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Research report 93

# The Strategic Funding Programme: An Evaluation

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and Jessica Huntley Hewitt

IFF Research Ltd



Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

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## **Abbreviations**

The following abbreviations are used in this report:

CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
DRC	Disability Rights Commission
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
SFP	Strategic Funding Programme

## Executive Summary

### Introduction

IFF Research was commissioned by the Equality and Human Rights Commission to conduct a review of its Strategic Funding Programme (SFP). This review was intended to: help determine whether the Commission had processes in place to ensure those organisations (Grantees) funded via the SFP had made proper use of SFP resources; assess whether the agreed project outcomes had been achieved and the extent to which this was attributable to SFP support; elicit grantee views on the management of the SFP and of the funding strategy and arrangements associated with it; and, based on this evidence, suggest ways in which a future grant scheme of this nature might be improved.

The SFP was designed to support organisations whose activities contributed towards meeting the strategic aims of the Commission at the national level while also helping them to achieve an impact in their local communities. In order to do this, the SFP was designed to fund individual projects which related to delivering outputs in two priority work areas:

- Priority 1: Providing guidance, advice and advocacy services; infrastructure development and capacity building.
- Priority 2: Good relations

The SFP ran between 2009-10 and 2012-13. Following its launch, over 2,000 not-for profit, voluntary and community organisations initially applied to the fund and, following a two stage assessment process, 61 organisations were selected for funding. By the end of the three year period, around £10m in total had been invested in the selected projects.

The SFP sought to unify and systematise the various grants programmes that had been run by the three equality bodies whose merger led to the creation of the Commission. It also aimed to encourage projects that were innovative and that incorporated more than one equality strand. Many projects contained an element of risk that often it difficult for the organisations who proposed them to obtain funding from alternative sources of finance. In addition, and following a consultation programme with potential grantees concerning its design, the SFP was initially intended to offer a continuous source of funding for projects.

However, during the period of the SFP's operation, three factors meant it had to be designed and managed in a particular manner. First, like all public bodies, the Commission is under an obligation to ensure the proper use of public funds and this meant, in the case of the SFP, putting in place rigorous monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure this was complied with by the organisations who received support. In addition, the Commission

itself was also subject to considerable scrutiny which also impacted on the way the scheme was administered. Finally, and mainly because of the wider public spending environment, the Commission experienced large reductions in both its budget and staffing. The main impact of this on the operation of the resulting SFP was that continuous funding could not be guaranteed and grantees had to re-negotiate this in each year of their project.

### **Methodological approach**

IFF conducted research with the participating organisations to evaluate the delivery process and the outcomes achieved by the SFP. The main aim of the research was to ensure that all the lessons that could be learned from the operation of the SFP were captured and could be used to aid the design of any similar funding scheme in the future.

The methodology for the research comprised of three key stages:

#### **Stage 1: Review of SFP documentation and interviews with Commission staff**

The first stage involved a review of the files relating to 20 projects that were funded by the SFP. The sample was selected to ensure a spread by the priority area in which the projects were operating, the total amount and number of years for which funding was received, the nature of the main beneficiaries and the region in which the project operated.

#### **Stage 2: Quantitative online survey with Grantees**

An online survey was sent to the 59 participating organisations that were still active at the time of the research. In total 35 organisations responded giving a 59% response rate.

#### **Stage 3: Case study site visits with Grantees**

The final stage of the research involved face-to-face site visits to a sub-set of SFP projects. In total 15 site visits were undertaken with a broad range of projects. This sample was selected by IFF Research in consultation with the Commission's Grants Unit.

### **Main findings**

Despite the funding market being more buoyant at the time of applying to the SFP than was the case by the time of the review, the grantees who responded to the survey reported having struggled to find alternative funding for the projects that were eventually supported under the SFP. Many grantees considered the projects that were supported by the SFP were sufficiently challenging and contained such an element of risk that other

sponsors would not have been able to fund them. In this respect, the SFP was seen as innovative.

More specifically, grantees reported that funding for intersectional projects was unusual and this was a key motivation for many of them to apply for SFP support. In addition, the fund was perceived as being beneficial in terms of enabling the supported organisations to branch out and build capacity in new areas of work, and with new audiences where they previously had limited experience, so giving them an opportunity to grow their expertise.

In general, grantees reported positive results with regard to achieving the project objectives that they had agreed with the Commission at the start of the funding period: most reported achieving many, if not all, of their objectives. This finding was supported by the Commission's own End of Grant evaluations and by the independent, external, evaluations that grantees were required to undertake in the final year of the programme.

Grantees also reported that the projects which had been supported by the SFP had led to wider benefits to their organisations and target groups. These included the formation of partnerships with other agencies working in their field, an increase in the visibility and wider awareness of their work and the extension of their activities into new areas of work. In addition, several grantees reported that SFP support for their project had been a factor in them being able to secure future finance for their work from other funding providers.

However, although the responding grantees were positive about the focus and impact of the SFP, only a minority viewed their overall experience of the fund in a wholly positive light. In particular, while the majority of grantees believed that the funding received had been extremely valuable, the administrative procedures that underpinned the SFP had placed a heavy burden on them. While monitoring and verification processes are unlikely ever to be popular with grantee organisations, there was a feeling that those associated with the SFP were onerous and had made a negative impact on the planning and delivery of projects. In addition, many grantees were left with a degree of uncertainty due to the need to renegotiate their funding and activities several times over the life of the fund.

The credibility of the Commission as the lead agency on equality and human rights issues was a key factor in encouraging organisations to apply to the SFP. Organisations felt that having the Commission support their projects had helped build their credibility and profile and encouraged other funders to understand the value of the work they were doing.

However, a number of the organisations who responded to the survey said the Commission could, or should, have played a bigger role in enhancing the achievements of the SFP. These concerns, when combined with those relating to the reporting and

monitoring procedures of the SFP alluded to above, may explain why, over the course of the funding period, grantee perceptions of the Commission moved in a negative direction.

The majority of the grantees who participated in the research stated that their project would continue to operate after their SFP funding had ceased. The rest reported that their project would stop or that, at the time of the research, it was too early to tell as they were in the process of applying for new funding and did not know the outcome of those bids. Those grantees who reported that their project would continue stated that this was because they had already secured funding from new sources, that it would continue through the work of the partnerships they had established whilst funded by the SFP or that they had managed to absorb the work of the project into their more mainstream activities.

In terms of the future funding of equalities work, most projects were disappointed that a similar funding programme would not be run by the Commission in the future and believed this would create a gap in the funding of equality and human rights projects and especially for those working in areas likely to be considered “risky” by other funders. There was a concern that this would be detrimental to the progress made in recent years in this area.

## **Conclusions**

The evidence collected through this evaluation suggests that the following broad conclusions can be drawn about the contribution of the SFP. Two are of a positive nature:

- The fund met a gap in the funding landscape at the time of its launch and facilitated the development of new and innovative approaches to tackling equalities issues.
- There is evidence to suggest that the contribution of the SFP will continue well beyond the life of the SFP itself.

Despite this, there was evidence that the SFP could have achieved even more if:

- There had been greater clarity at the start of the period concerning the respective requirements and capacities of the funding body and the grantees respectively;
- Simpler and more flexible monitoring and reporting procedures had been used;
- These processes had paid more attention to the final outcomes of projects, and less on their activities and outputs. As well as being less onerous, this might also increase the view among grantees that they were being trusted to deliver projects;
- There had been better coordination between the finance and grants management functions within the funding body. While there will be tensions involved, and limited

resources available, funders should also play a more active role in the projects they chose to support;

- There had been greater dissemination of information between grantees to improve project delivery and between the grantees and the wider community;
- There had been more certainty over the duration and level of project funding.

However, in considering these findings, and as is clear in the main text of this document, it is difficult to separate out which of the latter conclusions were due to the way the SFP itself was designed and managed from the effects of the wider environment in which it operated. In addition, while some of the above conclusions may reflect the particular set of circumstances which obtained during the design and delivery of the SFP, they may also relate to the inherent tensions that exist between the need to properly account for public funds while also seeking to support projects of an especially risky or innovative nature.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background and context

This report presents the findings of research conducted by IFF Research on behalf of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (the Commission) to evaluate the delivery process and the outcomes associated with its Strategic Funding Programme (the SFP).

Section 17 of the Equality Act 2006, gave the Commission the power to provide financial assistance to organisations concerned with promoting equality, diversity, good relations and human rights. This power led the Commission to create the SFP which aimed at contributing to the delivery of the Commission's then strategy of supporting relevant organisations and bodies, and especially the voluntary and community and not-for-profit sectors, through the provision of grant funding in priority areas. The SFP ran between 2009-10 and 2012-13, and, by the end of this three year period, around £10m had been invested in 61 organisations to support projects of between one to three years in duration.

In order to evaluate the SFP, IFF Research was commissioned by the Commission to conduct a review of the delivery of the programme and its main outcomes and impacts in order to provide a preliminary assessment of the benefits to which it had given rise and to ensure that all the lessons that could be learned from the programme were captured in a way that could be used to benefit the design of any similar funding initiatives in the future.

### 1.2 Overview of the Strategic Funding Programme

The main objective of the SFP was to support funded organisations ('grantees') in contributing towards meeting the strategic aims of the Commission at the national level, whilst helping them to achieve an impact in their localities. Projects funded were required to fall under one of three priority areas identified by the Commission's then Strategy Directorate. Projects associated with the first two priorities are the focus of this research<sup>1</sup>.

Priority 1 of the SFP covered providing guidance, advice and advocacy services; infrastructure development and capacity building. Within this, there were three more detailed objectives. The main one concerned the need to increase the opportunities for:

- Communities to set up new organisations that represented and responded to their interests and needs where none previously existed... and for existing organisations and services to expand and develop their expertise and services.

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<sup>1</sup> This report only covers grants made in relation to two of these priority areas. The third priority area was covered by the Commission's Legal Grants programme which falls beyond the remit of the current research.

This aim was supplemented by two more that would focus funds on projects that enabled:

- Individuals, and particularly those that suffer from inequality and disadvantage, to have greater choice, control and empowerment over their own lives in relation to social care, health, housing, education, employment and business advice;
- Victims of all forms of hate crime to receive the support they need and have the confidence to continue their everyday lives.

Priority 2 of the SFP related to the Commission's Good Relations mandate. This sought to support projects whose aim was to increase interaction and understanding between groups and communities that do not ordinarily interact or where particular tensions exist.

In line with these prescribed outcomes the main beneficiaries of the SFP were to be individuals, communities and organisations from across all equality mandate areas in Great Britain and, in particular, those individuals, communities and organisations that:

- Suffer the most acute discrimination and/or disadvantage in accessing social care, health, housing, education, employment and business advice;
- Are victims or perpetrators of any form of hate crime;
- Live in areas of known tension (e.g., inter-racial, religious etc.).

Thus the purpose of the SFP was to help deliver on the Commission's overarching goals of promoting equality, equality of opportunity and the elimination of discrimination at the grassroots level. The resulting fund was administered by the Commission's Grants Unit.

### **1.3 Objectives of the research**

As noted above, the SFP ran over the three year period between 2009-10 and 2012-13. Towards the end of this period the Commission decided to commission a review of the operation of the programme over this time. This review was intended to: provide information as to how any future scheme of this type could be better managed and monitored; ensure that SFP resources were efficiently managed by the Commission and, in particular, by its Grants Team; and to ensure these resources were used appropriately by the recipients of SFP funding. This report represents one outcome of this review.

In particular, the Commission decided that the scope of this project would be as follows:

- To review the internal management of the projects sponsored by the Commission to ensure that SFP grants were applied to appropriate activities and accounted for to the required standard;

- To review the extent to which the anticipated project outcomes were achieved and the extent to which these outcomes were additional and/or directly attributable to the SFP grant;
- To elicit feedback from grantees on the Commission's grant management processes, procedures and funding strategies;
- To highlight how and where future grant management procedures could be refined and improved to support any subsequent attempt to run a similar funding programme in the future.

#### **1.4 Methodological approach**

The methodology for the evaluation of the SFP comprised three key stages:

- **Stage 1:** Review of SFP documentation and interviews with Commission staff
- **Stage 2:** Online quantitative data collection with grantees
- **Stage 3:** Case study site visits with grantees

These stages are discussed in more detail below.

##### **Stage 1: Review of SFP documentation and interviews with Commission staff**

In order to understand the procedural structure of the SFP, the initial stage of the research involved collating and exploring programme and project level data. The volume and type of information available was initially catalogued. Following this, a selection of the key documents from a sample of 20 project files was reviewed. This stage provided insights into the way in which projects had been managed and the financial and other progress reporting procedures with which grantees had to comply with over the life of their project.

The sample of 20 projects was selected to ensure a spread by the priority area in which they were operating, the total amount and the number of years for which funding was received, the nature of targeted beneficiaries and the region in which the project operated.

In tandem with conducting the document review, six face-to-face interviews were held with the Commission staff, the Grants Officers, responsible for the direct administration the SFP. The aim of these interviews was to get a deeper understanding of the SFP's processes and procedures. These interviewees were also asked for their views on which projects were particularly successful or unsuccessful to help inform the selection of the case studies for Stage 3. Each of these interviews lasted for between one and two hours.

## **Stage 2: Online survey of grantees**

The next stage of the project involved collecting quantitative information from the projects that had been funded through the SFP. This was done by means of an online survey. A self-completion approach was used in order to allow respondents to complete the survey in more than one sitting, if needed, so allowing them to check any necessary details. A copy of the online survey document is reproduced at the end of this report as Appendix 1.

An initial 'sample building' exercise was undertaken which involved contacting all the funded organisations in order to ascertain who was the most appropriate individual to respond to the survey and to confirm their contact details in advance of sending out invites to complete the online survey. This exercise also provided an opportunity to give projects advance notice of the survey and alert them to the timeframes involved for its completion.

Following this, email links to the online survey was sent to 59 of the 61 initial grantees whose projects had been funded for the full period for which they had sought support. Thus two organisations that had initially been funded by the SFP were excluded from the survey as one of these had closed while the other grantee had seen its funding withdrawn.

The online questionnaire was structured as follows:

- Background to the organisation
- Becoming aware of the SFP
- Project aims and objectives
- Project delivery
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Project impact
- The future of the project
- Overall views of the Commission and the SFP.

In total 35 organisations out of the remaining 59 funded organisations responded to the online survey, giving a response rate of 59%. For reference, the profile of the responding organisations is outlined in Table 1.1 below and, where the information was available, this is compared to the characteristics of all the organisations who were supported by the SFP (i.e., Table 1.1 includes data on the two projects who were excluded from the survey).

**Table 1.1: Profile of the sample: survey responses and the grantee population**

	Survey		Total grantee population	
	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Organisational reach</b>				
GB	5	14%	5	8%
England	25	71%	46	75%
Scotland	4	11%	5	8%
Wales	1	3%	5	8%
<b>Annual budget / turnover at time of funding</b>				
Up to £100,000	9	26%	7	11%
£100,001-£500,000	11	31%	13	49%
£500,001-£1,000,000	6	17%	30	21%
£1,000,001 +	6	17%	11	18%
Not given	3	9%	/	/
<b>Phase</b>				
Phase 1	3	9%	5	8%
Phase 2	11	31%	23	38%
Phase 3	21	60%	33	54%
<b>Priority Area</b>				
PA1	26	74%	46	75%
PA2	6	17%	15	25%
Both	3	9%	/	/

*Base: Survey population: 35, Total grantee population: 61*

In addition to the above data, which only relates to those characteristics of the grantees who responded to the survey that could be compared to all the projects funded by the SFP, the grantees responding to the on-line survey were predominantly smaller, not-for-profit organisations: 94 per cent of the responding grantees had 99 or fewer employees while 91 per cent of them were not-for-profit or community/voluntary group organisations.

### **Stage 3: Case study site visits with grantees**

The final data collection stage involved face-to-face site visits to a sub-set of projects. In total 15 site visits were undertaken with a range of projects that were funded by the SFP.

In selecting these projects, the categorisations developed at the end of Stage 1 (i.e., the SFP priority area and nature of the beneficiaries targeted, the project's geographical location, the size of their SFP grant and the length of the funding period) were used to help ensure that the organisations included in the case studies were representative of the grantees as a whole. In addition, the interviews with Commission staff and the responses from the online survey enabled the identification of a range of projects for potential inclusion in this stage that were mixed in terms of their success in delivering against their agreed objectives and their likely views concerning the administrative aspects of the SFP.

However, as it was open to each grantee to decide whether or not to participate in this stage of the research, the final sample for the case study stage was determined by an iterative process between the responding grantees, the researchers and Commission staff.

Each site visit was adapted to reflect the size and structure of the organisation involved and involved an in-depth interview with a lead contact and, in some cases, a number of the front line project staff. A bespoke discussion guide was designed for those projects that were included in the project reviews and/or had already completed the online survey. This bespoke guide allowed the moderators to explore in more detail any issues or discussion points of interest that had arisen during the two earlier stages of the research.

The site visit discussions focused on the following areas:

- The alternative funding avenues available and their application to the SFP;
- Grantee thoughts about the structure of the SFP;
- Project design and planning procedures;
- Project delivery, including the SFP's monitoring and evaluation procedures;
- The impact of their project;
- Lessons to be learnt, overall views of the SFP and possible areas for improvement.

### **1.5 About this report**

The rest of this report presents the findings from the three key stages of the research.

An analysis of organisation's verbatim responses with regards to their experience of the SFP is presented throughout the report where appropriate. In addition, and where this is useful for gaining a better understanding the results of the research, some more detailed examples, drawn from the grantees who participated in case study stage, are discussed.

Due to the relatively small sample size, all the figures in the text and tables are in absolute numbers unless otherwise stated. As the base sizes were small the findings should be treated as indicative only. Likewise, unless otherwise stated, all the absolute figures used in this report relate to the 35 funded organisations which responded to the online survey.

Following this chapter, the report is organised into the following manner:

- Chapter two explores the background to the SFP including the circumstances leading up its launch, its objectives and the nature of the projects it supported;
- Chapter three focuses on grantees' understanding of the objectives of the SFP, their experience of applying to it, their thoughts on the application and assessment processes, and their reliance on the SFP for getting their projects off the ground;
- Chapter four explores grantees' perceptions of the SFP funding structure and the similarities and differences between the SFP and other sources of funding;
- Chapter five looks at the project design and planning processes involved with the SFP and grantee perceptions of the negotiations that occurred between them and the Commission in the lead up to the launch of their project and following this;
- Chapter six focuses on project delivery and, in particular, on how grantees felt their projects progressed, the obstacles they faced and how these were overcome;
- Chapter seven discusses the monitoring and evaluation procedures of the SFP;
- Chapter eight looks at grantee perceptions of the impact of their project and whether they had delivered on their intended outcomes and objectives. It also looks at the sustainability of projects funded by the SFP, the expected future of SFP funded projects and how the SFP impacted on grantee views of the Commission;
- Chapter nine outlines grantees' overall views of the SFP, the lessons that can be learnt for the delivery of projects, potential improvements to the SFP, the value of the Commission as a funding partner and grantee perspectives on the future for the funding of projects of this type following the cessation of the SFP;
- Chapter ten describes the conclusions and lessons to be drawn from this research.

## **2. The Strategic Funding Programme**

This chapter provides some background that **will allow the findings reported in the** following chapters to be put in a proper context. It covers three issues: the history of grant funding by the three Commissions who merged to form the current one in 2007 and the process which led to the launch of the SFP; the main aims and objectives of the SFP when it was launched; and the nature of the projects that were successful in securing support from the fund. In addition, the SFP was launched at a time when the Commission was subject to a significant reduction in resources and a considerable degree of external scrutiny. The impact of these wider issues on the SFP will be discussed in the concluding chapter while this one will focus on the specific aims and objectives of the scheme itself.

### **2.1. The development of the SFP**

The SFP was the first major grants programme to be delivered by the newly established Commission following the merger in 2007 of the three 'legacy' Commissions: the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE); the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) and the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC).

While each of the legacy bodies had some history of providing funding to support projects and initiatives delivered by third sector organisations, the processes and mechanisms for accessing the funding were very different. As a consequence, following the merger, it was decided to consult about creating a single funding mechanism accessible to all groups who worked across all the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2006.

During the transition period leading up to the merger, and in order to minimise any disruption to established services, it was recognised that the use of an interim Grants Programme would allow for some continuity while the new Senior Management Team reviewed the existing funding processes in order to define and refine the priorities of a unified grants scheme. Hence, whilst the strategic objectives of the new grants programme were being developed, the Commission established an initial Interim fund which ran during the 2008-2009 period. The delivery of this grants function was to be supported by a team which had moved from the CRE into the unified Commission following the merger.

In total, and since the merger, the Commission has offered five grant funding streams:

- The Interim fund that covered the first year after the Commission came into being;
- Legal grants which had two work streams focussing on discrimination case work and increasing legal advice capacity;

- Third sector capacity development funding which sought to address any gaps or areas of under-representation identified from applications to the interim programme;
- The SFP which forms the basis of the current research

## **2.2 The Strategic Funding Programme**

The SFP was launched in 2009, following a country-wide public consultation with relevant organisations to discuss their views regarding their expectations of such a fund. On the basis of this consultation and, in particular, the feedback from participants concerning the need for longer-term funding in order to achieve a greater degree of sustainable impact, the resulting SFP was initially designed to be a three year grant funding programme.

However, while the SFP was intended to provide continuous funding stream for periods of up to three years, the wider financial environment meant the Commission was never able to guarantee this. Thus grantees had to renegotiate for SFP funding for each year of their project. This meant, in practice, that there were three distinct phases of project funding, despite this not being the funding model that the Commission had intended to operate.

The SFP had several objectives. First, it was intended to be a channel to communities, so enabling the Commission's national priorities to be delivered at the grass-roots level. Second, it was designed to raise the profile of the Commission, and of wider equality and human rights work, in the public consciousness both in general and among community-based organisations, so encouraging them to understand their value and empowering them to drive forward these agendas. Finally, the SFP set out to elevate and enhance the capacity of third sector organisations involved in equality work and to identify where any gaps in support were in relation to groups working with less well-known equality strands.

The SFP was also designed to be intersectional so as to enable supported organisations to work beyond their established boundaries or areas of expertise. Hence it aimed to shift the culture of equality funding from being single-stranded to one that encouraged grantees to work across equality strands. In this respect the SFP was designed to be an innovative programme and one that was specifically aimed at funding new or risky areas of work.

## **2.3 The groups and activities supported by the SFP**

As described above, the SFP aimed to fund projects which met the needs of a range of strand groups and promote good relationships between communities. Therefore to provide some idea of the type of activities funded under the scheme, and before proceeding to the main results of the research, it is useful to briefly describe the nature of the projects

funded by the SFP. The following is based on a review of the project descriptions which formed part of the applications submitted by those groups that were selected for support.

In line with its objectives, SFP funded projects covering a wide range of the groups specified under the Equality Act 2006. These included groups seeking to provide support, advice and advocacy to: people with disabilities; those with various sexual and gender identities; the members of various ethnic minority groups, including Gypsies and Travellers and those from disadvantaged migrant and established communities; single parents; women facing domestic violence and sexual abuse, including those from ethnic minority groups; the victims of various forms of hate crime; and older and younger people.

SFP projects also sought to support a range of organisations and groups who aimed to challenge negative stereotypes, promote greater social entrepreneurship, raise human rights awareness, create better community relationships, promote the uptake of public services by those who were currently under-represented in this respect and increase the participation of certain groups in a range of more mainstream activities. A particular feature of many of the funded projects was that they appeared to be cross-strand and sought to address a range of disadvantages and forms of discrimination at the same time. Some targeted groups were seen as being hard to reach while other projects sought to provide services and support to groups in particular geographical areas where their needs were not, or might not, be met or sufficiently understood. Finally, many SFP supported projects sought to meet these objectives using approaches that appeared to be innovative.

### **3. Applying to the SFP**

This chapter uses the responses to the online survey to describe the ways in which the organisations that were eventually funded by the SFP became aware of its existence, their views on the programme's objectives and their experiences of the application process.

In addition this chapter looks at the wider project funding environment at the time they applied and the degree to which grantees were reliant on the SFP in the development and launch of their projects. This is to help understand the extent, if any, that the SFP was able to support projects which would not have received funding from another funding source.

However, because the respondents to the online survey were those who were eventually successful in receiving support from the SFP, the following evidence cannot be generalised to all of those organisations who initially displayed an interest in the programme. Therefore, the following should be read with this important caveat in mind.

#### **3.1 Becoming aware of the SFP and the Consultation Process**

In terms of how they first found out about the SFP, the responses to the online survey showed that the most popular sources of information were the Commission's own website and staff with 17 and nine organisations respectively becoming aware of the programme through either of these two means. A further seven organisations found out about the SFP via general word of mouth while four reported being made aware of it by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations or the equivalent bodies in Scotland and Wales.

Respondents to the online survey were then asked if they had attended a Commission organised consultation event in relation to the development of the SFP: 12 organisations reported having attended one of these; 13 stated that they did not; while the remaining 10 could not recall if they had done so or not. In terms of their perceptions of the consultation process, those organisations that had attended such an event were either positive or neutral towards it, with no negative ratings being given. This is illustrated by Table 3.1 below that shows how grantees rated the consultation using several different dimensions.

**Table 3.1: Grantee views of the Consultation Process**

Aspects of the Consultation Process	Adequate	Neither adequate nor inadequate	Unsure
The amount of information provided	10	2	0
Clarity of the information provided	9	3	0
Opportunity to express views	9	3	0
Diversity of organisations involved	8	2	2
Commission's feedback from the consultation	7	3	2

*Base: Responding grantees who attended a SFP consultation event: 12*

Table 3.1 suggests those organisations that had taken part in the consultation process and who were subsequently successful in obtaining SFP funding were largely satisfied with all aspects of the events which were organised as part of this. The level and clarity of information was found to be adequate as was the opportunity for organisations to express their views, the range of organisations attending and the feedback from the Commission. In summary, the evidence suggests respondents perceived it to be a worthwhile process.

### 3.2 The objectives and appeal of the SFP

Following the consultation process, the objectives of the SFP seem to have been well understood. Of the organisations who responded to the questions in the online survey about the clarity of the information provided about the SFP during the application process: 31 felt that the SFP's objectives had been made clear; 29 felt the same about the eligibility criteria; and 27 were clear about the size of grant available. In addition, 24 organisations gave a positive rating for the Commission's support in answering their queries or in providing further information. These findings were supported during the site visits where no issues emerged in terms of any lack of clarity over the aims and objectives of the SFP.

The online survey then asked a question relating to organisations motivations for applying to the SFP. As is outlined in table 3.2, below, the SFP appealed to organisations largely due to its objectives, the criteria for funding and the size of the grants available. Table 3.2 also includes the other relatively popular factors that influenced the decision to apply to the SFP given by the 35 funded organisations who responded to the online survey.

**Table 3.2: Grantee reasons for applying to the SFP**

Reason for Applying	Number
The objectives of the SFP	25
The criteria for funding	24
The size of grant available	17
The length of the grant available	15
It covered running costs and salaries	12
Reputation of the EHRC	5

*Base: All survey respondents (35). Grantees were able to select more than one response when answering this question.*

During the site visits, the participating organisations were asked in more detail about the appeal of the SFP and the reasons that they were interested in having the Commission as a funding partner. Three key themes emerged from these discussions and, where these are useful, each is illustrated by a related statement made by a SFP funded organisation.

The first theme was the credibility of having the Commission as a funding partner. As the leading national body for equality and human rights issues, the Commission's backing and stamp of approval on projects was seen to be a crucial benefit with the potential to add considerably to the credibility of the grantees work. Organisations also felt that securing funding from the Commission would help them in the formation of partnerships with other agencies, in encouraging external agencies vital to the success of projects to understand the value of the work being done and in securing funding from other potential sponsors:

By and large organisations like the EHRC, their badge and their national position and recognition is incredibly important to us and can make a project very successful.

The second main theme was the innovative nature of the funding programme.

Organisations said the SFP was funding work in areas in where they had previously found it difficult to secure grants and that this was a key reason for applying. Some grantees also reported that they had previously had difficulties in finding funding either for equality work in general or, more specifically, in the niche areas in which they operated. Some also felt their particular target group was not high on the political agenda at the time of their application and this had caused them difficulties in securing funding from other sources:

Hate-crime isn't a particularly popular issue with funders, We were aware of some of the issues and had previously had a small amount of money from the council to do some work but had not had the funding to build on this.

The final key theme to emerge was the intersectional nature of SFP funding. The fact that the SFP grant was multi-stranded also appealed to organisations as cross-stream funding would enable them to branch out into new areas and explore work with new equality implications. One organisation in particular stated that SFP funding had enabled them to bring together several existing projects into one and, rather than having to have separate programmes of work, this had allowed their objectives to be tackled via a unified approach:

We could have done them all as separate projects but this was such a good opportunity to tackle all four at the same time and it did. The value of EHRC was that you could put all the strands together.

We realised we had a gap in the service and for us as an organisation to be open to all young people, younger and older and male and female too is still quite "out there".

### **3.3 Grantee reliance on the SFP**

The online survey then asked questions that sought to understand how the SFP fitted into the wider funding structures that had been utilised by the participating organisations and whether the particular project would have taken place in the absence of SFP funding.

Almost two-thirds of the organisations responding to the survey reported that they had specifically designed their projects for the purpose of obtaining SFP funding (22 organisations). A further six organisations stated that their project had been designed to be financed through a mixture of funding streams including the SFP. The remaining seven were previously designed project that the grantee had been unable to secure funding for or had developed having already identified a need in their community. This indicates that, for the most part, the SFP led to the development of new projects to tackle equality issues.

Most grantees also felt that SFP support was critical to getting their project off the ground. When asked what would have happened to their project in the absence of SFP funding, 15 of the organisations who responded to the online survey stated that their project would not have happened at all while the rest felt that their project would have had to have been modified in some way. Table 3.3, below, outlines in full the grantees perceptions of what would have happened to their projects had they not been granted funding by the SFP.

**Table 3.3: How projects would have fared in the absence of SFP funding**

Project outcome without the SFP	Number
The project would not have gone ahead	15
The project would have gone ahead but in a reduced form	7
The project would have had to have been done differently	7
Not sure what would have happened	6
The project would have gone ahead anyway in the same form	0

*Base: All survey respondents (35)*

This view was confirmed during the site visits. As part of these, organisations were asked for their views on the funding landscape at the time they applied to the SFP and how reliant they were on the SFP for getting their project off the ground. These discussions confirmed that, for a number of the organisations, their project was designed specifically to meet the objectives of the SFP and would not have come to fruition without this funding.

In particular, and despite grantees generally reporting a more buoyant funding climate at the time of the launch of the SFP than was the case by the time of the interview, the majority believed their project would not have attracted funding from other sources, particularly those who were looking to build capacity or to work in niche or risky areas:

The project would not have run without the EHRC funding. There might have been some joint working, but there wouldn't have been anybody to drive it.

It enabled us to do things for a long time that other funders wouldn't have looked at.

Hence there is evidence, from both the online survey responses and the site visit discussions, to suggest that the SFP was responsible for initiating the design of new and different initiatives and of acting as a funder of last resort for a small number of projects.

### **3.4 The two stage assessment process**

Applications to the SFP were reviewed using a two stage assessment process. This process was designed to be both transparent and objective with teams outside the Grants Team being involved in the assessment of projects, e.g. Senior Officers, Corporate Law and Quality Assurance teams. The intention of this structure was to filter out any subjectivity or bias in the application process by the use of different layers and teams.

Stage 1 involved the initial submission of the organisation's proposed project. A review of the project files showed that applicants were required to submit several documents at this stage of the process including various application and assessment documents, accounts, policy documents, annual reports and full 'workplans' (see Appendix 2 for a list of these documents while 'workplans' are discussed in more detail in chapter five). However, because the Commission experienced a much higher than expected volume of applications at this stage of the process, with around 2,000 organisations applying to the fund, the Grants Team were required to condense this number down to 250 for Stage 2.

Organisations who were invited to submit proposals for Stage 2 of the process were then required to demonstrate a needs analysis with supporting evidence. A more detailed 'workplan' was also required that outlined how the applicant would address the gaps they had identified, meet the needs of their target groups and describe the intended benefits and impacts that their project would deliver for their primary and secondary equality strands. Projects were then assessed on the basis of several criteria. These included the:

- Quality of their needs analysis (i.e. the level of supporting intelligence, the degree to which their project objectives were aligned with the needs they had identified);
- Degree to which the project harmonised with priority area applied for;
- Capacity of organisation to deliver the project within the specified timeframe;
- Benefits to be delivered for the target beneficiaries and the wider community;
- How innovative the project was;
- Degree of longer-term impact/sustainability;
- Capability in enhancing the reputation of the Commission.

Those projects which had passed through both stages of the application process were then submitted to the Commission's Senior Management Team for final approval. This led to 61 projects being approved for funding.

As part of the online survey, grantees were asked several questions about the ease of applying to the SFP. Among those who responded to the survey, views on the ease of applying were fairly neutral. However, one reoccurring negative perception was that the application process for the SFP was both quite time-consuming and document heavy.

With regards to Stage 1 of the process, the views of the organisations who responded to the online survey were relatively positive overall. Thus, of the 35 responding organisations:

- 24 organisations had found obtaining an application form to be unproblematic

- Only four found completing the application form to be difficult
- Only three reported having any issues with gathering the supporting evidence.

However, responses to the online survey suggested there was more dissatisfaction with Stage 2 of the application process than at Stage 1. Here, 15 grantees found the amount of information that they were asked to provide was much more than they had anticipated.

In addition to their specific views about each stage of the application process, the online survey asked respondents a series of questions concerning the level of communication with the Commission during the process, the period of time it took the Commission to make a decision and their perceptions of how transparent or objective the process was. Most respondents were neutral on all of these aspects as Table 3.4 below demonstrates.

**Table 3.4: Grantee views of the assessment process**

Aspect of the assessment process	Good	Neither good nor poor	Poor	Unsure
Level of communication with the Commission	13	19	/	3
Time taken to reach a decision	10	20	1	4
Objectivity/transparency of the process	8	20	3	4

*Base: All survey respondents (35)*

The site visit discussions tended to provide support for the survey responses about the application process discussed above. In general, the participating organisations appeared to have been fairly comfortable with the application process which was similar to others that they had been involved with. One organisation positively mentioned that they felt supported during the process through having open discussions with the Commission:

We were supported through the process through several meetings. I found these meetings very useful. We can easily be seen as a private sector organisation rather than a community organisation. Being able to unpack that a little with someone within the funding organisation is very useful.

However, other organisations were more negative in their assessments and believed that the application process had been time-consuming, arduous and over-complicated:

It was the biggest I'd ever seen. They wanted policies on policies basically. The paperwork was ridiculous. You started to get to the point where you were thinking "This is disproportionate". I spent nights and nights at home working up to midnight because you are trying to fit it into your day job.

The application processes of smaller funding agencies are less onerous and more supportive to applicants than those of the statutory bodies.

In addition, some organisations believed that the Commission could have been more open and consistent in their communications with them throughout the application process with some specifically mentioning that additional support and guidance could have been provided, especially in relation to the second stage of the SFP application process.

Hence, and despite giving relatively neutral ratings with regards to applying to the SFP, the majority of respondents believed the application process could have been improved. The two most commonly suggested improvements centred on simplifying the application process, which was perceived to have involved an excessive amount of detail and supplementary documentation, and making it less resource-intensive and easier for smaller organisations to accommodate. The following two extracts illustrate these points:

The application process was extremely demanding and over-complicated with lots of additional demands for minor details made by EHRC. It could be improved by being less of an academic exercise and focusing more on potential outcomes of the proposed work.

Less bureaucratic application form - with more space for narrative about impact and not only outcomes and outputs. Better feedback and direct support after Stage 1 to help understand EHRC strategic objectives.

Furthermore, this perception - that the SFP had used excessively, disproportionate and bureaucratic processes and procedures - was a reoccurring one during the research and further aspects of this wider issue are discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

## 4. The SFP contractual agreement and funding structure

This chapter draws on the experiences of the grantees after their project had been approved for SFP funding. In particular, it looks at their views about the resulting SFP contract and the financial aspects of the scheme. Grantee perceptions towards the way in which the funding for their projects was structured are also explored with a specific focus on the impact these financial arrangements had on the planning and delivery of projects.

### 4.1 The contractual agreement

Organisations that were ultimately successful in their SFP application were required to enter into a contractual agreement with the Commission. As a result, the online survey asked grantees to rate this agreement in terms of its objectivity, clarity, appropriateness, practicality and flexibility. The responses to this question are outlined in Table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1: Grantee views of the contractual agreement**

Satisfaction that their contractual agreement was...	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Unsure
Fair and objective	19	11	4	1
Easy to understand	14	12	8	1
Appropriate to the project	14	10	9	2
Practical	14	6	14	1
Flexible	9	8	16	1

*Base: All survey respondents (35)*

As Table 4.1 illustrates, only a few negative views were expressed regarding the objectivity of the contractual agreement with most grantees feeling that it was both fair and objective. Many also appeared to find it to be both easy to understand and appropriate.

However, higher numbers expressed dissatisfaction with its practicality and flexibility. In particular, the flexibility of the contract seemed to divide opinion most, with almost half of the respondents expressing dissatisfaction with this aspect of the agreement. However, the reasons for the more negative responses with regards to the flexibility of the contract are, perhaps, partly explained by the views of the grantees relating to the complications

they experienced with the structure of the funding programme and issues surrounding project planning. As a result, some of these issues are discussed further in chapter five.

## **4.2 The funding structure**

Grantees were then asked for their views on the financial aspects of the SFP. In terms of the structure of the funding programme, several concerns were raised by the grantees who participated in the research. In terms of funding issues, these concerns included:

- Reductions in the level of grant they had initially applied for;
- The need to renegotiate their funding several times (and the potential for lower levels of funding to be provided than for the previous funding period);
- The arrangements for the payment of grants;
- The Retention clause;
- Decisions on financial issues being taken outside the Grants Team.

Each of these issues is discussed in more detail below.

### **Reductions in the grants initially applied for**

The majority of the organisations that responded to the survey received an SFP grant for all of the period for which they had applied: 32 grantees had applied for more than one year's worth of funding and, of these, 29 received it for all the periods they had sought.

However, the majority (24) of respondents had received a grant that was lower than the amount they had initially applied for: only 11 organisations reported receiving the full amount; nine reported receiving between 75 and 99 per cent of what they had initially sought; nine received between 50 and 74 per cent, five were granted between 25 and 49 per cent of the amount applied for while one was unsure as to the proportion received.

These reductions were notified to grantees at the beginning of the first year of funding. Of the 24 organisations that received a lower grant than the amount they had applied for at this point, only eight expressed dissatisfaction with the explanation provided by the Commission as to why this had occurred. Of these, six organisations stated that this was because they felt no real explanation had been given while two organisations said the only explanation offered was that there had just been too many high quality applications. However, the Grants Officers felt that it is not unusual for project sponsors, in cases where a funding source is heavily oversubscribed or reduced, to respond in such a manner.

Some organisations who responded to the survey felt that these reductions had impacted on their project planning in a negative way. These impacts included having to reorganise their budgets with only limited support and the creation of unrealistic expectations about what organisations could deliver with the remaining resources available. For example, four grantees expressed frustration at the perceived expectation that they would still have to deliver all of the outcomes they described in their application on a reduced level of grant:

[The Commission] encouraged us to add 'accessibility costs' and this took time and effort to budget properly and after the application process it turned out there was no funding for these additional costs.

There was no feedback as to whether we could renegotiate outcomes based on only having 50% of funding to deliver and would need to actively seek additional funds. There was also an expectation that we had to deliver 100% of the project with only 50% of the funding.

The 24 affected organisations were then asked about the perceived impacts that receiving less funding than they had applied for had made to their project. The responses to this question are summarised in Table 4.2 below. This shows that the main impacts mentioned by these grantees largely related to the pressures that less funding had placed on staff, the need to seek alternative sources of finance and/or to reduce the scope of their project.

**Table 4.2: Impact of receiving reduced funding**

Impact of Reduced Funding	Number
Staff on the project were overworked	15
Lower staffing capacity than was initially planned	14
Had to seek funding elsewhere	9
Lower time allocated to the project than initially planned	7
Fewer activities / events / sessions planned	7
Fewer beneficiaries catered for than was initially planned	6
Needed to take on additional volunteers as opposed to paid staff	5
More efficient planning of the project	5

*Base: Organisations that received less funding than initially applied for: 24 grantees. Grantees' were able to select more than one impact in their responses to this question.*

However, while most of the impacts described in Table 4.2 were negative, it should also be noted that five organisations expressed the more positive view that the reduced level of funding available had made them plan their projects more efficiently.

The online survey findings were echoed during the site visits. These also revealed that reductions in funding meant some grantees had to enter into a lengthy negotiation process with the Commission in terms of what could be realistically achieved, with some again feeling that they were being asked to deliver a similar proportion of the outcomes that they had initially suggested that was unrealistic given the proposed lower level of funding.

In addition these discussions suggested that, while there was a degree of sympathy for the Commission insofar as reductions were seen as arising from factors which were beyond its control, some grantees felt that they were given no real chance to dispute the amount of funding awarded or that there was a perceived lack of guidance, or understanding, as to how they might redesign their project when key aspects were no longer to be supported.

### **Uncertainties over funding**

The original intention was that the SFP would be a three year funding programme to reflect the views expressed by organisations during the consultation process that longer term funding would be beneficial to enhancing the impact and sustainability of projects.

However, the resulting SFP was one with three shorter funding periods where grantees, if they wished to continue to receive support, had to renegotiate their funding at the end of each period depending on whether they had met their targets during the previous one. As was noted in chapter two, this was not an intended feature of the SFP but had, instead, arisen as a result of the wider funding environment in which the Commission operated. Furthermore, while this renegotiation allowed for the on-going reassessment of projects likely outputs, the process itself was often time consuming for grantees and grants officers.

The survey responses suggested the process of having to renegotiate funding each year had caused problems for some grantees. Those organisations that had applied for more than one period of funding were asked how easy or difficult they had found the process of having to renegotiate. Of the 32 organisations for whom this was relevant, 21 found the process was neither easy nor difficult, one said it was easy while 10 found it to be difficult.

In discussions during the site visits, it became clear that the need to renegotiate funding during the three year life of the SFP had come as a surprise to the majority. Some grantees were sympathetic, and understood that it was likely that it was the political and economic environment that had shaped this change of approach. However, this extra requirement caused additional insecurities that subsequently impacted on project delivery.

For example, during the site visit discussions, one grantee reported that its funding had initially been allocated for two years which then had to be re-negotiated in the third. But, after this funding had been approved, the amount was cut by a third. However, the grantee was sympathetic towards, and understanding of, the reasons given for the reduction in funding available (i.e. resource constraints resulting from the wider economic downturn) and largely accepted that the decision was largely out of the Commission's control:

They cut the amount given to every project and they explained that one option would have been for us all to re-apply but they thought it would be fairer to cut the amount that all of the projects received.

The grantee had applied for SFP support because having access to a three year funding programme would help enable them to provide long term support to their service users. However, this reduction impacted considerably on their project and the grantee had to enter into a lengthy negotiation with the Commission around what could still be delivered. In addition, the project was forced to finish early and 'abruptly' at the end of January 2013, instead of at the original planned end date of March 2013. The grantee stated that the main impact of this was on the project staff who faced earlier than expected job cuts:

It's very disruptive for the staff working on these projects. We employ staff on a project basis. It's not a nice way to be working really.

In response to an open question in the survey about the nature of the difficulties caused by having up to three shorter funding periods and having to reapply for funding each year, the 32 affected organisations expressed several concerns. As is outlined in the discussions below these impacts were negative and related to range of issues. These issues included:

- General insecurity/anxiety;
- Inability to make long-term plans;
- Difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff;
- Maintaining staff and client morale;
- Difficulties in delivering a reliable service to clients.

Uncertainties about whether funding would be available in the next year was also felt to result in long periods of insecurity throughout the lifespan of projects. Grantees' said this uncertainty could be unsettling for all the parties concerned including the grantee and its staff, the target beneficiaries of the project and the Commission's own Grants Unit staff.

In particular, several organisations reported that committing resources and future project planning became more problematic where future funding levels were not guaranteed:

As a small charity we need confirmation that 3 year funding is in place and will be available. With one year at a time funding this made long term planning very difficult.

The reapplication process created significant challenges in maintaining momentum, securing partnership buy in and medium term planning.

In addition, organisations reported difficulties in trying to instil confidence in their staff, making employee retention and maintaining morale difficult. Likewise, grantees reported that they often found out at the last minute as to whether funding for the next year had been approved and this was felt to have made a considerable impact the quality, scope and the stability of the service being delivered. In particular, grantees reported difficulties in planning continuous projects and felt this impacted on beneficiaries' willingness to engage with services due to their unreliability and fear that they would be discontinued.

[It was] difficult to reassure staff that continuation funding would be successful and hard to plan on-going support for vulnerable clients needing long-term service provision with constant threat of project not continuing.

We were unable to plan a continuous project. Uncertainty over the future of the project each year meant that we continuously lost staff. It felt like no consideration to the funded organisations was given, and notice of future funding was very late at the end of the year, sometimes with only 4 weeks' notice.

We had to take more trainees as we worried we won't be able to do it again next year and we could not develop follow up development and support with past trainees. As a result we could not build community of trainees and continuity in a way that would be helpful for them.

### **Payment arrangements**

In total, 31 of the 35 grantees who responded to the online survey had received their funding, at least partly, in arrears while the remaining four stated that they received their funding in advance.

Of the 31 organisations who had received their funding in arrears:

- 13 had received all of their funding in this manner;
- 16 were paid part in advance and part in arrears;
- Two grantees could not remember precisely how their funding was received.

13 of these organisations stated that these funding arrangements had not caused them any problems, although two mentioned that this was only because they had large reserves upon which they could draw. But this means the payment of the grant largely in arrears had caused problems for 22 of the grantees who responded to the online survey.

The survey then asked the 22 affected grantees some more general questions about the problems the payment arrangements associated with the SFP might have caused them. Nine grantees stated that being paid in arrears meant that they had experienced cash-flow issues while six mentioned having to use their own resources and/or draw upon their own reserves to offset the negative effects of these. Four organisations also mentioned that, in addition to getting paid in arrears, payments were often late, which had caused anxiety and sometimes led to interruptions in project delivery. Four grantees also reported experiencing lengthy negotiations with the Commission before payment was released.

The following comments from grantees illustrate some of these problems in more detail:

We had to use our reserves and smaller charities could have gone under. The payment in arrears put a strain in our small financial reserves.

Funding in arrears, with frequent and lengthy negotiations around deductions unhelpful and not something I've experienced with any other funder.

Receiving payment was never consistent throughout the project with very late or delayed payments. This impacted heavily on our delivery of the project as we had to wait for monies to be able to deliver. Often the project relied on our reserves to fund the project while we wait for funds to be released... We are still awaiting our final payment for this project 7 months after the end of the project. This is unprofessional and damaging to small organisations that desperately need funds that have already been spent.

Similar findings also emerged during the site visits. In particular, those organisations who said they had no problems with payments in arrears qualified this by stating that this was only because they have large reserves and/or other large funders who paid in advance.

### **The Retention Clause**

All SFP grants were subject to a 10% retention clause: this was a proportion of the SFP grant which was withheld by the Commission until the project monitoring and reporting procedures was completed to a satisfactory level and all the funding was accounted for.

This was referred to by some grantees as the 'claw back' clause and, while it was not specifically asked about in the online survey, the correspondence sections in the project

files and the site visit discussions suggested that a number of organisations were concerned by this part of their contractual agreement. In particular, several grantees felt that the rationale for the retention clause had not been adequately explained and they had difficulty understanding how it was intended to fit into their project accounting procedures.

Likewise, during the site visit discussions, a number of grantees mentioned complications caused by the 'claw-back' clause, which was unfamiliar to some. In particular, the clause had caused several organisations problems with their project budgeting. For example:

They said at the beginning this is what you are going to be funded but we will retain 10%, which seemed fine but it didn't seem to work like that. We couldn't get a satisfactory explanation as to how it was going to work. If you had a column with your money in, it never balanced out ... We got our accountant on to it and he didn't understand ... We had to go to our auditor who is a chartered and he couldn't work it out ... We just had to go with it but I don't like it when you don't know ... you are putting in receipts but does that include the 10%? To this day we don't know how it works.

### **Financial decisions made outside of the Grants Team**

A final issue raised by the organisations who participated in the site visits was that they felt that decisions relating to their projects, and particularly those relating to the financial aspects, were often coming from parties within the Commission who were divorced from the process, as opposed to the front-line staff with whom they had direct contact (i.e. Grants Officers). This created a number of problems for these organisations including:

- Receiving inconsistent information regarding requirements for financial reporting;
- Changes to, or increases in, financial reporting requirements not always being properly communicated;
- A lack of understanding regarding project delivery.

In general, these organisations were sympathetic towards their Grants Officers and felt that they were being required to adhere to, and uphold, processes and procedures that they had not necessarily designed. However, the perceived disconnect by some grantees between the parts of the Commission responsible for establishing the financial rules and the Commission staff with the responsibility for monitoring individual projects (and by extension the projects themselves) was, at times, felt to have impeded project delivery.

More generally, there was also a sense of a lack of understanding within the Commission over how grass-roots, community-based projects needed to develop in order to achieve

impact. In particular, grantees felt that senior decision-makers within the Commission gave preference decisions to adhere to financial reporting procedures over those which would have allowed projects to build on their learning and to develop over the life of their funding:

The grants team cared in relation to the work we were doing and the other organisations but the wider organisation had no interest in the individual projects or the impact their decisions have on those projects.

The impacts of the restrictive requirements in terms of financial reporting are examined in chapter seven which looks in detail at the SFP's monitoring and evaluation processes.

## 5. Project design and planning

This chapter explores the design and planning processes associated with the SFP as they were experienced by those organisations who had received project funding. In particular, it discusses the negotiation process between the Commission and the grantees with regards to project planning and the degree to which this was felt to help or hinder project delivery.

Central to this stage of the process, which concerned the planning and expected delivery of projects, was the 'workplan'. This was a tool outlining the intended objectives and outcomes of the project. Given its importance, the chapter focuses on grantee views of it.

### 5.1 Agreeing objectives

The online survey asked organisations about the degree to which they had to compromise their original project objectives in order to secure SFP funding. The results suggested that:

- 20 organisations did not have to change their original project objectives;
- 11 grantees stated that they had changed their objectives to a slight extent;
- Four organisations said they changed their objectives to a large extent.

Given that the majority of grantees reported they had designed their projects specifically for the SFP (as discussed in Chapter three), it is perhaps not surprising that there was only a limited need for any renegotiation at this strategic level after the award of funding.

### 5.2 The 'Workplan'

The workplan was initially submitted by organisations during the application process and was then refined if they were successful in securing a grant. However, in most cases, because successful organisations did not receive the full amount of funding they had applied for, a considerable re-working of the workplan and project budget was required.

This involved a negotiation process between Grants Officers and the grantee in order to arrive at an agreement over what could realistically be achieved by the latter on the reduced budget. This process of re-negotiation was then repeated at the start of each subsequent period for which the grantee had sought funding. Grants Officers accepted that this process could be lengthy with some agreements only being made at a late stage.

The online survey asked grantees for their views on the workplan. The results suggested that the majority of grantees felt that the workplan required too much information. While 11 organisations felt that the workplan required about the right level of information, 24 felt that

it was too detailed. But, at the same time, many organisations also found the workplan to be helpful for project delivery: 18 out of the 35 organisations felt that this was the case.

More mixed responses were given as to the survey questions about the clarity of instructions on what was required in the project workplan: 10 organisations felt the instructions were clear, eight found them unclear while 17 said they were neither clear nor unclear. More positively, more than half of these organisations (19) believed that the Commission's staff had been supportive in helping them to develop their workplan.

Mixed views about the work plan were also expressed in the discussions held with organisations during the site visits. During these, a few organisations spoke positively about the workplan, stating that it helped maintain focus and momentum for the project:

A project plan is just normal. If you are going to do something, there is a project plan. If they agree with it, it means that they know what I have to and I know what I have to do and everybody is happy.

However, organisations that were wholly positive about the project workplan were in the minority: most of the grantees who participated in the site visits felt that it was helpful in some respects but not in others or that it had required an excessive amount of detail.

The grantees that were more negative about the workplan felt it allowed no room for flexibility and that this had prohibited their project from evolving organically. At times, grantees felt that the need to adhere strictly to the detailed workplan had limited the scope for 'learning through doing'. Grantees felt that this lack of scope for evolution was particularly problematic for projects that were innovative, exploring new ground or working with new groups of individuals whose needs could not be precisely determined 'up front'.

Some of the difficulties with the workplan are illustrated by the following two extracts:

The workplan was not designed by the organisation to assist the delivery of the project as we understood it, it was a very prescriptive workplan which had to satisfy the outcomes as perceived by the EHRC without gaining knowledge and understanding of the organisation and the way the service is delivered. The difficulties lay in negotiating a workplan that was practical for the organisation against what we were being told had to be included. There was no room for negotiation on actions that we felt were not helpful were told had to be included. The workplan added to our workload both in the planning and delivery. We did not feel we had ownership of the project.

Our original work plan was 47 pages long with so much detail that the project was unachievable from the start. There was some understanding from the EHRC team

with this; however it felt like a continuous battle to justify why aspects of the project as delivered in different ways. Reporting seemed very onerous and project delivery was often focussed on outputs, what would be needed for 'evidence' and to answer queries rather than an understanding of the project needing to be flexible to meet the needs of young people with multiple needs and achieve outcomes.

On a related point, several grantees felt their workplan was overly focussed on outputs or activities at the expense of outcomes. Instead, these grantees felt that it would have been preferable for it only to have specified outcomes and then leave it to them to work out the best way of achieving them via experimenting with a range of approaches. Some grantees also mentioned that the perceived desire to control the project outputs via the workplan had tied projects to particular pre-agreed paths that may have limited their overall impact.

For example, the site visit discussions included one grantee that was involved in delivering a particularly challenging service to beneficiaries who were hard to reach, transitory and traumatised. Because of the nature of their project, the grantee reported finding the SFP's planning process to be over-precise and over-controlling. In particular, they felt that the lack of flexibility, and the perceived desire to control project outcomes, had: reduced the opportunity for their project to react to changing user needs; forced them into forecasting what were likely to be an unpredictable levels of demand; and had inhibited the development of new ideas which would have allowed their project to evolve over time.

While the grantee was keen to express the opinion that, despite the difficulties they had experienced, their Grants Officer had been extremely supportive and helpful throughout this process, they also reported having to spend a long period of time re-negotiating their plan. This was mainly seen as being due to the nature of the projects target beneficiaries:

There were weeks [of] to-ing and fro-ing. I know that it restricted the development by the focus on numbers, and I also felt that some of the milestones we were obliged to agree were reducing the victim focus.

Likewise another grantee felt that other funders typically either looked to control project inputs or, perhaps more progressively, project outputs but their perception was that the Commission had tried to control both so placing considerable restrictions on their project:

There was an over-emphasis on the detail of activities when we were trying to focus on outcomes. We felt we had to tie it down to specific activity targets that weren't helpful and could actually hamper rather than help outcomes. I remember putting in extra meeting because of the need to meet targets rather than answering the actual needs of the community.

In addition, some grantees interpreted this perceived desire to specify the exact form that project delivery would take at the outset as representing a lack of understanding of the projects' objectives and the needs of the particular equality groups they were targeting.

Grantees also felt that the workplan had hindered project delivery simply by the length of time it took to approve it which reduced the time available for delivery. In some cases, the negotiations about the workplan during the project planning stage had resulted in a lot of revisions and, as a consequence, considerable delay in getting their project off the ground:

We must have had 10 revisions of the plan which was perfectly good initially. This was due entirely to a lack of understanding of the project and interfering with the detail rather than understanding monitoring processes and outcome based approaches. We got there in the end but it was so time consuming and very stressful.

In summary grantees felt that, while the workplan was a useful tool for guiding project delivery and for ensuring that both parties had an agreed statement concerning the work that to be completed and when it should occur, it should not become so restrictive as to inhibit a project from taking its natural course. Grantees also felt that workplans should place more emphasis on *what* work was being done, rather than *how* it was being done, and that more of a focus should have been placed upon impacts rather than on activities:

We tend to worry about the outcomes as that is the most appropriate guide but the EHRC wanted a concentration on achieving trackable outputs. Meetings, numbers etc. and it is not so easy to do that with our area of work. We didn't want to tie our people down to how many meetings, where and with who as it doesn't easily fit with what works.

Finally, the issues with the workplan seemed to be associated with wider concerns about the impact of the Commission's project planning requirements. This is illustrated by a question in the online survey that asked respondents about how the issues they had experienced during the planning stage had impacted on project delivery. 20 grantees answered this question and, in general, their responses related to the following key issues:

- The negative impact of the Commission's prioritising processes and procedures over allowing their projects to evolve;
- A lack of understanding of what their project was trying to achieve;
- The length of the project planning process.

## **6. Project delivery**

This chapter explores themes relating to grantee's experience of delivering their SFP funded projects and their relationship with the Commission during this delivery phase.

### **6.1 Perceptions of the achievement of project objectives**

The responses to the survey suggested grantees were positive about the delivery of their projects: 26 stated that their project had met all of its original objectives while the remaining nine said these were met in part. Likewise, those organisations participating in the site visits also felt that their projects had achieved most, if not all, of their objectives. Although this is based on self-assessment, and therefore should be treated with a degree of caution, these perceptions of success were supported by two other forms of evidence.

Firstly, the End of Grant questionnaires examined during the project review stage showed that the majority of the projects evaluated by the Commission's Grant's Officers and Managers were signed off as having been delivered in accordance with the agreed workplan and that all the grant money awarded was utilised for the purposes of these activities. In addition, during the final stage of project delivery, projects were required to undertake an independent, external evaluation to assess the degree to which their projects had met their objectives and to measure their impact. The majority of these evaluations highlighted that projects had been, on the whole, successful in achieving their stated aims.

The evidence from the online survey and the site visits suggested that, where obstacles were experienced in the delivery of projects, these largely related to the following issues:

- Issues with partners and external agencies essential for the delivery of the project;
- Difficulties engaging with the target beneficiaries;
- The relative distance of the Commission as a funding partner.

The rest of this chapter discusses these issues in more detail. The next section discusses the first two issues while the third looks more specifically at the role of the Commission.

### **6.2 Challenges faced during project delivery**

#### **Issues with partners and external agencies**

The majority of organisations involved in the research experienced positive relationships with partner organisations, i.e. other agencies grantees had worked with to deliver their

project including other third sector organisations, local authorities and other public sector bodies. While relationships with such partners are discussed in more detail in Chapter eight on project impact, a number of the issues also impacted on the delivery of projects.

In particular, and despite the generally positive relationships noted above, a number of organisations had experienced problems with their intended partners. Some of the examples of specific problems that were given during the site visits, or which emerged from comments made in the online survey, related to partner organisations being forced to withdraw their funding due to having their own budget cuts, or of them not being able, or sometimes not being willing, to complete anticipated tasks or work. These, in turn, subsequently impacted on the lead organisation's ability to deliver key project outcomes:

We tried to get equality training accredited but there was no interest from local colleges.

There's always the issue that potential partners do not always follow through with plans and support. It's always necessary to plan for this eventuality and have a 2nd or 3rd option. Statutory Services that you would expect to help do not always support clients in the way that you would expect. Important to ensure that you know the legislation you are relying upon to show that the statutory authorities do have obligations they should meet.

In general, although issues with partners meant that certain project outputs were not achieved, they were not felt to have had a major impact on overall project delivery. This conclusion was supported by evidence from the monitoring forms and from the discussions held during the site visits which also suggested that, despite experiencing such problems, organisations were still able to achieve most of their overall project aims.

For example, and despite them having played a major role in writing their bid for the SFP, one grantee included in the site visit discussions reported their main partner subsequently decided to withdraw from some of the project activities. The effect of this was to make it impossible for the grantee to deliver on some of the key project outputs. However, the grantee felt that they were able to discuss the situation openly with their Grants Officer who had been very supportive and open with them throughout the process. Furthermore, at the end of this process, a revised workplan was submitted and, despite this major obstacle, the project monitoring forms suggest that the project has since progressed well:

Despite additional challenges referred to above the project has continued to progress well, and agreed revised workplan appears to have given the consortium new momentum.

### **Difficulties in engaging target beneficiaries**

As highlighted in the project review documentation, the online questionnaire and the site visits some organisations, and especially those working with hard-to-reach groups or sensitive audiences, found it difficult to engage with their target beneficiaries, especially if they had had no previous experience of working with them. In particular, and in several cases, engaging with their target group took more time than they had initially anticipated.

This can be demonstrated using two comments from the responses to the online survey:

We did fail in some ways to reach the hard to reach groups but we tried. This was part of the plan we had to renegotiate as we learned one of the reasons that they are called “hard to reach” is that they are “hard to reach”.

Whilst contact was made via a lead health worker the community either did not want to engage or, as a relatively small community locally, did not include any relevant people at the time of the project.

Those organisations who experienced difficulties in accessing their target group or groups believed that several lessons could be learnt from this experience. These lessons include:

- **The need for building partnerships with specialist agencies** (beyond those included in their initial project plans): Working with those that had knowledge and expertise in working with such groups was felt to be essential for understanding their needs and for devising effective access strategies. Where this has not initially been planned for, some grantees had been obliged to seek additional partners that were not originally been part of their initial proposal.
- **Building in additional time to project plans:** Working in unfamiliar territory meant that more time was often required to enable appropriate routes of access to be created and that these approaches also had to be very flexible and creative.
- **The need to engage with those in close contact with target group or groups:** Forming relationships with, for example, family or peers or trusted third parties helped enhance influence and facilitated the signposting of services provided by SFP supported projects. This was particularly important where organisations were delivering services to vulnerable people in sensitive areas such as victims of abuse.

### **6.3 The relative distance of the Commission as a funding partner**

One area of exploration which was not included in the online survey but which emerged during the site visit discussion was the extent to which the Commission had met the grantees' expectations in terms of its role in aiding the facilitation of projects. This

emerged when organisations were asked to state, at a general level, what their expectations were concerning the role of funding bodies in the delivery of their projects.

During these discussions, several organisations outlined the difference in the experiences they had in working with different types of funding agencies and the varying levels of interaction they have with them. In particular, these discussions highlighted a clear distinction between the perceived approach generally taken by smaller, more traditional, funding agencies and larger bodies such as the Big Lottery Fund and statutory bodies. In general the former were felt to be more flexible in their approach and more willing to build an engaged, supportive and longer-term relationship with a stronger element of trust.

For example one grantee stated that:

Smaller funding agencies are less onerous and more supportive to applicants than those of the statutory bodies. The funding organisations that are easier to work with seem to be the smaller grants agencies... because they are more personal. Statutory bodies are more exacting and less supportive but then we do get more money from them.

Ideally, therefore, grantees appeared to be looking for the size of grant offered by larger funding bodies but with the flexibility and collaboration associated with smaller, independent sponsors. However, the site visit discussions suggested there was recognition among grantees that there was a degree of conflict between these two goals.

Nevertheless, the majority of these organisations stated that, in terms of the relationships they had with their funders, and regardless of the latter's size, that they hoped to establish what might be termed a working partnership: one in which the funder was not necessarily involved in a "hands-on" way in the day-to-day running of their project but, instead, was there to provide support, guidance and to share knowledge. The hope is that such funders will be interested in, and engage with, their project, that they will understand the needs of their client group and, potentially, form a longer-term working relationship with the grantee:

As the project progresses, I would expect the funder to be in a predominately consultative role, particularly if issues arise which necessitate a change of project direction.

We expect to be accountable to our funders and for them to be helpful if we encounter difficulties on a project.

However, the evidence from the site visits and the online survey suggested that grantee opinions were generally divided as to whether the Commission had, as a funding organisation, met these expectations in terms of their contribution to the facilitation of

projects. Whereas some organisations described having a positive working relationship with the Commission, a number of less positive issues were raised by some of the others.

In general, these issues can be classified using the following broad headings:

- A lower degree of engagement than had been anticipated;
- The lack of, or inconsistent, communication;
- Inflexible project delivery systems;
- Restrictive monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Each of these issues is discussed in more detail below.

### **Lower degree of engagement**

The majority (21) of the organisations who responded to the online survey stated that they were satisfied with the Commission's overall engagement with their project. However, nearly a quarter (eight) were dissatisfied while the remaining six gave a neutral response.

The organisations that were involved in the site visits were relatively neutral on this issue. However, a few expressed disappointment that, other than in its monitoring role, the Commission had not been more heavily involved from a strategic or operational perspective. And, although they were also in the minority, a few grantees also felt that the Commission was not been interested in the project itself but only in gathering evidence for where the SFP grant was being spent. For example, some organisations would have liked to have seen Commission staff attending events run as part of the projects. As well as demonstrating a general level of interest, it was also thought that this could have reduced the amount of information that grantees were required to submit for monitoring purposes:

I expect a funder to be interested in the project itself and the quality of output. The EHRC were interested in neither. They should be interested in the actual quality of work done and not just producing statistics at the end of the day.

We wanted an involvement from the EHRC on the level of supportive involvement on the agenda of Human Rights and Equality, rather than a non-responsive but heavy handed reporting system.

Some organisations also felt that they would have benefitted from the Commission being more involved in advising them on project delivery i.e. by sharing their expertise and experience on equalities issues. In addition, one grantee believed the Commission had a particular responsibility to play a more supportive role because their project had received less funding than had been initially anticipated. In this case there was an expectation that

the Commission would be more on hand to help guide them through the inherent challenges that would need to be faced where budgets had been reduced considerably:

If you are given a lower offer than on your funding application, be very clear and strong in what you can and can't achieve. If [funding organisations] are going to make a much reduced offer, don't just expect the organisation to sink or swim and sort it out themselves. It's irresponsible.

Conversely, several other grantees appreciated that the reasons behind the perceived lack of interest or assistance with their projects might have resulted from internal resource shortages at the Commission:

I know that the EHRC were experiencing a great deal of upheaval with the restructure which will have affected internal capacity.

### **Poor or inconsistent communication**

With regards to communication throughout delivery, around half (17) of the grantees that responded to the online survey were satisfied with the level of communication they had received from the Commission throughout the lifespan of their project, 11 were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied while seven (around a fifth of the total) expressed dissatisfaction.

Feedback from the site visits suggested that these negative views may have resulted from the organisations concerned not feeling up to speed with the changes in the processes and procedures associated with the SFP, such as those relating to monitoring and financial reporting, or with the other requirements expected of them by the Commission.

For example, a number of organisations reported being unexpectedly asked to undertake an independent evaluation of their project in the third year of their grant without being allocated the budget to do this. In addition, several grantees also reported that, again in the third year of the grants programme, the financial reporting regime changed and intensified without this being adequately communicated. The result was that, in order to gather the required information in time to meet the tight deadlines imposed by the Commission, these organisations needed to divert resources away from their projects.

The perceived lack of capacity and restructuring within the Commission was also felt, in part, to explain the lack of communication that occurred during some periods. For example, some organisations participating in the site visits felt that their project contact details were not always kept up to date due to the myriad of changes that were occurring.

It [communication] goes into this big black hole. If you do email them, you get no response or you are told that the person is no longer available.

### **Inflexible project delivery systems**

During the site visit discussions, a number of the participating organisations stated that the Commission had tended to be relatively flexible with regards to changes they had made to their projects and had understood when issues were encountered that would require certain alterations to be made to their workplan in order for projects to remain on track:

As the project progressed and encountered some issues, there were changes made to the workplan. The negotiations with the EHRC around these were positive and it was generally easy to reach agreements.

In particular, several of these organisations alluded to feeling extremely positive about the support and guidance that had been provided by their Grants Officers throughout their project's lifespan and, in particular, when changes had needed to be made:

If there was something I couldn't do I would just phone and say we are doing this and can we amend it, the grants team were really good in their flexibility and in relation to being realistic about changes that were beyond my control.

However, for other organisations that participated in the site visits, the perceived inflexibility in terms of project planning described in the previous chapter was also carried forward into project delivery. These organisations felt that changes were generally met with resistance. The change control processes that were required if an alteration in approach was needed were also felt, by some, to be very 'bureaucratic' and 'restrictive':

The change management process was really not helpful. I can understand it for large amounts but £50 or less, you should be allowed some movement between headings. You cannot be that precise when budgeting, it's unreasonable to expect it. Of course, you mustn't overspend but if an amount is less than 1% of the total budget you should be able to move it between different headings. This would be practical and reasonable and would aid smaller organisations.

This assessment, that the SFP processes and procedures could, at times, be restrictive, also carries forward into the next chapter on project monitoring and evaluation issues.

## 7. Project monitoring and evaluation

This chapter explores grantee perceptions of the monitoring and evaluation processes associated with the SFP. It presents their views on the level and amount of information required and explores further how this was perceived to affect the delivery of their projects.

### 7.1 Monitoring and evaluation processes

For reasons that are discussed in chapter ten, the monitoring and evaluation processes were a key part of the Commission's management of the SFP for tracking expenditure and ensuring that grantees were kept on target for delivering their agreed project outcomes and objectives and, therefore, for meeting the terms of their contractual agreement.

The SFP monitoring processes comprised of the following elements:

- Quarterly and annual financial reports;
- Once a year telephone monitoring;
- Yearly project site visits;
- End of year monitoring questionnaires and reports.

In addition, projects were also required to submit evidence in relation to the specific work they were undertaking. This evidence could include items such as attendance registers, evaluation sheets and photographs as evidence that events had taken place, or copies of related documents such as leaflets or posters. This evidence was required to prove that the outcomes and objectives set out in the project work plan had been met, for example, by showing that the target number of attendees for an event had actually been achieved.

Findings from the online survey and from the site visit discussions suggest that grantees had experienced several issues with regards to the monitoring and evaluation processes and procedures associated with the SFP and that the majority of their perceptions were negative. Indeed, even those organisations whose experiences of the SFP had been generally positive expressed a degree of frustration with this aspect of the programme.

Grantee frustrations with these procedures generally resulted from the following issues:

- The perceived disproportionate nature of the amount of information required and the pressure that gathering this had placed on their organisations;
- Inconsistencies in the above over the life of their project;

- The perceived lack of trust and confidence in grantees that was demonstrated by the extent of monitoring information required.

## 7.2 The amount of information required

One key theme of this research is that the amount of monitoring information grantees were required to submit was disproportionate in relation to the size and the nature of the SFP grant. Evidence for this has emerged from the document review, the online survey and the site visits that suggests that, on the whole, organisations felt that the evidence they were asked to gather and submit was over and above their expectations and that, in addition, they also felt they had been poorly informed in terms of these requirements at the outset.

In the online survey, grantees were asked how well informed they were in advance about the amount and type of information they would be required to submit to the Commission given what was actually requested once they received funding from the SFP. In response to this question, 18 of the 35 organisations that responded felt that they had been poorly informed, eight felt well informed while nine gave a neither/nor response to this question.

Organisations were also asked about the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with a set of statements relating to the complexity and frequency of the monitoring procedures associated with the SFP. The responses to these questions are shown in Table 7.1 below.

**Table 7.1: Grantee views of the monitoring requirements**

Aspect of the Monitoring Requirements	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Unsure
Monitoring forms were easy and straightforward to complete	7	12	16	2
Collecting evidence was an excessively bureaucratic, complex and time-consuming process	26	6	1	2
More training or guidance was needed for project staff	10	13	12	/
The monitoring occurred too frequently throughout the project	14	13	7	1
Enough time was given to prepare for visits and phone calls	24	8	7	1

*Base: All organisations responding to the survey: (35)*

In terms of their complexity, Table 7.1 shows nearly three quarters (26) of the respondents found collecting evidence for the monitoring procedures had been excessively bureaucratic and complex while almost half found the monitoring forms difficult to complete. However, this was not perceived by the majority of respondents to be due to the lack of appropriate guidance: only 10 grantees believed more staff training on completing the monitoring documentation would have been an appropriate solution to these problems.

Conversely, the frequency of monitoring was less of an issue with opinion being divided as to whether this had happened too often. More positively, organisations felt that they were given good notification in terms of when their monitoring visits or phone calls would occur.

Organisations were also asked how appropriate the level and frequency of SFP project monitoring was in relation to various aspects of their projects and in comparison to those associated with other sources of financial support. Table 7.2, below, shows the majority of grantees felt the SFP's procedures were inappropriate for all of these factors. In particular, Table 7.2 highlights the perceived disproportionality between the intensity of the SFP's monitoring procedures in relation to the nature and size of their organisation, the amount of grant awarded and in comparison to the other funding sources they had experience of.

**Table 7.2: Perceived proportionality of monitoring requirements**

Perceived proportionality of SFP project monitoring in comparison to...	Appropriate	Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	Inappropriate	Unsure
Other sources of funding	9	3	21	2
The size and nature or your organisation	8	4	22	1
The risks associated with the project	10	4	20	1
The size or length of the grant	8	7	19	1

Base: All organisations responding to the survey (35)

The reasons behind these overwhelmingly negative ratings were illuminated through grantee responses to an open question in the online survey which asked them how the SFP's monitoring and evaluation processes could have been simplified or improved.

With the exception of five grantees, all of the respondents made at least one suggestion as to how these processes could have been streamlined. The majority related to perceptions that these processes were excessive and disproportionate in relation to the size of grant while several of the others concerned the perceived repetitiveness of the evidence gathering and what was felt to be an unnecessary amount of cross-referencing:

We had several monitoring calls and an audit visit as well as our written reports in year 1 alone, this was too much. We also had some micro managing that was unnecessary e.g. where we could buy cheaper equipment.

Annual site visits, telephone interviews and written quarterly reports were a bit over the top. Other funders never request more than 2 of these types of monitoring. A visit OR a telephone interview, together with written monitoring should have been sufficient surely? The evidence required was also excessive and repetitive.

Several respondents also described the difficulties that they had experienced due to the size of their organisation and the need to reallocate resources away from project delivery in order to comply with these procedures. It was felt that the monitoring and evaluation processes showed a lack of understanding of the resource pressures faced by small organisations and the negative effect these could have on the quality of service delivery:

The level of detail required felt inappropriate and intensely bureaucratic. Costs to the organisation and time allocated to monitoring was disproportionate to the time spent on service delivery. Staff were not flexible at all and not understanding of the time restraints on small charities. A detailed level of financial and service delivery monitoring is expected and part of any contract but in this instant especially financial monitoring was detailed and time consuming to an unhelpful level.

As was found with regard to project design and planning issues discussed in previous chapters, the level of scrutiny and bureaucracy involved with the monitoring and evaluation procedures was felt by several grantees to have stifled the delivery of their project and served to entrench the perception that the SFP had a misguided focus on outputs, rather than outcomes. And because of this level of scrutiny, some grantees believed that even minor changes had been met with resistance so hindering the creativity of their project:

The monitoring procedure did not allow for any creativity or flexibility as the project progressed. Minor changes were met with disapproval and resistance. To grow a project, flexibility is the key and taking note of service users and changing delivery is important, the EHRC looked more for static consistency.

It seemed that we were held strictly to account for both inputs and outputs, rather than allowing us to be more flexible in how we use resources to achieve impacts - as inevitably costs change compared with original budgets as the project proceeds.

The evidence from both the online survey and the discussions at the site visits suggested that grantees were aware of the issues that were involved in accounting for public money and accepted that they needed to be accountable when they were in receipt of such funds. But it was also argued that the level of detail and the type of information required were onerous, often difficult to obtain and this had put pressure on their organisation's capacity:

In some instances, project service users have had to be turned away. There was one point where our referrals had to be closed for a short time because the other advocate was part-time and my time was taken up with the year-end reports, which was sending them what we they had already in the quarterly reports.

As well as the frequency and volume of the required monitoring information, some grantees also had difficulties in providing the information in the format required meaning that, in some cases, they had to install awkward, inefficient systems they would not usually otherwise have used. For example one grantee reported that they were required to submit hard copy attendance sheets where they would normally have used electronic registers.

Other grantees stated that, on occasions, gathering evidence on outputs relied on the willingness of the target beneficiaries to engage in the process, for example, by filling out questionnaires or by passing on personal information. This was not something that these grantees always felt they could control. Partner organisations were not always happy to provide information because they were not the end service-users. Additionally, in some cases, where projects were targeted at particularly vulnerable audiences, there was a reluctance to gather personal information from clients due to concerns that it would be potentially damaging to a relationship where the grantees were attempting to build trust.

### 7.3 Inconsistencies in approach

In addition to the above issues, some organisations also spoke during the site visits of a feeling that there was no consistency within the Commission in terms of what its project monitoring requirements entailed. In particular, some grantees mentioned that:

- There was **no unified approach** across the Commission with regards to the gathering of the evidence needed for project monitoring and evaluation;

- Over the course of their projects, and especially in the final year, the informational requirements for financial reporting purposes **intensified quite significantly** leaving grantees unclear as to what would and would not be accepted.

Both of these issues are discussed in more detail below.

### **Lack of a unified approach**

During the site visits, several grantees mentioned there were perceived inconsistencies between different Grants Officers concerning the level of evidence they required for monitoring purposes. Around two thirds of these organisations reported being allocated different Grants Officers during the lifespan of their project and, while this was generally understood and accepted as being the result of organisational changes inside the Commission, this had caused problems in terms of submitting monitoring information because some Grants Officers were felt to require a greater degree of detail than others.

Likewise, some grantees had also experienced situations where they had had their monitoring report signed off by their Grants Officer, only to have it queried by someone else within the Commission. This sometimes meant that their Grants Officer needed to come back to the organisation concerned with a request for further evidence.

### **Intensification of evidence requirements**

Some organisations also felt that a number of changes were made, particularly in the final year of their grant, which had led to changes in what would be accepted as evidence and specifically in relation to the financial reporting requirements. As a result of these changes, some grantees experienced delays in receiving their quarterly payments which left them feeling insecure and reducing their confidence in relation to the delivery of their project:

This has been my biggest bugbear because for two years they have allowed internal invoices. When the new finance director came, they wouldn't accept them. Like from the gas and electric – external bills or copies of the originals which we never had to do for the first two years. We were insecure and didn't know when and if we were going to get the funding, how to pay staff.

## **7.4 The perceived lack of trust and confidence in grantees**

Some grantees also felt that the amount of monitoring and evaluation that occurred during the duration of their project indicated a lack of trust and confidence in them on the part of the Commission. In particular, they felt that the auditing procedures were undertaken with

a degree of suspicion and that there was a lack of willingness on the part of the Commission to accept records that were deemed to be adequate by other funders.

It was also felt that the Commission should have had a greater level of confidence in the experience, credibility and integrity of the organisations it was supporting to deliver their objectives. For example, some grantees described during the site visits how these procedures had undermined them as an organisation and indicated doubts in their ability to deliver their project. Some also reported being unclear on how the information gathered was actually being used and there was a sense that it was being gathered for its own sake and not because it had any real value. The following extracts illustrate both these points:

We had to run parallel record keeping for every receipt in addition to standard records which are examined anyway by independent auditor. Our other trust fund funders accept independently audited accounts as sufficient, as does Company House and the Charity Commission. It was not clear how was information we reported used in a constructive way apart from exerting control over our activities. It looked as EHRC did not trust us nor these other legal systems to be accountable and transparent.

The quarterly internal audit of our receipts and progress was very disruptive. The goalposts for what was required and how it was monitored changed without any warning, this was incredibly disruptive. The distrust of the professionalism was apparent, the monitoring reports should have been sufficient without the reams of evidence to support this, given that the grant manager was also visiting. We produced evidence for the grant manager and then re-produced this for the reports which seemed unnecessary.

## **7.5 Overall value of the monitoring procedures**

Because of the range of issues described above, the grantees who responded to the online survey were relatively divided, when asked in the online survey, about the value of the Commission's monitoring procedures to them as an organisation and the degree to which they had made a positive impact on their ability to successfully deliver their project.

Hence, while only seven of the 35 organisations that responded to the online survey agreed that these processes had made an entirely negative impact on them or their project, only four found their impact to be entirely positive. Instead 15 of the 35 grantees said their impact had been mixed while nine felt they had made no impact. Likewise, feedback from both the online survey and the site visit discussions suggested that, while

the monitoring procedures were often seen to be cumbersome and excessive, they did contribute more positively for a number of grantees by better focusing project delivery:

The only advantage was that they sent us on a steep learning curve and knocked us into shape to be able to manage other projects more easily.

We found the monitoring procedures fair and helpful to help us focus our delivery.

Finally, organisations responding to the online survey were asked whether the level of monitoring would make them think twice about applying to a similar funding programme in the future. In response, 20 of the 35 responding organisations reported that it would.

However, and as is outlined in the next chapter, although most grantees tended to feel that the monitoring processes associated with the SFP were, in many respects, a burden to their organisations, the value of having a grant of this nature i.e. from an innovative, equality agenda driven fund, in the end appeared to supersede these negative impacts.

## 8. Project impact

This chapter outlines the perceived achievements of the SFP funded projects, their potential sustainability after the ending of SFP support and the future forms they will take.

It should be noted that the objective of the research was not to evaluate the impact of individual projects but rather the performance of the programme as a whole. As a result, the findings in this chapter are largely self-reported and therefore contain a degree of subjectivity although, as noted below, there is external evidence for the views expressed.

### 8.1 Project impact overview

As was discussed in chapter six on project delivery, the majority of the grantees who participated in the research felt they had achieved their project objectives. Although this is self-reported impact, this assessment is also backed up through Grant Officers' end of project assessments and, in some cases, by independent external evaluation reports.

The online survey asked organisations to categorise the key aims of their project in terms of the main aims of the SFP. The grantee responses to this question suggested that:

- 28 organisations saw their project as being to provide individuals who suffer from inequality and disadvantage to have greater choice, control and empowerment in their lives and in relation to public services;
- 15 grantees aimed to set up or extend existing organisations that represent and respond to community interests where none currently exist;
- 14 organisations sought to support the victims of hate crimes and provide them with greater confidence;
- 10 projects aimed to increase interaction and understanding between groups and communities who do not ordinarily mix or where tensions exist.

The majority of respondents to the online survey reported that, as a result of their projects, there had been positive changes in relation to the increased engagement of their target audiences within their communities and associated changes in their attitudes. Table 8.1 (below) shows the main impacts that were reported by the 35 responding SFP grantees.

**Table 8.1: Perceived achievements of projects**

Perceived Impact of the SFP Project	Number
Increased participation and influence of target group in the community	24
Change in attitudes of target groups	22
Increased interaction of target group with others	18
Measured change relating to quality of life	17
Increased perceptions of personal security among the target group	15
Other changes in the behaviour of the target groups	13

*Base: All survey respondents (35). Grantees could select more than one option in response to this question.*

Table 8.1 shows that the three most commonly reported impacts were the increased participation and influence of the target group in their community, a change in the attitudes of the target groups themselves and an increased level of interaction between the target group and others. Grantees' also reported that their projects had been associated with a change in the quality of life and in the perceived personal security of the target group.

Grantees were also asked to rate the different aspects of their projects in terms of whether they had been achieved at the level they had anticipated. Again, positive results were reported in terms of their engagement with target beneficiaries and the reaction to the project within their communities. Thus, of the 35 grantees who responded to the survey:

- 24 believed the reception from their target groups was better than expected;
- 21 believed that raising of their profile within the wider community was better than they had planned;
- 21 stated that mainstreaming the project activities into their wider work had been achieved at a greater level than they had anticipated;
- 18 felt that the sustainability of impact had been better than they had expected.

As well as achieving their specific project objectives the online survey and the discussions held during the site visits revealed that the SFP had also enabled the supported organisations to achieve positive impacts beyond those they had anticipated. For example 27 organisations reported that their project had provided additional benefits or positive impacts to individuals or communities that were not part of their original objectives.

When asked what form these extra impacts had taken, the grantees who had reported them mentioned the following additional benefits for their target groups and their staff:

- Extension of the project into new areas of work and/or to new audiences;
- Other organisations taking an interest in, helping to promote or emulating projects;
- Raising the profile of the needs of their beneficiaries;
- Volunteers working on their projects moving into paid employment.

A number of grantees that responded to the survey gave specific examples of how they had been able to establish new services, branch into new areas of work or apply the work they have been doing to different strands, enabling them to reach new beneficiary groups.

The following two extracts give examples of how the SFP was seen to have aided this:

We used the learning from the project to do similar work in other intersectional areas, in particular disability and sexual orientation/gender identity.

In a broad way, this strategic funding allowed us to expand our delivery to reach more beneficiaries. From this platform we have now scaled significantly and reaching many more equalities groups through other funding sources.

In addition, an analysis of the survey responses and of the discussions held during the site visits, suggested that grantees had been able to develop their own organisations as a result of the SFP. There were three main ways by which this had been achieved including:

- Forming partnerships with other agencies;
- Raising their wider profile and influence;
- Securing funding from new or alternative sources.

Each of these processes are now discussed in turn.

## **8.2 Partnerships with other agencies**

As was briefly discussed in chapter six, the ability to reach out into new areas of work, or to new target groups was, for some grantees, the result of the formation of strategic partnerships with other agencies. Although, as was also outlined previously, a small number of organisations experienced problems with these partners, this partnership approach was received positively by most organisations who participated in the research.

Hence 14 of the 35 grantees that responded to the online survey reported having worked with partner agencies, the majority of whom were either other not-for-profit, charity or community interest groups. These partners were reported as having provided guidance or more active input into the planning and or delivery of their projects, helping the project gain access to their target groups, the establishment of project steering groups, overseeing aspects of the delivery of the project's work programme and in providing extra resources.

During the site visits, several organisations outlined the benefits of forming partnerships with these other organisations and agencies. These suggested that good partnership arrangements were perceived to be beneficial in both the short and the longer-term.

In the short to medium-term (i.e., during the delivery of a project), partnerships with other agencies gave the funded organisations access to additional groups, enabled them to share knowledge, to seek guidance and advice when dealing in uncharted territory, and to drive their agendas forward. The following extracts provide examples of such benefits:

There was a synergy with other projects which provided an added value to the overall work of the organisation and the level of trust placed in us by the community that we serve.

We now have a much better working relationships with other agencies in the city that serve different clients groups (e.g. mental health and women's aid). We would be more likely to design projects that contain joint working aspects.

In the longer-term, some grantees anticipated that the development of such working-relationships would help enhance the sustainability of their project and allow it to develop further. In some cases, because such partnerships had resulted in the provision of more streamlined, joined-up and cost-effective services than the funded organisations would have been able to provide by themselves, they stood a better chance of being continued:

We are developing wider partnership work with disability organisations to develop approaches with our beneficiaries and a resource on women and disability. We have been invited to tender for CSU [the Community Safety Unit of the Scottish Government] funding to develop the approach with regard to anti sectarianism.

We developed a relationship with the local council equality development department. For an independent, non-public sector organisations, those sorts of relationships that come out of a project area really important to go on and develop more in the future.

Three of the site visit discussions illustrate these benefits in more detail. The first is an example of how one project's activities became mainstreamed into those of one of their partner organisations and relates to a grantee whose project involved the provision of

welfare rights advice and guidance. To progress their project this grantee had formed a relationship with a partner body. However, this partner initially felt that such activities were not within their remit and so had declined to get involved with this aspect of the project.

In response, the grantee took one of partner's workers "under their wing" and gave them training and supervision on how to deal with this specific area. In addition, the grantee seconded one of the partner's workers for three months to ensure a greater degree of joined-up thinking and approach and to increase their partner's understanding of the grantee's equality groups. The partner found both of these actions to be extremely valuable and, as a result, has since advertised for a relevant full-time worker in this area and has also integrated providing welfare rights guidance into their mainstream service.

The second example shows how one grantee's project has raised interest among other agencies working in the field who want to take this work further. As part of their project, the grantee had built on the strong relationships they already had with national providers in their area. Their subsequent project work in providing training and raising awareness of the issues affecting their equality group was sufficiently well-received to the point they are now being approached by other agencies to ask how they can work with these groups. In particular, more mainstream agencies are also now taking the work of their project forward and are doing it themselves. However while the grantee is still meeting, both nationally and locally, with the other agencies who are involved in their field to find new ways to drive their project forward, they are still seeking a new sponsor to enable this to happen.

However, this grantee felt many of the positive outcomes that had emerged from their project were not necessarily related to what they perceived to be a 'tickbox' approach to outcomes. For example, one specific project milestones had been to stage a national conference but, instead, a commercial organisation had taken it on and ran it on their behalf. However, the Commission still wanted to know why they had not run it themselves despite the grantee feeling that it was a success that another organisation was running it.

The final example shows how the SFP enabled the formation of a consortium of agencies which resulting in the design of a more streamlined, cost effective service. Here, despite experiencing a number of difficulties with the delivery of their project throughout the three years of their SFP funding, a key impact achieved by one grantee was the creation of a new partnership between a number of different organisations with similar overall aims:

The trial and error over the past 3 years has led to a very strong collaborative partnership between organisations who share the same values and vision going forward. The whole principle of it is that by working together, we enhance the services we provide. Where possible, we will open access to our special services to

other groups so that groups are getting access to services that they wouldn't normally be able to.

This new partnership has bought a number of benefits and will significantly build the internal capacity of the grantee and the other bodies involved. For example, it means they are now in a position to share services and to collectively negotiate to reduce their back office costs. As a result, the partnership has already begun to see cost-saving benefits which are anticipated to continue over time. For example, the organisations have already negotiated a single supplier contract resulting in a saving of £5,000 a year and are taking a similar approach to their photocopier, mobile phone and gas and electric suppliers. In addition, the partnership allows the organisations involved to collaborate with one other on writing bids for future funding. This has meant that the potential for securing further funding has been significantly raised, and particularly so for the smaller organisations.

### **8.3 Profile raising**

One key objective of the SFP was to help grantees to develop a wider awareness of their key activities and objectives. Evidence of this emerged from the responses to the online survey with 21 of the 35 grantees that responded believing that their profile within their wider community had been raised to a higher level than expected through their SFP work.

In particular, a number of the supported organisations believed that a key impact of their project had been in helping them to boost their recognition and credibility, so enabling them to better promote the needs of their beneficiary groups and further their broader agenda. The following comment from one of the site visit discussions illustrates this point:

It was very worthwhile and politically it elevated our organisation with the sector as a whole, it built our reputation and demonstrated that there was a need. As part of our bid, and in order to agree the funding, we had to agree a consortium with other local agencies. We had to meet regularly to monitor the project and this forum still exists today. It has proved to be a very good interface between us and the services involved. It upped our own status and credibility and influence with police, politicians etc. and meant they engaged more with us.

Some grantees also felt that it was not only the profile of their organisation that had been raised but, by extension, that of equality work in general. This was held to have contributed to other bodies and agencies understanding of the equality and human rights agenda. This point can be illustrated by several comments made by funded organisations:

The interest and enthusiasm for the project, as evidenced by the attendance and constructive engagement of civil society organisations through roadshows exceeded expectations and provided an important platform for embedding human rights principles in social action at community level.

The project has become much more established and has a good presence in the area. Reflected in positive feedback from agencies/survey work/attendance at events/referrals to the service from a range of sources/the setting up of a new advisory group.

Agencies and services we hoped to influence around service delivery and accessibility have maintained links and promoted our practice for other groups they work with and are championing Disabled People in combating disability hate crime.

The response from individuals to the initial publicity was far greater than expected, and it was easier to build up working relationships with other established organisations than had been envisaged.

However, during the site visit discussions, a number of grantees said that one key thing that they felt they would have benefitted from was more support at the end of their project in terms of disseminating the impacts of their work. In particular, some grantees said that, as the funding organisation, it was partly the responsibility of the Commission to work with the grantees to ensure that the achievements of their projects achieved a high profile. Subsequent discussions with the Commission's Grants Officers also suggested that the extent to which this had occurred had also varied across the organisation as a whole.

Those grantees with more negative views felt that the reason this had not happened was a result of the Commission's perceived overall lack of engagement with their project. Some expressed disappointment that they had not received any feedback on their evaluations or the other evidence they had submitted in terms of their projects achievements.

Conversely, more sympathetic organisations felt that, again, a lack of internal capacity at the Commission had meant that no resources had been allocated to help projects to disseminate their successes. Both of these viewpoints are expressed in the quotes below:

We submitted case studies all the way through and that was soul destroying because we never got one comment back. That was because it wasn't part of their tick list so they weren't interested.

I am not aware, I don't think EHRC did affect the impact in this case. We would have liked it if they had. Previously, when we have had EHRC Officer involvement, it has helped but because of the lack of continuity and involvement of the Grants Officers

on this project and then the change of emphasis to an audit role, we haven't been able to share our learning with the EHRC.

The EHRC could be playing more of a part disseminating it, so that their constituencies are being reminded of it. It's a fairly easy win for an agency that needs to have presence outside the metropolitan areas. It has what we call a long tail – this won't date for some years so there is an opportunity to continue to use it even through the project is finished.

But, regardless of the reasons for this, there was a sense among some of the organisations participating in the site visits that the lack of engagement with projects in terms of promoting the impacts of their projects was a missed opportunity for both parties. They felt that a well-thought out dissemination strategy could have successfully raised the profile of organisations and their projects, the achievements and value of the SFP as a grants programme and the contribution that the Commission had made as the sponsor.

#### **8.4 Securing funding from new or alternative sources**

One additional and beneficial effect of having a raised profile was the increased ability of grantees to secure future funding, so helping to ensure the sustainability of some projects beyond the life of the SFP. 14 of the 35 grantees – around four in ten of the respondents - reported being able to secure funding for continuing their projects from other sources.

In particular, a number of the organisations who participated in the site visits stated that they had been successful in securing funding from a number of high profile organisations which would either enable their projects to continue in a similar or a reduced form:

[We have secured] match funding from other funders including the Ministry of Justice, Police Authority and Northern Rock Foundation. [There is] also recognition from external bodies about the value of the work. [We have] a good experience of documenting evidence/evaluating our work. [We have] strengthened capacity which itself brought huge benefits to the project overall and increase in profile.

The project will carry on. We have secured funding for three years from Save the Children. There is also integrated work going on with different cultures.

The project has continued with a further two year funding through the Clinical Commission Group with some modifications. The project was given more of a health and well-being emphasis. They recognise the value of supporting people more holistically.

In particular, one grantee working in a particularly difficult area alluded to the fact that, due to the innovative nature of the fund, they were able to undertake what was perceived to be “at risk” work. As the project was successful in building bridges between communities, and received more of a positive response than was anticipated, this reduced the risks involved so paving the way for more cautious, scrutinised funders to commit to financing the work:

This kind of work had never been funded in Scotland before and people were really worried about the amount of backlash we would receive. It wasn't as bad as they thought. We broke the ground, we broke the fear and that is why it was easier for the Scottish Government to come in and support it after the EHRC.

### 8.5 The future of SFP funded projects

During the online survey and site visits, respondents were asked whether their projects were likely to continue following the cessation of the SFP funding and, if so, in what form.

Table 8.2 shows that 20 of the 35 grantees expected their project would continue to operate in some form while only eight reported that their project would finish after the ending of their SFP support. An additional seven grantees responded that it was too early to tell what the expected outcome for their project would be at the time of the research.

**Table 8.2: The future of SFP funded projects**

Will the Project Continue?		Explanation	Number
Yes	20	A smaller scale version	12
		The same in similar form	6
		A larger-scale version	2
No	8	Could not secure further funding	7
		Never intended to continue	1
Too early to tell	7	/	7

*Base: All survey respondents (35)*

The discussions during the site visits about the future of their projects largely reflected and shed additional light on these findings. Some organisations reported having secured funding from new sources while others were in the process of applying to, or waiting to

hear the outcome of, applications for funding from other sources. Some grantees also reported that the work of their projects would be continuing through the work of their partnerships while others had managed to absorb the work into their mainstream activities:

The impact will be more joint working. We are funding it through different work we are doing. Our partners are working together, which is new and other things will be coming up.

We've created links so students can gain experience in casework and they get a reference in return. That is because of the EHRC money. If we hadn't had that money, we would not have been able to develop and do all these things, it's a godsend.

We achieved more than we had expected with the staff time available for the project, and were able to make the work sustainable by integrating our learning onto our website.

Cost effectiveness was better because we had a lot of support from partner organisations. Mainstreaming within our organisation was better because we were funded us to expand the work into other intersections, in particular disability and sexual orientation / gender identity.

## **8.6 Grantee perceptions of the Commission**

Finally, and as part of the research, grantees were asked about how their experience of the SFP had impacted on their perceptions of the Commission. As a result, the online survey asked a series of questions relating to grantee perceptions of the Commission prior to them taking part in the SFP, during the funding period and at the end of the programme. Table 8.3 describes the grantees responses to these questions and shows how their attitudes toward the Commission changed across these points in the operation of the SFP.

**Table 8.3: Impact of the SFP on grantee perceptions of the Commission**

Nature of the Impact	Prior to taking part in the SFP	During delivery of the project	After taking part in the SFP
Positive	23	13	15
Neither positive nor negative	8	1	1
Positive in some respects, negative in others	3	17	15
Negative	0	2	1
Would rather not say	1	2	3

*Base: All survey respondents (35)*

Table 8.3 shows that, prior to participating in the SFP, 23 out of 35 organisations stated that they held a positive view of the Commission. However, this number decreased to 13 during the delivery of their project before rising slightly to 15 once the SFP had finished. This suggests that, despite the SFP having financed projects that might not otherwise have occurred, the overall impact of the SFP on grantee perceptions of the Commission was negative. However, and rather more positively, it should be noted that only a small minority of grantees held solely negative views towards the Commission at all three points.

## 9. Grantee views on how the SFP might have been improved

The final main section of the online survey asked respondents for their views about how the SFP might have been improved and on the ways in which they felt they could have approached their projects differently to achieve a greater impact. This chapter reports the responses to these questions and, in addition, it explores grantee views on any improvements that could have been made to the SFP. The chapter then looks at grantees overall views concerning their participation in the SPF and the value of the Commission as a funding partner. Finally it looks at grantee views about the future of funding in this area.

### 9.1 Ways in which planning and delivery could have been improved

The online survey asked grantees what they could have done differently in terms of the planning and/or the delivery of their projects in order to achieve a greater impact. Those grantees who responded to this question said more impact could have been achieved via:

- More staff and greater financial or practical support from partners or the other organisations involved (eighteen grantees);
- Greater access to national experts (five grantees);
- Improved internal monitoring (four grantees);
- Improved support from the Commission (six grantees).

When asked more specifically about what the Commission could have done differently to provide greater support to their projects the following responses were given. As can be seen, they largely reiterate various themes that have been discussed earlier in this report:

- Less stringent monitoring procedures;
- Being less distant and more approachable and making a greater attempt to understand organisations and their projects better;
- Giving larger grants (i.e., closer to the sums initially applied for);
- Assisting more with taking their achievements from a local to a national level.

Similarly, those organisations involved in the site visits also felt there were changes that could have been made to the SFP that would have increased its impact. Many of these issues related to the difficulties that grantees had faced in adhering to the monitoring and reporting requirements. In particular, these grantees said more could have been done at

the outset to ensure a clearer understanding of what would be required in terms of the staff and time resources needed to comply with the monitoring procedures, that this would have aided effective project planning and helped ensure project delivery was not impeded.

One grantee felt one reason why the reporting procedures were so impractical and arduous was that they had been designed by individuals who were detached from the process of project delivery and who had little knowledge of the nature of community work. It was suggested that there needed to be better linkages with, or more understanding between, the finance teams and those involved on the ground (both in the Commission and in the projects themselves). One way this relationship could be improved, it was suggested, was if finance teams had a greater interaction with the projects they funded.

On a related point, because some organisations had experienced issues in terms of their communication with the Commission through the duration of their project, some grantees felt that better outcomes would have been achieved if a more open dialogue had been established at the outset between the funder and the grantee. They felt that this would have helped to ensure that all parties were clear on what was to be delivered and would have enabled any arising issues to have been identified and resolved more efficiently.

The better sharing of knowledge was also highlighted as an area where improvements could have been made to the SFP. Sharing knowledge was perceived to be important, not just between the funder and grantee, but also between the other organisations involved in the programme. For example, some grantees stated that they felt there should have been a greater emphasis placed on those involved in the programme to share best practice, both in terms of their project delivery but also about how to administer the programmes processes and procedures and incorporate them into their own organisational systems.

In summary, the key themes that emerged during the research from the funded organisation's perspectives on how programmes such as the SFP could build stronger relationships between the funder and the grantee can be summarised as follows:

- More clarity in terms of what the grantee can expect in terms of involvement and/or input into projects by the funder from the outset;
- Greater understanding over the amount of resources and time needed for monitoring and evaluation processes so organisations can plan accordingly;
- Stronger linkages between those in the funding body who work directly with projects and those who design financial and/or monitoring processes and procedures;
- Creating channels to ensure best practice can be disseminated to other grantees.

## 9.2 Ways in which the SFP could have been improved

In addition to a question about how organisations could have run their projects differently to achieve a greater impact, grantees were also asked a more general question about how a programme such as the SFP might be improved. Table 9.1 summarises the responses to this question given by the 35 organisations who participated in the survey. Again, these responses included a number of similar themes to those already discussed in this report and it is also noticeable that none of the respondent felt that nothing needed changing.

**Table 9.1: Grantee views about how the SFP could be improved**

Area for Improvement	Number
Longer term funding	24
Less monitoring	23
Better understanding of each organisation's individual needs	20
Payment up front	16
Fewer conditions attached to the funding	16
Simpler application process	14
Higher maximum level funding	14
Better engagement with projects	13
Faster payment	12
More feedback on reasons for decisions	9
Faster decisions	9
More support with running projects	6
Lower minimum funding levels	6
More support with applying	3
It could not be improved	0

*Base: All survey respondents (35). Grantees were allowed select more than one option in response to this question.*

Table 9.1 shows that longer-term funding was the most common improvement selected by the organisations that completed the online survey. This is to be expected given that, during the consultation period, the participating organisations had expressed the desire to see longer term project funding and that this had been one of the original intentions for the SFP. Likewise, and again reflecting the evidence discussed in earlier chapters of this report, less monitoring was also mentioned by around two-thirds of these organisations.

Twenty grantees also stated that they would have liked to have seen a better understanding of each organisation's individual needs. Verbatim feedback from an open question in the online survey suggested that this could be in response to organisations feeling that the needs of their target beneficiaries, and the objectives of their projects, were not always as fully understood or accounted for by the Commission as perhaps they might have been.

However, it could also be argued that it was not necessarily a lack of understanding from the Commission on what was being attempted that was always the key issue but rather a feeling that the need to adhere to what were widely perceived to have been stringent and inflexible monitoring processes had often taken precedence over the aims of the project.

### **9.3 Overall value of the SFP and of the Commission as a funder**

The online survey asked grantees to assess the benefits to them of the SFP. In response, 20 of the 35 organisations who participated in the online survey stated that the SFP had been very useful to them as an organisation, 11 that it had been fairly useful while four provided a neutral rating. This evidence suggests that, despite the difficulties some participating organisations had experienced with the Commission as the funder, on the whole, most believed there was an inherent value in grants programmes such as the SFP.

To gain further information on the value of funding streams of this type, during the site visits, grantees were asked to provide their views on the fact that the Commission would not be running a similar grants programme in the future. Despite the operational issues described in previous chapters, grantees were concerned that, if the Commission did not offer a similar programme in the future, a gap in funding for equalities work would emerge.

In particular, these organisations felt that one unique benefit of the SFP was that it had supported valuable, community-based work that was often difficult to find funding for elsewhere. Indeed, a number of grantees felt that the achievements of recent years in terms of equality, human rights and conflict resolution within communities could begin to regress if organisations working at a grass roots level are unable to obtain such funding.

It was also suggested that removing the grants function from the Commission meant that there was a danger of the link between policy and the practical work undertaken by community organisations disintegrating. The Grants Unit was seen to be an important connection that enabled the strategic principles of the Commission to be embedded at community level. The removal of this was perceived to create a potential chasm between the Commission and grass-roots level organisations involved in delivering equality work:

I think it's a great shame that the EHRC are not funding further projects at the moment, the opportunity for agencies not to really work on the ground with a range of diverse organisations and approaches means that there is a real danger of detachment from policy and practice. If not, they should be making it clear how that knowledge and expertise is feeding into policy development.

If you're dealing with equality and human rights then the EHRC should be providing that funding. I think it has lost its reputation with individuals in the community. They have removed the grant function but they should give it back. The impact of the organisation is now very little.

It's terrible that EHRC are not running the programme again. It's quite rare to have such a broad opportunity for funding that was aimed at more strategic projects. The scope of the SFP was the programme's key strength. The EHRC was a little more visionary than other funders.

Finally, and perhaps due to what was perceived at times to be a somewhat detached relationship with the projects, there was a general sense that the Commission had not provided a unique contribution to the delivery of projects and had missed an opportunity to do so. Nonetheless, most organisations involved in the site visits felt that the Commission's unique role in the equality and human rights agenda made them an important potential funder for further projects in this area and that their endorsement of projects had value in raising profile and credibility even without a contribution to delivery.

In summary, and at the point in the site visit discussions where grantees were encouraged to think about their involvement with the SFP as a whole, only a minority of organisations perceived the programme in either an extremely positive or very negative light: most of the participating organisations were, in some respects, both negative and positive. However, and despite issues with the administration of the fund, the grantees recognised its overall value and believed the Commission should run a similar funding programme in the future.

## 10. Conclusions

Chapter one of this report described the main objectives of this research. These were to:

- Review the internal management of the projects sponsored by the Commission to ensure that SFP grants were applied to appropriate activities and accounted for to the required standard;
- Review the extent to which the anticipated project outcomes were achieved and the extent to which these outcomes were additional and/or directly attributable to the SFP grant;
- Elicit feedback from grantees on the Commission's grant management processes, procedures and funding strategies;
- Highlight how and where future grant management procedures could be refined and improved to support any subsequent attempt to run a similar funding programme in the future.

This concluding chapter discussed each of these objectives in turn. However, before doing this, it is necessary to discuss the wider environment in which the SFP had to operate.

### 10.1 The wider context within which the SFP operated

The SFP was delivered at a time of major upheaval and change for the Commission. In particular, due to changes in the economic and political landscape, it faced increased scrutiny and pressure to deliver across a wide range of areas on a much reduced budget.

The Commission, as a public body, is under a duty to ensure that public funds are used for the purposes for which they are intended and this applies to grants to third parties. This required, in the case of the SFP, putting in place effective monitoring mechanisms and ensuring that any changes in resource use from that initially specified would provide as good, if not a better, outcomes for the taxpayer. In addition to this general requirement, the Commission was also facing scrutiny concerning its own management of public funds and many of the financial arrangements associated with the SFP reflected external audit requirements that became more rigorous over the period that the programme operated.

The period during which the SFP operated also saw the Commission lose a considerable portion of its budget and staff. This inevitably impacted on the continuity of support it could provide and its ability to take a close interest in the projects that it had sponsored. In addition, and as was noted in chapter two, while the SFP had been intended to provide

continuous funding stream for the selected projects for periods of up to three years, the wider financial environment meant the Commission was never able to guarantee this. Thus grantees, as has already been described, had to renegotiate for SFP funding for each year of their project. This meant, in practice, there were three distinct phases of project funding, despite this not being the model that the Commission had intended to use.

One example of the impact these wider constraints may have had is the finding that there was a perception among many grantees that those responsible for working closely with them were not the same as those who had designed the financial and monitoring procedures. Frustration was therefore sometimes not directed towards the Commission as a whole but towards the processes associated with the SFP. Furthermore, while there is always likely to be some conflict between the interests of the sponsor and the grantee where public funds are involved, the particular nature of the projects being funded – being both innovative and risky – may have made this more intense. But, as has been noted at various points, the negative perceptions of the Commission, and the operation of the SFP, may need to be seen in the wider context in which the SFP was operating which might not, on all occasions, have been fully apparent to the grantees who received support from it.

Some grantees did recognise that, as a public body, the Commission was under intense scrutiny during the period during which the SFP was operating, and especially with regards to the spending of public money, and, as such, had to employ such intense monitoring processes. There was some evidence to suggest that some grantees felt a degree of empathy with the Commission, and even sadness, that the wider political environment and shifting priorities might have diluted its influence and public profile. But it is possible that the aim that the SFP itself - as an innovative funding stream - may have created an *additional* tension at a time when the Commission faced increased scrutiny over its use of public money which created a particular onus on it to ensure supported made proper use of the resources and delivered the objectives they had set themselves.

## **10.2 The management of SFP resources**

Given this wider environment, it is important to understand that the procedures for monitoring and evaluating projects funded by the SFP were designed by the Commission to ensure they were in alignment with the standards expected of a public body for the management of funding programmes of this type in the circumstances described above.

The research suggests the procedures which the Commission had put in place to ensure SFP funds were used for their intended purposes were effective. Indeed, the evidence suggests that the monitoring of the use made by grantees of their SFP funding was rigorous from the start and became more so over the life of the programme. However, the

feedback from grantees suggests the monitoring procedures associated with the SFP were more demanding than those they had experienced from other, similar, sources of funding and that they were, very often, both onerous and an obstacle to project delivery.

### **10.3 The contribution of the SFP**

At the time of its launch, and despite the more buoyant funding environment at that time, the SFP filled a gap in the funding landscape for certain types of project and, in so doing, had facilitated the development of new approaches to tackling equality related issues.

This conclusion can be supported by the finding that some organisations reported that they had previously encountered difficulties in finding funding either for equality work in general or, more specifically, for projects in the niche areas in which they operated. Some grantees felt their particular target group was not high on the political agenda at the time and that this had caused them difficulties in securing funding from alternative sources.

Furthermore, the fact that the fund had an intersectional dimension also differentiated it from other sources of funding. This encouraged the development of projects with an element of risk that allowed grantees to branch out into new areas and explore work with new audiences. The innovative nature of the SFP was shown by the fact that the majority of projects were designed specifically to meet the objectives of the fund rather than more generic projects that grantees had proposed with a range of potential sponsors in mind.

Both of these pieces of evidence can be supported by the survey evidence and the case study discussions which suggested that a large proportion of the supported projects would not have occurred, or have only taken place on a smaller scale, in the absence of the SFP.

Finally, there is also evidence that having the Commission as a sponsor helped to ensure the longevity of projects. Several organisations felt that the Commission's backing and stamp of approval on their project had added considerably to the credibility of their work and helped them to securing funding from other sources. Moreover, several organisations felt that they had improved their visibility and partnership networks as result of delivering SFP projects and that this would increase their capacity to do the same in the future.

### **10.4 The operation of the SFP**

However, and despite these positive findings, there was also evidence to suggest that the SFP could have achieved even more if various changes had been made to its delivery.

First, the monitoring requirements could have made it easier for projects to adapt during delivery. As has emerged throughout this report, there was a view that the monitoring and reporting requirements of the SFP were out of proportion with the size of grants provided.

Of particular concern was the feeling among the grantees that the focus on sticking to agreed outputs meant that resources were used up in conducting activities that organisations felt were less effective than other approaches discovered during the life of their project. While there was a process in place for agreeing changes to delivery models, most organisations seemed to find this to be sufficiently complex to put them off using it. Another concern was the amount of monitoring information that was required which also contributed to a feeling among some grantees that they were not being trusted to deliver.

In addition, several grantees expressed the view that the Commission could have played a more active support role alongside its primary audit function. Grantees were often disappointed about the relative 'distance' of the Commission in terms of guiding and supporting projects. The evidence from this review suggests that, perhaps, there was an opportunity missed to help projects with a (sometimes steep) learning curve by transferring some of the Commission's experience and expertise in delivering equalities programmes.

Grantees also felt that it would also have been beneficial, and more in line with the approach adopted by many other funders they had experience of, if a mechanism had been put in place to enable them to share their experiences and achievements so that they could learn from each other. Assisting projects with disseminating the achievements of the fund might also have been beneficial to raising profile among other potential funders and for helping to ensure alternative sources of funding once the SFP came to an end.

Finally, the need for grantees to re-negotiate funding for each year of their project created uncertainties for the projects concerned which may also have impacted on their delivery. But, as has been mentioned before, this was not the original intention of the SFP which had been designed to provide continuous funding for the full life of the supported projects.

All of the above concerns may have contributed to the changes in, and the rather more negative perception of, the Commission that was reported by grantees in the online survey. Taking into account the views expressed throughout this report, it seems likely that this profile over time reflects the fact that grantees had positive views relating to the Commission's overall remit, their reputation as the lead authority on equality and human rights issues, the fact that Commission was attempting to fund innovative, and in some cases, risky projects and their generally good relations with their Grants Officers. But, at the same time, it suggests that grantees also had negative feelings about the perceived

burdens placed on them by the monitoring procedures which were integral to the delivery of the SFP and that these, ultimately, became the major determinant of their attitudes.

### **10.5 Improvements to future funding schemes of this type**

In many respects, the suggested improvements that could be made to any similar future funding programme follow from the points made in the above paragraphs. These include:

- Greater clarity at the start of the funding period concerning the respective requirements and capacities of the funding body and the grantees respectively;
- Simpler and more flexible monitoring and reporting procedures to better reflect the size of the grant given, the resources of the recipients and the evolution of projects;
- More focus in such processes should be paid to the final outcomes of projects, and less on activities and outputs. As well as being less onerous, this might also increase the view among grantees that they are being trusted to deliver projects;
- Better coordination between the finance and grants management functions of the sponsoring body. In addition, if resources allow for this, the funder might seek to play a more active role in the projects that it has chosen to support;
- Greater dissemination of information between grantees to improve project delivery and increase their chances of securing future funding from alternative sources;
- Greater certainty over the duration and level of project funding to be provided.

Given the views expressed by the organisations who participated in the SFP consultation process, the final improvement of those listed above is perhaps the most important one.

# Appendix 1 – The survey questionnaire

## EHRC Strategic Funding Programme Evaluation

J5222

Date 7/3/14

Online

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### Screener

PROGRAMMING NOTE: NEED TO ALLOW ACCESS TO SURVEY EITHER BY UNIQUE LINK OR ENTERING PASSWORD/LOG-IN.

ASK ALL

**Thank you for accessing our survey. This survey is being conducted for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) by IFF Research. The project will look to evaluate the delivery process and the outcomes achieved by the Strategic Funding Programme (SFP) with a view to ensuring that all the lessons learned are captured in such a way that they can benefit any similar initiatives in the future**

**If you do need to leave the survey at any point, you can do so without losing any of the answers that you have already entered. To return to the point you had reached, just click on the same link that you were e-mailed.**

**If you would like further information on this survey you can contact Liz Murphy or Jessica Huntley-Hewitt 020 7250 3035 or by e-mail ([liz.murphy@IFFResearch.com](mailto:liz.murphy@IFFResearch.com) / [jessica.huntleyhewitt@IFFResearch.com](mailto:jessica.huntleyhewitt@IFFResearch.com)) You can also contact Andrew Meads at the EHRC for any further information on the Inquiry on 0161 829 8406 or by email ([Andrew.Meads@equalityhumanrights.com](mailto:Andrew.Meads@equalityhumanrights.com))**

## A About your organisation or group

ASK ALL

**In this section we are interested in finding about the organisation that applied for the Strategic Funding Programme (SFP) grant. Please answer these questions in respect to the WHOLE ORGANISATION, rather than just the specific project funded.**

**Which of the following best describes the type of organisation / group that was funded by the SFP?**

S PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

Not-for-profit or community/voluntary group	1	
Social enterprise	2	
Consortia/Partnership	3	
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	4	

ASK ALL

**Is/was the organisation/group that received funding from the SFP, a GB-wide organisation or one operating in either England, Scotland or Wales?**

T PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

GB	1	
England	2	
Scotland	3	
Wales	4	
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	5	

ASK ALL

**Approximately how many paid full-time, part-time and volunteer staff worked for your organisation at the time when funding was granted?**

Full time	NUMBER:
Part time	NUMBER:
Volunteer	NUMBER:

**If applicable, approximately, what was the annual budget/turnover of your organisation at the time when funding was first granted? And approximately how much is the annual budget/turnover of your organisation now?**

PLEASE WRITE IN

Annual budget/turnover at the time when funding was granted WRITE IN	£:
Not applicable	
Annual budget/turnover now WRITE IN	£
Not applicable	

ASK ALL

**What were the main sources of funding for the organisation at the time of your application to the SFP?**

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Donations from private individuals	1	
Local Authority	2	
NHS / Primary Care Trusts / Local Health Boards	3	
UK central government / Wales Government / Scottish Government	4	
Big Lottery Fund	5	
Fundraising events	6	
Donations from companies / employers	7	
Other sources (PLEASE SPECIFY)	8	
No other sources of funding	9	
Don't know	10	

## Becoming aware of the Strategic Funding Programme

ASK ALL

**How did your organisation become aware of the SFP?**

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Through word of mouth	1	
From a Local Authority	2	
From the National/Welsh/Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations	3	
From newspapers or other media	4	
From the EHRC website	5	
From a member of EHRC staff	6	
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	7	
Don't know / can't remember	8	

ASK ALL

**Did anyone from your organisation attend one of the EHRC organised consultation events in relation to the SFP?**

Yes	1	
No	2	
Don't know / Can't remember	3	

ASK ALL WHO ATTENDED AN EHRC SFP CONSULTATION (B2=1)

**How adequate did your organisation find the following aspects of the SFP consultation process?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION PER ROW

	Inadequate	Neither adequate nor inadequate	Adequate	DK
_1 The notification given that the consultation was taking place	1	2	3	4
_2 The amount of information provided during the consultation	1	2	3	4
_3 The clarity of information provided during the consultation	1	2	3	4
_4 The opportunities for potential grantees to express their views	1	2	3	4
_5 The diversity of organisations involved in the consultation	1	2	3	4
_5 The EHRC feedback from the consultation	1	2	3	4

ASK ALL WHO ATTENDED THE EHRC SFP CONSULTATION (B2=1)

**Do you have any additional comments you would like to make about the EHRC SFP consultation?**

WRITE IN	
No comment	

ASK ALL

**Which of the following features of the SFP appealed to your organisation the most at the time when you made an application?**

PLEASE SELECT THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS THAT LED YOUR ORGANISATION TO APPLY

Perceived ease of application	1	
Criteria for funding	2	
Size of grant available	3	
Length of the grant available	4	
Extent to which the EHRC monitored activities and expenditure of funds	5	
Reputation of the EHRC	6	
The objectives of the funding programme	7	
The only source of funding for your project of which you were aware	8	
It covered running costs and salaries	9	
You had previously been funded by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) or the Disability Rights Commission (DRC)?	10	
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	11	
None of these features	12	

ASK ALL

**Which of the following features of the SFP were least important to your organisation at the time you made your application?**

PLEASE SELECT THE THREE LEAST IMPORTANT FACTORS

Perceived difficulty of application	1	
Criteria for funding	2	
Size of grant available	3	
Length of the grant available	4	
Extent to which the EHRC planned to monitor activities and expenditure of funds	5	
Reputation of the EHRC	6	
The objectives of the funding programme	7	
It was the only source of funding that you were aware of	8	
Concerns that grant available would not cover running costs and salaries	9	
Capacity issues in completing the application	10	
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	11	
None of these features	12	

## Applying to the Strategic Funding Programme

ASK ALL

**Given your experience of receiving funding through the SFP how clear do you think the following were made during the application process?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION PER ROW

	Unclear	Neither Clear nor Unclear	Clear	DK
_1 The clarity of the SFP's objectives	1	2	3	4
_2 The appropriateness of the eligibility criteria	1	2	3	4
_3 The support available from EHRC to answer queries or provide further information	1	2	3	4
_4 The size of the grant available for each year	1	2	3	4

ASK ALL

**You may recall that there were two stages to the assessment process. Think back to the initial application form you submitted at the first stage. How would you rate following aspects of the first stage of application process?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION PER ROW

	Difficult	Acceptable	Straightforward	DK
_1 Ease of obtaining an application form	1	2	3	4
_2 Ease of completing the application form	1	2	3	4
_3 Ease of gathering the supporting information required (e.g. documentary evidence)	1	2	3	4
_4 EHRC's response to queries raised by potential bidders	1	2	3	4

ASK ALL

**Following your first stage application form submission, you were required to submit further information for the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of assessment. Was the level of information you were required to submit at this stage...?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

More than anticipated	1	
As much as was anticipated	2	
Less than anticipated	3	
Don't know / can't remember	4	

ASK ALL

**How many years of funding did you apply for?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

Year 1 only	1	
Years 1 and 2	2	
All 3 years	3	
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY	4	

ASK IF APPLIED FOR MORE THAN 1 YEARS WORTH OF FUNDING (C4=2 OR 3)

**And were you granted funding for all the years you applied for?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

Yes	1	
No	2	

ASK IF NOT GRANTED FUNDING FOR ALL THE YEARS APPLIED FOR (C5=2)

**How satisfied were you with the explanation provided by the EHRC as to why you were not granted funding for all the years for which you applied?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

Satisfied	1	
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	2	
Dissatisfied	3	

ASK IF DISSATISFIED WITH THE EXPLANATION PROVIDED (C6=3)

**You said you were dissatisfied with the explanation provided by the EHRC as to why you did not receive funding for the all the years you applied for. Why was this?**

WRITE IN
----------

ASK IF NOT GRANTED FUNDING FOR ALL THE YEARS APPLIED FOR (C5=2)

**What impact did not receiving SFP funding for all the years you applied for have on your project?**

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Project had to close/was unable to proceed	1	
Had to cut down on staff resources	2	
Had to scale down the project	3	
Had to cut down on external resources	4	
Fewer activities / events / sessions planned	5	
Work was left incomplete	6	
Fewer beneficiaries catered for than was initially planned	7	
Had to change the project's objectives	8	
Lower degree of private sector involvement than was initially planned	9	
Had to change project focus	10	
Had to seek funding elsewhere/from other project sponsors	11	
Other effects (PLEASE SPECIFY)	12	
No effects	13	

ASK ALL

**Thinking back to your original grant application. How much SFP funding did your organisation initially apply for?**

WRITE IN	£:
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ASK ALL

**Approximately what proportion of the total SFP funding that you applied for was your organisation successful in securing?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

The full amount	1	
Between 75% and 99%	2	
Between 50% and 74%	3	
Between 25% and 49%	4	
Between 1% and 24%	5	
Don't know / can't remember	6	

ASK IF FUNDING RECEIVED WAS LESS THAN THE FULL AMOUNT APPLIED FOR (C10≠1 OR 6)  
**How satisfied were you with the explanation provided by the EHRC as to why you were not granted the full amount of funding for which your organisation had applied?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

Satisfied	1	
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	2	
Dissatisfied	3	

ASK IF DISSATISFIED WITH THE EXPLANATION PROVIDED (C11=3)

**You said you were dissatisfied with the explanation provided by the EHRC as to why you did not receive the full amount of funding for which your organisation had applied. Why was this?**

WRITE IN
----------

ASK ALL

**What portion of your project costs were covered by the SFP grant?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

The full amount	1	
Between 75% and 99%	2	
Between 50% and 74%	3	
Between 25% and 49%	4	
Between 1% and 24%	5	
Don't know / can't remember	6	

ASK IF PROJECT COSTS WE NOT 100% COVERED BY THE SFP GRANT (C13#1 OR 6)

**Where did the other required sources of funding comes from?**

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Own resources	1	
Donations from private individuals	2	
Local Authority	3	
NHS / Primary Care Trusts / Local Health Boards	4	
UK central government / Wales Government / Scottish Government	5	
Big Lottery Fund	6	
Fundraising events	7	
Donations from companies / employers	8	
Other sources (PLEASE SPECIFY)	9	
Don't know	11	

ASK IF FUNDING RECEIVED WAS LESS THAN THE FULL AMOUNT APPLIED FOR (C10#1 OR 6)  
**What impact did receiving less SFP funding than was applied for have on your project?**

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Lower staffing capacity than was initially planned	1	
Staff on the project were over-worked	2	
Needed to take on additional volunteers as opposed to paid staff	3	
More efficient planning of the project	4	
More efficient use of resources for the project	5	
Lower amount of time allocated to the project than was initially planned	6	
Had to scale down the project	7	
Used fewer external resources than was initially planned	8	
Fewer activities / events / sessions planned	9	
Fewer beneficiaries catered for than was initially planned	10	
Had to change the project's objectives	11	
Lower degree of private sector involvement than was initially planned	12	
Had to change project focus	13	
Had to seek funding elsewhere/from other project sponsors	14	
Other effects (PLEASE SPECIFY)	15	
No effects	16	

ASK ALL

**Looking back over the whole SFP application process, how do you feel about the following aspects?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION PER ROW

	Poor	Acceptable	Good	DK
_1 The level of communication from EHRC throughout the process	1	2	3	4
_2 The objectivity/transparency of the process	1	2	3	4
_3 The timeframe taken to reach a decision	1	2	3	4

ASK ALL

**In what ways could the application process have been improved?**

WRITE IN
----------

ASK ALL

**Thinking now in terms of the contractual agreement that you had with the EHRC. How satisfied were you that the terms of your organisation's Grant Funding Agreement were:**

PLEASE CODE ONE OPTION PER ROW

	Dissatisfied	Neither satisfied not dissatisfied	Satisfied	DK
_1 Fair and objective	1	2	3	4
_2 Easy to understand	1	2	3	4
_3 Practical	1	2	3	4
_4 Flexible	1	2	3	4
_5 Appropriate to the delivery of the project	1	2	3	4

ASK THOSE WHO APPLIED FOR MORE THAN 1 YEARS WORTH OF FUNDING (C4=2 OR 3)  
**How easy did you find the process of reapplying for SFP funding each year?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

Easy	1	
Neither easy nor difficult	2	
Difficult	3	

ASK THOSE WHO APPLIED FOR MORE THAN 1 YEARS WORTH OF FUNDING (C4=2 OR 3)  
**What impact, if any, did only having funding for one year at a time have on the PLANNING of your project?**

None	1
Yes, it had an impact on project planning	WRITE IN

**What impact, if any, did only having funding for one year at a time have on the DELIVERY of your project?**

None	1
Yes, it had an impact on project delivery	WRITE IN

## Project aims and objectives

ASK ALL

**Which SFP Priority area did your project fall under?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

<b>Priority 1:</b> Guidance, advice and advocacy services, infrastructure development and capacity building	1	
<b>Priority 2:</b> Good relations	2	
Both Priority 1 and Priority 2	3	
Don't know	4	

ASK ALL

**Which of the equality strands did your organisation's project cover?**

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Age	1	
Disability	2	
Gender	3	
Race	4	
Religion and belief	5	
Sexual orientation	6	
Transgender	7	
Other (SPECIFY)	8	

ASK ALL

**Was your project...?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

Specifically designed for the Strategic Funding Programme	1	
An existing project which your organisation was previously unable to secure funding for	2	
An existing project that had been delivered previously through other funding streams	3	
A project which was designed to be met through a mixture of funding streams including the SFP	4	
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	5	

ASK ALL

**Would your project have gone ahead without the SFP grant?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

Yes, it would have gone ahead anyway in the same form	1	
Yes, it would have gone ahead in a reduced form	2	
No, it would not have gone ahead	3	
No, it would have been approached in a different manner / done differently	4	
Not sure what would have happened	5	
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	6	

ASK ALL

**And what was the specific purpose of your project? Please think in terms of the original intentions of the project at the design stage rather than any secondary benefits that arose during the project delivery.**

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Set up or extend existing organisations that represent and respond to community interests where none currently exist	1	
Provide individuals who suffer from inequality and disadvantage to have greater choice, control and empowerment in their lives in relation to public services	2	
Support the victims of hate crimes and provide them with greater confidence	3	
Increase interaction and understanding between groups and communities who do not ordinarily mix or where tensions exist	4	
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	5	

ASK ALL

**To what extent, if any, did your organisation's initial project objectives have to be changed in order to meet the requirements for SFP funding?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

The original project objectives were changed to a large extent	1	
The original project objectives were changed to a slight extent	2	
There was no need to change the original project objectives as they were already appropriate	3	

## Project delivery

ASK ALL

**Thinking now in terms of the planning stages for the delivery of your project. How did you feel about the following aspects of the workplan you were required to submit to the EHRC?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

**a) The clarity of instructions on what was required in your workplan. Was this?**

Clear	1	
Neither clear nor unclear	2	
Not clear	3	

**b) The level of information required in your workplan. Was this?**

Too much information	1	
About the right amount of information	2	
Not enough information	3	

**c) Overall, how helpful did you feel the workplan was in helping you deliver your project?**

The workplan was helpful	1	
The workplan was neither helpful nor unhelpful	2	
The workplan was not helpful	3	

ASK ALL

**d) How supportive were EHRC staff in helping you with your workplan?**

Supportive	1	
Neither supportive nor unsupportive	2	
Not supportive	3	

ASK ALL

**What problems or difficulties, if any, did you ask EHRC staff about during the planning stages of your project and what impact did their support have on project delivery?**

Not applicable. No problems or difficulties were experienced	1
Nature of problems or difficulties	WRITE IN
Impact these had on project delivery	WRITE IN

ASK ALL

**Did any other organisations have an active input into the planning or delivery of your project?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

Yes	1	
No	2	

ASK IF WORKED WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS (E3=1)

**What was the nature of these organisations?**

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Not-for-profit/charity or community interest group	1	
Social enterprise	2	
Individual	3	
Profit making organisation / private sector	4	
School, HE or FE institution	5	
Local Government (i.e., District, City or County Council, Councils or Counties)	6	
Other statutory organisation (e.g. Health Trust, body associated with the criminal justice system)	7	
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	8	

ASK IF WORKED WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS (E3=1)

**What did these other organisations contribute to your project?**

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Provided funding	1	
Provided project workspace (e.g. offices)	2	
Provided advice or guidance	3	
Helped gain access to target groups	4	
Provided staffing resources	5	
Allowed the use of their equipment	6	
Provided other resources	7	
Helped establish project steering groups	8	
Helped oversee the delivery of the work programme	9	
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	10	

ASK IF WORKED WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS (E3=1)

**In comparison to EHRC, how positive would you say the contribution these other organisations was to the effective delivery of the project?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

More helpful	1	
About the same	2	
More helpful in some ways but less helpful in others	3	
Less helpful	4	
Rather not say	5	

ASK IF THE CONTRIBUTION OF OTHER ORGANISATIONS WAS MORE HELPFUL THAN THE EHRC (E6=1)

**In what ways were such organisations more helpful than EHRC?**

--

WRITE IN
----------

ASK ALL

**Did you receive your SFP funding in advance or in arrears?**

In advance	1	
In arrears	2	
Part in advance, part in arrears	3	
Don't know / can't remember	4	

ASK ALL

**Did this funding arrangement cause you any problems?**

None	1	
Yes, it caused us problems	WRITE IN	

ASK ALL

**Did your organisation encounter any other problems in planning or delivering your project that have not previously been discussed?**

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

No problems	1	
We had problems getting people to participate	2	
We underestimated the time needed for planning	3	
We had problems with tight deadlines to deliver the project	4	
Insufficient money caused some problems	5	
Insufficient staff resources caused some problems	6	
Inexperience / lack of skills among staff and volunteers caused some problems	7	
We encountered some legal difficulties	8	
We had recruitment difficulties	9	

Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	10	
------------------------	----	--

ASK ALL

**Thinking back over the planning and delivery of your project, how satisfied was your organisation about the following aspects of its interactions with EHRC?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION PER ROW

	Not Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor un satisfied	Satisfied	DK
_1 The level of communication from EHRC throughout the lifespan of the project	1	2	3	4
_2 EHRC's overall engagement with/enthusiasm for your project	1	2	3	4
_3 The supportiveness/responsiveness of the EHRC's grant officers	1	2	3	4

## Monitoring and evaluation

ASK ALL

**Think back to before your project commenced and how well informed your organisation was about the amount and type of information you were required to submit to the EHRC as part of their monitoring processes. How well informed did you feel once you discovered what was actually required?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

Well informed	1	
Neither well nor poorly informed	2	
Poorly informed	3	

ASK ALL

**Thinking about the value of the monitoring procedures implemented by the EHRC, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION PER ROW

	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	DK
_1 The monitoring information required was also useful for my organisation	1	2	3	4
_2 The monitoring procedures were also useful for better focussing project delivery	1	2	3	4

ASK ALL

**In terms of the complexity of the monitoring procedures how far would you agree or disagree that...**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION PER ROW

	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	DK
_1 Collecting evidence for the monitoring procedures was an excessively bureaucratic, complex and time-consuming process	1	2	3	4
_2 The monitoring forms were easy and straightforward to complete	1	2	3	4
_3 More training or guidance on completing the monitoring was needed for our staff	1	2	3	4

ASK ALL

**Thinking now in terms of frequency of the monitoring procedures. Would you agree or disagree that...**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION PER ROW

	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	DK
_1 The monitoring from the EHRC occurred too frequently throughout the project	1	2	3	4
_2 The organisation was given enough time to adequately prepare for monitoring visits and phone calls	1	2	3	4

ASK ALL

**What impact did the level of EHRC project monitoring have on your organisation’s ability to successfully deliver the project?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

A positive impact	1	
Neither a positive nor a negative impact	2	
Positive in some respects but negative in others	3	
A negative impact	4	

ASK ALL

**Thinking about the level of monitoring required. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement.**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	DK
The level of project monitoring required for the SFP would make my organisation think twice about applying for a similar funding programme in the future	1	2	3	4

ASK ALL

**In overall terms, how appropriate would you say the level and frequency of project monitoring by the EHRC was...?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

	Very inappropriate	Inappropriate	Neither Appropriate nor Inappropriate	Appropriate	Very appropriate	DK
_1 In comparison to any other sources of funding you may have accessed	1	2	3	4	5	6
_2 In relation to the size and nature of your organisation?	1	2	3	4	5	6
_3 In relation to the risks associated with the project	1	2	3	4	5	6
_4 In relation to the size/length of the grant	1	2	3	4	5	6

ASK ALL

**In your view, were there any aspects of the monitoring procedures that could have been simplified or removed?**

PLEASE WRITE IN
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# Impact

ASK ALL

**Did your project meet its original objectives?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

Yes, in full	1	
Yes, in part	2	
No	3	

ASK IF NOT ALL ORIGINAL OBJECTIVES MET (G1 = 2 OR 3)

**Which of your ORIGINAL objectives were not met? Why was this?**

PLEASE WRITE IN
-----------------

ASK ALL

**Did your project provide any additional benefits or positive impacts to individuals or communities that were not part of your original objectives?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

Yes	1	
No	2	

IF ADDITIONAL BENEFITS WERE DELIVERED (G3/1)

**What were these additional benefits or positive impacts?**

PLEASE WRITE IN
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ASK ALL

**How did you measure the outputs/outcomes of your project?**

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Number of individuals accessing a service	1	
Number of individuals attending an event	2	
Number of training sessions delivered	3	
Feedback from beneficiaries	4	
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	5	
Did not seek to measure outputs/outcomes	5	

ASK ALL

**How did you measure the impact of your project? These should relate to the specific objectives that your project was designed to promote.**

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Change in attitudes of target groups	1	
Increased perceptions of personal security among the target group	2	
Increased interaction of target group with others	3	
Increased participation and influence of target group in the community	4	
Other changes in the behaviour of the target groups	5	
Measured change relating to quality of life	6	
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	8	
Did not seek to measure impact	9	

ASK ALL

**Has or will your project been / be formally evaluated? If so, who by?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

Yes	1	WRITE IN:
No	2	

ASK IF PROJECT HAS / WILL BE FORMALLY EVALUATED (G7=1)

**Will the EHRC be able to obtain a copy of the evaluation report?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

Yes	1	
No	2	

ASK ALL

**How would you rate the following achievements of your project compared to what you had expected?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION PER ROW

	Much less than expected	Less than expected	What we had expected	Better than expected	Much better than expected	DK
_1 Reception from the target group	1	2	3	4	5	6
_2 Cost effectiveness	1	2	3	4	5	6
_3 Sustainability of impact	1	2	3	4	5	6
_4 Profile within the wider community	1	2	3	4	5	6
_5 Mainstreaming the activities into the wider work of your organisation	1	2	3	4	5	6

ASK IF ANY ASPECT GIVEN A “BETTER” RATING AT G10 (G10.1-5 = 4 OR 5)

**You said that some aspects of your project were better than expected. Why was this?**

PLEASE WRITE IN

ASK ALL

**How would you assess the overall effectiveness of your organisation’s project in relation to the SFP’s objectives?**

	Less effective than expected	As effective as expected	More effective than expected	DK / N/A
_1 It was effective in delivering the SFP objectives which it was intended to address	1	2	3	4
_2 It was effective in establishing, extending or improving guidance, advice and advocacy services to the intended target groups at the local level	1	2	3	4
_3 It was effective in developing infrastructure and building capacity for the intended target groups at a local level	1	2	3	4
_4 It was effective in increasing the levels of interaction and understanding between groups and communities who do not ordinarily mix or where tensions had existed.	1	2	3	4

ASK ALL

**What could your organisation have done differently to achieve greater impact?**

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Secured more financial or practical support from partners / other organisations involved	1	
More staff	2	
Made better use of resources	3	
Greater access to national experts	4	
Better / more training of staff	5	
Better focus on objectives and outcomes	7	
Better internal organisation	8	
Improved internal monitoring	9	
Sought more support from the EHRC	10	
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY())	11	

ASK THOSE WHO FELT MORE SUPPORT WAS REQUIRED FROM EHRC (G14=10)

**You say you feel more support from the EHRC would have enhanced the impact of your project. What could the EHRC have done/done differently?**

WRITE IN
----------

ASK ALL

**From the time of your initial application to the SFP through to the present time, what has been the most valuable lesson your organisation has learnt throughout this process?**

PLEASE WRITE IN
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## The future of the project

ASK ALL

**Following the end of your funding from the SFP, will your project continue to operate?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

Yes	1	
No	2	
Too early to tell / Don't know	3	

ASK IF PROJECT IS ONGOING (H1=1)

**Which of the following best describes the form your project will take or has taken after the end of SFP funding?**

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

The same or very similar form as when funded through the SFP	1	
A smaller-scale version of the project	2	
A larger-scale version of the project	3	
Same project but with a new target audience	4	
Same project but in a different geographical area	5	
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	5	

ASK IF PROJECT WILL BE ONGOING (H1=1)

**Have you been able to secure funding sufficient to continue the project from any other sources?**

PLEASE ONE OPTION ONLY

Yes	1	
No	2	
Too early to tell / Don't know	3	

ASK IF PROJECT IS NOT ONGOING (H1=2)

**Why has or will the project not continue(d) after the end of the SFP funding?**

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

Could not secure further funding	1	
Insufficient private sector support	2	
Insufficient support or interest from the community	3	
Insufficient staff / voluntary support	4	
Competition from other organisations	5	
Feeling that the project wasn't successful enough	6	
Never intended it to continue beyond this point	7	
Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	8	

## Overall views of the EHRC and the Strategic Funding Programme

ASK ALL

**What was your impression of EHRC before you took part in the SFP?**

**PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY**

Positive	1	
Neither positive nor negative	2	
Positive in some respects and negative in others	3	
Negative	4	
Would rather not say	5	

ASK ALL

**Overall, how do you view the relationship your organisation had with the EHRC throughout the delivery of the project?**

**PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY**

Positive	1	
Neither positive nor negative	2	
Positive in some respects and negative in others	3	
Negative	4	
Would rather not say	5	

ASK ALL

**And how do you feel about the EHRC now, having participated in the SFP?**

Positive	1	
Neither positive or negative	2	
Positive in some respects and negative in others	3	
Negative	4	
Rather not say	5	

ASK ALL

**All things considered what is your overall assessment of the SFP to your organisation?**

PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION ONLY

Very useful	1	
Fairly useful	2	
Neutral	4	
Not very useful	5	
Not at all useful	6	
Would rather not say	7	

ASK ALL

**In what ways, if any, could the Strategic Funding Programme have been improved?**

PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY

It could not be improved	1	
Simpler application process	2	
Faster decisions	3	
More support with running projects	6	
More support with applying	7	
More feedback on reasons for decisions	8	
Fewer conditions attached to the funding	9	
Higher maximum funding levels	10	
Lower minimum funding levels	11	
Faster payment	12	
Longer term funding	13	
Payment up front	14	
Less monitoring	15	
Better understanding of each organisation's individual needs	16	
Better engagement with projects	17	
Don't know	18	

ASK ALL

**Are there any other comments you would like to make about the SFP?**

PLEASE WRITE IN
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ASK ALL

**As part of the evaluation of the SFP, IFF Research will be selecting a number of projects to use as case studies. Part of this process would involve one of our researchers visiting you at your place of work to discuss your SFP funded project further. If selected, would you be happy for us to approach your organisation to use as a case study?**

Yes	1	
No	2	

ASK ALL

**Would it be OK if IFF were to contact you again with regards to this survey, if any other queries should arise?**

Yes	1	
No	2	

IF WILLING TO BE RECONTACTED (H7 OR H8 = 1)

**Please type in your name, phone number and e-mail address into the boxes below. These will only be used if we need to clarify any of your responses to this survey:**

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Phone number</b>	
<b>E-mail address</b>	

## Appendix 2 – Documents required for an application to the SFP

The following documents were required to be submitted by organisations during the SFP application process:

- Application and Assessment documents
- Proposed objectives / Outputs
- Risks and Mitigating actions
- Resources required
- Proposed budget
- Project management
- Sustainability plan
- Risk Assessment
- 1<sup>st</sup> stage assessment form
- Proposal outline
- Business plan
- Policy documents
  
- Memorandum of association (grantees)
- Accounts
- Workplan / Project revisions
- Work-plan
- Agreed objectives / outputs
- Timings
- Evidence to be submitted
- Agreed budget
- Monitoring requirements
- Annual report

[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

The Commission's publications are available to download on our website: **[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)** If you are an organisation and would like to discuss the option of accessing a publication in an alternative format or language please contact [engagementdesk@equalityhumanrights.com](mailto:engagementdesk@equalityhumanrights.com). If you are an individual please contact the Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS) using the contact methods below.

### **Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS)**

The Equality Advisory Support Service has replaced the Equality and Human Rights Commission Helpline. It gives free advice, information and guidance to individuals on equality, discrimination and human rights issues.

Telephone: 0808 800 0082

Textphone: 0808 800 0084

### **Opening hours:**

09:00 to 20:00 Monday to Friday

10:00 to 14:00 Saturday

Closed on Sundays and Bank Holidays

**Website:** [www.equalityadvisoryservice.com](http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com)

**Post:** FREEPOST Equality Advisory Support Service FPN4431

In 2009 the Equality and Human Rights Commission launched a Strategic Funding Programme to provide financial support for non-profit and voluntary organisations to run projects that provided guidance and support to various disadvantaged groups in their local areas. The Programme was designed to support projects which covered more than one such group and which were innovative in nature. Over the following three years, the Commission invested around £10m to support 61 such projects.

In the final year of the Programme, the Commission commissioned an external review of its operation. This Research Report, based on a survey and in-depth interviews with, a sample of the supported organisations, provides an assessment of the programme and offers suggestions for how such a funding scheme might operate in the future.