

Social Enterprise Coalition Event Summary

Knowledge Sharing Workshop: Business Support Projects

Baskerville House, Broad Street, Birmingham, B1 2ND
Monday 12th July, 2010

On the 12th July 2010, the Social Enterprise Coalition (SEC) ran a free one-day workshop which brought together delivery partners from a wide range of Capacitybuilders and Big Lottery funded social enterprise business support projects.

The workshop consisted of morning presentations and Q&A sessions, followed by an afternoon of group discussions on various thematic areas of business support. Over thirty project managers from across England attended the event and it proved to be a valuable opportunity for them to meet and network; to share expertise and experience. With key speakers from the sector, it was also an opportunity to join in conversation on the challenges facing the social enterprise business support landscape and how these can be planned for and overcome.

KEY LEARNING FROM THE EVENT

Project updates

Prior to the workshop, project managers were asked to complete project updates and submit these to SEC. The updates were then printed and displayed in the event space via thematic topic: Scaling-up, Impact Assessment, Networks, Peer Support, Knowledge Management and Business Development. The 'posters' provided insight into the work that has taken place so far on the projects; the successes, achievements, challenges, key learning and affect on beneficiaries and delivery partners. They enabled project managers to learn about projects being delivered in similar geographical and thematic areas, allowing them to share valuable knowledge and experience and to source key contacts for future collaborative work.

The posters have been uploaded to the SEC website and can be found [here](#).

First morning session

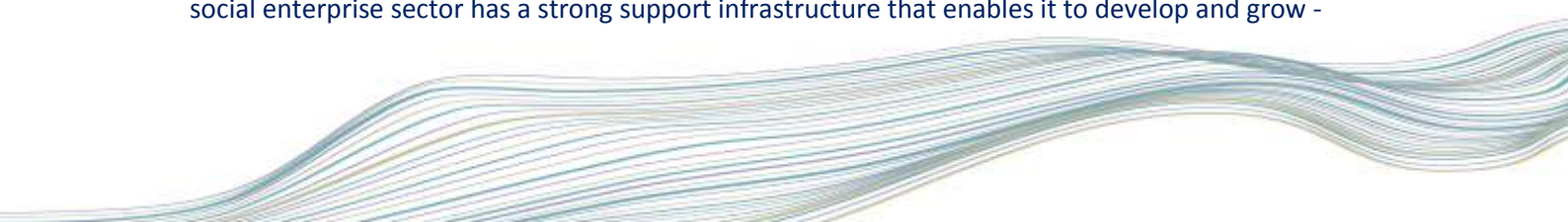
Peter Holbrook , CEO of the Social Enterprise Coalition: The Importance of Investment in Social Enterprise Business Support

Kevin Maton, Network Director of Social Enterprise West Midlands: Social Enterprise Business Support in the West Midlands

Jon Fox, Director of Strategy and Programmes at Capacitybuilders: Social Enterprise Business Support: a funder's perspective

(Full speaker biographies listed in appendix)

The first morning session considered the current business support landscape from a national, regional and funder's perspective. The speakers focused on the action that is required to ensure the social enterprise sector has a strong support infrastructure that enables it to develop and grow -



something which will be invaluable if the sector is to deliver aspects of the Government's Big Society agenda. The speakers encouraged project managers to stay positive in the current situation, which although brings great uncertainty, also brings great opportunity.

Second morning session

Mark Reading, Senior Regional Manager, Capacitybuilders: The Social Enterprise Programme in its final year

John Davies, Senior Consultant at TFPL: Knowledge Management and how it can help the social enterprise sector

The second morning session focused in detail on the Capacitybuilders funded Social Enterprise Programme; a reminder of its purpose and the impact it has achieved so far. Mark Reading encouraged project partners to continue to work hard on their projects, which are delivering great things and have real potential for self-sustainability beyond March 2011.

Leading on from discussions on the development of projects, John Davies delivered a valuable presentation on Knowledge Management: how sharing information between projects enables expertise to be shared and strengthens the resulting tools and services. John continued to explain that in turn this has the capacity to strengthen the provision of support to the wider sector, enabling it to develop and grow.

This Knowledge Management presentation can be found on the [Knowledge Management area](#) of the SEC website.

First afternoon workshop

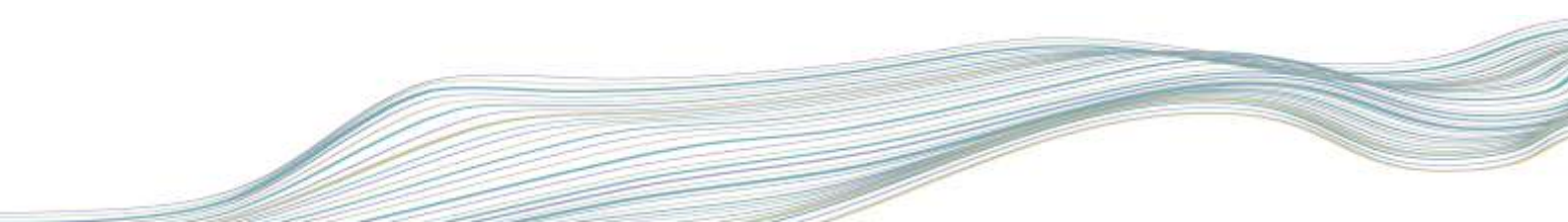
Delivering a social enterprise business support project

The project managers, having been divided into thematic groups, discussed the practicalities and experiences of delivering a business support project. This was a valuable opportunity and project managers found they often shared similar experiences and could learn from each others' challenges and successes. Processes and tools were shared and links were made between projects and organisations for future collaborative work.

Second afternoon workshop

Business support knowledge and expertise

Having discussed the practicalities of project delivery, the project managers took a 'step back' and contemplated the wider knowledge and expertise they had gained in their respective thematic areas as a result of running their projects. This session revealed that collaboratively the project managers hold a wealth of knowledge on various aspects of social enterprise business support; something of great value to the sector. It is important to capture this knowledge and to disseminate it to a wider audience. For this affect, SEC collected the information from this second session and will shortly make it available online in the form of thematic knowledge cards.



Closing Discussion

The future of social enterprise business support

In the last session of the day, attentions focused on the need for an open and frank discussion on the acute challenges currently facing social enterprise support organisations, and in turn, the sector as a whole.

The need for immediate lobbying to Government was highlighted; to deliver the message that if they want social enterprise to deliver significant aspects of Big Society, they need to invest in the development of the sector's business support infrastructure, instead of cutting key funding.

The closing consensus was that the time is upon us to act. The time is now to make voices heard and protect the future of the social enterprise movement.

APPENDIX

MATERIALS/RESOURCES

- *Project updates from the event are now hosted on the SEC website and can be found, arranged by thematic area, [here](#)*
- *The presentation from John Davies of TFPL is now also hosted on the SEC website and can be found [here](#)*

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Peter Holbrook became CEO of the Social Enterprise Coalition in January 2010. The Social Enterprise Coalition is the UK's national body for social enterprise and represents a wide range of social enterprises, regional and national support networks and other related organisations. The Coalition's key activities are centred on informing the policy agenda, influencing the political agenda, promoting the benefits of social enterprise through the media, campaigning and events, and undertaking research to expand the social enterprise evidence base. Prior to taking on this role Peter was CEO of the Sunlight Development Trust, an award-winning social enterprise based in Gillingham, Kent. Sunlight won the 2004 Community Regeneration Awards (BURA), was given special recognition by the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2005 and in 2008 was awarded Best New Social Enterprise at the Enterprising Solutions Awards. In 2007, Peter was appointed as one of the UK's Social Enterprise Ambassadors – a scheme supported by the Cabinet Office and coordinated by the Social Enterprise Coalition. In this role he advocated for social enterprise through lobbying politicians, speaking at events and representing the sector in the media. Peter has previously worked for Oxfam, Greenpeace and various disability charities. He has experience of working in overseas development, community development and public health. Peter started his career with Marks and Spencer PLC and also spent time with Body Shop International

Kevin Maton was appointed as the Network Director for SEWM in July 2007. He has responsibility for the overall work of the team which includes the Social Enterprise Centre of Expertise. Prior to joining SEWM, Kevin

was a research consultant and part of the team that ran the national network for the LEADER+ programme - a rural development programme funded through the EU. Kevin has worked in regeneration and economic development since 1981, employed both in local authorities and consultancy agencies. He is Vice Chair of an FE College and sits on the Board of a housing association in Coventry.

Jon Fox is Director of Strategy & Programmes at Capacitybuilders, the non-departmental public body with a remit to improve support services for the third sector. Jon has responsibility for grant-making, programme development, research and policy development. Jon joined Capacitybuilders in 2007 from BVSC, the Centre for Voluntary Action in Birmingham where he managed third sector support services. Prior to moving to the West Midlands, Jon spent 3 years at the Home Office working on third sector policy and the ChangeUp framework. He was founding director of the national Consortium of LGBT Organisations until 2002, has worked in community development and sexual health services in London and Yorkshire, and has a Masters in Voluntary Sector Organisation from the LSE.

Mark Reading joined Capacitybuilders in May 2007 from the Cheshire & Warrington ChangeUp consortium, where he was the consortium Coordinator and Assistant Chief Executive of Cheshire Community Council, the rural community council for the county. Mark has responsibility as the Regional Manager for the North West, and has an internal role supporting the Social Enterprise Programme.

John Davies combines extensive business expertise with a rich experience of information and knowledge management in the public and private sectors. He worked for ten years as an archivist and records manager in local government before moving to the private sector in 1988. Thereafter, he worked as an information manager and internal consultant in a wide variety of roles in the pharmaceutical and finance sectors. He joined TFPL in 2004. John has undertaken a wide range of management and consultancy activities including: interim information management for the Olympic Delivery Authority during 2007-08, and strategic development and implementation of information and records management programmes in the UK, USA, and Europe. John studied at the universities of Sussex and Liverpool and has an Ashridge Masters in Organisational Consulting.

