

Community Foundation Sustainability: Co-Creating a Shared Understanding of the Concept (part 2)



This report presents discussions and conclusions from the 2nd Sustainability Roundtable held on 3 Feb 2021. It should be read as an addendum / part 2 of the first Roundtable held on 4th Dec 2020 (available [here](#)). It offers additional and broader perspectives and insights from 18 participants from eight community foundations (CFs), eight community foundations support organisations (CFSOs), and one observing foundation, from, Austria, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Nepal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain U.K. and Zimbabwe.

Major contextual and long-term challenges to CF organisational sustainability and topics for further collective exploration and sharing

Participants affirmed the major contextual and long-term challenges that influence community foundation organisational sustainability identified in the first roundtable i.e.

1. Relating to funding context and fundraising practices.
2. Shaping the relationship of the community foundation with the community it serves.
3. Concerning managerial strategic choices and operational ones.
4. Digital challenge and its potential contribution to sustainability.



Community Foundation Sustainability Workshop. Visuals Marina Rosa from SenseTriba

This strengthens the idea of how similar the challenges are, across contexts and cultures and how much more efficient and stronger we can be if we learn and share together. A few issues emerged from the conversations in relation to the role of the two entities in the ecosystem - community foundations and support organisations.

For **community foundations** a lot of the questions revolved around the new order of things, or the 'new normal' post Covid. For example: what are the trends? How will a



How IS LIFE GOING TO LOOK LIKE POST-COVID? How CAN CFs SUPPORT THE "NEW NORMAL" CHALLENGES?

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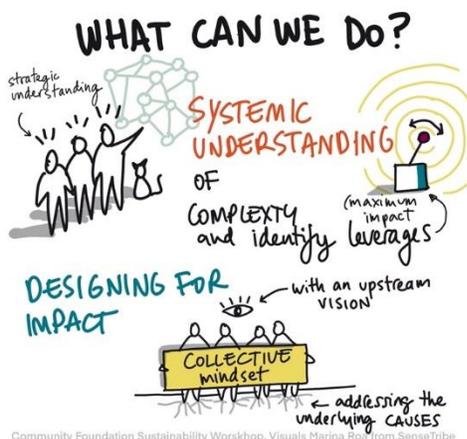
CF look like in the 'new normal'? How to build on relationships and partnerships created during the pandemic to produce new opportunities going? How to refine in a collaborative way what the post Covid priorities/themes for funding should be? And although some feel Covid-19 is still in focus and that they continue to be in response & recovery some are also asking whether the existing issues are due to the pandemic or have just been worsened by it?

As for the **community foundations support organisations** the discourse and questions debated have been in connection to their role of support, like: how can we as CFSOs effectively advocate for unrestricted funding? How can we support partnerships better in navigating the Covid context? How can we better make the case for CFs as local key actors, with other funders? How do we, as CFSOs, support in this particular moment, CFs that are rethinking themselves? There have also been questions around what can be done differently? What other assets can be leveraged? How to reach different people, audiences (young people, migrants, excluded communities)? And how could we achieve strength through collaboration/clustering and to identify a common vision and voice.



How CAN WE SUPPORT PARTNERSHIP IN NAVIGATING THE COVID CONTEXT?

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What we can do together?

Participants suggested that it would be of value to them to address and discuss more in depth the questions raised in the group talks, while others expressed an interest to participate in online meetings where we could make use of the collective knowledge and an idea or challenge would be posed beforehand and it could be scrutinized by the participants.

Take-aways and next steps

Based on feedback from the meetings and a further consultation with national CFSOs we are working to design different initiatives to support continuous learning and exploration of the many specific parts related to sustainability.

We have noticed suggestions of a strong connection between resilience and well-being of communities with the sustainability of the community foundation as well as the broader field of support. One very critical question that was posed during discussions was: “how can community foundations contribute to the greater resilience of the community when they are struggling themselves to be resilient?” While some questions seem rather philosophical or a bit larger than life, there is a clear interest on approach topics from a very practical point of view and we strive to achieve balance in our peer-learning events between mapping topics and issues but also on providing practical examples and case studies.

Apart from the short-term thematic meetings of 2021, in the medium term our ambition is to create a space for sharing of practical experience and for building a resource of knowledge relevant to sustainability of community philanthropy in the next couple of years.

And although this year will most likely be a year of online learning, sharing and connection, we notice a growing positive attitude to digitalisation and we can all strive to make use of the opportunities it creates.



DIGITALISATION
is helping us in
many ways!

Community Foundation Sustainability Workshop, Visuals Marina Roa from SenseTribe

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