



The City Bridge Trust



## The City Bridge Trust Case Study

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### Introduction

*The City Bridge Trust is a major grant-maker, awarding grants of £15 million a year to charitable projects benefiting the inhabitants of Greater London.*

*Stewart Goshawk, Principal Grants Officer at the Trust talks about why The City Bridge Trust chooses to support and work with Charities Evaluation Services.*



### A Funders View

#### The Need

When we were set up in the 1990's the quality of monitoring and evaluation in the sector was very patchy, but given the number of grants that the City Bridge Trust makes, we set good store to monitoring.

A great proportion of our grants are for revenue funding – often over three years and we only require an annual monitoring and evaluation report before submitting the next tranche of funding. We talk to charities about monitoring and evaluation before making a grant, but it is easy for the monitoring and evaluation planning to get “lost” with staff turnover and other priorities, and monitoring and evaluation can get pushed to the side or attempts are made to do it retrospectively, but the data may not be available.

The organisations that we choose to fund are good at doing what they do, but not necessarily as good at evaluation. Generally we find that charities can do the monitoring (eg how many people they provided a service to) but then struggle to demonstrate the difference that they make.

The City Bridge Trust wanted to be a learning organisation, and not just a cash machine. We needed to get feedback from organisations on what they did with our funding, what they learnt, what was successful and how they could do it better next time to inform how we might allocate our grants in the future.

The City Bridge Trust starting grant-making in 1995 but found that we were not getting the information back that we needed to gain the learning and inform the strategy. We needed the organisations to provide the information to help us and therefore we needed to improve the skills base in the sector.

## **The Solution**

The City Bridge Trust and Trust for London (formerly the City Parochial Foundation) are jointly funding CES to increase access to its training in quality and evaluation systems by subsidising staff from organisations funded by either Trust to attend the CES training courses. Courses include *Monitoring & Evaluation, Quality, How to Collect Data, How to Analyse Data, How to Demonstrate Outcomes*

We first started supporting CES in 2000 and are currently half way through our fourth three-year grant awarded. There are no other organisations that we have funded for that long, so this demonstrates how much we value the service that CES is providing to our grant recipients.

This training not only has a direct impact on the organisations that we are funding with the lessons being applied to the current organisations, but as the individuals are benefiting from the training and taking the principles on board, they will be taking the skills with them to any new organisations that they work with in the future, further extending the benefits to sector – but obviously we really hope that they fully embed the learnings in their own organisation first.

The support for CES is part of a series of support and advice services that we have provided over the years for our grant recipients. Others have included support for the Ethical Property Foundation, Centre for Accessible Environments, and the Media Trust. We want to help the sector to do what it does better and to professionalise where needed. We really feel that CES does this and their support for monitoring and evaluation helps organisations to improve and learn, but also to provide evidence to demonstrate the value of their work and be accountable to all their funders and supporters.

## **The difference it makes**

When organisations fill in our monitoring form they are asked if they have had any training in monitoring and evaluation and if so with whom. Most of those who have had training respond with CES. However, anecdotally we can see who has and hasn't had training from the quality of information in the reports that they are submitting. We haven't done any scientific analysis of it, but we feel that we can see real improvements when representatives from the organisation have attended training.

Organisations that have had training from CES seem to better understand what they should be telling us and they have a real appreciation that they need to show the difference that they make and they know how to do it. They move on from the old "flat" reports that we use to get of the nature of '120 people attended the activity and they had a good time' to the impact of the attendance. Monitoring and evaluation has become part of the ongoing process for the charities. We are seeing better presentation and articulation of results and a more honest picture from charities which informs part of our own knowledge. We are able to share learning between

organisations, and the challenges reported can be used to inform our future grant-making.

Some organisations that we have funded to attend the CES training are building it in to their everyday work across their organisation and not just the element that we are funding and that they need to report to us on. There is evidence of charities using the learning from the training and the monitoring and evaluation to inform their own practice, but it is not yet all and it will take time for the processes to become embedded in the organisations.

The City Bridge Trust is striving to use the information it collects from the charities we fund to demonstrate the difference that it makes itself and also to influence the grant-making strategy – but the sheer weight of grants made and reports received means that we can't always analyse the information to the extent that we want to, but it is something that we are working on. We are looking to be more strategic in accumulating information, starting to take a more thematic look at our grant-making to consider the difference that it has made. The better quality of information that we are receiving as a result of the support our funded organisations have received from CES is central to achieving this aim.

We have had very positive feedback about the CES training from the organisations that we have funded, but more than that we can see the real value that the service is adding to the Trust, the charities that we fund and ultimately their beneficiaries.

We are keen to continue to support the development of monitoring practices and organisational learning and improvement. Our funding to CES confirms our commitment to evaluation in the sector. Funders need to invest more in it to ensure that charities have the skills that they need to improve and do what they do even better. Funding the work of CES adds value to our grant-making and extends its impact.

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