TRANSCRIPT: SOCIAL RESPONSE CYCLE RESOURCE

SECTION THREE FUNDING SOCIAL ACTION ENTERPRISES

Funding social action enterprises

Later on, there is an opportunity to try out the process of applying the Social Response Cycle in order to access funding via a sample funding bid. This section prepares you for that exercise.

I have found it helpful to use the Social Response Cycle, which generates practice-derived evidence rather than more traditional evidence-based practice, when evidence is not readily available. Research projects may receive thousands, even millions of pounds, while the funding available for services is considerably smaller. Funders rightly require evidence of need, but conventional sources of evidence are not always necessary. I mentioned in the Introduction that we spent money on a feasibility study when Mothertongue was established. It was that experience that led me to the development of the Social Response Cycle so that we could save the money spent on formal research to find the evidence and plough that resource into the service while finding the evidence as we went along.

 Funders are anxious to minimize spending money on enterprises that risk failure. But they may be prepared to invest very small amounts of money for trial projects. This type of investment is suitable for Social Response Cycle initiatives. The Social Response Cycle produces pilot projects – starting with small, untried service delivery methods, keeping the risk small by keeping the projects very small.

EXAMPLE

An example of a pilot service could be a satellite counselling service in one GP’s surgery where the only costs are the counsellor’s and supervisor’s fees. For £2000 this could be trialled for 6 months. The practice-derived evidence from this pilot can show the evidence of real need, evidence of take up of the service, and evidence of its effectiveness, while at the same time, delivering over 70 hours of counselling. On the strength of such a pilot trial, major funding could be applied for, in order to run a full-blown service. In my experience, evidence of need, service delivery and effectiveness prove a convincing combination for many funders.

 Your ambition may be different. You may want to create a discrete project, not a whole organisation. Here is an example from my own experience, which I will describe according to the phases of the Social Response Cycle.

OBSERVE   
In 2018 I decided to respond to my observation that most spoken language interpreters had no support available for them even though they were at high risk of vicarious traumatisation, because of the sensitive material they heard and relayed.

RESPOND

My response took the following form. I created a small organisation so that I would be able to apply for funding. I opted for a Community Interest Company rather than a charity as it is a much simpler legal structure <https://www.gov.uk/set-up-a-social-enterprise> .

As a result, I was able to apply for and receive funding to offer a free, year-long, reflexive support group for volunteer interpreters with a small charity, which supported immigration detainees.

EVALUATE   
I included feedback mechanisms for the group participants to record their experiences of participating in the groups. I obtained the feedback halfway through the year so that I would have time to apply for continuation funding if it was necessary. From these evaluations, it became clear that a) the interpreters wished to continue with the support groups once the funding ended and b) the interpreters were interested in a development opportunity. They wanted to be trained to run their own support groups.

RESPOND

With this feedback, I was able to apply for and access further funding before the project ended. The funding enabled the group to continue and for the support to be offered to another two groups.