

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Progress Update

June 2023

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1 REVIEW OF PROGRESS AND CURRENT PLANS

Introduction

The 2022-2024 Strategic Plan has been developed to accelerate our ongoing mission to enable women to be financially resilient by tackling the root causes of gendered poverty as well as continuing to respond to immediate needs. Currently c.70% of our funding is targeted at immediate needs and c. 30% at root causes / systemic work.

At the heart of this plan is a pro-active approach to equity, diversity and inclusion, where we have articulated the following key elements/activities as:

- Increasing available funding from our investments
- Trust-based funding
- Shifting power
- Developing an EDI Action Plan / “statement of intent”
- Working in partnership to deliver our mission

In this paper we will highlight progress that has been made taking into consideration the main activities above, areas where there are still gaps or have been more difficult to implement and ongoing responses to the EDI Audit recommendations.

This paper reports progress under the following headings:

1. Grant-making and external partnerships
2. Board development, governance and accountability
3. Staffing and internal culture
4. Historical investments

1.1 GRANT-MAKING AND PARTNERSHIPS

Summary of progress

We have developed and implemented a **gender-lens grant-making framework** as part of the Strategic Plan – this takes an intersectional approach to our grant-making and includes outcome goals such as system transformation, supporting partners to take a gender-lens approach, flexible funding and supporting networks and communities to be more resilient.

We have invested £2.1 million in place-based initiatives (Coventry, Birmingham, Manchester, Middlesbrough) with the intention of shifting power and challenging the (local) systems that keep women in poverty.

Two examples within the place-based programme where we are **shifting power** include:

Middlesbrough – in partnership with Turn2Us and Buttle UK we will be starting the co-design process with local communities for a local gendered poverty programme in January 2023. One key learning from this work is that we have had to build trust and create safe spaces over the past 4-6 months as a stepping stone before we even embark on any co-production process. This work is intensive and requires not only different ways of thinking but the allocation of quite significant non-grant resources.

WoW - Women of Wythenshawe (Manchester) – WoW's entire approach is 'bottom-up co-production'. In the first 6-12 months, women will engage in dialogues within their own familiar settings about the issues affecting them and other women in their community and will begin also to meet with women from other groups to share some of the issues they are facing and build relationships of trust with each other. At least one woman from each group will also be supported to attend and participate in WoW Steering Group meetings from month 1.

By month 12, women will have been supported to draw out issues and only after this is when partners will be invited into the process - when women have identified their critical concerns and are ready to consult others who may know more about particular policy arenas and opportunities. This is not about rejecting professional expertise – it is about recognising and valuing different forms of expertise and bringing them into dialogue on a more equal platform once women have had the time and space to set their own agenda and priorities.

WoW members will then be supported to go back out to the women in their own memberships, local areas, or service user communities to consult more widely on the issues under discussion, seeking their views and priorities and feeding these into the process.

The **Community grant partners** (CGPs) are a core element of delivering our strategy, currently c.30% of the overall grants budget is devolved to them where they have autonomy on awarding onwards grants to individuals and on how they allocate the contribution to their overhead/operating costs. We have re-funded existing community grant partners to a value c.£2.7 million over the next three years.

This programme won the Grant-making category at the 2022 Charity Awards.

Last year we launched an interim **Cost of Living Fund for individuals targeted at women who are most at risk of poverty** – this was based on evidence and research from the Women’s Budget Group. This Fund has been particularly successful at targeting women with no recourse to public funds and disabled women.

A large number of processes have been either changed or streamlined in recent years to make them more inclusive, some recent examples include:

- We amended our grant-making to individuals’ criteria so that women with no recourse to public funds were prioritised
- We auto-caption grant application webinars and provide signed webinars
- We accept grant applications in a language other than English
- We have increased the overall CGP annual maximum award and increased individual flexibility around the split of funding to grants and admin/overhead support (previously it was a blanket 80/20)
- We pay fees for ‘lived expertise’ when we have been organising workshops with grant partners

In terms of external partnerships we have worked with other funders such as Turn2Us and Buttle UK to develop a gender-lens approach to grant-making for the co-designed programme in Middlesbrough.

In the last 6-8 months we have secured £6 million of external funding where we have been able to make the case to provide additional funds to specialist women’s services through Smallwood and present ourselves as a trusted partner.

We have also strengthened our working relationship with Rosa UK, the only other major specialist ‘women only’ funder in the UK. The Impact Report for our joint Women Thrive Fund is due to be published shortly.

What are the next steps with grant-making and partnerships?

Overall c.45% of beneficiaries are women from Black, Asian and minoritised communities, though not all of the services that are accessed by these women are led by Black, Asian and minoritised women.

Currently 30% of our funds are awarded to organisations led by Black, Asian and minoritised women. These organisations receive about 20% of the funding, so over the medium term we are committed to ensuring that we close this gap.

There are also some gaps in our funding for specific ethnicities which we will also continue to collect data on to understand and further target our funding.

Overall, c.20% of organisational beneficiaries are disabled women with 45% of individuals receiving grants through the Cost of Living Fund reporting they have a disability. However the percentage of our grant partners which are disability led is 4%. This has increased slightly from 2%. We should note that disabled women-led organisations are likely to be more informal (for example with no written constitution) so we will need to take a different approach including reviewing existing criteria that may exclude these informal groups and also working with larger disability orgs that are not necessarily gender specific.

In terms of age we are quite well-balanced across the portfolio.

However only 1% of our partners are LGBTQ+ led though a higher percentage of LGBTQ+ individuals access Smallwood programmes. We do not currently routinely collect information on sexual orientation on an individual basis but we are adding this to our evaluation processes in 2023. This year we have resolved to undertake further team learning on trans-inclusion as the first steps of developing a trans-inclusion policy.

Through the TNLCF-funded **Gendered Poverty Learning Programme (GPLP)** there is huge potential to develop our approaches around what works in terms of shifting power and being more accountable to the communities we fund. The GPLP will be the umbrella for all learning and evaluation activities across all programmes but particularly for the place-based initiative and community grant partnerships.

At the time of writing we are in the process of reviewing applications that have been submitted to the first round of the Women's Urgent Support Fund, which is funded by TNLCF as a response to the cost of living crisis. This fund has a significant focus on supporting women most vulnerable to poverty. In the second round of the Fund, to be launched later this year, co-design will be a core element.

There is appetite from our community grant partners and place-based networks for peer and shared learning support. We are currently working with the community grant partners to offer more flexibility around the overhead/operating and grant-making costs.

Including the voice of women with lived experience in our strategic development and decision-making has been an iterative process which has included surveys with individual grant recipient's, workshops with organisations led by and for women with lived experience, the implementation of the Board shadowing programme and more latterly the co-design and co-production processes started through the place-based funds.

Through the Gendered Poverty Learning Programme we are looking at mechanisms (such as an operational steering group) to include women with lived experience in the strategic direction of this programme, including the staff post paid for by the TNLCF grant.

1.2 BOARD DEVELOPMENT, GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Summary of progress

In 2020, we won the 'Managing Turnaround' category of the Charity Governance Awards which acknowledged:

"Judges praised this charity's approach to governance, which gave substantive and consistent consideration to beneficiaries. Led by the board, decisions were taken to properly apply the resources of the charity for its beneficiaries. The board took brave decisions in implementing comprehensive new structures and processes, which considerably aided the Smallwood Trust in increasing its social impact. Sweeping reforms across governance and a commitment to evaluation and improving impact are aimed at ensuring that the Trust's new-found success will be sustainable."

We adopted the Charity Governance Code in 2019 and created a Governance Action Plan to set ourselves clear milestones in relation to organisational purpose, EDI, openness and accountability.

The Board approved the continuation of the Shadowing Programme for the next two years following the [evaluation](#) of the first year. This is an integral part of making our governance space more inclusive.

This year we have re-instigated the 'mission moment' at board meetings and have invited grant partners and staff to present at meetings during this section.

The decisions on Tampon Tax funding of £1.9 million, which was awarded in partnership with Rosa UK, were delegated to a Grants Panel that included women with lived experience. Similarly the place-based funding panel included a representative from the Coventry Women's Partnership.

Last year the Board participated in an EDI development session as part of the EDI Audit process. The Board away day in October 2022 had a focus on shifting power. The Board have established an EDI Sub-Committee to take this work forward.

What are the next steps with Board development, governance and accountability?

At the away day, the Board considered delivery vs strategic impact, and taking a flexible approach vs risk management. This followed a discussion on the cost of living crisis held at the Board meeting the day before.

Themes that emerged from the discussions included governmental and policy challenges, with a lack of prioritisation of women and understanding of the reality of their lived experience by decision-makers and officials, coupled with a political culture of blame (narrative such as “undeserving poor”, “troubled families”).

In tandem, with the cost of living and inflation rising, compounding previous economic impacts, there is lack of public support and challenge, and the level of philanthropic appetite has reduced.

The Board also discussed increasing destitution (no way of getting out) beyond increasing poverty (getting by) and in-work poverty due to the precarious nature of zero hours contracts, freelancing/self-employment and the gig economy. Runnymede Trust’s ‘Falling Faster’ report shows black and minority ethnic people are disproportionately falling faster and further below the poverty line amidst the cost of living crisis.

There is limited to no choice for women within the immigration system or seeking safe accommodation and the private sector is often unwilling to accommodate them.

- **Since over 45% of Smallwood Trust’s beneficiaries are women from Black, Asian and minoritised communities, it is important that the Board takes an intersectional feminist approach to its decision-making.**

The Board also considered how Smallwood Trust will continue to shift power to the communities it serves. Trustees considered the impact of EDI and a need to define what good looks like for Smallwood Trust.

- **What do we mean in practice when we talk about shifting power and intersectionality? Do we fully understand what intersectionality means?**

The Board felt it important to name elephants in the room, and to not assume that women cannot shift out of the box they find themselves in i.e. in the words of a participant in the workshop for Board Shadowees in November 2022, they can “not only survive but thrive.”

- **What are we going to do about this? Start with who we are currently working with and then look at a pipeline of new entrants?**

Shifting power is about continual learning and building trust. Do we need to be comfortable with knowing that organisations will be reliant until on us until they are more resilient? Do we want to work together with them by committing for the long haul? We also need to acknowledge that some will be ready for this kind of relationship, but others may not be in that place or don't want it.

- **What impact would a longer-term approach have on power dynamics?**

It was recommended that the EDI sub-group drills deeper into the Charity Governance Code framework, considering each of its principles through an EDI lens, using the questions above as prompts.

1.3 STAFFING AND INTERNAL CULTURE

As part of our Strategic Plan commitments, we said we will invest in our culture, knowledge, systems and skills and build our own capability to deliver on our plans.

We have appointed an external HR Adviser to help the CEO take this work forward. This has included:

- **We reviewed and updated our recruitment process and the job description and person specification for the new Programme Manager role** through an EDI lens, with competencies and specifications related to creating and leading on a stronger EDI culture – we have also engaged an inclusive recruitment agency Radical Recruit who advised and supported us on the recruitment of this role
- **We are embedding a value based approach to interviewing** by creating additional value based questions
- **We recruited our 2nd placement from the [2027 programme](#)** which seeks to place individuals with lived experience within grant-making organisations
- **Designed tailored workshops for staff** that addressed the beginning of their EDI journey, including identifying and understanding structural inequalities, identifying and understanding unconscious bias and how it manifests in the workplace, identifying what microaggressions are and how they manifest at work and engaging staff in conversations on how they would develop an inclusive work place

- **Offered 1 to 1 coaching** to staff on matters related to EDI, personal development and how to manage performance management issues
- **Engaged staff in EDI conversations by providing safe spaces.** We have done this through staff workshops, EDI month and Team day which helped consolidated the staff's EDI learning journey
- **Line management training.** We designed tailored workshops for management on how to initiate cultural change: this workshop included topics such as- how to roll out Growth Mindset initiatives and learning how to create and foster High Performance Work Cultures. These workshops were developed with an EDI lens
- **Undertook a salary benchmarking review in 2022** to ensure we are paying staff fairly, created a salary band to ensure we were addressing issues of cost of living, inflation, rewarding and retaining key staff. This resulted in Grants Assistants and Grants Managers receiving 10-15% increases on their annual salaries (plus everyone received a one of cost of living payment)

What are the next steps with staffing and internal culture?

- We are implementing a new **People Strategy** that was approved by the Board in April 2023
- **Training for SMT** to identify, understand and address issues of Power and Privilege and Allyship
- **Staff leading on EDI recommendations.** We will ask staff to identify one EDI recommendation, consider what that looks like operationally and lead on it. We will review, measure and support their progress throughout their 121's and this will also make up their appraisal and personal development process (see below)
- We have reviewed and updated our **Appraisal** process which will have a new approach that weaves the Smallwood values throughout the appraisal including EDI

Examples of the detailed work connected to the development of the People Strategy and our organisational culture include:

- **We designed a new Programme Manager role** that focuses more explicitly on shifting power, accountability and sharing learning, linking this to the Gendered Poverty Learning Programme
- In the process of developing a **Code of Conduct/Anti Bullying policy** using an EDI impact assessment framework. This would essentially mean the policy would contain a section of EDI relevant topics such as microaggressions and a different process for reporting microaggressions or other EDI related incidents that will encourage any employees suffering discrimination to come forward and feel supported. The extra EDI sections will also help employees to identify the subtleties and complexities of microaggressions
- **Review of organisational policies through an EDI lens** – this will be a separate piece of work in addition to the standard annual review of policies
- Development of a **Competency Behavioural Framework** for staff with an EDI segment of behaviour/competencies that should be demonstrated at each level

1.4 ORIGINS OF HISTORICAL INVESTMENTS

At the time of writing further research has been undertaken into our historical investments building on previous research in 2021/22.

The Board will be considering next steps and will be agreeing a timetable to publish the research.

The learning from this research will be harnessed as a further impetus to shift power across all of our work.

2 RESPONSE TO EDI AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

This is enclosed as a separate attachment. Overall we are making progress especially on grant-making, partnerships and governance.

In 2023 we have focused on building an inclusive internal culture and taking forward the relevant recommendations.

3 NEXT STEPS AND REPORTING BACK

The next phase for Smallwood is critical to enable us to move along the continuum to a fully transformative, anti-racist and anti-oppressive funder. A further update will be provided in October 2023.

Ends