grantees the best of luck with their projects and look forward to celebrating their results over the coming years.

Philippa M Charles  
Director
Executive summary

Overall progress – Over a third (38%) of projects are already completed, these are largely the straightforward projects such as purchasing a new minibus or minimal refurbishments. More complex projects, such as those involving major capital building works and/or legal transactions, are ongoing and due for completion by the end of 2020.

Delays are commonplace – Just over half (56%) of projects were at least one month behind schedule by summer 2019 and a small proportion (5%) were significantly delayed by seven or more months. As delays are commonplace, and some due to factors beyond grantees’ control such as bad weather, it is recommended that future applicants consider building contingencies for both delays and additional costs into their initial plans.

Altered costs – Just over a third (38%) of project costs had changed after the grant was awarded. In some cases this was due to the cost of some items being omitted in the original budget, but more often it was due to additional or new costs being incurred once the project began, such as finding asbestos in the building. To help mitigate slippage in costs, it is recommended that quotes used in applications be no more than three months old, and that grantees should source an updated quote prior to starting work and relay any changes back to their funder.

WAF grants have often catalysed additional support – Well over half of WAF grantees (59%) felt they had attracted more donors as a result of winning this funding. This is attributed to a combination of greater confidence in seeking funds, and increased credibility as Weston grantees.

More than money – A majority of grantees describe the benefits of WAF funding as going beyond the monetary value of the award, to include an important morale boost for their staff, volunteers and beneficiaries, in addition to economic benefits locally and health and wellbeing impacts.

Increased demand – An upshot of receiving funding to improve facilities and extend services is greater demand from a larger pool of potential beneficiaries. Becoming better placed to meet needs is a key driver for applicants, and a source of great satisfaction for those who receive funding, but it can also highlight other gaps in provision such as the need for more volunteers. Whilst this is a challenge for many grantees, some share insights into how they have recruited and retained volunteers as a result of WAF funding.

Profile raising and knowledge sharing – Almost all grantees (95%) felt that local awareness of their organisation had been raised as a result of receiving a WAF grant, and this was largely through enhanced local visibility and word of mouth rather than through formal public relations (PR) and media efforts.

Future concerns – The main worry facing grantees (mentioned by 54% of those expressing concerns) is securing ongoing revenue funding. Other key concerns include succession planning, recruiting and retaining volunteers and staff (15%); ability to meet increasing need and demand for their services (9%); and undertaking and funding ongoing maintenance of their building and project (9%).

Conclusion – The insights from grantees highlights the complexity of making social change happen, especially amongst small, volunteer-led organisations. Good outcomes are the result of partnerships between grant-makers and grantees, where both bring valuable assets (money, time, expertise etc.) to bear on the final outcome. No evaluation can capture or quantify every outcome, because they are widespread across place and time. But on the basis of the evidence presented in this report, we can conclude that the £11.1 million of funding is making a tangible and lasting difference in communities across the country.
About the evaluation study

The first evaluation report, published in April 2019\(^1\), was based on an online survey of all 156 grantees plus a quarter (26%) of the unsuccessful applicants. That first report focused on exploring what kinds of organisations had applied, how they had heard about the opportunity, what kind of projects were funded, challenges experienced during the application process, and reflections by both successful and unsuccessful applicants on their learning as a result of making an application.

This second report is based on a complete survey of all grantees, conducted in summer 2019, which was incorporated into the standard grant reporting process. Grantees were asked questions on the following issues:

- progress of their project so far
- project budget, and any changes since the grant was made
- number of beneficiaries, and how this compares to projected numbers
- outcomes and any changes to their organisation (such as number of volunteers, higher or lower running costs) as a result of the grant
- PR and profile raising as a result of the grant
- learnings as a result of undertaking the project
- future concerns and opportunities in the coming one to three years

The diverse nature of the funded projects and the absence of a control group (i.e. a set of organisations that share the same characteristics but did not receive funding) mean it is not possible to isolate WAF funding as the sole causal factor behind outcomes identified by grantee organisations. At best, we can identify the contribution that new funding has made, rather than claiming sole attribution.

In order to paint a meaningful picture of funded organisations’ experiences and reflections, this report includes a large number of quotes from grantees commenting on the seven topics outlined above, plus six case studies that tell the story from announcement of the award to completion of the project. A handful of quantitative measures are also included to succinctly convey findings that can be expressed as percentages, but for the most part this report seeks to tell the story behind the figures, for example to illustrate and explain why some projects experience delays or how funding can boost morale, so the findings are largely conveyed through quotations to enable grantees to speak about their experiences – for better and worse – of receiving a WAF award. The results and analysis of the data are presented and discussed in this report, which ends with recommendations for both grantees and the Garfield Weston Foundation.

Findings

1. Overall progress

Over a third (41%) of the funded projects, representing 30% of the total amount granted (£3,365,500 of £11,059,300), have been completed. These are primarily the ‘straightforward’ grants, such as purchasing a new vehicle, playground equipment or undertaking improvements to one part of a building such as the kitchen or toilets. Most of the more complex projects, such as purchasing a building, or those involving extensive building works are ongoing and due for completion by the end of 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status of funded project</th>
<th>Percentage of grantees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almost completed</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-way to completion</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have begun</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not yet begun</td>
<td>6</td>
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2. Delays

Just over half (56%) of projects were at least one month behind schedule by summer 2019. Of these, most were delayed by less than three months (including some which have since been completed) and only a small proportion (5%) were significantly delayed by seven or more months. Some delays had positive consequences such as allowing more time for fundraising.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status of timescale</th>
<th>Percentage of grantees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On track as planned</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>1–3 months behind schedule</td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>3–6 months behind schedule</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 or more months behind schedule</td>
<td>6</td>
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Delays can be due to many factors outside of the direct control of grantees, including the time taken to complete legal transactions, bad weather holding up building works, problems with contractors and suppliers, and even a potential bat roost being found in the roof. The following examples, with quotes from a range of different types of grantees, illustrate some reasons behind delays.

The experience of a group extending their community hall was typical of many where bad weather affected progress:

“The weather has been a major contributor to the delay in our build, this has had a knock-on effect with builders’ and contractors’ schedules.”

A scout group that received funding for a new hut reported that “We encountered two main issues that impacted the start of our project build: the first was in relation to the depth of footings needed at one end of the building because our structural engineer had failed to observe there was an oak tree in the neighbouring car park and secondly, we encountered a change of permission from the neighbouring land owner with regards to the discharge of any excess rainwater and the siting of the pipe across their land.”

One village hall and community centre experienced delays which brought a silver lining of new support: “The flat felt roof above the toilet block started to leak badly. As this additional work was needed it was agreed to completely recover the roof with a longer-lasting material, plus the additional expense was not expected, so additional fundraising was needed. The local architect, who had formerly been a trustee of the charity, agreed to offer free support for the design.”

A church that received funding for a new kitchen, storage area and toilet also found the bright side of facing delays: “Unforeseen problems with the tiles on the adjacent church hall roof were discovered part way through the development project and there was a short delay whilst this was investigated and the decision made to re-felt, re-batten and re-tile the existing roof. This will however improve the outcome and ensure the longevity of the whole building.”
Whilst the specific reasons for delay are unique to each organisation, it is clear that delays are commonplace, just as they are for major projects conducted in people’s own homes. As many grantees are run by volunteers and/or over-stretched staff, the capacity to manage complications is clearly limited. Thus, it is recommended that future grantees plan for the unexpected when projecting their time plans.

This point is underlined by those involved in refurbishing a community hub: “What we have learned is that things never go to plan and timescales slip, normally as a result of others’ timescales. For example, we are holding off actually making the changes to the interior of the building until the old and ineffective heating system is replaced. This was originally scheduled for summer and has now been moved back until September 2019 due to the council’s internal procurement processes.”

As another funded scout group concludes: “Everything takes longer than you think it will, and running a project using the goodwill of volunteers is challenging as we are all busy individuals.”

As a result of widespread experience of delays, this report concludes with a recommendation that future applicants should build a ‘time contingency’ as well as a ‘cost contingency’ into their initial plans.

3. Altered costs

Just over a third (38%) of project costs were reported as having changed after the grant was awarded, often by relatively small amounts but in one case they increased by £40,000. A few projects came in under budget, with the biggest cost saving being £7,000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status of budget</th>
<th>Percentage of grantees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project costs have not changed</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project costs have changed since grant awarded</td>
<td>38</td>
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In some cases, the increase was due to the cost of some items being omitted in the original budget, but more often it was due to additional or new costs being incurred once the project began. For example, improvements to a community centre resulted in knock-on costs, mitigated to some extent by the involvement of volunteers: “Although our boiler was dying and needed to be replaced we didn’t know that the heating circulation system was sufficiently ‘tired’ that the new boiler would result in other work - such as replacement of most of the escape valves in the roof space that were too past it to cope with an efficient boiler... [but] additional volunteer involvement in the refurbishment resulting in lower costs.”

Other examples of additional works that became necessary as the project progressed include a youth centre, which found: “As we started the renovation, some additional works needed to be done to ensure that the works we were carrying out were to the required standard. An example would be when beginning the process of installing the kitchen, we needed to upgrade the fire safety wiring. We expect that the budget for the works planned will need an additional £6,000–£7,000 but we have been able to find this additional money from our own reserves.”

And a village hall association, who reported:

"We encountered a major problem with our external drains that we have had to address. We have slightly modified the work on the toilet block and put back the work on the kitchen to accommodate the work on the drains... We have had to find another £5,000 to cover the cost of remedial work on our external drainage from the toilet block."

Finding the money to plug gaps between the original estimate and the final bill most often relies on new fundraising by the organisation. A parish hall explained: “On starting the project asbestos was confirmed in the existing extension which had to be removed under licence before work could start on our new extension project. This created an additional cost which was met through our own fundraising activities.” A different village hall faced a big increase in costs, which was plugged with both fundraising and a kind-hearted builder: “Due to problems with foundations and unstable ground, considerable increased costs were incurred and we had to raise approximately another £30,000.... We also had a lot of help from our builder who did a lot of extra work without payment.”

Finally, the unique nature of the organisation’s work can result in higher costs, as illustrated by one grantee: “The insurance for our new van was considerably higher – because so many of our volunteers are ex-offenders, there is only one company that will insure us.”
In addition to using volunteers and getting ‘good deals’ from supportive local tradespeople, some grantees managed to make their budget go further by taking advantage of the ‘up front’ payment of the full grant. As one village hall explained: “The decision by Weston Anniversary Fund to provide the grant monies upfront significantly enhanced our negotiating position with suppliers. Having ‘money in the bank’ ensured that we were regarded as ‘serious players’ rather than ‘ambitious hopers’.”

A community sports association also found that having a major donation ‘in the bank’ helped to unlock other support: “Once it was evident that the project had significant support from the Weston Anniversary Fund our local council and school came on board and helped to finance the final piece.”

The next section explores in greater depth the ways that WAF funding helped lead to additional financial support.

4. WAF grants as catalyst for other income

The experience of the WAF grant acting as a catalyst to ‘unlock’ other support was widespread. Well over half of respondents (59%) felt they had attracted more donors as a result of winning this funding. When the type of new funder was stated, this was primarily other charitable trusts and foundations (mentioned by 44% of responses), businesses (23%), individuals (20%) and statutory funders (15%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has WAF funding helped attract new donors?</th>
<th>Percentage of grantees</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not yet</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
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This prompts the question as to why and how one donation can catalyse other support? The data shows that success begets success as a result of greater confidence both within fund-seeking organisations, and within those they approach, as these examples illustrate:

A community centre that received funding for an extension noted how their confidence had been boosted by the WAF award:

“We have learned not to be afraid of applying for any funding that comes our way, you have to be in it to win it so we now apply for things we wouldn’t have before.”

Likewise, a sea cadet group explained: “Receiving the grant has given us a renewed optimism in the future and made us more ambitious when applying for more assistance.”

A village hall association explained how WAF funding altered their internal outlook and led to greater fundraising success: “The switch from ‘We’ll never manage that’ to ‘We CAN do it’ came as a result of the faith shown in us by Garfield Weston. You gave us the confidence to continue with our application to [another funder] and now we have the resources to make a huge difference to our community in a matter of a few months.”

The way a big donation can stimulate additional support is described by an organisation which received funding to refurbish and renovate its building: “I think that the confidence shown in us by the Weston Anniversary Fund and the investment in our future is a very positive message to other grant making trusts – we have highlighted the benefits of the Weston Anniversary grant in recent applications including to Big Lottery (and we’re through to Stage Two!).”

A group that received funding to install a pontoon to stimulate fishing and recreational use of a loch also found the WAF grant a useful stimulus for other fundraising efforts: “Getting the grant in the first place meant that we were able to progress the project and this has had the knock-on effect that other funders can see that we can take projects to completion and we have had more success in obtaining grants for another small project.”

This theme is echoed by another organisation that received funds to improve a community lido: “When trying to raise large sums of money it is incredibly important that the project is somehow given credibility. Community fundraising can only go so far and demonstrates demand. But credibility is bestowed by a large organisation having belief in the project and making a large donation to really turbo charge the fundraising. Garfield Weston’s grant persuaded Sport England to support us, and in turn led to us raising all of the funds required.”
Reflecting on the importance of partnership that emerges as a key theme in this evaluation, other grantees note that it is the combination of the big award plus volunteer effort that encourages other donors, as a community centre explains: “[Other potential donors] can see that due to the hard work from the committee of volunteers, members of the community and the support received from a respected trust such as Garfield Weston Foundation, has given them the confidence in the facility, enough to support us”.

Many other grantees use similar language to explain how the WAF grant led to “enhanced credibility” in the eyes of other donors, and how the “good reputation” of the Garfield Weston Foundation lends grantees “prestige” so that future funding applications are felt to be “taken more seriously”. As a child and family centre that received funding for an outdoor recreational space explained: “Garfield Weston are such a well-known foundation that our successful application has made other funders and interested parties consider our requests, possibly more carefully than they might have otherwise have done.”

The fact that WAF grants were available to fund the larger part of costs, rather than make a smaller contribution, was also felt to be a crucial factor in attracting other donors. As a village hall who received funding to redevelop their playing fields noted: “The strategy by Weston Anniversary Fund to offer ‘major’ rather than ‘top-up’ funding was the catalyst to this project being implemented at all. We were really struggling to see how financially we could achieve our ambition to ‘really create a venue’ rather than just add ‘another swing or two’. With the majority of funding secured, top-up funding then became relatively easy.”

This strategy is supported by research showing that donors are motivated by fundraising targets that are within reach, as illustrated by a scout group: “Once the Weston Anniversary Fund and the funding from [large business] were confirmed... it meant that our target was much closer and therefore it became easier to approach local businesses for smaller amounts of funding. Companies want to know that their money is safe, being so close to target meant that they knew we were a safe investment.”

A church project reported a similar ‘close to target’ effect, in conjunction with a ‘credibility’ boost:

“The knowledge that we had already secured a significant grant from Weston Anniversary Fund has given other grant providers confidence to support the project as they were reassured that the project was viable and that our project was significantly robust to have merited your support.”

A final example of how WAF funds are helping with the financial sustainability of grantees is via future cost savings. A number of grants enabled the purchase of buildings, as one centre explained: “Once the sale is complete we will no longer have to pay rent on the premises which will save us £16,000 per year, which can be used for a staff post and an increase in volunteers.” Other examples of long-term cost savings include reduced electric costs as a result of changing to efficient LED lighting; lower heating bills for better insulated buildings; and savings on MOTs and repairs for new vehicles.

A new minibus for a women’s centre has had a positive impact on both costs and energy efficiency: “The bus is more economical in terms of running costs - fuel and servicing and has a “town” economy mode which makes it more fuel efficient especially as we do a great deal of shorter journeys. As it has a greater seat capacity, we make fewer journeys.” The ability of WAF funding to achieve multiple simultaneous benefits is further illustrated in the following sections.

5. More than money

Many grantees describe the benefits of WAF funding as going beyond the monetary value of the award. In particular, the funding gave an often much-needed morale boost and “massive encouragement” to the staff, volunteers and beneficiaries of recipient organisations, as well as improving their facilities. Grantees describe having “a renewed sense of pride”, “a significant feel-good factor” and “a real sense of ‘we’re on the up’.”

A comment from a library project concisely conveys this dual benefit: “Getting support from significant funders like WAF keeps us going in terms of morale as well as in the very practical sense.”

The emotional reaction of some recipients is reflected in this comment from a scout group: “The project would not have been completed without the financial support of the Weston foundation and upon receiving notification on our success made a number of adults shed the odd tear because up until then we had just about run out of road and the project was about to stall.”

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Another scout group captured the joy felt by many fundees: “We cannot wait to open our new scout hut! It will be the most wonderful addition to our town and community. Our scout pack have existed in damp, dingy conditions for so long that it is quite hard to imagine just how wonderful this new space will be.”

Grants to three different community organisations to improve their buildings illustrate how money can raise morale, and inspire greater hope for the future:

“\[
\text{The main effect has been to boost the board’s confidence. This grant together with the previous Garfield Weston revenue grant has taken us from pessimists worrying about how soon we would have to close the centre to being confident of the centre’s long-term viability. We still have many funding challenges but we are able to approach them with optimism now.}
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“\[
\text{We have noticed new motivation in staff and volunteers, there are more funds available for youth work activities and the young people are keener to take part in activities and have a renewed pride in the building. It has been a busy year but the renewed vigour and energy has definitely changed the way we work and has brought new members into the centre.}
\]

“\[
\text{The difference the refurbishment project has made to our centre has been amazing... Not only have we increased usage, but our staff and volunteers are enjoying our new surroundings and it has really given everyone a huge lift.}
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The impact on self-worth of beneficiaries is a further non-monetary outcome of WAF funding. This is spelt out clearly by a project for homeless people, which received funding to upgrade the shower room and toilets: “We cannot thank you enough for being willing to trust us with a sum of money that has allowed us to do something special to an area (or rooms) which don’t often get much attention in buildings – whereas people in their homes invest in their toilets and bathrooms heavily. We have really taken a massive step forward in creating a home of hospitality in the heart of the city.”

The same sentiment is expressed by an organisation that received funding for a new van and building improvements: “We are able to offer more professional and organised community projects, giving users a clear message they are valuable and worth good quality!”, and by a community voluntary action group: “It means someone else cares and that it is acknowledged that everyone deserves a place that is safe, warm and well looked after.”

6. Increased demand: a challenge and an opportunity

One upshot of improved facilities and extended services is greater demand from those whom the organisations serve. For example, grantees who received funding for new minibuses report not only being able to transport a larger number of people but also not having to turn away those with greater mobility issues. Other examples include improved heating enabling buildings to be used year-round (one scout group reported: “previously we have had to cancel meetings during very hot or very cold weather”), and outdoor coverings enabling extended use of recreational grounds. Renovated buildings are attractive to more users, and WAF grantees report an increase in bookings from regular and one-off users: “potential users are impressed with the better kitchen and audio-visual facilities. This is beginning to attract new groups.” And a community centre with refurbished facilities reports this has encouraged new services to start: “e.g. a mental health out-of-hours crisis service four nights per week. We are now being used seven days per week, from 9am-11pm.”

Becoming better placed to meet the needs of the local community is a key driver for applicants, and a source of great satisfaction for those who receive funding. But it can also highlight other gaps in provision such as the need for more volunteers. A scout group who got funding to renovate their building explained: “We have had an increase in the number of youngsters wanting to join the group. Unfortunately, we haven’t received the same level of interest in adults wanting to volunteer as leaders.”

The shortage of volunteers, and pressure on those few who are willing to give up their time for free, is commonplace in the kind of small, volunteer-run organisations that won WAF grants. This is especially the case in rural areas where ageing populations struggle to sustain local facilities. This situation can be unintentionally exacerbated as a result of receiving funding when the new project requires extra effort to implement, in addition to keeping normal services running. As a scout group who won a grant to build a new hut explained: “to undertake a project like this whilst people hold down full-time jobs places extreme pressure on a small group of people.” The leaders of an organisation that got funding to renovate a playpark express a similar sentiment: “It is hard work with very few people.”

Organisations may not only have a shortage of time and bodies but also lack the requisite skillset to implement their project. The skills required for managing a capital project are not necessarily held by existing staff and volunteers, as a community
organisation noted: “Managing a large building project is new to all of us.” Another example also highlights the strain on capacity that a capital project can involve. A day centre upgrading bathroom facilities noted that: “Keeping tabs on, liaising with and pinning four or so contractors for lead times is a job in itself.”

Some grantees have managed to use the opportunity of the WAF grant to attract new volunteers with relevant skills. A different scout group, which also has funding for a new hut, described their response: “We have been using social media to recruit volunteers to take part in building the wooden frames for the building, over five days we have over 30 people currently signed up to work on the project... We have recruited about 30 new volunteers to the organisation, this will be short-term volunteering where they will do some of the building work but we are hoping that some will turn into longer term volunteers who get more involved in the running of the scout group.”

Another scout group is taking a more long-term perspective, seeing their new facilities as a recruiting tool: “As a result of the new building and the exceptional facilities we now have we are now witnessing more adult helpers coming forward.”

A community library that received funding to install a disability-compliant toilet also found this useful for retaining helpers: “The library is a more pleasant place for a volunteer to work – many of our volunteers are elderly and the new toilet was essential.” Whilst a community centre which received funding to make its building more accessible reported: “We have attracted two or three new volunteers to work at our reception desk.”

Organisations that received funding to buy new vehicles frequently report a positive impact on both the happiness of current volunteers and the ability to attract new volunteers.

An organisation that received funding for a new wheelchair-accessible minibus reported that:

There has also been a significant increase in the number of high calibre volunteers coming forward to drive or assist on our minibuses but who have additional skills and backgrounds in areas that will benefit our organisation... Nine new volunteer drivers and passenger escorts and one new trustee have been recruited.

A number of projects working with children report attracting more volunteer helpers and coaches, who became aware of the existence of the organisation as a result of the WAF grant – either seeing building works taking place or hearing about it through print, broadcast or social media. Raised profile and awareness is explored in the next section.

7. Profile raising and knowledge sharing

Almost all (95%) grantees felt that local awareness of their organisation had been raised as a result of receiving WAF funding.

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<th>Profile of funded organisations</th>
<th>Percentage of grantees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, profile has been raised locally as a result of WAF</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile has not been raised locally as a result of WAF</td>
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All grantees are provided with a ‘toolkit’ by the Garfield Weston Foundation to help them undertake PR and media work. Whilst some organisations report success in achieving coverage as a result, not all found this useful, partly due to lack of people power to undertake PR activities but also due to a perceived lack of interest by local news organisations in covering ‘good news’ stories.

A handful of grantees managed to engage support from local high-profile celebrities, which helped to attract interest. One scout group hut will be opened by a well-known comedian who comes from the town: “We are very excited because... this will be our opportunity to showcase our achievements to the wider community.” And a community centre has received ongoing support from a local sportsman: “We also had a visit from a football legend who will be attending the official opening.”

Most often, grantees report that positive visibility and word of mouth are the best methods for raising awareness and attracting interest. This is easier when new or improved facilities are noticeable to the local community, as is the case for a scout group: “The whole area around our building has been transformed, previously our property was an eyesore”. A village hall reported: “the new play area has been greeted with terrific enthusiasm, not only by members of our village community (population 1,200) but by residents and families of adjoining villages too”.

A number of projects working with children report attracting more volunteer helpers and coaches, who became aware of the existence of the organisation as a result of the WAF grant – either seeing building works taking place or hearing about it through print, broadcast or social media. Raised profile and awareness is explored in the next section.
A community association that received funding for a playpark with outside toilet explain how word can spread to attract beneficiaries, who also boost the local economy: “The playpark opened mid-July and has already attracted far more visitors than we had anticipated. People are making a day trip to the island just to visit our new improved playpark. It has brought a large number of people to the island who might not otherwise have visited.”

Boosts to the local economy are reported by a number of grantees including one for a community centre extension: “We decided very early on in the project to use all local tradespeople so that the community and wider community felt they had a part in the build and project, this has worked extremely well as from the start these tradespeople have had a vested interest in the project and the build being a success.”

A village hall explains that the ‘upfront’ payment of the WAF grant and the lack of prescription on how to spend the money has enabled them to involve and inspire a larger number of local people: “Receiving this grant has energised our community. More villagers are using the hall and everyone takes a pride in it. In particular the flexible way in which we have been able to use the grant has enabled us to employ local tradespeople, this is much cheaper than employing large contractors and has given us more control (and learning), so it helps our local economy.”

A youth group took a user-centred approach which has also resulted in greater local ownership:

> We have involved young people and parents in the design of the application and we have included them at every step of the way. The empowerment of local people in creating a space that they believe will benefit families has been at the heart of this project.

Such wider benefits are reported by many grantees, but are not easy to capture as outcomes because they involve intangible factors, such as “increased community spirit”, or long-term and wide-ranging impacts on mental, physical and social health, such as “the children play more”, “healthier eating” and “greater wellbeing”. The precise scope and ultimate impact of these benefits could only be measured at great cost, both the financial costs of collecting data and the cost in terms of time and input from staff, volunteers and beneficiaries participating in a very long-term evaluation process. Even were funders and fundees willing to bear these costs, the absence of a control group (a very similar organisation that did not get WAF funding) would make it impossible to draw firm conclusions.

The difficulty in precisely measuring the impact of WAF funding is illustrated by a community association, whose grant was to purchase their building, stating: “The full impact of the centre being awarded a grant by the Weston Anniversary Fund can never fully be measured or quantified. It has secured our future for many years and generations to come. Hopefully [we] will be here in a hundred years’ time, having supported and delivered services to thousands of people. It is no exaggeration to say that this would be down to the Garfield Weston Foundation who helped us when it was crucial in order to ensure the sale happened.”

Similarly, a child and family centre explained: “The impact this outdoor play area will have on the local community over the coming years is hard to define. The young people who were part of the application process and who were involved in helping decide on which design to go with have taken full ownership of the area and will grow up with a safe place to play, meet friends and develop their skills. During the building of the play area we had some antisocial incidents (particularly around the marching/bonfire season) but the local residents living around the new park were quick to come out of their homes to stop any damage and to ensure the play equipment was protected. They have all taken a positive interest in the development of the area and it has been a talking point in the local shops. They know the difference the park will make to their children and grandchildren and the development of the local area. This project has increased the community spirit in the area and got neighbours talking to neighbours and allowed them to have pride in their community which we are confident will increase with the years to come.”

Other grantees echo the fact that the impact of WAF funding is far-reaching and impossible to contain in a simple metric. The funding of a seemingly mundane facility such as a public disability-compliant toilet in a library means that “people with a disability and carers with babies and young children can now attend our events such as the coffee mornings, children’s activities and story times.” Another typically prosaic outcome of WAF funding – a new kitchen in a primary school – means that “children are learning more about growing food and healthy eating”. A love of books and a better diet both create lifetime benefits, in which WAF funding has played a part. In a final example of the myriad and ultimately unquantifiable benefits, a centre serving the homeless and other vulnerable people explained: “We have been able to use the new minibus to continue our programme of activities and excursions with the vulnerable adults who attend our day centre. This has included day trips to local attractions as well as to the Peak District. It is also used on weekly basis by our men’s and women’s group, to transport clients to our allotments as well as by the photography group. These all have a significant positive impact on people’s wellbeing.”
The Garfield Weston Foundation has a clear goal for this programme – that a total grant in excess of £11m would make a tangible and lasting difference in communities across the country. The data reported above indicates that this is certainly the case. Some projects are experiencing delays and increased costs, and there are valid concerns about the future sustainability of financial and volunteer support (more on this in the next and final section), but there is abundant evidence that the WAF programme has not only funded successful projects across the country, it has also stimulated a range of wider benefits including three-quarters (76%) of grantees reporting increased confidence in fundraising3, as well as further donations, new volunteers, raised morale and increased awareness and profile of the funded organisations, and sparked myriad wider benefits beyond the funded organisations and well into the future.

Knowledge sharing

The final finding from the evaluation study relates to a point that was not explicitly raised in the questions asked of grantees, but nonetheless emerged as an important theme. As grantees are small, volunteer-led organisations that often lack capacity and experience of delivering complex projects, some reported finding ways to learn from others with greater expertise, whilst others volunteered their learnings to help future applicants and grantees who find themselves in a similar position.

This comment from a village hall and community centre illustrates the extent of learning that took place from winning the award to completion: “We have developed our understanding of the whole planning application process, the legal work involved, dealings with the [local authority], contractors, surveyors, archaeological teams. Staff have developed their awareness of local community groups and what is on offer in the area and how we can work together. It has been a real learning curve.”

Similarly, a community asset preservation trust reflected on their learning curve:

“Our Trustees are much better at project management as a result of this project. We had to ensure that the building work remained on budget and this was achieved with regular meetings with contractors and careful management. Navigating the planning system and building control regulations was a learning curve.”

Rather than only ‘learn by doing’, a community centre awarded funding for a refurbishment explained how they took the initiative to get input before beginning their project: “We undertook several site visits to other centres and sports facilities prior to commencing the refurbishment work. This was very beneficial as staff and users on these sites discussed the pros/cons of their showers/changing areas, what worked and what didn’t. I would highly recommend that other organisations undertaking similar projects do this to ensure they get the very best for their centre.”

A village hall took a ‘mutual aid’ approach to learning by joining with others to share advice and experiences: “We have joined a network of local community organisations that meets regularly to exchange information, news and advice. We have given a talk at one of these to explain how we have put the project and the grant applications together and have passed on lessons learned, as we have learned from others.”

And the organisation that installed a pontoon has found itself an unintentional, but willing, source of advice to others who hope to follow suit: “We have had a number of enquiries from different communities asking us about our project as they are hoping to do the same – we are as helpful as we can be because we remember being there.”

Finally, an organisation that won funding for a new adventure playground shared three pieces of advice for future grantees about to embark on complex capital projects: “(1) Always get three quotes for capital work, there can be huge variations in quotes for work; (2) Seek advice if you are not sure about a quote; (3) Take your time do not rush into decisions when it comes to capital expenditure.”

8. Future concerns

Unsurprisingly, given the difficult financial context in which most small, volunteer-run organisations operate, the main future concern of grantees was securing ongoing funding, this was mentioned by 50% of respondents. As noted above, some highlighted that this concern arose – in part – as an unintended consequence of the grant (e.g. “Greater use will obviously mean greater running costs”). A scout group set out in more detail how these new costs arise, and the strain of ensuring they can be covered. “Because we now have a new, modern hut we will have additional equipment which will incur additional electricity charges and this includes the running costs of the CCTV security system we have installed. In addition, we also now need to pay annual rental charges for the use of the land on the recreation ground. These additional costs will be

covered by the group executive committee in their annual fundraising activities... [but there is] competition in the village for fundraising activities because people can only give and do so much.”

Other key concerns include succession planning (recruiting and retention) of volunteers and staff (mentioned by 14%); ability to meet increasing need and demand for their services (9%); and undertaking and funding ongoing maintenance of their building and project (9%).

The following final quotes from grantees illustrate the second major concern: the difficulty of recruiting and retaining volunteers, which builds on the points raised in section 6 above. This concern relates to the need to find people willing to give up their time for free, to take on the stress of being responsible for running projects, and having the right skill set. The point is well summarised by a village hall which noted:

“One area which is of concern, and I believe is a concern to many community organisations, is the need to recruit more volunteers, especially younger members. In the main our committee consists of retired people, which does not always reflect the audience we are serving.”

A church which received funding for refurbishment and a village improvement society both highlight the problem of finding volunteers willing to take on long-term leadership roles. The former explains: “It is not difficult to find volunteers to help with the day to day but when they have done, they want to be away. We need secretary, treasurer etc. and we are finding these roles more and more difficult to fill.” And the latter concurs: “Getting people to come forward to serve on the committee. We have numerous volunteers in the village but very few who are actually willing to be committee members and take on the role of Chairperson.”

The experiences, concerns, challenges and opportunities described through quotes in the above sections, are described in more detail in the following pages through six case studies of grantees, telling their story from award to completion as a WAF grantee.
Case studies

Addingham Community Library
Yorkshire & the Humber
£50,000 Weston Anniversary Fund grant, first time applicant to the Garfield Weston Foundation

“It’s been absolutely fantastic; we’ve got a super new building now. Before this funding the library was cold and damp because we were in a building built in the 1600s – well past its sell-by date! The new hub is light, airy and warm, which matters as most of our volunteers are older – we now have 20 to 30 volunteers on a regular rota.

The hub is free for groups to use and is being booked by lots of different groups – in the last few days we’ve had a singing group, people in making Christmas wreaths, a ‘rhyme time’ for little children and some older children in doing environmental activities. A lot more people are using the library too – the numbers are double what they were this time last year when we just had the good news about winning the WAF grant.

It was a lot of hard work from winning the grant to opening the new hub. We had support from the Parish Clerk but a lot still falls on the shoulders of us volunteers, especially the core group of five volunteer coordinators. We wrote the fundraising applications in the first place, and then once the building work was finished it was us volunteers who moved every book from the Portakabin into the new hub. One of our volunteer’s husband is a computer buff so we needed his help to make sure all the technology was set up right before we opened.

If I’m honest, I didn’t expect it to be so much work. I didn’t think that at 78 I’d be doing all that! But it’s given me a new lease of life and we’ve had a brilliant reaction from the people in the village. Everyone’s read about it in the local newspaper or heard about it from their friends and neighbours, so it’s all been worth it.”

LASC Childcare Services
Scotland
£107,000 Weston Anniversary Fund grant, first time applicant

“Getting this grant really lifted our spirits. We were just so delighted to be able to renovate our building where we hold a range of activities for children and for older people, including a lunch club, cinema club, bingo club, baby yoga, and before-and after-school clubs.

The building was in a bad way so we were on cloud nine when we heard that we got the funding. It’s been like a fresh start for us.

The enthusiasm from people in the local community was amazing – we had a squad of volunteers that came in to help make the extension and refurbishment happen. One lot knocked down a wall, others got to work on the community garden, and others were fantastic in helping make sure the groups ran during the build, so that we could continue providing our services without a break.

Having a lovely welcoming centre makes it easier to attract volunteers, and we really need them now as we’re now offering more services to older people, some of whom are infirm, have Alzheimer’s and need a lot of support, including help to get here from their home. We are also now able to offer vastly more respite provision for children and young people that have additional needs as we have now got the space to increase our service with the installation of the extension.

We want our clients and our volunteers to enjoy being here, and they do now feel good about being in the building. They also feel ownership because they were involved in some decisions about the new build. I think there’s also greater trust in us as a charity, they believe that we’re going to be here for the longer term – now we have a nice new building, they know we are here to stay.”
Beeston Rylands Community Association

East Midlands

£30,000 Weston Anniversary Fund grant, first time applicant

“Everything is done now and we’re enjoying our new hall. It took a few months longer than expected partly because it was project managed by a volunteer, who was trying to get the best deal from suppliers. We were lucky she was willing to take the lead as she’s a local businesswoman and did a great job taking care of sourcing and managing the suppliers for the new kitchen, bathroom and main hall.

A refurbishment like ours does take a lot of time and energy and relies on a good management team – you couldn’t do it without having the right skills on the committee, and people being willing to turn up to let the builders in and out each day! It’s only when you get stuck in that you realise how much you’re reliant on a small number of volunteers. We’re quite a tight team, and at the opening we all patted each other on the back and gave a special thanks to our volunteer project manager.

I remember the absolutely amazing feeling when we heard that we’d got the funding to improve our building. It was quite a run-down, dated, 1970s building, with a tatty main hall that didn’t inspire anyone. The newly refurbished hall is being used lots more by regular groups – like yoga, a dance class, and a cookery class for young people. We’ve also been able to respond to demand, and increase our Friday Club, which is afternoon tea and activities for the over 60s, from once a fortnight to every week.

The response from local residents and users has been amazing – we have more new and regular bookings which makes us more sustainable as we have a steadier income stream. I’m sure getting the Weston grant helped us to find other money because we got confidence from making a successful application and other funders feel reassured that we’ve already got support.

As a team we feel so positive and proud of the centre now, it is somewhere to be proud of. Having a lovely venue helps us to find and keep the volunteers that we need to run things like the youth club and the Friday Club because now it’s a warm and inviting place, somewhere that you’d want to be involved with.”

The newly refurbished hall is being used lots more by regular groups – like yoga, a dance class, and a cookery class for young people.
Exodus Project

Yorkshire & the Humber
£40,800 Weston Anniversary Fund grant, previous applicant

“Getting a substantial £40,000 grant reverberated around the whole charity – it was a boost for the staff, the volunteers and the children we work with.

We had an old dilapidated van that wasn’t fit for purpose and we asked for funding to replace that with a new van with a tail lift, which lets us move very heavy things around. We also needed a new minibus to transport the children who attend our activities. We’ve been around for two decades and the Weston Foundation has supported us for the past dozen years. In the past we’ve asked for much-needed core funding, which is essential, but the van and minibus are visible and tangible things that everyone is delighted about, they’ve both been a godsend.

We involved adult volunteers in helping choose the new vehicles, and we let the kids help name them. We have to name our vehicles because they all look identical to the children. When we have to tell them which bus to get on it’s easier to say a name than a number plate. The kids unanimously decided to call the new van Garfield! We did a lot of online research to get the best deals and are delighted that we got a two-year-old van and a one-year-old minibus with only 1,000 miles on the clock. We had to drive to south Oxford to pick it up but it’s almost new and is perfect for our needs.

Our volunteers help in all sorts of ways – they run the weekly youth clubs, the summer camps, the charity shops that raise funds for us, and they also keep the vehicles in good shape. Every week four of our volunteers – young men with learning disabilities – clean all of the vehicles inside and out to keep them in great condition. We also check the tyres, lights and windscreen wipers every week, and arrange regular mechanical maintenance – when you’re carrying children around you have to be meticulous.

Our work makes a difference to the lives of vulnerable children living in some of the most disadvantaged communities in the country. I co-founded the charity because I saw the need, but I’m not a professional fundraiser. We couldn’t do our work transforming the lives of these children, without the generosity of funders like the Garfield Weston Foundation.”

Turntable Furniture

South West
£40,000 Weston Anniversary Fund grant, previous applicant

“We took delivery of the new van just a few weeks after we heard the good news as we wanted to get it up and running as soon as possible. Every day the van goes out with a driver and two mates to deliver furniture to people in need, then when it’s empty, they collect donations of furniture – we save tonnes of perfectly good items from going into landfill. Back at base, other volunteers are getting furniture ready for delivery, and then loading the van up ready for the next day’s deliveries.

We’re all very proud of the new van – the old van was unreliable and we never knew if it would break down and we’d have to unload everything. We no longer have to cross our fingers when we turn the key in the van each morning! Having a reliable van is important so that we can keep commitments – if a company is able to give us a load of perfectly good beds that can’t be re-sold because the packaging is damaged, then we need to be sure that we can turn up to collect them when they expect us.

We have 25–30 volunteers in any one year, many of whom are in the process of rebuilding their lives for many varied reasons. They are trusted to collect donated items, and prepare and deliver furniture to people on low incomes. Last year we helped 775 families furnish their homes but our work also helps the volunteers – we see their confidence grow, they make friends and start to work as a team and they gain and improve reading and writing skills too. If you’re not going to let people rebuild their lives then you might as well throw away the key.

Getting this funding was amazing, all of us were elated: the committee, staff and volunteers. It felt like a pat on the back and acknowledgement that our work is important and worth supporting.”
Eden’s Project

East of England
£120,000 Weston Anniversary Fund grant, first time applicant

“Eden’s Centre is a place of hope and opportunity – young people come here with their stresses, strains and problems of teenage life and we help them to see hope and possibility for a future in which they can fulfil their potential. We have around 20 volunteers, without them we couldn’t function. Our busiest night is Friday when we’re supervising up to 70 teenagers so we need seven adults who are willing to give up their Friday night to provide that space for the young people. Our volunteers are amazing.

Being awarded this grant solved a huge stress and strain that we had been feeling as the leaders of the centre. For 19 years we’d paid a below market rent to a landlord who was a supporter of our work, then he passed away and in his will it said that we could buy the building for 75% of its market value so long as we could get the money together within a year. It was a fabulous opportunity to safeguard the future of the charity but it was also a highly stressful time as the clock was ticking.

As well as me there’s one other part-time staff member. Our training and expertise are in youth work, but as a small charity we just have to try and do our best with fundraising. I’ve never put as much time and effort into any application as for the Weston Anniversary Fund. The young people knew we were trying to raise the money to buy the building – there was a great big bottle for them to put coins in, we’d asked parents for help and we’d been doing local fundraising. They kept asking ‘Have we got the money yet?’, and the older teenagers, who are a bit more savvy, were asking ‘What will happen if we don’t get it?’. So it was an absolutely huge celebration when we got the good news, there was a great buzz around the place. The stress didn’t end until we completed the purchase just before the year deadline ran out – then we all breathed a big sigh of relief.”
Conclusion

Three key themes emerge from the findings and the case studies:

1. Grant-making is more than a financial transaction

Whilst grants are initially described in monetary terms (for example: “We got £40,000 from the Garfield Weston Foundation”), recipient organisations report securing many other benefits as a result of their award. Prime amongst these is the morale boost to volunteers, staff, beneficiaries and the local community, but grantees also report:

- achieving peace of mind that they can deliver a better and more reliable service
- gaining new skills such as project management
- a raised profile in the community and awareness of the organisation’s work
- an increase in the number of volunteers coming forward
- more confidence in fundraising and greater success with other donors who may view funding from a major grant-maker as endorsement that the organisation is well-run and worthy of support

2. Money is essential but not sufficient to improve communities

The money provided by the Garfield Weston Foundation is deeply appreciated and essential to make the proposed projects happen, but it is not sufficient to make a tangible and lasting difference in communities across the country, which is the central goal of the WAF programme. We therefore find:

- Whilst the first Shared Insights report focused on the struggle for small, volunteer-led organisations to write successful bids, this second report illustrates that delivering a funded project can be an even greater struggle. To put it simply, accessible toilets don’t build themselves!
- Not only does the project need to be managed from start to finish (as one case study explains, this includes something as straightforward yet difficult as finding someone to let the builders in and out each day) but the interim disruption also needs to be managed, such as finding alternative premises so that services can continue during the build.
- The findings and case studies in this report demonstrate that money can only be turned into good outcomes in local communities as a result of the hard work and dedication of the staff and volunteers who run the funded organisations.
- As successful outcomes rely on a partnership between the funder and the funded, a key contribution of the data presented in this report is to highlight the crucial role played by volunteers in the recipient organisations, whose hard work and dedication enables generous funding to be put to good use.

3. Risks are experienced by both grant-makers and grant-seekers

The power imbalance in philanthropy is well known and is usually understood to function in favour of the donor. As the popular saying goes: he who pays the piper calls the tune. However, the evaluation of this funding programme illustrates that risk is not entirely a one-sided phenomenon:

- Once the money goes out of the door, power shifts to the recipient to spend it well.
- Some projects are experiencing delays and increased costs, and there are valid concerns about the future sustainability of both financial and volunteer support.
- A minority of organisations (4%) did not provide a brief, timely update on their progress as agreed, despite being chased for this information.
- Even when grant reports are readily forthcoming, it is not always easy to capture the difference between outputs (what the money was spent on) and outcomes (what difference that made to intended beneficiaries).
- Ultimately, there needs to be mutual trust and respect, and an understanding that risk and power are shared on both sides of the funding equation, in pursuit of a better society and stronger communities that benefit all.
**Recommendations**

**Time contingency** – Organisations seeking funding to consider building into their plans a contingency for time as well as for budget, given the common experience of delays and increased costs, especially for capital projects.

**Continuity post-award** – Trustees and other key volunteers of organisations receiving grants to consider staying in post until the completion of the project, rather than seeing the award of the grant as a good moment to step aside.

**Timely and updated quotes** – To improve accuracy of budgets, quotes for capital expenditure (including all items such as architects’ fees and labour costs) to be dated no later than three months before submission of applications. Those awarded funding to source updated quotes prior to starting work and relay any changes back to their funder.

**Leveraging award to get best value from suppliers** – Grantees to take advantage of receiving funding upfront by negotiating with suppliers to get the best deal.

**Keeping contact details up to date** – Grantees to prioritise keeping the funder up-to-date with contact details when the staff member/volunteer who submitted the original application moves on, so that grant reporting and evaluation processes are not hindered by turnover.

**Buddy support** – Grantees to view each other as sources of mutual support during the implementation stage. Local ‘buddies’ could provide mutual support and advice, for example about how to undertake project management, how best to work with contractors, and how to deal with unforeseen problems such as losing key volunteers or trustees.

**Additional guidance for managing capital projects** – As many grantees lack the specialist knowledge to manage projects such as capital builds, the Garfield Weston Foundation to commission a practical guide to help small, volunteer-led organisations undertaking capital projects.