



BME Skills Conference

"Building Capacity through Community Asset"

27th November
Pierhead Building

BME Skills Conference Report

The BME Skills Project held its first conference on 27th November at the Pierhead Building in Cardiff and the event was sponsored by **Julie James AM, Minister for Housing & Local Government**

Speakers

Rocio Cifuentes – EYST Chief Executive - Rocio highlighted the need for the project and its inception process. From other EYST projects this need was identified, and CVC partners were invited to join the project to bring their years of knowledge and skill in capacity building and organizational development.

Amanda Carr – SCVS Director- Amanda highlighted how the project has allowed SCVS to broaden its scope of support and increase its support to BME community groups in Swansea. Amanda shared there has been a visible and tangible difference within SCVS as a result.

Lloyd Williams – Acting BME Skills Co-ordinator EYST – Lloyd shared a Project Overview of what the BME Skills project is and the model it uses. In essence, the project helps BME organisations on their development journey. Project officers can support organizations in Cardiff, Swansea, and Wrexham through our CVC partners, C3SC, SCVS, and AVOW. Organisations go through a health check, then when the needs are identified they can be matched with our project volunteers to support their development. The volunteers can either be a “Navigator” who acts as a ‘reflective friend’, or a “Specialist” who helps with specific issues.

Polish Integration & Support Centre (Wrexham) Anna from PISC spoke about the impressive growth and development of their organization. She spoke about the type of work they undertake and the high demand from the Polish Community for this support.



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Anna thanked BME Skills Project Officer Sandi (AVOW) for her support



WSSAG Wales (Cardiff) Joys shared the important work of the group in supporting Women seeking sanctuary in Wales. Joys spoke warmly about the support that the BME Skills Project Officer Leticia (C3SC) has provided. Joys highlighted the positive experience of being matched with several volunteers who have been able to support the work of the organisation with their unique skills.



Ellie Philips (Swansea) – Ellie shared her experience of volunteering with the BME Skills Project in Swansea. Ellie volunteers as a “Navigator” supporting an organization in Swansea with its organisational development. Ellie spoke glowingly about the experience and especially about how much she has learnt and developed on a personal level. Ellie



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has really enjoyed the support provided by the Eleri (Project Officer SCVS) and the chance to volunteer on a project where you can have a real and lasting impact on an organisation.



Richard Newton Consulting – Richard shared initial findings from the feedback from organisations who have been supported by the project. Groups shared that an understanding of the third sector and organisational culture was often more important than the background of the volunteer and whether it matched that of the organisation.

Key Note Speech Julie James AM, Minister for Housing & Local Government – Julie was happy to support the event and values the importance of supporting the BME community and diversity. Julie has been a longtime supporter of EYST and highlighted the work of the BAME Public Life Mentoring Scheme as a way for people to gain access to new opportunities. Julie also thanked the partners on the project for their work in supporting the BME community.



Workshop A: Community Foundation – Funding Needs (Delivered by Andrea Powell and Ffion Roberts)



Guidance on how to make an effective grant application to be eligible for a grant from Community Foundation Wales.

Top tips for completing a grant application:

Every grant has its own unique funding criteria that explains the aims for the fund, who can apply and what can be applied. The funding criteria must be read before the application process is started. When a group/organisation finds that the grant is fit for their project, they must make a solid case to apply for the grant, fill the application form and submit it within the deadline. Application must be written in simple and easily understandable language, (English or Welsh) and say as clearly as possible what the grant will be used for. E.g. “Provide tutor for twenty children between the ages of six to twelve after school club”.

Good Governance:

Community Foundation Wales sees a group/organisation’s governance as important as the project. The governing document of the group/organisation holds the core information of its operations and should be a working document that is reviewed regularly with action oriented content to qualify for a grant. The group/organisation’s constitution must have its latest set of account in income/expenditure and safeguarding policy. If this document is seen to pose a



risk through poor management of finances or people, the grant will not be awarded.

The group/organisation must explain and evidence that the project is needed (such as, community consolidations that have been held, any gathered relevant local information, project work that is on-going and the monitoring procedures). This will help to show that project beneficiaries' views are being used to shape the project offering.

The group/organisation must explain how they will show that the project has been successful, such as, formal questionnaires at start and end of project, increase in membership, video clips of beneficiaries' activities and feedback from third parties.

These supporting documents must be in order and included with the application:

- Contact Details
 - Organisation/group name
 - Address
 - Email Address
 - Contact numbers
- Information about group/organisation
 - Size of the group or organisation – providing a brief overview of the charity.
- Finances
 - Group/organisation total income received in the most recent financial year, the sources of the income. Including membership, subscriptions, grant and trading.
 - An expenditure of total amount spent in the last financial year.
 - Money held by the group/organisation that is not designed for specific purposes and has been received through donations.
- Information about the Project
 - Clear details of project activities that grant application is for.
 - Timescale of project (project must be due to begin after grant programme closing date).
 - Breakdown Cost into the different elements of project, helps to give an overview of a well-planned cost considered project.
- Supporting Documents
 - The group/organisation's governing document – (constitution) must be signed and dated



- Two years' financial documents, or for a new group/organisation financial information covering the period since it was established.
 - Things to Note
- Grant application must be for the total project cost or for a substantial majority of cost with signed terms and conditions.
- Grants will not be awarded to backdate cost already incurred prior to the receipt of grant offer.

Workshop B: **Building Communities Trust** – Harnessing the power of networks (Delivered by Rachel Harding)



Question: Why would working with other people be useful?

Discussion in pairs: Makes a good networking opportunity to find out about different services.

Skills, experience, understanding and resources – sharing.



Motivation and inspiration.

Multiplier effect – meeting one group can expand resources that way.

Sharing what works/ what doesn't work.

Problem solving and critical thinking together.

Develops your own skills – communication and knowledge, for example.

If an organisation isn't 'big enough' (for example – no HR), we haven't got the power to do everything. We can achieve scale through working with other people.

Feedback: Working with others, that's why we have come today, it's a good networking opportunity. Who can you refer people to and seek support from?

Multiplier of resources by coming together. Multiplier effect – various kinds scale, human resources etc.

Good opportunity to meet inspirational people to motivate us to do better.

Develop your communication skills.

Learn from shared experiences.

Offloading to help stress levels.

Being able to work together even though we have different opinions and ways of working.

Building strengths and working together to develop weaknesses.

Offers outside of the box thinking – through a 'different lens'.

Question: Who have you worked with that has helped you to do the work that you can deliver? Individual and project based ... What has worked well and what hasn't worked well?



Participant 1

Working with the project officer.

How has it helped? – Sent on training courses and see how to develop. ‘_____ is the bridge between me and the clients/people in need.’

What can go wrong? – Communication breaks down between me, _____ and the groups. Feeling regrets around miscommunication.

Positives – We try to actively encourage young people to BME youth club. Delivering training and playing games.

Participant 2

Well-Being project at National Charity. There are three workers on the team.

What works well? – We are all based in the same place and similar timetables. Not an issue to arrange a team meeting. People on the project are all from similar backgrounds – we are aiming the project at people like ourselves. It makes me more motivated.

Participant 3

In the third sector it feels like we are all in the sandpit making separate sandcastles. Aim is to all be together making the same sandcastles.

What can go wrong? – Not all partners are as engaged or committed as each other. Not all the partners have the same philosophical stance – makes it hard. People can be a problem, as some people just are not that good at sustained cooperation.

Workshop C: **Wales Co-op** – Mentoring, coaching and creating a culture around it (Delivered by Nicola Mehegan)



The workshop was opened by Nicola who asked participants to organize themselves into 2 lines to reflect their experience of mentoring and then discuss them with their partner.

Nicola then gave out a *pro forma* that she uses in mentoring and management sessions and the pairs were asked to pick a mentor and mentee. The mentee chose a topic and the mentor supported them through the preformat discussing the issue and supporting them to an action/solution.

Nicola discussed with the group this model of mentoring which could be used as a management tool where staff/mentee became empowered and solution-focused.

The group were asked to identify next steps for them and these included:

- Make coaching/mentoring more of a standard process – currently depends on individual



- **Management by walking** is a good motivator in meeting targets
- Measure performance compared to individual progress and development
- To encourage experienced staff to mentor
- Listen to employees' needs
- Communication skills between coach and coachee
- Learning from each other
- Being confident about what you want to do
- Respect people you are coaching

Workshop D: **WCVA** – Board Diversity & Recruitment (Delivered by Rajma Begum)



- Focus on board diversity in third sector boards. There is often a defensive response, or a commitment to improving diversity but no action plan.
- Vital to have an organisational 'welcome' as well as mentoring and empowerment programmes to increase confidence. You can have lots of mentoring/empowerment programmes but if the organisation is not welcoming, individuals will not stay involved for long.
- Need to have equality monitoring – in order to have evidence of the lack of diversity on boards.
- Equality and diversity is okay, but inclusion is vital.



- **Boards** should not try to diversify by having a ‘token’ member/champion. An individual cannot be representative of an entire group in society, they are an individual in their own right.
- Commitment from all levels of organisation is key. Especially the middle levels of organisations.
- Advertising of board vacancies is key. Sending vacancies to one organisation or BME individual is not good enough. Reaching people is not difficult - knock on doors, access community centres, go to where the group you are trying to reach meet!
- A feeling that unconscious bias is inherent in the recruitment/assessment process. Strong recommendation to use name-blind recruitment.
- BME communities include more than Black or Asian individuals. Need for recognition of Eastern Europeans who are a minority community as well.

Possible solutions:

- Encourage organisations to undertake a skills audit to see what skills are currently on the board, prior to recruitment for new trustees.
- Ensure term limits are adhered to, and individuals do not automatically re-stand for election.
- Some individuals may need to resign / stand down from boards to enable more diverse representation.
- Recognise that encouraging diversity on boards will take time and is a process, should be accompanied by an action plan.

Feedback



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56 people attended the conference and 35 people attended the Workshops

Feedback Questionnaire

Did you find the conference useful?

On average attendees gave 3.8 out of 5.

Do you have more knowledge about support is available?

80% of attendees said YES - they have more knowledge about the support available.

Are you more likely to seek support and advice from a source you have a not used before?

50 % of attendees said they would seek out more support, 40% said they would consider seeking more support.

What did you like about the conference?



“Open discussions”, “Raising concerns about BME Communities”

“The workshops, more of it”, “Discussions were useful, networking was good”

“the openness of the conversation and the candour with which participants spoke”

“well organised, useful workshop”, “all useful, good networking”

“Everything - meeting people from various organisations”

“Networking, meeting new people. Finding that other volunteers have got similar problems”

“The interactive nature and shared experience. Q&A was good addition”

“Individuals groups sharing experiences, skills and info about groups/organisations they work for/with”

“Interacting with other organisations and making connections”

“the open discussion, experience sharing”

“The opportunity to network with other delegates was really good. Will be following up on contacts made”

How would you rate the workshops?

Attendees rated the workshops 4.09 out of 5