ASTON
BUSINESS SCHOOL

Centre *for* Voluntary Action Research

Lessons from the Field:
Supporting governance in small voluntary and community organisations

Final Report

CONTENTS

Executive Summary

1.   Introduction

This is an Executive Summary of the Final Report of the evaluation of the 'Lessons from the Field' partnership project. The end of project evaluation was carried out by the Centre for Voluntary Action Research at Aston Business School for **bassac** between December 2003 and March 2004.

2.   Part A: Introduction

'Lessons from the Field' had two principal aims:

Aim One
To learn how to improve the effectiveness of governance in small voluntary and community organisations

Aim Two
To provide evidence for a national strategy on governance.

This Report concentrates on Aim One. Aim Two was partly addressed by the production of the 'Small Talk' report (**bassac**, 2003).

The report describes the current context for small organisation governance, including

- The increasing interest in the role and effectiveness of voluntary and community organisations
- The growing demands on voluntary and community organisations, and increased expectations in terms of accountability, monitoring and regulation
- The growing government interest in strengthening governance (eg. the publication of the strategy on governance, and the Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework
- The particular challenges for small organisations that are dependent on a few key people
- The multiple demands on trustees of small organisations, who are often responsible for both strategic planning and operational roles.

3.   Part B: Key findings

3.1   **Project activities**

The project comprised four different pilot models of supporting trustees in small voluntary organisations and community groups, co-ordinated through four Local Development Partners (LDPs).

- Community First in Herefordshire and Worcestershire (Face-to-face trustee networks)
- Community Projects Trust [SW] (Training Plus Support)
- Durham Rural Community Council (Action Learning for Trustees)
- Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation (Web-based trustee network).

3.2   **Evaluation methodology**

The evaluation comprised:

- Analysis of evaluation material collected by the LDPs
- Semi-structured interviews with the LDPs
- Semi-structured interviews with trustee participants from the four pilot projects.

3.3   **Challenges in setting up and running the pilot projects**

All four LDPs experienced similar challenges in relation to making contact with trustees who might wish to be involved, in ensuring that the model of support met their needs, and in establishing and running the project within the agreed timeframe.

3.4   **Challenges in sustaining the pilot projects**

All four had also experienced some difficulties in sustaining participation from trustees in all aspects of the model of support being piloted in their area. In two areas the particular model of support had posed additional challenges: some participants were suspicious of the Action Learning technique, and securing participation in the discussion aspect of the Web-based trustee network proved particularly difficult. The constraints imposed by a 15 month pilot programme exacerbated these challenges.

3.5   **Meeting participants' expectations**

Trustees had hoped to benefit from participation by gaining increased knowledge of a range of aspects of trusteeship and new skills (for example committee or problem-solving skills). Reinforcement of existing knowledge was also felt to be important, as was the opportunity to meet and learn from other trustees.

3.6   **Matching support models to participants' needs**

Study participants felt that each model of support had to a large extent met the needs of participating trustees. Trustees expressed positive views about all four models, while in some cases also suggesting minor modifications that might enhance their effectiveness.

3.7   **Sharing learning with other trustees**

Participating trustees had generally been able to share what they had learned with fellow trustees.

3.8   **Trusteeship generally**

Study participants felt that trustees of voluntary organisations *in general* experience challenges in four main areas:

- Developing an understanding of what the role involves
- Developing an effective governing body
- Dealing with the regulatory environment
- Securing and managing the necessary resources.

3.9   **Smaller organisation trusteeship**

In *small* organisations, it was thought that the main challenges for trustees relate to:

- Human resources
- Financial resources
- Boundaries between governance and operational roles
- The influence of personalities.

3.10   **Effective role performance**

Trustees felt that a range of support mechanisms would be useful in helping them perform their roles more effectively:

- Training
- Information
- Help with problem solving
- The opportunity to meet others with similar experiences
- Recognition of the importance of the trustee role.

3.11   **The local and national partnerships**

Local Development Partners felt that their ability to engage with each other had been limited by a number of logistical factors. They also felt that it might be useful to have had more support from the national partners, and that the project as a whole had lacked continuity.

3.12   **Learning the lessons**

In reflecting on the pilot project as a whole, Study participants reiterated the importance of a manageable timescale, of clear aims and objectives and of developing opportunities for shared learning. The need for personal contact with trustees to encourage participation was again stressed. They also highlighted the importance of celebrating the project's successes.

4.   **Part C: Key issues for consideration**

Part C reflects on eight key issues:

- Support for trustees of small organisations
- A range of support models
- Support for particular aspects of the trustee role
- Support to encourage and sustain trustees' participation
- Raising the profile of trusteeship
- Building on the concept of shared learning
- Issues of partnership
- Timescales.

In particular, it is suggested that there is an ongoing need for support both for paid staff (where employed) and trustees in developing an effective governance role in small organisations.

A strong desire was expressed by trustees for *local* support; one way forward might be through provision of a common core of support that local development agencies could tailor to meet local needs. A range of possible support models is suggested that builds on the pilot approaches.

It is also suggested that personal contact with trustees is needed to encourage their participation in available support. Along side this, more work is also needed to raise the profile of trusteeship.

Reflections offered by Study participants on the pilot project itself suggest that any future project would benefit from greater investment in opportunities to develop shared learning amongst the partners. More explicit statements of the aims and objectives of the partnership might reduce some of the uncertainties that arose over issues of accountability and monitoring, and improve continuity. Despite the regrettable constraints posed by the tight timescale for this project, a considerable amount was achieved that was useful both for the participants and for the development of future governance support projects.

5.   Part D: Options for the Future

Part D offers some key learning points based on the evidence presented in Part B and the discussion in Part C.

The need to locate support for trustees of small organisations within a broad conceptualisation of organisational governance is proposed; this might usefully be built on the distinctive governance challenges of small organisations.

It is argued that future governance support would need to take into account the particular features of small organisations and the focus of support needed (i.e. trustees alone or trustees and paid staff). There would also be a need to offer support that provides the opportunity for skills development within the broader context of the demands on, and expectations of, small organisations.

The Report concludes by returning to the context within which the Study has taken place – a period of heightened interest in the role, capacity and effectiveness of the voluntary and community sector. Against this background, and the particular challenges facing small organisations, it is suggested that more work is needed to develop a model of 'core' governance support that can be adapted and implemented locally. Alongside this, there is a need to develop opportunities for continuous shared learning.

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Part A   Introduction

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1.   Introduction to the Final Report

1.1   This is the Final Report of the evaluation of the 'Lessons from the Field' partnership project (part of a programme of work funded by the Home Office Active Community Unit aiming to support the governance needs of small organisations).

1.2   'Lessons from the Field' is a partnership project led by **bassac**, involving NCVO, NACVS, ACRE, Community Matters, BTEG, CTN and four local development agencies: Community Projects Trust / East Cornwall Council for Voluntary Service (East Cornwall); Community First (Herefordshire and Worcestershire); Durham Rural Community Council; Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation.

1.3   The end of project evaluation was carried out by the Centre for Voluntary Action Research (CVAR) at Aston Business School, Birmingham, for **bassac** between December 2003 and March 2004.

1.4   In this Part A of the Final Report we set out the aims and background of the project.

1.5   In Part B we describe the activities of the project before highlighting the key findings from the project evaluation.

1.6   In Part C we reflect on the study findings to explore some key issues in relation to improving the effectiveness of governance in small voluntary and community organisations (VCOs).

1.7   In the final Part D we propose some options for the future development of governance support in VCOs.

2.   Aims of 'Lessons from the Field'

2.1   The 'Lessons from the Field' partnership project had two principal aims:

Aim One

*To learn how to improve the effectiveness of governance in small voluntary and
community organisations*

Aim Two

To provide evidence for a national strategy on governance.

2.2   The revised timetable for the national Governance Strategy meant that Aim Two of
this project had to be addressed separately, partly through the production of the
'Small Talk' report (**bassac**, 2003). The consequence of this was that the evidence
from this body did not contribute to the development of the Governance Strategy.

2.3   For the purposes of this report, 'governance' is used to describe *the sum of authority
over and accountability for the organisation.* Within this broad description, the
primary focus of this project was on *trustees / management committee members*.

2.4   In addition, 'small organisations' is understood to include *organisations which have
no more than the equivalent of four full-time workers.*

2.5   In June 2003, CVAR was engaged to supervise **bassac**'s evaluation of the 'Lessons
from the Field' project. Following staff changes within **bassac** in December 2003,
CVAR was engaged to complete the end of project evaluation and produce a Final
Report (see section 6 below).

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3.   Background to 'Lessons from the Field'

3.1   The policy context

Voluntary and community organisations of all sizes are operating in a changing and increasingly complex external environment. Whereas VCOs were once seen as complementing or supplementing services provided by the state, they have, from the 1980s onwards, become increasingly part of the 'mixed economy of welfare' (Harris, Rochester and Halfpenny, 2001). VCOs are now viewed by government and local and national statutory bodies as key providers of public services. They are also seen as agents of government policy in addressing issues such as crime, social exclusion and community deprivation. There is growing awareness amongst policy makers that VCOs can play a significant role in promoting community cohesion and civil renewal, in developing community and grassroots activity and in facilitating participation in democratic processes (HM Treasury, 2002).

Recent government reports (HM Treasury, 2002; Strategy Unit, 2002) have been concerned with improving the performance and effectiveness of VCOs. Central government strategies dealing with capacity building, performance improvement and governance concentrate on specific aspects of voluntary and community sector (VCS) effectiveness. A recent speech by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Brown, 2004) again highlighted the government's commitment to strengthening the voluntary sector and promoting ways for more people to engage in voluntary activity. In describing a range of measures aimed at supporting both the sector and individual organisations, Mr Brown referred to work by the Home Secretary on a new capacity building and infrastructure framework, 'including funding to help improve skills, performance management and governance in the sector'.

3.2   The draft Governance Strategy

The Home Office's draft Governance Strategy, published in February 2004 and based on work by the Foundation for Good Governance, sets out the government's vision for strengthening governance in the VCS (Home Office, 2004). Governance is

described as *'the systems and processes concerned with the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision, and accountability of an organisation'* (based on Cornforth, 2003). The draft strategy recognises that governance reaches across an organisation and beyond, including relationships with external stakeholders and the broader environment. It also recognises that the VCS is a diverse sector and that different approaches to governance will be needed by different organisations at different stages. The document sets out a number of objectives as central to the vision of strengthening governance in the VCS. These can be summarised as:

- A shared understanding of and commitment to effective governance
- The willingness of a diverse range of citizens to act as members of boards
- Access to appropriate training, information and advice for board members and for voluntary and community organisations
- Appropriate and proportionate regulation, and action by other intermediaries, that encourages effective governance
- Resources focused on underpinning and strengthening governance
- A shared and evolving strategy, with implementation effectively monitored.

Recommendations from the draft strategy will be fed in to the Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework, to be agreed by the VCS and government during 2004.

3.3 Growing demands on voluntary and community organisations

As the role of the voluntary and community sector has grown, so have the opportunities, and also the demands, on individual organisations of all sizes and in many different fields of activity. Opportunities have arisen to participate in new forms of partnerships, and to access new funding streams. The idea of developing partnerships between government, the private sector and the voluntary and community sector as a means of implementing social welfare and community regeneration policies has grown apace since the mid 1990s. Demands, in particular for accountability, have grown alongside this (Rochester, 2001). Emphasis on monitoring and regulation has increased; VCOs now operate in an environment permeated by 'expectations of measurement' (Paton, 2003).

VCOs are required to be accountable to a variety of stakeholders, including funders, statutory bodies, members, users and a whole range of regulatory bodies. These include generalist bodies such as the Charity Commission and Companies House, and others concerned with particular fields of work or types of activity. Staff and trustees need to be aware of UK laws relating to, for example, food preparation, the management of community buildings or work with children, and EU regulations on issues such as working hours, issues of equality and diversity and human rights.

3.4   **The challenges for small organisations**

Voluntary and community organisations operating in this complex environment need to address a number of organisational and management issues. They also have to deal with the many demands of actually providing a service, developing community action, organising events or whatever forms their core work. For small organisations, these multiple challenges may be particularly acute. The most recent research study to focus specifically on small organisations defined 'small' as *'organisations which had at least one member of paid staff but no more than the equivalent of four full-time workers'* (Rochester, 2000, p.2).

Small VCOs, according to that study, experience the 'liability of smallness' in a number of ways. They are usually heavily dependent on a limited number of committed individuals – paid staff, trustees, and perhaps one or two volunteers. The loss of any of these individuals can often have major implications for the future of the organisation. The small number of people involved limits the range of skills and experience available. The small scale of the operation often makes it difficult to call on specialists for additional assistance. Furthermore the demands of the day-to-day can make it difficult to step back and concentrate on longer-term strategic development.

The research (Rochester, 2000) suggests that the situation described above leads to a series of further challenges, in particular of:

- Leadership - including establishing some boundaries for managers and protecting them from some of the pressures that can lead to burn-out
- Managing Staff - and the personal dynamics of a small staff team where roles and responsibilities may not always be clearly defined
- Involving Volunteers - including establishing the appropriate degree of formalisation of their role to fit with the culture and work of the organisation
- Developing an effective governing body
- Financial management - which can be a particular problem for organisations that do not have the resources to employ specialist staff
- Obtaining funding
- Accountability and regulation
- Competition - the need to operate in an environment where competition amongst providers is encouraged by central and local government
- Partnership with other agencies - which requires huge investments of time and effort, and which raises questions for small organisations about the extent to which they can have any real influence
- Change - in the external environment, in the needs of users and in the ways in which the organisation needs to relate to these changes

3.5   **The role of trustees**

Against this background, trustees of small organisations need to consider a multitude of issues and find ways to consider the future of the organisation without being overwhelmed by operational matters. The role of the governing body as a whole can be considered as comprising five main elements (Harris, 2001):

- Being the employer
- Formulating agency policy
- Acting as the final point of accountability within the organisation
- Securing and safeguarding resources

- Providing a link between the organisation and its external environment.

The functions of being both the employer and the final point of accountability mean that trustees bear the ultimate responsibility for any problems that occur in the agency. For trustees of small organisations, whose role is often more 'hands-on' than that of the governing bodies of larger agencies, understanding and implementing these functions can at times feel rather daunting.

Research with trustees (Harris, 1998) indicates that the number of people willing to involve themselves in governance is diminishing, partly because of demographic trends and wider social factors, but also because of increased demands on the voluntary and community sector in the form of regulation and contracting. VCOs may face particular problems in recruiting trustees in the first place, and then with retaining their interest and commitment and facilitating their understanding of their role and its relationship with paid staff. Other research (Harris and Rochester, 2001), specifically with Jewish voluntary organisations, showed a very high investment of time and energy amongst those interviewed and their colleagues, but also noted difficulties in attracting new people.

All of these problems are especially acute in small VCOs whose internal resources to develop the governing body and ensure its effective contribution may be limited. Problems of recruitment, retention, achieving a balance between the day-to-day and the longer term, and between informality and the degree of formality needed to run an organisation, are all experienced more sharply in small organisations (Rochester, 2000).

Part B	Key Findings

4. Timescale

4.1 The 'Lessons from the Field' project started in December 2002 and concluded in March 2004. The majority of activities involving trustees took place from mid 2003 onwards.

5. Project Activities

5.1 The project comprised four different pilot models of supporting trustees in small voluntary organisations and community groups, co-ordinated through Local Development Partners (LDPs):

i. **Action Learning for Trustees** (co-ordinated through Durham Rural Community Council)

ii. **Training plus Support** (co-ordinated through Community Projects Trust [SW] / East Cornwall Council for Voluntary Service)

iii. **Face-to-face Trustee Networks** (co-ordinated through Community First in Herefordshire and Worcestershire)

iv. **Web-based Trustee Network** (co-ordinated through Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation, GMCVO)

5.2   The original plan was that LDPs would implement their own pilot model twice during the lifetime of the project. In reality, however, the activities did not divide neatly into distinct phases. For example:

- The first few months of the Web-based trustee network were taken up with developing and building the site; from July 2003 it then operated in one continuous phase.

- In Herefordshire and Worcestershire it was recognised early on that a considerable amount of groundwork would be required to test out demand for a trustee network and to start to build relationships amongst trustees. Four events were held in different locations in support of this end, but they cannot be considered as forming distinct phases.

5.4   Table 1 below sets out details of the activities organised within each model of support.

Model of support	Number of events / activities	Number of participants
Action Learning for Trustees (Durham)	2 Action Learning sets held during 2003; two more due to start February / March 2004	6 (set 1); 6 (set 2); 12 (set 3); 6 (set 4) Total = 30
Training Plus Support (East Cornwall)	2 events held + conference planned for March 2004	9 (event 1); 10 (event 2) Total = 19
Face-to-face trustee networks (Herefordshire and Worcestershire)	4 events held	20 (event 1); 20 (event 2); 25 (event 3); 23 (event 4) Total = 88
Web-based trustee network (Greater Manchester)	Web-site set up	106 registered (but not all active)

6.   Outline of End of Project Evaluation

6.1   At the outset of the 'Lessons from the Field' project, it was expected that both phases would be separately monitored and evaluated by **bassac**, in addition to a final, end of project evaluation.

6.2   CVAR was first engaged to supervise **bassac**'s evaluation of the project. However, following staff changes within **bassac** in December 2003, CVAR was engaged to complete the end of project evaluation and produce a Final Report. It was agreed that the fieldwork for this end of project evaluation should comprise:

- Analysis of evaluation material collected by the LDPs
- Semi-structured interviews with the LDPs
- Semi-structured interviews with trustee participants from the four pilot projects.

It was also agreed that the fieldwork for this end of project evaluation should focus on the four models of trustee support in relation to Aim One of the 'Lessons from the Field' project:

- *To learn how to improve the effectiveness of governance in small voluntary and community organisations.*

6.3   Table 2 describes the core elements of the project evaluation.

Model of support	Questionnaires completed by trustees	Evaluation forms completed by trustees	Semi-structured interviews with trustee participants	Semi-structured interviews with Local Development Partners
Action Learning for Trustees (Durham)	✔		✔	✔
Training Plus Support (East Cornwall)	✔		✔	✔
Face- to-face trustee networks (Herefordshire and Worcestershire)		✔	✔	✔
Web-based trustee network (Greater Manchester)	✔		✔	✔

6.4   Questionnaires were distributed by LDPs to all trustee participants involved in Training Plus Support, Action Learning for Trustees and the Web-based trustee network. Table 3 below indicates the response rate.

Model of support	Questionnaires distributed	Questionnaires completed	Percentage completed
Action Learning for Trustees (Durham)	12	4	33%
Training Plus Support (East Cornwall)	19	7	34%
Web-based trustee network (Greater Manchester)	100	10	10%

6.5   In Herefordshire and Worcestershire (Face-to-face trustee networks) it was decided to use evaluation forms for each event rather than the questionnaires. Evaluation forms could then be tailored to the particular model of support and not only ask for participants' opinions of the event they had attended but also gauge their level of interest in a trustee network. 64 forms were returned out of 88 distributed, a response rate of 73%.

6.6   Local Development Partners were asked to identify a sample of trustee participants to take part in semi-structured telephone interviews. During late February and early March 2004 a total of 16 trustee participants were interviewed. Between them, the participants are trustees of 23 organisations.

6.7   Interviews with LDPs also took place during late February and early March 2004.

6.8   LDPs were asked about:

- The challenges of setting up and sustaining the governance support project in their area
- The appropriateness of the particular method being piloted
- The effectiveness of the partnership
- The challenges of trusteeship in general and of being a trustee of a small organisation in particular
- Their general reflections on the process.

6.9   Trustees were asked about:

- What they had hoped to gain from participating
- Whether the model had met their needs
- Whether they had been able to share their learning with their fellow trustees
- The challenges of trusteeship in general and of being a trustee of a small organisation in particular
- What they felt they and their colleagues needed to help them perform their roles effectively.

6.10   In the presentation of our key findings we distinguish, where appropriate, interviewees as 'trustees' or 'LDPs'. Where this distinction is not necessary, we shall refer to interviewees generically as 'study participants'.

6.11   Interviews with both the LDPs and trustees were recorded and analysed. The data (from both interviews and questionnaires) was analysed thematically using a system of open coding of the interview transcripts and completed questionnaires. These codes were then analysed in relation to each other.

7.   Key Findings

7.1   The Key Findings from the end of project project evaluation are set out here under ten main headings:

Issues and challenges involved in:

- Setting up and running the pilot projects
- Sustaining the pilot projects
- Meeting participants' aspirations
- Matching support models to participants' needs
- Sharing learning with other trustees
- Trusteeship generally
- Smaller organisation trusteeship
- Effective role performance
- The local and national partnerships
- Learning the lessons.

7.2   **Setting up and running the pilot projects**

Interviews with the Local Development Partners indicated that all four felt the need to address a similar set of issues in setting up the pilot project:

- Making contact with trustees who might wish to be involved
- Ensuring that the model of support met the needs of participants
- Establishing and running the project within the agreed timeframe.

7.2.1   **Making contact with trustees**

The Local Development Partners spoke of the difficulties of making contact with trustees who might wish to be involved. All four organised and distributed promotional publicity, but felt that more personal contact was needed as well as the mainly written media used. In the two more rural areas (Durham and East Cornwall)

LDPs commented on the amount of time needed to make contact with trustees of very small groups. Both LDPs felt that personal contact with these trustees was very important, but opportunities to promote the project to people who might benefit were limited by the lack of available fieldwork staff, and by time constraints. In Greater Manchester it was also recognised that, although GMCVO has extensive networks in the area, face-to-face demonstration of the website would be needed to encourage participation. Opportunities for this interaction were, however, again limited by time and staffing resources.

LDPs had also experienced the problem of 'gatekeepers' (usually paid staff) not passing on information to trustees. This problem was particularly apparent in East Cornwall and in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, where in some cases paid staff had turned up to events themselves. Ultimately the LDP had successfully overcome the problem by using local newspapers and radio to publicise events.

7.2.2 Matching support models to participants' needs (see also 7.5)

All four LDPs were concerned that the model of support used in their area should meet the needs of the participating trustees, and drew on their knowledge of small organisations in pursuit of this end. They were also concerned that the models of support that involved attendance at events took place in accessible, welcoming venues, and were facilitated by people with thorough knowledge of the issues facing small organisations.

In East Cornwall the LDP felt it was important to select as potential mentors people from the local voluntary and statutory sectors who were known to, and trusted by, the organisations involved in the pilot. Importing consultants from outside the area was not felt to be appropriate.

In Greater Manchester, considerable thought was given in the early phase of the pilot to designing an easy-to-use site that would meet trustees' needs.

7.2.3   **Establishing and running the project within the agreed timeframe**

All four LDPs commented on the challenge of establishing and running the pilot project within the designated timeframe. This meant that LDPs were required to limit the amount of time that could be spent on setting up the project in order to have events or a website in place. In Herefordshire and Worcestershire it was felt essential to test out the demand from trustees for a network before attempting to set one up. This led to the decision to organise a series of training / networking events for trustees, following which interest in a network could be better measured. The delay in securing a response from national agencies to a request for resource materials to support the events further compounded the problems of timescale in this area.

In the Durham pilot, the lead-in period to setting up Action Learning for Trustees was again considered to be restrictive, given the newness of the partnership, lack of familiarity with the model on the part of the local voluntary and community sector and the general characteristics of the sector in the county.

7.3   **Sustaining the pilot projects**

Once established, LDPs experienced a series of further challenges in sustaining the pilot projects in their area. These related to:

- Sustaining participation from trustees
- The particular model of support involved
- Time and other resource problems.

7.3.1   **Sustaining participation from trustees**

All four LDPs spoke, to varying degrees, of the difficulties of sustaining participation from trustees in all aspects of the particular model of support piloted in their area.

In East Cornwall, a total of 19 people took part in the two training events, but very few took up the offer of ongoing support from a mentor. Interviews with trustees

suggest a variety of reasons for this: some did not feel the need because of the comprehensive nature of the training; some were not ready to involve a mentor; some were preoccupied with day to day issues.

In Greater Manchester, getting people to register and actively participate in all aspects of the site was a major challenge. Most participants seemed happy to use it to download information on aspects of trusteeship, but did not wish to engage in discussion with other trustees. As indicated above, the LDP felt that much more face to face promotion of the site was needed than could be done within the timeframe and resources available.

In Durham, it proved difficult to maintain the momentum of the Action Learning sets; attendance was erratic for reasons of illness, bad weather and other commitments, and some people dropped out altogether.

7.3.2   The particular model of support involved

In two areas the particular model of support seemed to provide additional challenges to the question of sustaining participation. In Durham, some participants were suspicious of the Action Learning technique itself, expecting to be *'told what governance was and given papers to take away'*. Others found it difficult conforming to the ground rules of not giving advice and asking only insightful questions. While some people found the technique a very useful model of problem-solving, others felt it was not their preferred learning style.

In Greater Manchester, as indicated above, securing participation from trustees proved difficult. While this was partly the result of the need for more promotion of the site, it may have also related to a general reluctance to engage in discussion, the availability of other sites providing information for trustees and some aspects of the site itself.

7.3.3   **Time and other resource problems**

As indicated above (section 7.2.3) the constraints imposed by a 15 month pilot
programme posed challenges in setting up the project. LDPs indicated that resource
constraints (both their own time allocation and the overall timescale for the project)
remained a problem throughout. In particular they reduced opportunities for ongoing
promotional work and for encouraging trustees to utilise all aspects of the support
model available in their area. Restructuring in two of the four agencies had also had
a bearing on the wider question of resources.

7.4   **Meeting participants' aspirations**

Analysis of the questionnaires completed by trustee participants, complemented by
interviews with 16 trustees, indicates that trustees hoped to benefit in one or both of
two main ways from their involvement in the pilot:

- Increased knowledge (or reinforcement of existing knowledge) and skills
  development
- Networking.

7.4.1   **Increased knowledge and Skills development**

Participating trustees in all four areas hoped to improve their knowledge about
aspects of trusteeship, in particular: roles and responsibilities, Charity Commission
requirements and legislation. They also often wanted information about particular
trustee responsibilities such as fundraising or other financial matters. It was clear that
trustees took their responsibilities seriously; the desire to be *'a more knowledgeable
and better informed trustee'* was expressed by several people, as was a concern to
'check what I thought I knew was correct'. For some people, this was felt to be
especially important in an environment of public scrutiny and government interest in
the sector.

A concern with increasing one's range of skills as a trustee was expressed by trustees from East Cornwall and Durham in particular. They wanted to, for example, improve committee skills as well as general organisational skills.

7.4.2 Networking

Trustees in all four areas were keen to meet other trustees, to exchange ideas, learn from each other and share knowledge. The opportunity for '*dialogue in any form with other trustees'* was an aspiration expressed by many of those taking part in the pilots.

7.5 Matching support models to participants' needs

We asked study participants for their views about the appropriateness of the model of support piloted in their area to the needs of the participating trustees, and what might be done to increase its usefulness. Information from questionnaires and evaluation forms provided further information.

7.5.1 Training Plus Support (East Cornwall)

Trustee interviewees were very positive about the model, both in terms of the knowledge gained and the style of the training. Participants commented that they had gained new perspectives on trusteeship, financial matters and *'useful reassurance that we are doing things right'*. Participants liked the idea of support being available from mentors, even though very few had availed themselves of the option. They could not think of anything that had been lacking in the training.

In the opinion of the LDP too, the model of support had been very appropriate for the area; ongoing trustee networks would have involved too much travelling in a very rural area. The need for locally based support had been apparent. Involving the potential mentors in the training had worked well. Events had involved a good range of trustees and discussion had been productive.

7.5.2   **Web-based trustee network (Greater Manchester)**

It is clear from the questionnaires and from interviews with trustees that participants derived most benefit from the information (e.g. model documents, information about trustees' responsibilities) they had downloaded from the site. Very few people had used the site to discuss issues with other trustees; this seemed to be for a variety of reasons, including awareness that numbers registered were small and that they might receive few responses, limited time to access the site and concerns about the level of expertise of potential respondents. One trustee's comment that *'people see the Internet as about receiving information rather than commenting'* may also shed light on the low level of participation.

Trustees made a number of suggestions for increasing use of the site:

- Clarity over who the site is for
- More promotion of the site
- Links to an e mail group
- E mails sent to registered participants when new information posted or new people joined
- An 'expert' answering problems
- A monthly discussion forum.

In the opinion of the LDP the Web-based trustee network is in theory very appropriate to the needs of trustees for information, discussion and general support in carrying out their role. Trustees attending events to demonstrate the functioning of the site have expressed positive views, but this has not led on to extensive use, especially of the discussion aspect of the site. The site, it was suggested, needs much more demonstration to trustees throughout the Greater Manchester area (which in turn requires substantial resources). Given the disparate nature of trustees, and the fact that they are 'not glued to their screens', a personal approach is essential to increasing participation.

7.5.3   **Action Learning for Trustees (Durham)**

Questionnaires completed by trustees who remained involved to the end of their particular Action Learning set indicated that they felt they had benefited in terms of developing skills to deal with problems. They had also enjoyed the opportunity to meet other trustees. Interviews carried out with three of the participating trustees supports this view. Most were disappointed with the erratic attendance of some participants, and one or two suggested minor improvements that might be made, such as 'action plans and homework' or more detailed initial outlines of the programme. While the style of learning was unfamiliar to most people and required some adjustment, participants who remained involved throughout felt they had gained new skills and some had gone on to address organisational problems as a result.

The LDP's view of Action Learning as a technique largely concurs with the above; that it is not a uniform preferred learning style, since some people clearly expect 'answers', but it has been shown to be an effective way of addressing organisational problems for those who are comfortable with the approach. It was noted that more publicity, and more prior explanation of the Action Learning approach, would be beneficial.

7.5.4   **Face to face trustee networks (Herefordshire and Worcestershire)**

Evaluation forms completed by participants in the four events, supplemented by interviews with four participating trustees, indicate that the vast majority of participants found the event they attended very useful both in terms of information (on issues such as committee structures, trustees' roles and responsibilities, legal matters) and networking. The comment of one interviewee that *'it is not often you get such high quality of presentation'* is typical.

In the opinion of the LDP the events had been appropriate to the needs of participants, but perhaps more so for those of the larger organisations than for those of the really small (no paid staff) bodies. Participants had benefited from a raised

awareness of their roles, from the availability of direct support and the opportunity to see themselves in a wider context. It was noted that the meetings so far have been about *'building relationships rather than building a network'*. While over 40 participants had expressed themselves as 'very' or 'possibly' interested in a trustee network, this would take time and several meetings to build. The preference expressed by many trustees for very local meetings and their interest in a very wide range of topics would also need to be considered.

7.6   **Sharing learning with other trustees**

The 16 trustees who participated in the interviews were all asked whether they had been able to share the information and ideas they had gained with other trustees from their organisation. The majority had done so; they had either given fellow trustees copies of supporting materials, or spent time at a trustees' meeting sharing information. Some people, who were trustees of more than one organisation, had so far shared information in one organisation but not yet the other (where they generally felt that need was less urgent). Two had passed on copies of documents to colleagues in other organisations. Others had not yet shared their learning because of pressure on time at trustees' meetings, but were planning to do so. Some users of the Web-based network had shared information, while others had not because they already had similar material from other sources.

For participants in the Action Learning for Trustees pilot the sharing of learning had generally taken the form of putting into practice ideas from the sessions to address organisational problems.

One trustee did, however, sound a note of caution, that it can be difficult to engage the less active and less motivated trustees. In that respect, the attempts of committed trustees to share their learning may be thwarted at the next stage. The suggestion was made that more of a 'cascade principle' might be needed to engage other trustees.

7.7   **Trusteeship generally**

We asked study participants what they felt were the main challenges facing trustees of voluntary organisations *in general.*

The problems described fell into four main categories:

- Developing an understanding of what the role involves
- Developing an effective governing body
- Dealing with the regulatory environment
- Securing and managing the necessary resources

7.7.1   **Developing an understanding of what the role involves**

A majority of LDP and trustee interviewees felt that a major challenge for trustees is simply being clear what their role involves. One LDP commented that *'the main challenge is simply understanding that they are trustees'.* It was also noted by some trustees themselves that *'some trustees lack a basic understanding of their role and awareness of their responsibilities'*; and *'a significant challenge is distinguishing the role of trustee – governance – from the role of management, and setting boundaries for paid staff'.* This appears to be a particular difficulty in the smallest organisations.

7.7.2   **Developing an effective governing body**

Study participants also identified a number of challenges for trustees related to acting as an effective governing body. These included:

- Involving all trustees, not just an active core
- Getting everyone to pull in the same direction
- (For the Chair) – delegating responsibility appropriately
- Acknowledging shared responsibility for the budget
- Getting the right mix of skills and experience

7.7.3   **Dealing with the regulatory environment**

Several study participants noted the increasing demands that the external environment, and regulatory or funding bodies in particular, make on the trustees of voluntary organisations. One LDP commented that there is a big 'fear factor' for trustees about dealing with legal requirements. Several study participants felt that keeping pace with changing legislation is a major source of concern for trustees; it can also lead to difficulties recruiting trustees in the first place.

7.7.4   **Securing and managing the necessary resources**

A further set of challenges relates to securing and managing the necessary resources, both financial and human. Several trustees commented on difficulties *'ensuring the organisation is sustainable'*, *'remaining solvent'*, identifying and applying for funding and managing the finances. Others referred to the challenge of managing paid staff, especially when taking on staff for the first time.

7.8   **Smaller organisation trusteeship**

We asked study participants what they felt to be the distinct challenges encountered by trustees of <u>small</u> organisations. Four main challenges emerged, relating to:

- Human resources
- Financial resources
- Boundaries between governance and operational roles
- The influence of personalities.

7.8.1   **Human resources**

Several interviewees commented on the dependence of small organisations on a limited number of people. This means, it was suggested, that *'trustees have to do more than just turn up for meetings'*. It was also felt that a small organisation,

particularly if it works at a very local level, may have more difficulty than a larger one in attracting trustees and volunteers.

7.8.2   Financial resources

Smaller organisations, it was suggested, experience distinctive difficulties in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the organisation, for example in relation to financial skills and limited opportunities for cross-funding with a budget. Trustees may have problems identifying suitable sources of funding and completing funding applications. As one trustee put it *'managing the finances is complicated, and fundraising is difficult. I do not feel sufficiently experienced to know what are the right words to use, but it is difficult finding someone to assist'.* There was a general plea for more external support to deal with the process of preparing funding applications, which several people found a daunting and complex process.

It was also suggested that it can be difficult for small organisations to gain recognition for their work, and hence to secure resources. Larger voluntary agencies and statutory bodies, one trustee suggested, do not always take small organisations seriously, particularly if they are run by people who do not have paid jobs.

7.8.3   Boundaries between governance and operational roles

As suggested above, trustees in small organisations have to bear a considerable amount of responsibility for the day to day work of the organisation as well as for its strategic development. It was felt that this can lead to a blurring of boundaries and difficulty, in the words of one trustee, *'distinguishing the sharp end doer role from the management role'.*

7.8.4   The influence of 'personal relationships'

Several study participants highlighted the significance that individuals can have in small organisations, particular those working in tight-knit small communities; *'everything is much more personal in a small organisation'* and *'personalities loom*

large'. Relationships tend to be more intense, particularly if founders remain involved. In a small community, the same people meet in several different contexts, strengths and weaknesses are exposed and it can be hard to maintain confidentiality.

7.9   Effective role performance

We asked all the trustees interviewed what they felt they needed in order to perform their trustee roles effectively. Their responses can be considered in terms of what is needed *within* the organisation and what may be required from external sources.

7.9.1   Internal issues

Trustees suggested that they need:

- A clear vision for the future direction of the organisation
- The ability to think strategically
- Clarity over their roles
- An overview of the whole organisation as well as their own role
- The chance to use their own skills
- Enthusiasm.

7.9.2   The need for external support

The trustees we interviewed suggested a range of support mechanisms that would assist them in performing their roles more effectively:

- Training
- Information
- Help with problem solving
- The opportunity to meet others with similar experiences
- Recognition of the importance of the trustee role.

i.   **Training**

Trustees stressed the importance of training, preferably locally based, covering issues such as trustees' roles and responsibilities, financial issues, committee skills and conduct of meetings. Several trustees were keen to see the training in which they had recently participated replicated more widely.

ii.   **Information**

Trustees wanted information on a range of issues affecting their work, including fundraising, legislative matters, Charity Commission requirements and trustees' liability.

iii.   **Help with problem solving**

Several people suggested that it would be useful to have access to external support to deal with organisational problems, resolve disputes and address tricky 'personality issues'.

iv.   **The opportunity to meet others with similar experiences**

Trustees had generally enjoyed meeting other trustees and sharing experiences with them, and many were keen to have further opportunities to do so in the future.

v.   **Recognition of the importance of the trustee role**

Finally, some trustees suggested that there needs to be greater recognition of the important role that volunteer trustees play in their organisations and the wider community. In the words of one trustee *'the role needs to be valued more, and celebrated, both locally and nationally'*.

7.10   **The local and national partnerships**

We asked LDPs for their views about the usefulness of working as part of a partnership with other local development agencies, and also their views on the effectiveness of the partnership with national agencies.

7.10.1 **The partnership of local development agencies**

In general, LDPs had little sense of common cause with the other local development agencies involved in the pilot programme. LDPs varied in their views as to whether or not contact between them had been encouraged, but felt that, even with encouragement, a number of other factors had restricted their ability to initiate and sustain regular contact:

- The limited timescale for the pilot
- The fact that LDPs had several other roles to perform in their organisations
- The different focus of each support model
- Geographical distance between the partners.

7.10.2 **The partnership with national agencies**

LDP interviewees were generally critical of the role that the national partners had played in the pilot. While some successful individual relationships had been formed, for example between Action Learning for Trustees / Durham RCC and Action Learning for Managers / NACVS, it was felt that the national partners could have played more of a positive role in the pilot. There was some feeling that more support might have been forthcoming to LDPs, in terms of resources or advice in setting up and sustaining the project in a short timeframe.

It was also felt that the initiative as a whole lacked continuity, for example in terms of provision of meeting minutes and feedback from the 'Small Talk' conference. There was a lack of clarity over who was to check progress made by LDPs.

Overall LDPs felt that the project suffered from lack of a defined national strategy. The result was that the respective roles of local and national partners were unclear and the balance of responsibility for achieving results weighed too heavily on the side of the local partners.

7.11 Learning the lessons

In the final part of our interviews with LDPs, we asked for their reflections on the lessons they felt could be learned from this pilot initiative. Their comments can be divided into general observations about the venture as a whole and specific comments about the particular model of trustee support in their area.

i. General comments about the initiative

7.11.1 Timescale

There was general agreement amongst LDPs that 15 months is not enough to set up and develop such a project, especially in rural areas where it takes time to make contact with those trustees most likely to need support. It is also not sufficient time to test out the need for a trustee network and then set it up in such a way as to be self-sustaining.

7.11.2 The importance of people

LDPs stressed the importance of personal contact with trustees to encourage their participation. One LDP commented that *'a newsletter can't replace trusted workers in the field'*.

7.11.3 Clear aims and objectives

Clarity over the aims and objectives of the initiative was felt to be very important, together with more definition of the roles of local and national partners and more regular support to LDPs.

7.11.4 **Continuity of learning**

One LDP noted that there have been other projects designed to improve governance in the voluntary sector, and it might have been useful to have made links with them and draw out issues in common.

7.11.5 **Celebrating success**

Despite some of the organisational difficulties, trustees have benefited from their involvement and gained new knowledge and problem-solving skills. It was suggested that is important to celebrate the successes of the project, so that trustees can see it has made a difference.

ii. **Specific comments about the models of support**

All four LDPs felt that the model piloted in their area had benefited those trustees involved, and had potential as one of a range of ways of supporting trustees. They noted also some issues that would need taking into account when deploying these particular models again:

- It can be difficult teasing out support for trustees from an organisation's overall needs for governance support – need to work with paid staff (where these exist) as well
- Action Learning is a useful technique, and can help trustees recognise they have the ability to address problems themselves – but it takes time to understand and it is not everyone's preferred learning style
- A web-based approach to supporting trustees has potential, but it needs the right promotion, impetus and ongoing support
- Training Plus Support is a good model, but needs adapting to the features of the area – it is important not to take an urban model of support and 'ruralise' it.

Part C	Key issues for consideration

In Part A we discussed some of the background to 'Lessons from the Field' and we highlighted the challenges facing small organisations in general and their trustees in particular. In Part B we outlined the key findings from the project, drawn from interviews with Local Development Partners and trustee participants, and from questionnaires and evaluation forms completed by participants.

In Part C we offer some critical reflection on key issues in relation to improving the effectiveness of governance in small voluntary and community organisations.

We discuss in turn eight areas:

- Support for trustees of small organisations
- A range of support models
- Support for particular aspects of the trustee role
- Support to encourage and sustain trustees' participation
- Raising the profile of trusteeship
- Building on the concept of shared learning
- Issues of partnership
- Timescales.

8. Support for trustees of small organisations

Our trustee interviewees suggested that those responsible for small organisations have to address difficult issues in relation to human and financial resources. They may often have to deal with tricky 'personality' issues, at the same time struggling with the need to achieve recognition for the organisation's work and balancing the demands of the day to day with the long term, or the operational and strategic needs of the organisation. The 'liability of smallness', and limited range of people to fulfil key roles within the organisation, indicates that the demands on trustees of small organisations are markedly different from those of larger agencies.

Trustees themselves suggested that they need, in broad terms, training, information on a whole range of issues, help with problem solving and opportunities to meet and share ideas with others with similar experiences.

This Study therefore highlights an ongoing need for support for the 'governance' functions of small organisations, within the context of understanding 'governance' as *the sum of authority over and accountability for the organisation*[1].   It suggests that this support should not always be directed solely at trustees, but should look at governance more broadly and provide support both to paid staff (where employed) *and* trustees together in developing an effective governance role.

9. A range of support models

Interviews with trustees, combined with analysis of questionnaires and evaluation forms, indicates a high degree of satisfaction with the model of support piloted in their particular area. The interviews, as indicated above, also show trustees as having a whole range of ongoing needs which cannot be met by a 'one size fits all' approach. Interviews with LDPs back up this view; while all four felt that the model piloted in their area had had considerable merit, they all felt that it would be effective as one of a range of models used to support trustees rather than the sole model available. As participants in the Action Learning for Trustees pilot noted, individuals have different preferred learning styles as well as a variety of needs for information, training, advice and networking which need to be met by different means.

This finding, coupled with the strong desire expressed by many trustees for locally based support, suggests an ongoing need for provision of trustee support by local development agencies. However, the development of a 'menu' of trustee support for people to choose from would be both expensive and unfeasible. A possible way forward is, therefore, to provide a common approach or 'core' which could be easily tailored by local development agencies (LDAs) to suit local needs.

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[1] See 2.2 above

10.   Support for particular aspects of the trustee role

Some study participants indicated a need for help with particular aspects of the trustee role, for example finance and fundraising and employment of paid staff for the first time. Some trustees also suggested that support would be welcome for people taking on a new trustee role, e.g. Chair or Treasurer, for the first time. These needs were particularly apparent amongst trustees of very small organisations (usually without paid staff). Given also the particular demands on trustees of these organisations of endeavouring both to act as the governing body and perform day to day operational roles, the need for more support seems urgent.

However, it should be noted again[2] that it would almost certainly prove uneconomic to develop sufficient courses to cover all eventualities (eg. ' Becoming a Treasurer for the first time').   Building on and moving beyond the four individual approaches attempted in the pilot projects, consideration may be given to developing new models of support. These might include:

- An Open University approach of supported individual distance learning
- Combining two of the pilot approaches (for example, Action Learning and Training + Support)
- Modifying one or more of the approaches in a way that takes account of the study findings (for example, the widespread interest in meeting other trustees, or the desire to have personalised support, or the identified need for support for more general organisational capacity building).

11.   Support to encourage and sustain trustees' participation

The interviews with LDPs indicate the importance of personal contact with trustees to encourage their participation and in some cases to 'sell' the benefits of training. LDPs working in rural areas emphasised that this would take time. It was also clear that promoting the opportunity to be involved in a new initiative, a 'virtual' network, would require significant resources of time and personal contact. Other work by the Centre

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[2] See 9 above

for Voluntary Action Research with an online discussion group (CVAR, 2003) indicates that there are significant barriers of time, access, resources and confidence to be overcome before people are willing to share ideas with semi-anonymous figures in a virtual environment. This suggests that such web-based initiatives are not yet appropriate for small organisations (where there are fewer people with office-based jobs and constant internet access) and, consequently, do not represent a useful investment for trustee support.

The pilot initiative in Durham experienced problems of erratic participation, while in Greater Manchester and East Cornwall trustees made use of only parts of the particular support model. This again suggests the need for personal support and encouragement to demystify models of support, suggest possible benefits of involvement and generally encourage and sustain participation.

12.   Raising the profile of trusteeship

The strong commitment and sense of responsibility for their role was very striking during the interviews with trustees. Yet as noted earlier [3] the number of people willing to engage themselves in governance is diminishing, and some trustees are concerned about the increasing demands being placed on them. The level of interest in the support models piloted, and in ongoing contact with other trustees and further training, does, however, indicate that there are people willing to commit time and energy to the trustee role. This provides a sound and positive platform for the further development of support models for trustees in small organisations.

13.   Building on the concept of shared learning

LDPs commented that, for a variety of reasons, there had been little contact between them during the lifetime of the pilot. However, LDPs did experience some similar challenges in the early stages in terms of making contact with trustees who might wish to be involved, ensuring that the particular model of support met the needs of participants and establishing and running the project within the agreed timeframe. In

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[3] See 3.5 above

the later stages, there were some similar challenges in terms of sustaining participation from trustees and dealing with time and other resource problems.

The opportunities for shared learning amongst the local partners was not adequately developed or exploited. Any future project of this kind would benefit from greater planning and investment in this area.

14. Issues of partnership

LDPs indicated that there was a lack of clarity over the aims and objectives of the project and the respective roles of the local and national partners. Changes in personnel also meant there was a lack of continuity in relation to support to the local partners and accountability for their work.

Other research on the work of partnerships suggests that these are common concerns that often give rise to tensions, particularly where partners have unequal levels of resources and influence. Smaller organisations can question whether the benefits of involvement outweigh the time and other resource commitments of engagement.

It appears that more explicit statements of the aims and objectives of 'Lessons from the Field' might have been beneficial, certainly for the local partners, and might have reduced some of the uncertainty over issues of supervision, accountability and arrangements for monitoring. These issues would again need to be taken into account in any future governance support project.

15. Timescales

As a result of unexpected delays at the outset of this initiative, the pilot project only had 15 months to develop, deliver and evaluate heir activities. This undoubtedly posed problems for the local partners and put significant constraints on what could be achieved. In Greater Manchester the development time essential for setting up

the website left only a few months for trustees to make use of the site and become accustomed to using it on a regular basis. In Herefordshire and Worcestershire time was needed to test out the idea of a trustee network and seek trustees' view on how, when and where it might operate. While much groundwork was done, the time available was clearly insufficient both to do this work and set up a sustainable network. The pilots in Durham and East Cornwall were less affected by time constraints, but the time needed to reach potential participants across two largely rural areas took up considerable amounts of time.

This suggests that any such venture set up in the future needs to allow more lead-in time for development and promotion of the initiative and assessment of trustees' support needs. It is to the credit of the Local Development Partners that they managed to achieve so much in the time available.

Part D	Options for the Future

From the evidence presented in Part B and the discussion in Part C it is possible to identify a set of key learning points that might inform subsequent initiatives in the area of governance support for small organisations.

16.   Understanding 'governance'

This Study has identified some confusion between the needs of *trustees* and the needs of *organisational governance*. It has highlighted the need to locate ongoing support for the trustees of small organisations within a broader conceptualisation of organisational governance, that is *the sum of authority over and accountability for the organisation*.

17.   Recognising the distinctive challenges of governance in small organisations

Building on earlier research on small organisations, this Study has confirmed a number of distinctive governance challenges in small organisations[4], in particular of

- Developing an understanding of what the role involves
- Developing an effective governing body
- Securing and managing the necessary resources
- Financial management
- Dealing with the regulatory environment
- Managing change.

These might usefully form the core of any future models of support.

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[4] See 3.4 and 7.7 above

18.   **Designing support models for governance in small organisations**

The outcomes of the pilot projects provide useful lessons for future work in the area of governance support in small organisations. In particular, attention will need to be paid at the outset to:

- Identifying a common understanding of 'governance'

- Agreeing the actual focus of support (eg. trustees *or* trustees and paid staff)

- Incorporating a detailed understanding of the distinctive features and characteristics of 'small organisations' (for example, by its nature a small organisation may be difficult to find and access; therefore, projects may require longer set up time)

- Recognising the importance of adopting approaches which are specifically tailored for small organisations and individuals within them (for example, face to face networking and peer contact)

- Taking account of factors which correlate with size but are not themselves strictly about size (for example: local base, local focus, capacity, volunteers motivated by personal and local issues)

- Developing content for support approaches which is both contextual (ie, recognising the broader demands and expectations of small organisations) as well as skills development.

19.   **Investment in small organisation governance**

This Study has taken place during a period of heightened interest in the role, capacity and effectiveness of the voluntary and community sector[5]. As part of this agenda, the Active Communities Directorate[6] has indicated its commitment to focusing more resources on governance[7]. This Study has provided sound evidence of the need for continuing targeted investment in the area of small organisation governance.

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[5] See 3.1 above
[6] Previously the Active Community Unit
[7] See 3.2 above

In taking this agenda forward, this Study has highlighted the critical importance of:

- Recognising and responding to the distinctive features of <u>small organisations</u>
- Supporting activity at a <u>local</u> level
- Developing flexible and adaptable models of governance support
- Developing the capacity of infrastructure agencies (especially at a sub-regional and local level) to deliver governance support
- Ensuring that project timescales allow for thorough preparation and continuity of support.

To ensure that the learning from this Study is applied constructively to build the capacity and sustainability of governance in small organisations, particular attention might be paid in the first instance to:

- Further research to develop a model of 'core' governance support[8]
- Support for local adaptation and implementation
- The development of opportunities for continuous shared learning.

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[8] See 9 above

Appendix One: References

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