New
Philanthropy
Capital

Consulting services for charities

This is a turbulent time for the voluntary sector. More and more people need charities' help, yet funding is diminishing. So how can charities rise to the challenge in 2012?

At best, charities are having to prioritise activities. At worst, they are developing strategies for survival. But at the same time, they need to remain focused on creating a real difference in people's lives.

A clear and convincing strategy, together with strong capacity and infrastructure, will help charities to direct scarce resources and convince stakeholders of their merit. Keeping track of impact will help charities improve their services and demonstrate their worth to funders.

'NPC's analysis was the best thing that happened to us last year. Although at first it wasn't the feedback we wanted to hear … we have now changed what we are doing and have much greater clarity and direction of travel.'

Director of a disability charity

Approved Consultant 2011 ncvo

www.philanthropycapital.org

How we can help

NPC helps charities to create a greater impact, whether it is through dealing with strategic challenges, thinking about opportunities for merger or collaboration, assessing governance, or upgrading measurement processes.

We are independent and objective, and can tailor our work to suit your needs and budget—from formal reports to facilitated workshops to informal presentations. We can help with:

1. Strategic planning
2. Improving your organisation
3. Measuring, analysing and communicating impact

NPC's aim is to create a world in which charities and their funders are as effective as possible in improving people's lives and creating lasting change for the better. It is by helping you to improve your services and increase your impact that we can deliver our mission.

'We now have a common measurement framework, which allows us to be more responsive to the needs of the people we work with. NPC worked alongside us … and they made it fun. This could have been a dry piece of work but it wasn't.'

Donald Findlater, Deputy Director, Lucy Faithfull Foundation

What makes NPC different?

NPC is the leading voice on impact in the voluntary sector.

- **We understand the context in which UK charities operate.** We are a respected commentator on big sector issues, such as cuts, mergers and trusteeship.
- **We are experts in measuring and communicating impact.** We help charities measure their results, communicate their impact, and make the most of the data they collect.
- **We have a detailed knowledge of social issues.** We have carried out in-depth research into dozens of issues, from youth crime and child abuse to homelessness and palliative care.
- **We are experts in analysing charity effectiveness.** We have analysed hundreds of charities and developed a groundbreaking charity analysis framework, set out in *The little blue book*, for all kinds of charities.
- **We bring people together and shape debate in the sector.** We run our own training and events, we have a high profile in third sector press, and we have published an extensive library of reports and opinion pieces on our website and blog.

1 Strategic planning

The environment that charities work in is constantly changing. To tackle poverty, illness, prejudice and crime in the best way possible, charities need to have vision, goals and a clear strategy for success.

Our strategic planning work with charities often falls into one of these areas:

- **Market research:** We can help you to understand the context in which you work, including the needs you are addressing, other charities in the field, and the funding environment.
- **Building a strategy:** We can help you focus your mission, articulate your vision and work out the best path to achieving them.
- **Developing an 'impact chain':** We can help you think about how to work with other charities in the sector to achieve better results.

Community Service Volunteers (CSV)

CSV, the UK's leading volunteering charity, asked NPC to investigate sustainable funding and come up with a plan for CSV to increase its capacity.

We focused on six high-impact programmes, assessing each to determine their eligibility for statutory funding, potential to result in savings for government, and ability to generate unrestricted income. We then analysed CSV's measurement systems in detail.

Our report included actions that CSV could take to attract funding and recommendations for investing in impact measurement. CSV has used the report to secure new funding.

NationalNumeracy

In 2010, NPC published *Count me in*, a report about the state of numeracy in England. We recommended that a new organisation should be created to promote more positive attitudes towards numeracy and identify and scale up successful approaches to tackling poor numeracy. This new organisation would also lobby government and critically assess the government's performance in improving levels of numeracy.

Following our research, we brought together a steering group of experts, charities and funders who created a business plan based on a wide consultation process.

As a result of this work, a new charity—NationalNumeracy—is now being established.

2 Improving your organisation

In a difficult funding climate, charities need to make the most of their resources and prioritise activities for maximum impact. A strong team, effective governance, good financial management and results measurement all contribute to a charity's ability to create improvements in people's lives.

NPC's charity analysis framework in *The little blue book* forms the bedrock of our support for organisational improvement. We can provide:

- In-depth, independent reviews to determine where you are effective and where you could improve.
- Analysis of key areas, such as governance, finances or results measurement, with recommendations for action.
- Support in thinking about organisational challenges, helping management teams grapple with difficult issues.

'Not only did NPC's analysis provide us with constructive challenges that helped move our thinking on, the media coverage we received from the report … has directly led to the acquisition of new donors.'

Jason Suckley, Director of Fundraising, Scope

Sue Ryder

Sue Ryder is a national charity providing care to people living with long-term and end of life conditions. The charity recently commissioned NPC to carry out an organisational review.

We visited several projects and interviewed management and trustees. We found Sue Ryder to be well-run, progressive, and unafraid of making difficult decisions. It also embraces opportunities for improvement.

The chief executive, Paul Woodward, described the resulting report as *'agenda-setting'*. **He told us,** *'NPC's report … gave the senior management and trustees lots to think about. The report is going to be a really valuable document when out fundraising. Funders won't have to take our word for it.'*

Exeter Community Initiatives

Exeter Community Initiatives (ECI) is an unusual community organisation. It works to improve the lives of local people by incubating new projects that then become independent.

ECI asked NPC to help it plan its strategy for the next three years. Our analysis highlighted ECI's strengths and suggested areas for improvement—for example, it could find a better way to track the impact of former projects.

The acting director, Matt Bell, told us: *'The end result is a very clear report that highlights what we are doing well and where we need to improve. This will be helpful both to our internal improvement processes and to current and future funders.'*

3 Measuring, analysing and communicating impact

Charities exist to change people's lives for the better—they want to create an impact. They would also like to be able to prove their impact, especially as funding is increasingly being driven by evidence.

But being able to capture impact and analyse it in order to improve and develop can be far from straightforward. Funders' requirements often differ from what a charity would choose to measure for itself, and an emphasis on hard outcomes can underestimate the true value of a charity's work.

NPC can help you measure, analyse and communicate your impact. We can:

- Develop measurement frameworks and tools.
- Carry out independent evaluations and economic analysis.
- Help groups of charities to share measurement.
- Improve your impact reporting.

'[NPC's] analysis is directly attributable to the strengthening of our charity ... The report has been a really invaluable tool not only in developing our strategy but also how we can engage with funders about what we do.'

Jodi Manning, Operations Director, Just for Kids Law

Mind

Mind is a national mental health charity that provides a whole range of activities, from lobbying government to providing information for people who experience mental health problems. Many of its services are delivered through 180 independent Local Minds.

Mind commissioned NPC to develop an evaluation framework to help it better understand its impact. We looked at Mind's existing evaluations, spoke to staff and developed a model to show how the charity achieves its aims. We created an impact measurement plan and a set of tools.

Mind then asked NPC to develop a framework to enable Local Minds to measure their impact. Seven are now piloting the framework.

Laureus

The Laureus Sport for Good Foundation asked NPC for help finding good evidence of the economic value of sports projects that tackle youth crime.

After researching the economic case for investing in sports-based interventions, we did a cost-benefit analysis of three projects: Kickz, The Boxing Academy and 2nd Chance. We gathered outcomes data and costs from each project, and interviewed project staff and young people who had been through the programmes.

We found a positive return on investment for all three projects. The resulting report attracted national press coverage, and Laureus is using it to make the case to government for greater investment in sports-based projects.

Thoughts for 2012

NPC is supporting several developments that help the sector address the challenges and opportunities of the current environment.

Shared measurement

Charities can struggle to develop their own impact measurement frameworks. In many cases, they could develop better quality tools in a simpler way by working with other charities and funders to discuss which outcomes to measure and how to measure them in common ways.

Shared measurement applies to charities that use similar activities to help a particular group of people—for example, using mentoring to help disadvantaged young people.

Impact chains

Charities often try to understand their impact in isolation from the other organisations that help the people they are trying to reach. But they could make even more of a difference in people's lives by working with partners in their 'impact chain'.

An impact chain includes organisations with all sorts of activities that help to deal with the same problem—for example, health care, housing support and education can all help to tackle homelessness.

Theories of change

A theory of change shows a charity's path from needs to outputs to outcomes to impact. It describes what a charity wants to achieve and how it plans to get there. At NPC, we believe that clear, simple theories of change are the foundation of every charity's ability to achieve impact. Without them, it is hard to work out how well a charity or sector is doing and how to improve.

Financing models

The growing social investment market may present opportunities for charities to accelerate expansion. But understanding new models and risks will be key to sustainability and long-term success.

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About NPC

NPC is a charity consultancy and think tank dedicated to helping funders and charities to achieve a greater impact.

We provide independent research, tools and advice for funders and charities, and shape the debate about what makes charities effective.

Find out more at **www.philanthropycapital.org**

What next?

For more information on NPC's services, please contact Casey Stander on **020 7620 4850** or **cstander@philanthropycapital.org**

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