Institute for Voluntary Action Research

Sustaining simplified funding beyond the Covid-19 crisis

Introduction

We have a unique opportunity to make life easier for charities. We have seen what is possible in an emergency. The challenge now is for funders and VCSE organisations together to interrogate new behaviours and to nurture and grow the best of them into the future.

How can we build on the changes you have made so far, and sustain them for the long term? The first step is this survey - it will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. This will inform work led by IVAR and a steering group of funders and charities to capture recent experiences, and to share learning that helps to shape both future emergency approaches and general grant-making practice (e.g. stripping back application processes; reaching new groups or speeding up decision-making).

Multiple members of your organisation can complete the survey or you can gather views and provide a composite response. We are keen to hear from: grant staff; programme staff; grant managers; those in senior leadership roles; Directors/CEOs.

Your responses are confidential; full responses will only be seen by the IVAR team. Anonymised findings will be shared publicly as part of the project. At the end of the survey you will have the option to provide your name and email; this is completely optional but will enable us to keep you updated on the research and share emerging learning.

The survey will be live until the end of September 2020. If you have any problems completing the survey, or you have any questions regarding the research more generally, please email Eliza Buckley (eliza@ivar.org.uk)

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About you

* 1. What is the **name of the organisation** you work for?

2. What is your **role** within the organisation?

- Trustee
- Chief Executive/Director
- Head of Grants/Programmes
- Grant Manager
- Other (please specify)
- Grant Officer
- Monitoring/Evaluation/Learning/Impact Lead/Officer
- Administrator

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About your organisation's response to Covid 19

* 3. From the outset, it would be useful to know whether your organisation's approach/response to Covid 19 has been **consistent across its funding portfolio** or whether its response has **varied** according to the needs of individual grantees and/or funding streams/programmes?

Our organisation's appproach/response to Covid 19 has been...

- ...consistent across our funding portfolio
- ...varied according to BOTH the needs of individual grantees AND the needs/priorities of different funding streams/programmes
- ...varied according to the needs of individual grantees ONLY
- ...varied according to the needs/priorities of different funding streams/programmes ONLY
- Not sure/ Don't know

Please use this space to briefly explain your answer

For the remainder of this survey we are interested in the range of actions/responses that may have been adopted, even if these have varied across your organisation.

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About your organisation's response to Covid 19 (continued)

The next set of questions are about the range of ways your organisation may have changed/adapted its practices during Covid 19. Following this, you will have the chance to provide more detail throughout the rest of the survey.

* 4. **Existing grantees**

In response to Covid 19, did your organisation...?

	Yes	No	Not sure
Make changes to the value, use, duration or structure of any existing grants	○	○	○
Withdraw funding from some grantees because agreed targets/outcomes could no longer be met	○	○	○
Cancel the renewal of regular annual funding	○	○	○
Adapt the way you work/communicate with grantees	○	○	○

* 5. **Emergency fund(s)**

As part of your organisation's response to Covid 19, did your organisation...?

	Yes	No	Not sure
Launch its own emergency fund(s)	○	○	○
Distribute emergency funds on behalf of government/public authorities/private donors/other funders	○	○	○
Contribute towards, lead and/or administer collaborative emergency fund/s	○	○	○

* 6. **Pre-existing programmes/funds**

Did your organisation make any of the following changes/adaptations to its pre-existing programmes/funds?

	Yes	No	Not sure
Some of our pre-existing grant application processes were changed/adapted	○	○	○
The level and/or type of funding available to successful applicants was changed/adapted	○	○	○
Some of our existing funding streams/programmes were discontined or paused	○	○	○
We deferred outstanding funding decisions	○	○	○

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Engagement with existing grantees

7. What types of changes/adaptations did you make to the **funding provided to some of your existing grantees**? (Please tick all that apply)

- [ ] We awarded additional funds to support some grantees manage new/additional demands
- [ ] We awarded additional funds to enable some grantees to deliver the agreed work over a longer timeframe
- [ ] We extended the timeframe of some of our existing grants without providing additional funds
- [ ] We enabled some grantees to defer start times
- [ ] We enabled some grantees to move money between budget headings, with approval from us, to ensure their work could continue
- [ ] We allowed some grantees to move money between budget headings, without needing to tell us, to ensure their work could continue
- [ ] We converted some of our project/programme funding into unrestricted funding/core funding
- [ ] We did not renew our regular annual funding at the year end
- [ ] We gave unsolicited emergency funds to some/all existing grantees to help them through the crisis

Other (please specify)

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The way you worked/communicated with grantees

8. How did your organisation **change/adapt the way it worked/communicated with existing grantees** during Covid 19? (Please tick all that apply)

- [ ] We spoke to grantees more regularly
- [ ] We cut back on regular contact with grantees but made sure they knew they could contact us for help/to discuss their situation
- [ ] We renegotiated agreed outcomes and outputs
- [ ] We removed any requirements to meet and/or report on outcomes and outputs
- [ ] We deferred or adapted reporting dates/deadlines

Other (please specify)

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About your organisation's emergency fund(s)

9. Turning to your emergency fund(s), **who is/was your emergency fund(s) open to?**

- ◯ New applicants only
- ◯ Existing grantees only
- ◯ New applicants and existing grantees
- ◯ Don't know/ Not sure

Other (please specify)

10. What would you say was **different about the way(s) your emergency fund(s) worked** compared to your everyday funding practice? (Please tick all that apply)

NB. You will get the chance to provide a bit more detail later on in the survey

- ☐ We adopted different funding criteria and/or changed some of our due diligence requirements
- ☐ We introduced a lighter-touch application process
- ☐ We closed funds in the light of demand rather than advertising/sticking to published deadlines
- ☐ We made quicker grant decisions
- ☐ We awarded smaller grants than usual
- ☐ We awarded larger grants than usual
- ☐ We awarded more short-term grants (up to 12 months) than longer-term (12 months+)
- ☐ We awarded more unrestricted funding
- ☐ We relaxed our monitoring and reporting requirements

Please use the space below to identify **any other changes/adaptations that were made** to your emergency fund(s) compared to your usual practice.

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Collaborative emergency fund(s)

11. What **collaborative fund(s)** did you contribute to, lead and/or administer?

Collaborative fund(s) we **contributed to**

Collaborative fund(s) we **led**

Collaborative fund(s) we **administered**

12. Did supporting a collaborative fund(s) require you to make any **changes to your usual practice**?

Yes (please provide details below) No Don't know/ Not sure

If yes, please use this space below to detail up to three ways that your practice shifted.

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Changes/adaptations to pre-existing programmes/funds

13. What changes/adaptations did your organisation make to some/all of your **pre-existing programmes/funds**?

- [ ] We changed funding criteria and/or some of our due diligence requirements
- [ ] We introduced lighter-touch application processes
- [ ] We amended funding priorities
- [ ] We closed funds in the light of demand rather than advertising/sticking to published deadlines
- [ ] We made quicker grant decisions
- [ ] We awarded smaller grants than usual
- [ ] We awarded larger grants than usual
- [ ] We awarded more short-term grants (up to 12 months) than longer-term grants (12months +)
- [ ] We awarded more unrestricted funding
- [ ] We relaxed our monitoring and reporting requirements

Other (please specify)

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Changes to application processes

Earlier in the survey you indicated that your organisation introduced a 'lighter-touch application process', either for your emergency fund(s) and/or your existing funds. The question below asks you about this in a bit more detail.

14. What would you say was **'light-touch' about the application process(es)** during Covid 19 compared to your everyday practice? (Please tick all that apply)

NB. If your organisation did not launch an emergency fund(s), please leave this column blank.

	Emergency fund(s)	**Existing funds/programmes**
We reduced the number of pages	☐	☐
We reduced the number of questions asked	☐	☐
We relaxed/removed word limits	☐	☐
We relaxed/removed requirements to state firm outcomes	☐	☐
We asked for less supporting information (e.g. detailed budgets, forward plans)	☐	☐
For existing grantees, we relied on the information already provided to us	☐	☐
For new grantees, we asked them to provide essential information only (e.g. name, description, annual income etc)	☐	☐

Please use this space to identify **any other changes/adaptations that were made** to the application process for either your emergency fund(s) and/or your existing programmes

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Funding criteria and/or due diligence requirements

Earlier in the survey you indicated that your organisation changed/adapted its 'funding criteria and/or due diligence requirements', either for your emergency fund(s) and/or your existing funds. The question below asks you about this in a bit more detail.

15. What was different about the '**funding criteria and/or due diligence requirements'** during Covid 19 compared to your usual practice? (Please tick all that apply)

NB. If your organisation did not launch an emergency fund(s), please leave this column blank.

	Emergency fund(s)	Existing funds/programmes
We accepted applications from groups working in fields that we do not usually fund	☐	☐
We accepted applications from groups we had not previously funded	☐	☐
We restricted funds to specific client groups (e.g. older people; BAME communities) or needs (e.g. food; mental health; digital exclusion)	☐	☐
We restricted funds to specific types of work (e.g. front-line services; advocacy)	☐	☐
We restricted funds to specific organisational circumstances (e.g. cashflow crisis; managing premises)	☐	☐
We accepted a higher level of risk (e.g. lower reserves levels, shorter track record, supporting unconstituted groups)	☐	☐
We increased our due diligence requirements to reduce risk (e.g. higher reserves levels, longer track record)	☐	☐

Please use this space to identify **any other changes/adaptations** that were made to the funding criteria and due diligence requirements related to your emergency fund(s) and/or your existing funds/programmes

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Grant-making decision process

Earlier in the survey you indicated that your organisation changed/adapted its 'grant-making decision processes' either for your emergency fund(s) and/or your existing funds. The question below asks you about this in a bit more detail.

16. How was the **grant-making decision process** changed/adapted during Covid 19 compared to your organisation's usual practice? (Please tick all that apply)

NB. If your organisation did not launch an emergency fund(s), please leave this column blank.

	Emergency fund(s)	Existing funds/programmes
We significantly decreased the amount of checking and follow-up by grants staff before a recommendation was made	☐	☐
We simplified our assessment reports/recommendations	☐	☐
We were more likely to '*err on the side of funding rather than not funding*'	☐	☐
Trustees delegated more/all grant decisions to staff	☐	☐
Grant decisions were delegated to less senior staff/a wider pool of staff	☐	☐
Grant making panels met more frequently	☐	☐
More grant decisions were made outside formal meetings (e.g. by circulation of emails)	☐	☐

Please use this space to identify any **other changes/adaptations that were made** in relation to the grant making decision processes of your organisation's emergency fund(s) and/or your existing funds/programmes during Covid 19

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Grant-making decision process (continued)

17. Please state how long (on average) it takes between **'receipt of application' to 'funding decision'** (in weeks) for both your usual programmes/funds, your emergency fund(s) and/or your amended pre-existing programmes/funds? (This can be an approximation)

Average length of time (in weeks) from 'receipt of application' to 'funding decision' **for your usual funds**

Average length of time (in weeks) from 'receipt of application' to 'funding decision' **for your emergency fund(s)**

Average length of time (in weeks) from 'receipt of application' to 'funding decision' **for amended pre-existing programmes/funds**

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Monitoring and reporting requirements

Earlier in the survey you indicated that your organisation relaxed some of its 'monitoring and reporting requirements', either for your emergency fund(s) and/or your existing funds. The question below asks you about this in a bit more detail.

18. In what ways did your organisation '**relax its monitoring and reporting requirements**' during Covid 19 compared to its usual practice? (Please tick all that apply)

NB. If your organisation did not launch an emergency fund(s), please leave this column blank.

	Emergency fund(s)	Existing funds/programmes
We reduced the frequency of monitoring requirements	☐	☐
We only require a final report; no interim reports	☐	☐
We do not require any formal reports	☐	☐
We will rely solely on an 'end of grant' conversation	☐	☐
We have not attached predefined outcomes/performance targets to our emergency grants	☐	☐

Please use this space to identify **any other changes/adaptations that were made** to the monitoring/reporting requirements of grants during Covid 19**.**

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Non-financial support and advice

* 19. **Non-financial support and advice**

In response to Covid 19, did your organisation...?

	Yes	No	Not sure
Introduce non-financial support and/or capacity building that was specifically relevant to Covid 19	○	○	○
Make changes to its existing non-financial support and/or capacity building offer	○	○	○

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Non-financial support and advice (continued)

20. What **non-financial support and advice** has your organisation provided during Covid 19? (Please tick all that apply)

- [ ] Delivered online surgeries/webinars about applying to us for funding during Covid 19
- [ ] Circulated information on other potential sources of funding
- [ ] Signposted organisations to sources of advice/guidance (e.g. government schemes, management challenges, safe opening of services etc)
- [ ] Produced advice and guidance ourselves on some of these topics
- [ ] Provided training/workshops
- [ ] Enabled peer support opportunities for organisational staff/leaders
- [ ] Provided 1:1 consultancy support
- [ ] Collated and shared feedback/research into the needs and challenges in one or more of our priority areas

Please use this space to identify **any other adaptations/changes you may have made** to your non-financial support and advice during Covid 19.

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Other responses to Covid 19

21. In response to Covid 19, are there **any other significant changes/adaptations** that your organisation has made in relation to its programmes, grant management or non-financial support that you **do not feel have been captured so far**? If so, please note them here.

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Future practice

* 22. Having reflected on your organisation's response to Covid 19, **to what extent** would you say the organisation's grant-making and grant management practices have **differed from your everyday, usual practice(s)**?

Please explain your answer

23. Thinking about **what has enabled your organisation to change/adapt its practice(s)**, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the following factors have played a role?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Our board has been supportive of change/adaptation	○	○	○	○	○
We have trusting, open relationships with grantees, which has aided communication	○	○	○	○	○
The moral imperative to act has been very clear throughout Covid 19	○	○	○	○	○
We have put a greater degree of trust in the organisations we fund	○	○	○	○	○
We have built on examples of good practice from previous emergency/crisis responses (either internally or externally)	○	○	○	○	○
We had existing policies, systems and/or processes in place to guide our emergency response	○	○	○	○	○
We signed up to London Funder's joint "Covid 19 statement" which increased our accountability to change/adapt	○	○	○	○	○
We have been more relaxed about demonstrating 'results' during Covid 19	○	○	○	○	○

Please use the space below to identify **any other factors** that you feel have enabled your organisation to respond/adapt in the way it has to Covid 19

24. What, if anything, would you say has **made it difficult/hard** for your organisation to adapt/change its grant-making and grant management practice(s) in response to Covid 19?

* 25. Of the different practice(s) your organisation has adopted during Covid 19, **what would you ideally like to embed** in your organisation's everyday future practice and why?

* 26. **What do you think it would take for this to happen?**

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About your organisation

Below are a few final questions about the size and focus of your organisation. This will be helpful to us as we begin to analyse the results.

27. In 2018/2019, what was the **total value of grants awarded** by your organisation?

28. How many **full time equivalent paid staff** work for your organisation?

29. Does your organisation **make grants to organisations, individuals or both?**

30. Is your organisation's funding/support **restricted to a particular geographical or administrative area?** If so, please select from the list below

Other (please specify)

31. Finally, if you would like to be informed about the **progress and findings of this research and/or opportunities to be involved,** please provide your name and email below.

Name:

Email address: