

Annual Community Interest Company Directors' Report on Creating Space For You (CIC)'s Community Benefit December 2013 – November 2014

Creating Space For You (CIC) completed its fourth year of trading at the end of November 2014. The focus of the community benefit that was delivered during that year was Training4Good:

Our Aims

Training4Good aims to inspire and enable Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations to make the best possible use of the tremendous potential of their staff, volunteers and trustees; and so make a bigger difference to the people these organisations exist to help.

We aim:

- To improve the strategic planning of training and skills development in VCSE organisations, particularly in relation to volunteers
- To increase the ability of VCSE organisations to implement training and skills development for all within their organisation
- To increase access to training and skills development opportunities for VCSE organisations
- To increase mutual understanding between VCSE organisations and other sectors.

What we do

Brokerage of donated training places:

Training places are wasted every day as companies deliver training without using their full capacity. These empty places could be used to up-skill people from VCSE organisations, at little additional cost to the training provider. Training4Good has developed a unique approach which enables organisations with surplus training capacity (hosts) to offer spare places to VCSE organisations, supporting both VCSE workforce development and the host organisation's Corporate Social Responsibility work.

Additional help with strategic planning of training and workforce development

We believe that VCSE organisations will get most benefit from Training4Good opportunities if they have a clear view of what skills their

organisation needs in order to succeed; what skills, knowledge and experience their staff and volunteers already possess; and what skills gaps they need to fill. We strongly encourage organisations accessing T4G learning opportunities to undertake a skills audit.

We want to offer VCSE organisations the chance to access some intensive help with this and are developing relevant resources - including workshops, mentoring, and new online resources.

History

The idea for Training4Good was first conceived in 2012, as part of Creating Space For You CIC (CS4U) developing a programme of community benefit.

The concept was trialled with a small number of organisations in York during 2013. 25 organisations were involved in an initial event in March 2013 to raise awareness about the project and undertake 'fact finding' about stakeholder views. Operating processes were designed in April and the approach was promoted through organisations already engaged during May. A live trial of the Training4Good brokerage took place between May and October 2013. This confirmed that the approach can work, and meets a real need.

We reviewed our learning from the first stage pilot, which demonstrated that the basic methodology of the brokerage service worked. After carefully reflecting on feedback from participants, we further developed the brokerage processes and built in an 'outcomes' based evaluation system which would enable us both to quantify the overall benefits of Training4Good, and to provide individual host organisations with feedback on the benefits that have arisen as a result of their donation of training.

We recognised the need to test this approach by running a further pilot. This would ensure that our systems worked as intended; provide further robust evidence of the impact of T4G; and enable us to work with stakeholders to develop a sustainable business model for the future.

We were delighted to be awarded funding from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (£5,000) and the Big Lottery Awards for All programme (£9,025). This, together with CS4U's own contribution, made it possible for us to set up the pilot of our new processes during 2014.

2014 pilot

During 2014 we planned to:

- recruit up to 20 new 'host' organisations, each of which would offer 2 or more places on at least two of their courses. These could be 'in house' courses of local companies, or courses offered free by training providers that normally charge
- enable up to 40 VCSE organisations to access the training opportunities offered by the hosts
- support VCSE organisations registered with Training4Good to think more strategically about how they plan for staff and volunteer development. We aimed to work intensively with 10 VCSE organisations to test out what works best for them, through an offer including:
 - an online diagnostic Development Needs Analysis tool
 - 2 workshops to support participants strategic approach to learning
 - up to 2 one-to-one coaching sessions per organisation
- Thoroughly test our operational and evaluation systems, so that we can demonstrate the value of our approach and continue to improve it.
- Develop a sustainable business plan for Training4Good so that we can roll it out more widely in 2015 and beyond.

Progress

The pilot progressed well during the first half of 2014. During this time we:

- further developed the integration of our evaluation processes with a new online brokerage system and associated back office systems, undertook initial testing (funded)
- promoted the Training4Good concept to potential hosts and beneficiaries (funded + £3000 in additional time from Directors given in kind = 6 days at £500 per day)
- held a stakeholder event involving 12 hosts and 16 recipient organisations, to promote the service and obtain user feedback. A further 18 organisations expressed interest in and support for the project but were unable to attend the event. (funded + £5000 in additional time from Directors given in kind = 10 days at £500 per day)

- Produced a comprehensive handbook for users explaining the T4G principles and operational policies (funded)
- Held one-to-one meetings with potential host organisations to secure their involvement - including strong interest from potential major supporters e.g. City of York Council (funded)
- undertook initial market research on users' perceptions of costs and value, leading to the formulation of preliminary ideas for a viable business model. (funded)
- Began recruitment of the cohort of 10 organisations to receive additional support. (funded)
- Developed concepts and a framework for the Development Needs Analysis tool and workshops. (funded)
- Total additional contribution to project in Director's time: £8,000

Interruption to project

In the summer of 2014, an unexpected change in the family circumstances of a key CS4U Director (requiring a move away from York) resulted in a significant delay to the project. After careful consideration, and discussion with the project's funders, we decided to put the pilot on hold until the end of 2014. Stakeholders were informed that we expected to restart activities in early 2015.

In January 2015 CS4U Directors reviewed the project plan in the light of current circumstances. We considered a variety of options for completing the work. Our main concern related to the timescales: the Awards for All funding carried a final deadline for completing the project of 31 July. We regretfully concluded that the enforced delay now meant that it would not be possible to re-engage stakeholders and complete the planned project activity to our satisfaction within 6 months.

We therefore agreed to halt the pilot and return the unspent portion of the T4G funding to the funders.

Whilst this is very disappointing, the work that was completed has been very valuable in progressing our understanding of what will work well in future.

Learning from the work undertaken:

- Demonstrated there is a genuine interest in the project by engaging organisations from the Third Sector, public sector and private sectors, along with support in principle from Leeds LEP

- We clarified what was needed by stakeholders in order to engage and participate, including:
 - Developing the framework for a Development Needs Analysis tool that could be used by organisations wanting to involve their staff in training, to make sure the training was in line with their strategic plans and would support the organisation's development effectively
 - Identified the commercial benefits the hosts were looking for, including working in line with some of their existing targets that we were previously unaware of
- Clarity about the resources required in order to run the project effectively:
 - The quality of administrative staff required to be able to use the current systems effectively, as they are bespoke
 - Consistent follow up with hosts and beneficiaries using a range of approaches including email, telephone and face to face visits depending on the organisational requirements
 - Extensive marketing required to promote concept to a point where stakeholders are interested in finding out more
 - The importance of personal meetings to enable organisations to register effectively and in line with the outcomes framework requirements
- Clarity about how we would progress the project in the future
 - We would develop the Development Needs Analysis further, pilot it and review its success before making it widely available
- Clarity about potential business models that could make the project sustainable:
 - Gained information about what stakeholders may be prepared to pay on a one off or ongoing membership basis

Future plans

We remain committed to the principle of T4G, believe in it as a viable concept, and aim to restart it when CS4U resources allow, building on what we have learned so far. This will be kept under review as part of the CS4U ongoing business planning process.

In the short term, we intend to complete the Development Needs Analysis tool as time permits over the coming year, and integrate this with CS4U's wider offers to the sector around leadership skills.

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Creating Space For You (CIC) has contributed £8,000 to upskilling the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors around York and North Yorkshire in the year 2013/2014, bringing our total community contribution to £101,332 over the last 4 years.

