

# Replicating Successful Voluntary Sector Projects

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Diana Leat

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## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	1–2
<b>Replication in the Sector in the US and UK</b>	3–11
<b>Why Replicate?</b>	13–14
<b>The Case for Replication</b>	15–18
<b>Clarifying Replication</b>	19
<b>Steps in Replication:</b>	
Building a Framework for Practice	21–23
<b>1</b> Demonstration	25–26
<b>2</b> Evaluation and Dissection	27–29
<b>3</b> Communication	31–36
<b>4</b> Adoption	37–44
<b>5</b> Resourcing	45–47
<b>6</b> Implementing	49–51
<b>7</b> Sustainability	53–54
<b>An Overview of Replication</b>	55–60
<b>Conditions for Replication</b>	61–62
<b>Recommendations:</b>	
Developing an Infrastructure to Support Replication	63–70
<b>Conclusion</b>	71–72
<b>References</b>	73–76
<b>Appendix</b>	77

## Introduction

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### **The Study and Brief**

The study was commissioned by the Association of Charitable Foundations and funded by the Baring Foundation, Community Fund, Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The research was conducted in early 2003. The study arose from foundations', and other funders', growing interest and involvement in replication. This report is written for foundations, other funders, policy makers and voluntary and community organisations interested in replicating successful projects. The report begins with a brief history of replication and the lessons from that; it then considers the case for replication, and some of the costs, followed by clarification of the term. The main body of the report outlines a series of steps in replication, spreading ideas that work and implementing them in other places or on a larger scale, based on data from the case studies and literature. In conclusion, the report makes a series of recommendations to encourage wider learning from, and implementation of, voluntary sector projects that work.

The aims of the study as set out in the brief were to: identify the positive aspects of replication; investigate the barriers to replication and ways in which these have been overcome; suggest new models of replication; identify common factors and pathways promoting successful replication; and to develop guidance for funders (and voluntary and community organisations) on effective strategies and models for replication, including ways in which the UK funding framework might be structured to support replication.

The preliminary definition/description of replication in the brief included: enabling the same project to be delivered to larger numbers of people; enabling similar projects to be delivered in other areas; enabling organisations to adopt more effective practice. It was suggested that replication could

involve: the same organisation delivering the project on a larger scale; other organisations delivering similar projects; defining new practice which could be adopted in service standards, quality standards, organisational practice; strategic alliances and other forms of working. As discussed later, this preliminary definition required some distinctions and refinement. What replication means became an interesting and important part of the research.

A note on terminology: this report uses the term 'funder' to apply to all funders of voluntary organisations; the term 'foundation' is used to apply specifically to independent grant-making foundations and trusts. This distinction is important insofar as foundations and other funders differ in perceptions of roles, values and cultures. Foundations, lacking a democratic mandate, have not typically seen themselves as development agencies, and some are further constrained by a desire, or perceived need, to spread their money around. This, and other aspects of foundations' dominant traditional cultures, has implications for their involvement in replication.

Finally, a note of caution: this report makes generalisations about foundations' and other funders' traditional cultures and approaches to replication. There are important exceptions to these generalisations – some foundations and others adopt different approaches, as the commissioning of this report indicates.

## Replication in the Sector in the US and UK

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### Interest in the US

Interest in replication in the US has grown over the last ten years. One of the first initiatives was a conference in 1995 co-sponsored by the California Community Foundation, bringing together foundations and non-profits to look at issues of AIDS and drug abuse in Hispanic communities. The emphasis was very much on working in partnerships with government agencies to promote and fund dissemination and utilisation efforts. Further discussion of replication took place at the Council on Foundations 1995 annual conference.

In the US dissemination has been seen as a key plank in replication. For example, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation identifies dissemination as one of the five basic tools of the trade: dissemination, demonstration, evaluation, advocacy, and capacity building. Foundation websites have clearly provided new opportunities for dissemination, but some US foundations have adopted a more active approach, using brokering and networking to bring together non-profits with good projects and programmes with other foundations, inviting other foundations to hear about projects, making introductions, providing meeting space, and so on. The Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation builds dissemination into grant application, offering technical assistance on dissemination to applicants; considerable significance is attached to dissemination in the review process and grantee progress reports and final reports are required to discuss dissemination and utilisation.

Some foundations take dissemination a stage further. For example, the Dana Foundation emphasises the importance in some fields of persuading certain critical constituency groups (which will vary depending on the nature of the project)

actively to support and promote take up of projects. The Foundation's aim is to "create a rising tide" of public interest and support for brain research; this involves going much further than promoting findings from the projects supported by the Foundation.

Dissemination shades into marketing and this is now a central issue for some US foundations. The Kellogg Foundation, for example, states that: *'We want marketing and dissemination to be both the alpha and omega, rather than just a simple afterthought in our grant-making'* (Backer, 1995, 28; see also, Lake et al, 2000). To achieve this, the Kellogg Foundation has re-designed its approach to grant-making and its internal structure with a new department that merges communications, strategic planning, evaluation and dissemination and social marketing activities.

But replication is not solely about dissemination and marketing and some foundations actively attempt directly to replicate projects. The Soros Foundations, for example, attempted to introduce Head Start into 15 European countries with eight sites in each. This involved development of a 'Head Start standard' with common elements to be included in each replication but anticipating allowances for considerable variation.

A little differently, the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation starts with identification of the need for replication of a good programme, or wider dissemination of the results of a project, and then links with other organisations to build an 'engine for change' to accomplish each stage of the activity.

### Lessons from the US

Despite the volume of US interest in replication, the literature demonstrates that partnerships for dissemination and utilisation have not been without problems. For example, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Health Care for the Homeless programme encouraged 126 replications of existing projects supported by the Federal government, the Robert

Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts. Replication on this scale led to a number of compromises and loss of quality, possibly partly because replication was not planned from the beginning. The problem was not lack of money but lack of early planning and providing a platform for discussion of issues of politics and funding (Backer, 1995, 25).

Again, a Council on Foundations round table on dissemination and utilisation warned: *'Foundations need to be cautious when entering partnerships for large-scale dissemination. Programs that succeeded at the individual 'boutique' level sometimes perform poorly in the process of scaling up. Effective 'going to scale' means seeking the optional growth – a method called 'rightsizing' in the corporate community. This will vary from program to program. A capable consultant with no vested interest in the innovative program can provide counsel on this issue'* (Backer 1995, 28).

The experience of ten years of capacity building and replication from 1990-2000, funded by a large number of foundations, was written up under the title: *Lessons from the Street: Capacity Building and Replication*.

### The key lessons were:

- Technical assistance in capacity building, replication and funding result in improvements in skills, knowledge and action.
- Technical assistance included: needs assessment, work-plan development, national group workshops, one to one training, as well as grants and other resources. More funding to increase the number of technical assistance staff, to provide more and larger grants and to allow for more systematic evaluation would have 'refined the formula'.
- Technical assistance should be done by peers who have both formal training and practical experience; it should be practical, applicable to solving problems, complemented by step-by-step follow up and written instructions and involve trainees who then become trainers back home.

- Technical assistance should include board development, fundraising, financial management, organisational management, including evaluation, personnel management, staff development and communications; evaluation and communications are regarded as particularly significant. These elements are intimately intertwined – each impacts on every other area.
- Although technical assistance resulted in increased skills and knowledge these did not necessarily translate into measurable outcomes.
- Future progress will be a function of adequate resources, regional clustering and distance learning. Technical assistance requires time (one director and two full time trainers over 24-36 months) as well as discretionary grants to underline the seriousness of the commitment and to provide an incentive to invest time in training. Regional clustering of sites provides economies of scale. National and regional intermediaries have a crucial role to play.
- Behaviour is more resistant to change than structures and systems.
- Funders should base replication decisions not on friendships and fashions but on evaluation *‘in the rough and tumble of real world street life, funding, pressure, staff burnout, inadequate salaries and political machinations’* (p.10).
- Replication depends on adequate funding over sufficient time (a minimum of 36 months); evaluating the replication, not just the model being replicated; creating sound institutional and staff capacity at replication sites; generating professional training and staff capacity; training replication staff; adhering to strategic work plans and budgets and ensuring quality control; concentrating on underlying principles rather than exact copies.
- Funders should beware conventional wisdoms – volunteerism, self-sufficiency and empowerment are no substitute for dollars. Funders should give more priority to unaffiliated grass roots organisations and less to resourcing national organisations to create more affiliates.

- Funders need to better understand the power of communications in capacity building and replication.
- Public funding is needed to replicate to scale.

These lessons are remarkably consistent with those from the UK experience outlined below.

Replication and ‘scaling up’ are now a topic of interest to various non-profit research centres in the US including the Harvard Business School Initiative on Social Enterprise, Yale University School of Management Non-profit Ventures Research Centre and Stanford University’s Centre for Social Innovation. Some of this research is still in progress but a recent working paper from the Harvard Social Enterprise initiative suggests that the benefits of scaling up are variable and lie primarily in effects on brand and organisational learning rather than economies of scale (We-Skillern et al, 2002). Interestingly, GrantCraft at the Ford Foundation has recently added a piece on scaling up to its collection (GrantCraft, 2003).

### History in the UK

Although UK interest in replication is more recent than in the US, the practice of replication in the UK voluntary sector is not new. In large part, the UK voluntary sector has been built on the replication of methods, structures and approaches to problems and issues. Examples include the Red Cross, Old Peoples’ Welfare Committees (now Age Concern), Citizens Advice Bureaux, Crossroads, and a host of others past and present (see, for example, Brasnett, 1969; Houghton and Timperley, 1992). At the same time, however, replication has always been seen as involving some degree of tension between blue-prints and local diversity, the strong voluntary sector ethos of local autonomy and sensitivity of national organisations to the accusation of ‘parachuting’. The history of the Red Cross is just one vivid example of the problems generated by attempts to create coordination and consistency within voluntary organisations (Moorehead, 1998).

In the early 1990s there was some interest in applying the practice of franchising to the voluntary sector. A national conference on franchising in the sector was held in 1990 and in 1991 a national development and information service for charities, the Charity Franchising (Project Replication) Centre was established in Birmingham. The Centre provided *'information, research, advice and expertise services to charities and not-for-profit organisations interested in exploring how Charity Franchising can be used to expand their services to other locations'* (Houghton and Timperley, 1992, 89). Development of concern with 'branding' and quality standards, and the growth of contracting creating added impetus for tighter control, use of common title and perceived ability to deliver across a whole area may have contributed to interest in franchising as one model of replication. However, interest in franchising appeared to fall away (possibly because of the legal problems it involves and the tensions in control at a distance) even though the practice may have continued in one form or other. Crisis, for example, has franchised its model rent deposit scheme 'Smartmove'.

National organisations undoubtedly continue to replicate successful projects via organisational expansion and through branches, and some may encourage other organisations to develop similar projects/methods. Similarly, as this study demonstrates, networks and associations play an important role in disseminating ideas and methods and encouraging replication.

In the last few years new forms of consultancies or 'partnerships' have been developed by Save the Children Fund, Groundwork and Revolving Doors. These consultancies/partnerships aim to encourage replication of particular projects, methods or models by others in the voluntary and statutory sectors. The originating organisation provides support to others interested in 'copying' the model while adapting it to local needs and context.

In addition, more replication may be one by-product of the growth of learning networks, such as that funded by

Bridge House Trust, even though this may not be a specific, explicit aim.

The reality is that we do not know how common the practice of replication is. There may well be more replication going on than is immediately apparent. The 'invisibility' of replication may be in part a function of funding practices. As one foundation representative said: *'We fund projects organisations put to us. If an organisation comes back for another tranche of funding then we look at it in a silo – solely related to that project and that charity. We see it as "development of a project" – it's actually replication but we don't necessarily see it that way'*. Similarly, it could be argued that funding of similar projects, such as summer play schemes or youth counselling, all over the UK are a form of replication.

Before leaving the subject of the history of interest in replication it is worth looking more closely at some examples of replications and the lessons they may hold.

### Lessons from the UK

Citizens' Advice Bureaux (CABx), developed by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), then the National Council of Social Services (NCSS), are a particularly interesting example of replication. Initially conceived during World War I, they gained further impetus as a result of a broadcast series 'Question Time for the Unemployed' in the 1930s. But despite recognition of the need for such a service, and dissemination, they did not fully develop until they had a committed champion and source of advice and promotion (NCSS), bringing together interested national and local organisations, a favourable policy climate at the outbreak of World War II, and from 1940 onwards government funding. Significantly, once the policy environment and funding became less favourable at the end of the War the number of CABx dropped from 1,060 to 639 in one year (Brasnett, 1969). Later, the policy environment again became more favourable and CABx continued to develop with the support

of an active national association and the support of foundations and other funders.

Crossroads Care started in the mid-1970s but did not take off until the late 1980s facilitated by the high profile of the issue of carers and the crisis in residential care, and thus the willingness of local authorities and health authorities to encourage and fund such schemes. Crossroads Care developed as a national organisation with a Head Office providing policy decisions, advice and promotional lobbying and Regional Offices conducting research, negotiating with funding bodies and presenting applications, as well as encouraging and supporting local groups. Similarly, the development of Home Start schemes was facilitated by availability of local authority funding as part of child care strategy, and the existence of Home Start Consultancy which promoted schemes locally and helped and supported new start-ups. Adult Family Placement schemes were pioneered by Liverpool Personal Service Society (LPSS), and by Leeds Social Services Department and then taken up by various other local and health authorities and voluntary groups. Initially promoted by means of research reports and presentations at conferences, as well as word of mouth and visits to and informal advice from LPSS and others, AFPs later developed a national association. Again the schemes spread at a time when money via the benefit system, as well as local and health authority funding, was relatively easily available due in part to the shortage and cost of residential care.

The growth of community foundations is another somewhat different example. Community foundations were first developed in the UK in the 1980s. By 1992 there were 15 community foundations. Between 1992 and 1996 community foundations grew very little, but by 1999-2000 they had almost doubled in number. By 2001-02 there were 31 community foundations, with another 33 aspiring community foundations, with a total endowment of £90 million making grants to the value of £28.1 million (Community Foundation Network, 2002). This growth was fuelled by a number of

factors including strong championing by the Charities Aid Foundation, the work of the Community Foundation Network (an association of community foundations with a key role in promoting and assisting community foundation formation), the availability of start-up funding from various sources, and their fit with wider policy concerns to do with local regeneration, and the supposed decline of civil society and social capital. The Baring Foundation, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and US foundations have also played important roles in supporting development of community foundations.

**These brief vignettes illustrate various pathways to replication:**

- Spontaneous replication e.g. informal copying of a good idea
- Replication with informal advice
- Planned, purposeful/promoted replication.

One key difference may be whether the replication is undertaken by the original agency or by another. However, the literature, case studies and other interviews conducted for the study suggest that these distinctions may be misleading in that replication involves the same key stages and tasks whether those take place within or outside the originating organisation.

**The vignettes also suggest that replication requires:**

- Time – building from a slow start to take off perhaps a decade later
- Funding, very often from statutory funders
- Resonance with key policy issues and concerns
- Champions to promote the project locally
- A source of technical advice and support.

These points are developed and illustrated later with data from the interviews and case studies conducted for this study.

## Why Replicate?

Why is replication a key issue for foundations and other funders in 2003? The literature and interviews suggest various answers to this question.

### The Policy Context – Delivering Successful Outcomes

One suggested reason for interest in replication was that in the current policy context the voluntary sector has a new place in both provision and the shaping of policy and practice, and needs to be able ‘to punch its weight’ with new ideas and approaches that demonstrably work. It was suggested that the current government is less inclined to support voluntary sector projects *per se* – however worthy – and is much more interested in ideas that produce proven outcomes. The Treasury’s *futurebuilders* initiative was seen as one example of government encouraging the voluntary sector to realise its full potential in helping government address intractable social problems.

This view was attributed to government and also expressed by one major grant-maker: *‘We want to fund projects that deliver successful outcomes – those proven to deliver – rather than treating all projects/applications as equal’.*

It was also suggested that interest in replication could be seen as a by-product of current emphasis on evaluation in that one measure of impact is transferability to other settings.

### Business Concepts and Models

Others linked the current interest in replication to the popularity of business concepts and models applied to the voluntary sector. *‘I see the current thing about replication as related to the fashion for a social investment approach – if you could guarantee a blue-print model then you could roll*

*it out'; 'I think it's based on a desire for efficiency – a sort of opening a new supermarket approach, let's standardise and reproduce'.*

Shortage of resources in both the public and the non-profit sector was seen as underlying or underlining both of the trends above. As one respondent put it: *'Looking for the next quick fix'.*

### Finishing the Job You Started

Somewhat surprisingly, no-one suggested that the current interest in replication stems from a change in the environment and roles of foundations. In the past foundations saw their roles as innovating and, in effect, left replication to 'the market' or, more accurately perhaps to local authorities. Rolling out innovations was someone else's business. But, in important ways, investing in innovations only made sense if you could assume that these would be disseminated and adopted by others. In the new policy context it cannot be assumed that local authorities will adopt/replicate even the most effective projects. Foundations, it might be suggested, are under a new pressure to finish the job they started, and some are actively taking up this challenge.

As the views above hint, interviewees had varying views on the value and viability of replication. Replication is obviously not always a good thing. Replication bears a close relationship to fad and fashion, and it is possible to replicate the bad as well as the good. So when and why is replication a good thing?

## The Case for Replication

*'A foundation-supported program whose lessons are never detailed and communicated, whose successes are never duplicated, whose failures are never published as a cautionary tale – is this program's impact as equivocal as the unwitnessed crashing of the philosopher's tree?' (Weisfeld and Karel quoted in Backer, 1995, 2).*

Various points supporting the case for replication were made in the literature and interviews.

### The case for replication suggests that replication is a means of:

- Adding value by spreading good practice, improving the lives of beneficiaries
- Achieving greater pay off from philanthropic investment/resources
- Reducing risks and costs
- Convincing regulators that foundations take seriously their commitment to public good.

### For provider organisations, replication may be a means of:

- Increasing organisational visibility
- Enhancing fund-raising capacity
- Achieving improved financial stability
- Strengthening programme activity (adapted from Skloot, 1987 p387)
- Reducing start up costs (also an indirect benefit for funders)
- Delivering service models with the teething problems ironed out (also an indirect benefit for funders and for users)
- Delivering benefits more quickly and efficiently (also an indirect benefit for funders and for users)
- Reducing risk.

## The Costs of Replication

But replication is not cost-free. For originating organisations (i.e. those originally developing the project/service), replication within the organisation (business expansion) was said to raise issues of:

- Costs of dissemination, teaching, and sharing within the organisation
- Costs of investment in structures and standards
- Organisational capacity and priorities
- Control and managing at a distance.

For originating organisations, encouraging replication by other organisations raises issues of:

- Costs of dissemination, teaching, and sharing for which there is often no funding incentive or cover
- Costs of investment in structures and standards
- Increased competition and/or loss of income, or no gain in income
- Loss or dilution of brand.

For non-originating organisations (i.e. those taking up a project/service originally developed by another organisation), replication raises issues of:

- Costs of investment in learning
- Costs of selling the replication to funders, staff and users
- Set up costs
- Potential costs of loss of autonomy if standards, recognition etc are required.

For both originating and non-originating organisations, replication raises issues of:

- Priorities
- Competition with/duplication of services serving similar groups
- Organisational capacity
- Financial and other resources.

## General Cautions

Some interviewees raised more general objections to replication: *'It's not possible to replicate projects in the sense of taking them and planting them somewhere else'; 'Some things don't travel well – especially but not only across the Atlantic'; 'Maybe you can replicate parts but you shouldn't replicate wholes'; 'Nothing is ever so totally wonderful in its entirety that you want to replicate the whole thing.'*

When unpacked these general objections contained a number of more specific points. It was suggested that emphasis on replication encourages:

- The notion that needs are evenly distributed and/or unlimited: *'Just because a project did something interesting that doesn't mean there's a need for more'*
- Duplication/overlap and competition with other organisations/schemes, if there is no knowledge of the area and existing provision: *'Replication may mean too many on one patch dividing the cake'*
- Fads and fashions
- Inappropriate standardisation: a *'one size fits all'* approach and/or *'easily replicable ideas for easy groups'*
- 'De-contextualisation': *'Circumstances and environments are different and change and new values and expectations of users and funders, new programme funding priorities and so on, make replication both inappropriate and difficult'*
- Premature replication: *'The results of a project take so long to become apparent that replication is almost always a leap of faith and/or the environment has moved on'; 'What's the point of replicating the same project over and over again if the context is changing?'*
- Seeds of stagnancy: *'One issue is when you start replicating – on what knowledge base; another issue is when you stop replicating. The latter may be just as important. How do you deal with ideas and approaches whose time has past?'*

Some interviewees were undecided about the value of replication: *'If there are good outcomes from what we've funded what do we do? Do we really want 302 projects that are all the same?'*

## Clarifying Replication

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Clearly, the positive and negative aspects of replication depend on the meaning of 'replication', and on the particular models of replication adopted. The interviews suggested that replication means different things to different people. Three key themes emerged: replication as copying/duplicating; replication as expansion; the relationship of replication and innovation.

It was also clear, as several respondents noted, that when the term replication is used it generally implicitly refers to replication of things that are believed to work. As one respondent put it: *'When we don't really approve or it's more of something seen as out of date we call it copying or duplicating; replication these days usually means duplicating something new that works'*.

### Diffusion and Utilisation of Things That Work

In this report the term 'replication' is used to refer to: ***diffusion and utilisation of innovations that work***, or spreading new ideas that work and implementing them in other places or on a larger scale. As discussed later, 'replication', as used here, does not imply slavish copying or cloning. Seeing replication as diffusion and utilisation of innovations that work allows for replication of ideas and approaches that work rather than whole projects.

## Steps in Replication: Building a Framework from Practice

### The Data

The discussion below is based on four main cases of successful replications, supplemented by data from other organisations and from published articles and reports. The cases demonstrated some key, and in many ways remarkably consistent, patterns in replication. In order to draw out these patterns and to provide principles and lessons that go beyond individual stories, the discussion develops a framework for understanding stages and methods of replication, illustrating these with data from the cases.

The four main cases, selected by the Advisory Group (see Appendix), were development of buddying and mentoring schemes, credit unions, supplementary and mother-tongue schools, and time banks. In each case data was obtained from the key national support organisation or association; these organisations were in a position to have a geographical and historical overview and to be aware of patterns and trends.

- 1 The National Mentoring Network (NMN), supporting buddying and mentoring schemes in a variety of settings, was founded in 1994. In 2003 it has 1500 members, mostly organisations. In the last three years mentoring schemes and NMN have expanded significantly due, in large part, to a supportive policy environment encouraging both volunteering and mentoring in schools. The Active Communities Directorate and Department for Education and Skills (DfES) are now NMN's main funders.
- 2 The Association of British Credit Unions Ltd (ABCUL), is the largest trade body for credit unions in Britain with 460 credit union members. ABCUL, formerly the Credit Union League of Great Britain, was formed in 1975, and in 1979 two regional workers were employed. Take-off was slow in

England and Wales, but the Local Government Association and, later, the Labour government, have been important champions in recent years, encouraging further growth. Funding for credit unions has been patchy; in some areas local authorities have put significant sums into development. ABCUL itself is funded from a variety of sources including earned income, membership fees and statutory bodies.

- 3** Supplementary and mother-tongue schools have grown dramatically in recent years. In 1996 it was estimated that there might be a few hundred schemes in London; by 2002 that estimate was over 1000. Arising out of work by the City Parochial Foundation and the Trust for London, the Supplementary and Mother-Tongue Schools Resource Unit was formally created in 1997. By 2001 the Unit had 70 'core' users, in addition to providing telephone or written advice to several hundred other schemes. The Unit's work has grown in a context of increasing awareness of Britain as a multicultural society and a strong policy emphasis on education. It now receives funding from DfES as well as various non-statutory grant-makers.
- 4** The idea of time banks originated in the US. In 1998 the first time bank in the UK was set up by Fair Shares Gloucester (with a grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation); around the same time, time banks were taken up by the New Economics Foundation with a grant from the Kings Fund. In 2000 Time Banks UK was created to support growth of time banking. By the end of 2002 there were 50 time banks. Development of time banks has benefited from policy concerns around decline of social capital, neighbourhood renewal and volunteering. Time Banks UK is funded by the Active Communities Directorate and the Community Fund.

Further details of how buddying and mentoring schemes, credit unions, supplementary and mother-tongue schools, and time banks were developed are discussed later. It is worth noting here that none of the case study organisations explicitly

described their roles as 'replicating'. They saw themselves as engaged in dissemination, supporting and developing/training for adoption and implementation. They emphasised the differences, as much as the similarities, between the projects they worked with. They did not see the projects as 'copies' or 'clones' of each other but rather as adaptations of a core concept.

### Patterns and Stages

In theory replication is relatively simple. Skloot, for example, outlines a series of logical stages in business ventures in the voluntary sector that may apply equally to replication (Skloot, 1987). But business venture models tend to oversimplify the process of replication in the voluntary sector, often underplaying the importance of context. In reality, replication is a complex process of several parts. Although in practice the elements of the replication process overlap and interact, for the purposes of analysis it is worth distinguishing seven stages:

- 1** Demonstration of the service/project/model that may or may not create a basis for replication
- 2** Evaluation and dissection
- 3** Communication
- 4** Adoption
- 5** Resourcing
- 6** Implementing
- 7** Sustaining.

Within each stage or element there are tasks to be undertaken, by agents who take or accept responsibility for the process, and have, or have access to and resources to fund, necessary skills, tools, organisational capacity and competence. Different skills and tools are necessary at different stages. Diffusion and utilisation of innovations that work may be halted at any stage.

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## 1 Demonstration

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The demonstration phase creates the service/project/model that may (or may not) create a basis for replication. The tasks involved vary in relation to the nature and scale of the project but are likely to include design, securing human and financial resources, executing and managing. The skills involved in the demonstration stage will vary in relation to the nature and scale of the project but will include personal, professional and managerial skills. Again the tools required in this stage will vary with the nature and scale of the project.

### **Facilitating Factors**

Factors facilitating demonstration include: the need for the project, elements in the project environment including availability of funding and human resources, competition, organisational capacity and competence and the soundness of the design of the project.

### **Obstacles**

Obstacles to demonstration are likely to be the opposite of facilitating factors: lack of need/demand, competition from other organisations or projects seen to be similar, poor design and planning, lack of funding, lack of appropriate human resources and skills, insufficient organisational capacity, and poor management.

Interview respondents gave a number of examples of projects that had failed at the demonstration stage due to changing government policies or procedures, lack of need/demand, the wrong model, failure to adapt, and other factors. Changing policy environments was one key factor. One foundation gave an example of a youth homeless project:

*'There was so much new legislation that six months later the project wasn't very relevant'. Another said: 'With two reforming governments in recent years, replication becomes a bit of a faint hope'.*

Projects may also be halted at the demonstration stage due to insufficient funding, inadequate skills and tools, lack of organisational competence and capacity, poor design, and poor marketing.

## 2 Evaluation and Dissection

Replication requires convincing evidence that the project is effective and, crucially, works better than the available alternatives with no negative side effects. Case study respondents stressed the importance of a solid knowledge base, based on evaluation and dissection. One respondent said: *'It's impossible to over stress the importance of evidence showing outcomes'*; another emphasised: *'A research base gives credibility and legitimacy, but also confidence, drive and a route map for pushing things forward'*. However, it was also clear that evaluation demands and standards may be different depending on the environment. For example, one scheme had already been 'adopted' by government and, in this case, demands for solid evidence of outcomes were less exacting.

This stage also requires dissection of the project and its context: does it work, what are its outputs and outcomes, what makes it work and what makes it what it is, what are its core/essential elements, what does it cost, and crucially, how does it relate to its wider environment. Case study organisations attached considerable significance to understanding the conditions under which projects work, not least because providing 'how to' information and support was part of their core business.

### Facilitating Factors

Evaluation and dissection clearly require different tasks, skills and tools from those involved in running a demonstration project. In addition to skills and tools, evaluation and dissection require planning, time and funding. Ideally, evaluation and dissection need to be built into the demonstration project from the start to ensure that the necessary data is recorded. Time is required for the evaluation

and dissection process, and, as important, for the project itself to show results. One year funding is rarely sufficient, and even three year funding, as several respondents pointed out, may be inadequate. Recognising that three or six years is often not enough to demonstrate the value of a project, the Community Fund is now prepared to consider up to nine years funding for its strategic projects, but acknowledges that this involves a different relationship with funded organisations and a different grant giving culture with a bias to outcomes rather than fair shares.

Diffusion of the project may be halted at the dissection/evaluation stage if evaluation reveals that it does not produce the outputs or outcomes claimed or expected. As several interviewees commented: *'It's rarely the case that you can honestly say this must be replicated – most projects are pretty disappointing – you start with such high hopes but those drop...'*. In the current 'evidence based' policy and funding environment, without evidence that the project 'works' gaining support for diffusion is likely to be more difficult.

## Obstacles

Funding is required for evaluation and dissection. But traditionally funders have been reluctant to take on responsibility for funding evaluation; and the culture of foundations, in particular, has traditionally stressed looking forward to the next round of grant applications rather than spending time and money looking back. As one foundation respondent commented: *'Most of us are happier getting on with doing rather than getting on with recording what we've done'*. But there are exceptions and many foundations, and other funders, increasingly devote resources to monitoring and evaluation.

More generally, however, lack of funding for evaluation and dissection, is related to the fundamental problem of the lack of value attached to mining and managing knowledge and unclear allocation of responsibility for ensuring that this happens.

Evaluation and dissection, the first stage in knowledge building, require some body to take responsibility for ensuring that they happen. But responsibility for evaluation and dissection often belongs to, or is owned by, no-one. Neither demonstrating organisations nor funders clearly own or accept responsibility for evaluation and dissection, and for knowledge building within and across projects. Demonstrating organisations are often too busy getting on with running the project and securing future funding.

Evaluation and dissection are difficult. But, more fundamentally, current evaluation approaches are not usually designed with replication in mind. Conventional evaluations tend to focus on outputs rather than outcomes and often fail to clearly specify who benefits and who does not. Conventional evaluations tend to ask: 'did it work' rather than 'what makes it work' and under what environmental and internal circumstances. Dissection and evaluation for replication would involve analysing internal essential and incidental factors as well as environmental factors. A project that works in y environment may not work in z. Environmental analysis involves taking into account prevailing political, financial, and legal factors as well as the way in which projects and facilities interact to produce outcomes for users. For example, a scheme designed to divert young people from crime may only work in combination with other services – even if the project itself has no direct interaction with those services.

In addition to difficulties in obtaining funding for evaluation and dissection, case study respondents and funders noted other obstacles to be overcome: *'Evaluation for replication sits uneasily with branding and the cult of success'; 'Replication requires real honesty and dispassionate evaluation. That isn't helped if there is some prima donna who can't be honest and self critical and who blinds everyone with charisma.'*

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## 3 Communication

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### Facilitating Factors

Successful projects that no one knows about are obviously unlikely to be replicated. The way in which the project works with whom and how, its key elements, structures, processes, outcomes and costs have to be communicated. Communication or dissemination involves spreading the word, publicising and telling a plausible/relevant story, and generalising that to overcome the ‘Not Invented Here’ syndrome.

Some innovations are so compelling, relevant or simple, or get so much media attention, that they appear to replicate almost spontaneously. Some projects or approaches will slowly diffuse by informal networking, presentations and so on. But, the notion that if you build a better mousetrap the world will beat a path to your door is unreliable. Even ‘spontaneous’ replication may require support to disseminate, build on, and embed the impact of what’s already occurred, and to help ensure long term success and wider replication.

Effective communication requires time and effort, specialist skills and tools and resources. Communication also requires an agent who has, or has access to, those skills and tools and resources, and crucially, who takes on responsibility for communication.

Case studies underlined the value of disseminating information packs, guides, models and other practical information outlining how to set up and run a similar project. In all cases, a support agency – such as the Supplementary and Mother-Tongue Schools Resource Unit – or a network organisation or association – such as the Association of British Credit Unions Ltd and the National Mentoring Network – had, in effect, taken on responsibility for dissemination, and in some cases, maintenance or development of standards. Similarly, the Community Foundation Network has a growing

number of resource materials outlining the stages and necessary factors in developing a local community foundation.

## Obstacles

There are various obstacles to effective communication. One fundamental problem is that responsibility for dissemination is unclear. Demonstrating organisations may not have the capacity, the skills, the interest or the resources to engage in communication. Small local organisations may not even see the wider value of what they have demonstrated, and are, in any case, unlikely to have the capacity, skills and resources to do so. They are more likely to be fully engaged in simply keeping their heads above water. Larger and national organisations may, or may not, have the skills, capacity and resources to disseminate the project but may have, at best, little incentive to do so and, at worst, a disincentive to do so if this detracts from other work, or if successful dissemination, and later utilisation, would raise issues of competition, branding and standards. Effects on income generation may also be an issue for some originating organisations; here it is important to distinguish between generating income from the project/service itself and from ‘selling’ the model to others. Some organisations are now generating income from selling models they have developed to others; but this raises the question of who will fund those who wish to purchase the model.

Funders do not always see dissemination as an activity worth spending time and money on. Case study organisations disseminating practical know-how struggled for funding. Funding was often short term, to be renewed or replaced every few years. Funding did not always cover the level of dissemination activity considered desirable or necessary.

Another reason for lack of perceived responsibility for communication raises deeper issues to do with foundations’ perceptions of their roles. As one foundation interviewee put it: *‘We’re here to fund projects, to give grants. We’re not here*

*to go around telling people what they ought to do, or how they ought to do things. I’m not sure that we’d feel comfortable taking on dissemination. It would be like favouring some things over others, and who are we to say what should be disseminated. That’s up to the organisation.’* Another said: *‘We don’t own the project, we just fund it. It’s up to them what they do with it’.*

Yet another, closely related, reason has to do with lack of clarity around foundation missions and outcomes. When foundations see their role in terms of proactive, wider social change they tend to re-think their attitudes to dissemination. But even when foundations see their roles in terms of more widespread change via diffusion and utilisation of innovations that work, it does not necessarily follow that they will take on responsibility for dissemination. One foundation interviewed acknowledged that: *‘We use national significance as a selection criterion (for grants) and measure that by potential for replication and we do look at their (applicant organisations) networks to check that out – but we don’t go that one step further and take responsibility for dissemination, or even check, or require, that the organisation actually does it.’* Another said: *‘Potential for replication is one of our key selection criteria but who did we ever expect to replicate? We’ve never asked or even thought about it’.*

## Audiences, Content and Methods of Dissemination

### Audiences

Even when one or more organisations take on responsibility for dissemination, voluntary organisations and funders may work with ill-thought out or token approaches to dissemination. One funder remarked: *‘Projects say they will disseminate but that usually means putting something in their newsletter or on the website, and that’s it.’*

Dissemination for replication is not a matter of simply using existing address lists for, say annual reports, but rather one of

identifying and targeting those people/organisations who are in a position to replicate the project, or to facilitate replication by others. The nature of the audiences will vary with the particular project to be replicated. In most cases, if replication is to happen information will need to be disseminated to other funders and policy makers in order to create a funding environment conducive to replication of the project. Case study organisations were well aware of the importance of taking every opportunity to ‘sell’ their project/service to funders and policy makers.

In some cases, effective communication for replication may mean targeting information at larger organisations, in other cases at smaller organisations. Two case study organisations were particularly aware of the danger of disseminating successfully to some groups and not others: *‘The danger is that you’re reaching people who already know the system. It’s much harder to reach the areas and groups that could use schemes like this, but just aren’t in the right networks to make use of the information and support we’re providing.’*

### Content

In addition to identifying the ‘right’ audiences, the language and content need to be appropriate to those different audiences. The content and style likely to grab the attention of a policy maker or funder will need to be adapted for use with potential replicating organisations/groups. User friendliness and accessibility are crucial. *‘Information needs to be abbreviated so that attention spans aren’t exceeded and edited to focus on issues of key interest such as does it work and how can I replicate it in my organisation?’* (Backer, 1995).

### Methods

Communication tools should be designed to achieve maximum impact with the chosen audiences. As one foundation put it: *‘We want the organisations we fund to adopt more of a marketing approach in dissemination.’*

*Now we want proof in pre-grant assessment that they understand that approach and are heading that way.’*

All of the case study organisations used written material to communicate outcomes and practical guides. But none saw this as sufficient for effective dissemination. Telephone advice and face to face contact were also considered important. The value of site visits and bringing people together in regional networks, seminars and conferences, was emphasised. As one respondent put it: *‘People learn so much better from each other. People who are doing it already have a sense of what others need to know, and it seems it’s so much easier to ask questions of people who have been where you are at the beginning.’*

One organisation had used a video to disseminate the schemes they promoted. This was seen as a very powerful method of encouraging interest in replication. Both site visits and videos raised a more general issue to do with the power of enabling people ‘to tell their stories in their own voices’. Effective communication, several organisations suggested, involves a combination of objective outcome analysis and subjective passion. Different elements will convince different audiences.

Although going to visit a project may be far more inspiring and re-assuring than any number of words on paper, site visits are expensive for potential adopters and can quickly become burdensome for demonstrating organisations. Some organisations are now limiting frequency of site visits to say once a month, and some are charging ‘entry’ fees. Interestingly, Arts Council England has, for some time, given ‘look and see grants’, allowing potential ‘replicators’ to go on site visits before making a full application for funding. Similarly, the Community Foundation Network (CFN) attaches considerable significance to the effects of their members’ willingness to ‘show’ their community foundation to others. In addition, CFN members have undoubtedly benefited hugely from funding (provided by US foundations) to visit successful community foundations in the US.

### Things Can Only Get Better

All of the case study organisations commented on the way in which dissemination becomes easier as replication proceeds. One respondent said: *‘The hard bit is at the beginning when you have to do everything. Later on, when there is a network of projects they sort of take on some of the burden – publicising themselves and answering queries for others, showing people how to do it.’* Another said: *‘Our members do some of the dissemination for us now. It’s a snowball effect. The more people out there doing it, the more people get to know about it and the more examples you’ve got to refer people to’.* But, as some funders recognise, members taking on these tasks require support and access to networks.

## 4 Adoption

Adoption does not automatically follow from dissemination. There is an important gap between knowing about something and taking it on. Adoption is in many respects a more complex, and less acknowledged, process than dissemination. It involves dealing with a range of obstacles as well as financial, organisational and human issues.

The term ‘adoption’ is used here to distinguish the stage between dissemination and implementation and resourcing. Adoption is the stage at which people or organisations become committed to using the information provided by dissemination – become committed in principle to seeking the resources to implement a project. As one foundation interviewee remarked: *‘Things don’t spring up just because the idea is there, or even because the money is there.’*

### Conditions for Adoption

Here, it is worth drawing on the literature on policy making. The dominant ‘common sense’ approach to policy making sees it as a rational process based on a series of steps from problem formulation and evaluation of alternatives through to policy implementation. The rational model sees the policy system as having clear boundaries; people identified as policy makers make policy. An alternative model sees policy making as an essentially political process in which interests and perceptions of actors enter at all stages. Policy is seen as a bargained outcome, in an environment characterised by diversity and competing objectives (Gordon, Lewis and Young, 1997). In the political model, problems are required first for which policies/replications can then be presented as solutions.

The take-off of buddying and mentoring schemes illustrates this process. Children were seen to be failing in schools, buddying and mentoring were seen as a solution, the

government took up such schemes and promoted them, providing funding and other support. Similarly, in some areas credit unions have developed largely because local authorities have promoted them as a solution to poverty. Time banks have gained support partly because there is perceived to be a problem of declining civil society and time banks are seen as a way of encouraging social networks. Similarly, credit unions were developed in Scotland and Northern Ireland in the 1950s, but did not begin to develop in England until the 1980s when it was assumed they would grow organically. But as one respondent commented: *'By then financial services were seen to be more widely available and it was a much harder and slower process'*.

Again, in the US a planned replication of Project Star, a drug prevention project, was dropped when it was realised that the policy environment had moved on and drug education was no longer a major priority. These examples highlight the importance of supportive policy environments, and the importance of dissemination that presents the project in terms of solutions to the perceived problems of the day.

Some potential replications will fail to be adopted, not because they are not useful, but because the problem to which they are a solution is not currently perceived, or because the way in which they relate to a problem is not clearly presented. However, the problem to which the project is seen as a solution may not be the problem the scheme sees itself as primarily addressing. For example, it appears that buddying and mentoring schemes were encouraged by the Active Community Unit (the precursor to the Active Communities Directorate) in part because the Unit saw this as a way of meeting its imposed target of recruiting one million volunteers over three years.

Competing alternatives are another reason why a potential replication may fail to be adopted. Furthermore, potential replications have to compete for adoption with existing ways of doing things, priorities and plans. As several interviewees noted: *'It's hard to get people to take on something new when*

*they are already doing other things. Don't underestimate the comfort and power of the already established'*. Another said: *'You can have a great project but getting any of the big organisations to adopt it if it's not in their five year plan is hugely difficult.'* Projects that cross organisation boundaries may find it particularly difficult to gain acceptance.

### The Importance of Champions

Another implication of seeing the process of replication as competitive is that proposals need champions if they are to be supported and subsequently adopted. One problem in replication is that champions may be lacking. Encouraging adoption of innovations that work is not typically seen as the business of foundations. As one foundation respondent said: *'We don't promote things we've funded to other foundations or grant recipients – that's not the sort of thing we do'*. It seems that dissemination is one thing; positively encouraging adoption by championing successful projects is quite another. Another foundation representative suggested: *'No one feels it's their responsibility, unless it's part of their mission, and it's not the mission of foundations to push particular projects and nor do most voluntary organisations see it as part of their mission – their mission is to get on with the job they're doing, not to help others to do so'*. For some foundations encouraging adoption of disseminated projects was an issue of mission. For others it was a matter of time: *'You publish a report but you don't know what happens next because there are 101 other things on your desk.'* But, for some, it was a reluctance to become involved in development. Several foundations emphasised that their role is not to be development agencies. But, as the case studies demonstrate, some foundations are prepared to take on this role indirectly, not least in their funding of intermediary and support agencies.

As the data from the case studies illustrates, voluntary sector replications may also need champions from outside the

sector. Local authority and central government champions may be needed both to secure funding and, as important, to push the project onto the agenda of options for support. Champions may also be necessary in organisations whose cooperation is needed for the project to work.

Champions may be needed at different levels in an organisation. For example, a project dealing with people with mental illness will need champions among various front-line health and welfare professionals, and among policy makers and those in a position to make resource decisions.

The case studies illustrated the importance of champions and some ways in which champions may be recruited and resistance overcome. One organisation emphasised the importance of working with others where things are already happening, 'cooperative piggy backing'. Similarly, time banks had deliberately sought to work with people they already knew were supportive of the idea – champions – in order to achieve some 'quick wins' thus generating more credibility, overcoming resistance to the new and generating more champions, as well as sharing the task of replication, dissemination and support. At the same time, they worked on certain key groups whose cooperation was important, illustrating the need for a variety of champions. As one respondent commented: *'Doctors won't use the project until you can tell them that another doctor thinks it's good'*.

Buddying and mentoring schemes increased dramatically in number when they were championed by government departments and local authorities. Credit unions were initially championed by Roman Catholic priests in some areas, but were slow to take off in England until some local authorities championed them as solutions to urban poverty, and the Labour government also supported them. Similarly, community foundations took off in Britain with strong championing from the Charities Aid Foundation and, later, its own body and board members.

## Capacity

As the case study organisations emphasised, replication requires not only champions but also organisations or groups with capacity to adopt, and then implement, the project. In theory, larger organisations may have the organisational capacity to adopt a new project or approach but, in practice, may have little desire to do so for reasons already noted. Several foundation respondents noted that: *'Difficult issues arise with very small projects. They're often volunteer run, involve charismatic individuals, and are often very successful. But who could or would replicate – it's about ownership and capacity'*. Another respondent suggested: *'Encouraging a small charity to replicate may even be damaging to the point of destruction'*, and added: *'Is infrastructure for replication different from infrastructure for capacity building?'*

## Ownership

The issue of ownership may also be at work in the adoption stage. Some foundation respondents cited issues of ownership to explain why they did not see it as their place actively to encourage adoption by others. However, some were also critical of voluntary organisations: *'The sector isn't very good at recognising that others may be better placed to roll something out. It's something to do with ownership and institutional rivalry'*. Potentially replicable projects may also suffer from the associations of their origins. If the demonstrating organisation is controversial, or seen to be in competition with others, this may hinder the process of adoption by others (and organisational expansion). As one funder remarked: *'People stop talking about the project and start talking about the organisation and then people, including funders, start taking up positions.'*

## Quick Wins

'Quick wins' were seen by several of the case study organisations as a way of encouraging adoption by making adopters feel: *'Part of something larger, and not something totally batty'*. Another organisation noted the tendency for a cluster effect in adoption: *'Credit unions tend to cluster in certain geographical areas. It may be partly to do with the fact that it becomes known about, and people visit projects and see for themselves. But I think it's also about people realising this isn't a weird thing to do.'* The cluster effect is well known in the business literature and may be worth exploring further in the voluntary sector, especially in relation to diffusion and utilisation of innovations that work.

Another factor in 'quick wins', suggested by the case study organisations and by Revolving Doors and the Community Foundation Network, is the need to start in areas where voluntary activity is already developed; this again underlines the importance of capacity not only in potential replicating organisations but also in the wider local sector infrastructure.

## Trust and Flexibility

Adoption is, in part, a matter of gaining the trust of potential funding and other champions, and users, and, in part, one of gaining the confidence of potential implementing organisations that they can make the scheme work in their area. To gain trust from the former group, and to avoid tarnishing the reputation of current and potential future schemes, standards are likely to be necessary. To gain the confidence of the latter group standards may be problematic. Complex standards may be off-putting to potential and current adopters, and standards may all too easily imply standardisation. The case study organisations appeared to deal with this dilemma by talking about 'professionalisation' and 'development', rather than imposing rigid standards. They stressed the scope for flexibility and differences between projects, at the same time emphasising their roles in providing

advice and models to ensure that schemes produced the outcomes on which their reputation was based. One respondent commented: *'We never tell people what to do – that's why we are trusted'*.

The appearance of simplicity and flexibility in the core concept of the scheme was seen by some as one of the keys to adoption by others: *'It's not a blue-print. It's an idea, a set of values, a basic approach. That's what gives it its power.'* It was interesting that the apparently most difficult replication process of the case study examples was also the most complex one, and one that was undergoing a 'debate' about the core philosophy, function and values of the schemes.

## The Importance of Networks

Some themes emerged in reasons for failure of replications. Groups working in isolation were said to be less successful than ones that have linked up with others; the most successful were said to be those where other things were in place and groups were able to link up and share knowledge, underlining the importance of networks and capacity. One respondent said: *'There's a need for recognition of the importance of 'connectors' and network makers. "How many relationships have you had today?" ought to be one of the things we all ask'*. National and regional bodies/associations were seen by all case study organisations as valuable both in creating opportunities for networking and providing a point of contact and information through which people could develop their own networks.

Other reasons for failure included lack of sufficiently powerful champions or a host organisation, as well as lack of funding and other resources.

## Start-Up Funding

Because adoption is a complex and sometimes long process, several case study organisations emphasised the need for a pot

of money both to fund the work involved in encouraging adoption and to provide seed funding for potential adopters: *'You need time and money to persuade people to take on something new, and you need to be able to offer people something to get them started'*; *'You really need another demonstration, a pilot phase in a local area, to show that it can work here too, and to give people confidence to give it a go.'* It is worth noting here that 'challenge grants' (largely from US foundations) have generally been highly effective in encouraging the growth of community foundations in the UK.

## 5 Resourcing

A project may have supporters willing to take it on but still fail to be implemented if it cannot attract necessary and appropriate resources. As one case study organisation noted: *'Good intentions disappear into thin air the moment you don't have resources'*. Another said: *'The whole point of replication is that there has to be someone there to pick it up'*. It is worth noting here that in the US, the United States Drugs Administration is regarded as one of the most successful replicators because it invests a dollar for dissemination and utilisation for every dollar invested in research.

All of the case study organisations were hampered to some degree by lack of funding, in that with more funding they believed they could do so much more. All emphasised the amount of work that is required to obtain funding.

Funding for local schemes came from different sources and varied in availability. For example, although credit unions are not generally well funded, in Wales £4.5 million has been made available for development. In another case, some schemes had been developed with funding from a larger government programme, but one organisation warned against relying on funding from a larger bid or programme: *'Those sort of big bids and programmes tend to take a year or two to actually materialise and that often means the momentum for the scheme is lost. It just all takes too long'*. In one case, a local pilot programme had taken place and the programme was adopted as part of a wider regeneration bid but then not taken up for two years: *'All the expectations were dashed'*.

As noted above, case study organisations emphasised the need for funding for start-up pilot schemes in local areas. In addition, they noted the lack of fundraising capacity at local level: *'When it comes to putting packages of funding together, they just can't do it'*.

One organisation suggested that ‘selling’ a scheme to local authority purchasers involved: *‘Bringing something more to the table than a good idea. Projects need to sell themselves a lot better. They need to be very clear about what’s in it for the purchaser and play to that much more. What problem are you offering a solution to, are you taking some of the risk off them, are you bringing proven knowledge and skills, are you ensuring standards, why is this better than what they already have, what else are you offering?’.*

## Obstacles

The most successful and well-known replications of the past – CABx, Adult Family Placement schemes, Crossroads Care, for example – all received substantial funding for replication from central or local government. But the assumption that local or central government will pick up the tab for longer term and replication funding, if it were ever true, cannot be relied on today. Some government departments seem to be more willing to fund chosen replications than others. For example, one foundation noted that: *‘Where we replicate best is where we pump prime projects that the DfES will pick up’*; and buddying and mentoring schemes, for example, receive considerable DfES and Active Communities Directorate funding.

But, in the current policy environment, government is likely to fund replications if, and only if, they provide something that fits with their current political and service provision needs and priorities. Again this underlines the importance of presenting the project in a way that exploits ‘open policy windows’ (Kingdon, 1995) and explicitly ties the project in to government funders’ concerns of that day. Telling the story in the right way may be as important as content *per se* if funding is to be secured from government.

As already noted, with some exceptions, foundations, too, generally do not see it as their role to fund replication *per se*. Even if foundations were not explicitly against funding

replication, some appeared reluctant actively to encourage replication due to anxiety about favouring particular projects or models, commitment to sharing their resources around, or unwillingness to engage in ‘development’. One foundation suggested that actively encouraging replication by making replication of xx a priority would not work anyway. Certainly, there are a number of examples of foundations signalling a desire to receive applications for xx, and receiving very few. The issue here may be about need. Although there is a tendency in the voluntary sector to assume that more of the same is generally good, just because a project has met a need in one area it does not follow that it is needed in any other area.

Lack of take up for foundation priorities may also be related to the issues discussed. Resources are not just about availability of funding; they are also about human resources, knowledge and skills, organisational capacity and space. Recognising this, one foundation interviewed said: *‘We don’t fund for replication but we do fund to build capacity’.*

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## 6 Implementing

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A project may be adopted and find funding, but those are, in a sense, only the pre-conditions for replication. The project still has to be implemented.

### Obstacles

Rational managerial models of implementation encourage us to believe that if the resources, correct structures and processes are in place then all will be well. This is the model of project implementation typically implicitly adopted by funders. Pre-grant assessment generally requires that the applicant has a plan, the 'right' structures and processes and a plausible budget (Leat, 1998). Proposals come from fund-raisers, and/or senior management or the trustees, and sometimes have to be approved (prior to submission) by the finance officer. Although assessment of users' views of the project (usually the proposing organisation's assessment) is sometimes required, there is little attention paid to those who actually have to implement the project. This approach is consistent with the managerial model of implementation which suggests that if staff/volunteers are told clearly enough what to do, and properly managed, they will do what is required (Hood, 1983).

Other models of implementation pay more attention to the human dynamics of change. The 'right' structures and processes, and financial resources, may be important but these have to be implemented by real people with established ways of doing things, professional and common-sense notions of how things ought to be done, as well as fears and anxieties about the new. Research shows that: *'Nothing will derail even the most brilliant and well-organised innovation effort more effectively than the "subtle sabotage of withheld enthusiasm"* (Backer, 1995, 7; on models of implementation see Elmore,

1997; Hogwood and Gunn, 1984; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984; Sabatier and Mazmanian, 1981).

### Facilitating Factors

According to the ‘human dynamics’ approach to policy implementation, involvement and consultation, as well as incentives and rewards, are important in encouraging feelings of ownership, full commitment to change and making the project work. However, ownership may also require some degree of openness and space for adaptation and control. For this reason, the literature suggests that both adoption and implementation are more likely to succeed in organisations with structures and processes that encourage constant questioning, discussion and change at all levels in the organisation, while, at the same time, providing stability via strong key values and objectives (‘bounded instability’). This in turn suggests that successful implementation of replication may involve balancing a pre-designed model and standards, to ensure consistent quality and confidence, not least among purchasers, with flexibility to allow for legitimate adaptation and to encourage ownership by the implementing organisation – a recipe rather than a blueprint.

The case study organisations did not subscribe to a rational managerial model of implementation. They did not impose structures and processes presented as right for all people and all time. They did not see themselves as replicating in the sense of cloning or copying, but rather of supporting and encouraging implementation of a broad model held together by a common idea, values and objectives. They did not tell people what to do but offered possible ways of doing things as a basis on which to build or adapt. If they had standards, these were not strongly imposed but took the form of aspirational good practice guidelines. In order to receive advice and support, local organisations were not required to display or sign up to any particular standards. As one respondent said:

*‘If you replicate too rigidly maybe you’re not leaving enough room for excitement and originality, and real adaptation to local needs and circumstances’.*

One respondent reflected on the way in which larger charities go about branch expansion/replication. In this process, ways of doing things are detailed in handbooks and manuals. *‘It’s typically often very rigid and prescriptive – you must have this number of people on the Board, you must have these positions, you must have this procedure and that procedure and so on. I think this may put people off; they don’t want to come into this bureaucratic network’.*

At the same time, some respondents questioned: *‘How do you replicate to ensure standards and quality and reputation and leave room for change in the organisation?’.* It is worth noting here that there seems to be a tendency for movement to more closely specified and applied standards as the number of organisations claiming to be doing the same thing grows.

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## 7 Sustainability

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In focusing on the diffusion and implementation of innovations that work, it is important to remember that if replications are to be fully effective they must be sustainable. While some projects in the voluntary sector may continue beyond their 'sell by date', research in the business sector suggests that many initially successful start-ups fail despite continuing demand for their products/services.

In the voluntary sector, lack of continuing funding is only one of a variety of reasons for lack of sustainability. Projects may fail to be sustainable because they are not actually needed or there is insufficient demand in a particular area. They may not be sustained because they lose staff and volunteers, and thus essential human resources and knowledge, skills and organisational memory (sometimes because of insecure or short-term funding, but also for other reasons including people moving on or away, burn-out, poor management and lack of incentives to stay).

Projects may also be unsustainable because the policy, or other, environment changes. Policy concerns change and the project may cease to be seen as the key issue of the moment. Legislative changes may radically alter the conditions under which the project works, and other statutory or voluntary provision may be introduced making the project redundant, or at least difficult to maintain. Competitors may enter the market – including other replications – slicing the demand and funding cake into smaller pieces.

Data from the case study organisations suggests, in effect, that it may be easier to replicate some schemes than to sustain them. Organisations reported different obstacles at different points in the project's life cycle: there are problems to do with birth and childhood and then to do with adolescence when projects begin to spread their wings and

expand; and there are problems to do with post adolescence – middle age perhaps – to do with sustainability and more expansion.

At birth the problem is finding the trust, time, money and human resources for start up. In adolescence and middle age there are problems in ‘getting over the no longer new phase’. As one respondent remarked: *‘The new challenge arises when you’ve got a proven tool – very few funders are interested in a proven tool’*. Another described this phase as: *‘Not new enough to be sexy, not sufficiently established to be independent and self-generating’*. Recognising this, and the time it takes to become established, the Community Foundation Network successfully applied to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for support for ‘static’ community foundations to move on to a new phase.

One case study organisation commented on the dangers of too easy a birth: *‘Some of the organisations we work with have had a relatively easy start. They were flavour of the month in some areas and got funding fairly easily. But they aren’t sustainable – partly because they have never had to think about how they will become self-sustaining’*.

The case study organisations also highlighted the fact that dissemination is an on-going process: making people aware of on-going outcomes, expanding the group of champions – and funders – and gaining critical mass for wider take off/replication and sustainability. To achieve this network building is a constant process: *‘The new has to become part of the furniture pretty quickly to put down roots. It’s money and relationships that help put down roots’*.

## An Overview of Replication

### Myths of Replication

Replication in all sectors is surrounded by myth and confusion. Traditional non-profit sector culture may be seen as overly dominated by worship of ‘innovation’, distaste for ‘duplication’ and the idea that one shouldn’t reinvent the wheel. Many funders in both the statutory and charitable sectors see themselves as ‘pump-priming’, funding innovation, for public benefit, but rarely question how water from the primed pump will be extracted from the well or in what quantity. Traditionally innovation was the business of foundations; dissemination and ‘rolling out’ were someone else’s business, most often that of local authorities. In the 1990s a government Efficiency Scrutiny turned the tables and allocated to itself the job of innovation and pump-priming – again leaving the job of rolling out and sustainability to someone else. Foundations are now beginning to address this responsibility gap – but they cannot do it all.

In part, traditional approaches to the wider diffusion of innovations may be a matter of outdated assumptions regarding the take up of funded innovations. But traditional approaches may also be related to more widespread myths regarding the diffusion or replication of innovation.

One of the common cultural assumptions around innovation and diffusion is that if you build a better mousetrap the world will beat a path to your door. Conversely, if your mousetrap isn’t good enough then there will be little interest in it. Richard Johnson of Exxon Education Foundation commented some years ago on the Foundation’s dawning realisation: *‘That many fine mousetraps seemed to be lying on the shelf, with few other institutions “beating a path to the door” of the innovator we had supported. It was then that we began to question the mousetrap theory of diffusion.’* (Backer, 1995, 29).

The commissioning of this study was based on similar questions.

Organisational expansion and diffusion of innovations in other fields highlights the need for time consuming and often expensive dissemination/marketing of new ideas. Crucially, the knowledge at the core of the business has to be put in a form that constitutes a 'product' to be replicated or diffused more widely.

Another assumption is that innovations are created and spread by charismatic individuals and lone heroes, whose very brilliance and charisma creates innovation but also means that, although organisational expansion is possible, replication by others is not. Again the evidence is somewhat different. First, inventors rarely see the opportunity they have created. Entrepreneurs are needed to take up their innovations and diffuse or adapt them for wider take up. Second, the original idea may be the result of individual genius or charisma but the diffusion of innovations requires collaboration and partnerships. This is because diffusion and utilisation of new or different ideas, products and services requires both human and financial resources not typically available to the individual innovator. Funding is important, but so too are executive capacity and skills.

One implication of the above is that diffusion of innovations, far from being 'natural' or inevitable, is actually an organised, structured, expensive, time consuming and collaborative exercise (Leadbetter and Oakley, 2001).

In the non-profit world there is a further complicating twist related to values. On the one hand, there is an assumption that grants are 'pump-priming' or 'demonstrations' and will lead, by some unspecified process, to replication; on the other hand, there is a view that 'replication' is not appropriate, desirable and/or possible. The assumption is that developments in the voluntary sector should be 'organic', 'locally driven' and 'autonomous'. 'Externally driven' development is often referred to in terms of 'parachuting' – a term with negative connotations.

In interviews, some respondents drew a contrast between business expansion and replication in the voluntary sector. In the voluntary sector, it was suggested, replication of new services should not be treated like opening another branch of Sainsbury. This comparison may, however, overlook the point that considerable market research precedes the decision to open a new supermarket. Sainsbury does not open in an area where there is insufficient need/customers or too much competition. In addition, the products stocked in different branches of Sainsbury vary between areas depending on local needs and demands. Interestingly, it could be argued that replication in the voluntary sector should be treated more, not less, like business expansion, overcoming the voluntary sector's tendency to believe that more of the same is always worthwhile, without thinking through what else is available and the nature and volume of need.

### Steps in Replication

It has been argued above that 'replication' is a short-hand for a complex process in several stages. Replication involves:

- An idea, activity, model to replicate
- Confidence that the model is worth replicating and an understanding of the essential elements – evaluation and dissection
- Communication of the model in the right form to the right people
- Adoption by champions, potential implementing organisations and funders, requiring demonstration of need/demand and a favourable policy environment
- Implementation by an organisation with capacity, competence and commitment
- Adequate resources – financial, management, technical, knowledge
- The ability to sustain itself.

Given this complexity it may be more useful to think of replication as the *diffusion and implementation of innovations with proven outcomes*.

### Facilitating Factors

The history of replication in both the US and the UK suggests that replication requires:

- Time – building from a slow start to take off perhaps a decade later
- Funding, very often from statutory funders
- Resonance with key policy issues and concerns
- Champions to promote the project locally
- A source of technical advice and support.

These findings are demonstrated again in the case studies included here. If these conditions are absent then replication will be less likely or more difficult. Some funders, including some foundations, already recognise the importance of these factors by, for example, choosing priorities related to key policy concerns, funding for longer periods and funding support agencies. Others do not.

### Obstacles

In addition to the specific obstacles to replication, there are other more general factors that constrain successful replication.

### Values

General obstacles include the fact that the past and present values of the voluntary sector do little to encourage replication. First, the sector legitimates itself in terms of innovation, encouraged partly by the high traditional value placed on innovation by foundations and other funders. Second, diversity is highly valued in the sector. Third, local autonomy is a key value.

### Lack of Incentives

Another set of obstacles is the lack of incentives to replicate. There are few incentives to evaluate outcomes and few to disseminate. Looking back and learning, evaluating and dissecting have not traditionally been key values among voluntary sector funders, and perhaps especially foundations. All the incentives have worked the other way in favour of projects that can be presented as innovative and in favour of getting on with the next project, the next grant application and so on. There are few incentives for organisations to network with others. Arguably, the increased competitiveness of operating voluntary organisations, the replacement of grants with contracts and the rise of business concepts and methods further decrease the incentives to evaluate and disseminate, unless this is part of a strategy for business expansion.

Few foundations have dedicated budgets, or dedicated staff, for evaluation and dissection, dissemination or encouraging adoption and implementation. Local authorities used to have community development officers who undertook the latter activities, but in the contracting culture such posts are rare. Similarly, only a very few foundations value the wealth of knowledge they have, or could build from the information they possess, and actively attempt to mine and manage that knowledge.

### No-One's Responsibility

Foundations, in particular, may argue that they do not reward activities related to replication because that is not their role. The problem is that responsibility for encouraging replication appears to be clearly accepted by no-one. In the past foundations tended to assume that what they innovated local authorities, and other government departments, would pick up and replicate. Although central government may still pick up certain projects, disseminate and encourage their replication, this may have more to do with their own agendas than the worth of or need for the project. At local government

level, contracting effectively puts responsibility for replication back onto the provider.

Operating voluntary organisations may see it as their job to evaluate what they do, but can only do so if someone else accepts responsibility for funding this. Operating voluntary organisations typically do not see it as their role to disseminate and, in any case, often lack the resources, skills and capacity to do so. Organisational expansion may be attractive if the organisation has the appropriate capacity, but this does not ensure replication of projects with proven outcomes not least because other internal and external political factors may be in play. Projects that are supported by a favourable policy environment and that are income generating may stand the best chance of replication. Encouraging adoption and implementation by others is not the job of operating voluntary organisations. Franchising may be one approach that encourages organisations to take on the job of replication by others but this raises important cost and control issues of particular significance in the context of contracting.

## Conditions for Replication

What would foundations and other funders need to be doing if they had a real commitment to encouraging replication? Funders would need to give initial grants that provided projects with sufficient time to demonstrate their full potential, and then to commit significant resources to evaluation and dissection of projects that were candidates for replication. They would need to encourage and fund development and implementation of new forms of evaluation specifically designed for replication. They would need to turn information into knowledge, bringing together and codifying knowledge of what works and under what conditions. They would need to plan for and fund dissemination of potentially replicable projects. They would need to become actively involved in, or fund others to take on, the process of adoption, and possibly continue to provide support for implementation and sustainability. Above all, they would need a serious commitment to replication of chosen projects as a measure of their own effectiveness.

The implications of this approach would be fewer, larger and longer-term grants, a more proactive and selective approach in which a few projects were chosen for replication and heavily promoted and supported, directly or indirectly. Funders would need to be very, very sure that their chosen projects could reliably produce the most effective and efficient outcomes.

This sort of serious commitment to replication would require cultural change in many funders, re-allocation of resources and development of new skills and recruitment of new staff. For foundations, it would raise difficult issues to do with taking on a development role.

Some may argue that foundations already covertly engage in development – but are less than fully effective because they do not openly acknowledge this as a goal and do not commit

time and money to following it through. Others may ask what is wrong with being a development agency as long as you are sure about what you are developing. Why would anyone back potential losers if they could be sure of backing winners? If your commitment is to users don't you have a responsibility to provide them with the best services/products you are aware of?

But if foundations are to become effective development agencies they need to address the issues and implications above. Above all, they need confidence in what they choose to develop, and they need to devote resources to collecting information about what works, and how and why, and to manage and communicate that knowledge effectively. Foundations devote considerable resources to management of their financial investments; they need to treat their knowledge in the same way.

An alternative approach that would avoid some of the difficulties, but would still require significant change, would be for foundations, with other funders if appropriate, to explore ways in which they might create and support an infrastructure for replication.

## **Recommendations: Developing an Infrastructure to Support Replication**

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### **Recommendations for Funders**

#### **Funding Evaluation for Replication**

Funding an infrastructure to support replication would involve actively encouraging and supporting, financially and in other ways, the design and execution of evaluations to identify positive outcomes, intended or not, their costs and any potential negative short or longer term side-effects. Evaluations would include clear specification of beneficiaries, and any losers in the process.

Funding evaluation for replication would involve changes to the typical duration, and size, of grants. Rather than, say, three year grants a real commitment to funding evaluation for replication would mean a fourth year grant for evaluating the project, and a separate, later research grant to evaluate the longer-term impact of the project. The exact timing and duration of grants will depend on the nature of the project. The important point is that evaluation for replication requires commitment of resources to assess both the immediate and the longer term outcomes of projects.

Funders would also need to promote and support development of new forms of evaluation that would dissect the project, identifying its core and peripheral elements and, equally important but often overlooked, the environmental conditions that contributed to its survival and success. Mapping the project's environment, and keeping a record of what's going on externally are crucial in evaluation and dissemination for replication. Evaluations that fail to dissect what makes the project work, what is essential and what is peripheral, and under what conditions are unlikely to

provide the necessary information for effective diffusion and utilisation.

Funding to build infrastructure would mean identifying how a project could be rolled out on a bigger scale, identifying the model and the process, rather than simply funding four more of the projects in four more places.

### **Funding Communication**

Supporting an infrastructure for replication would involve actively promoting and supporting communication. Effective dissemination for replication is a complex task involving more than simply producing a standard report and sending it to everyone on the mailing list. Funding would be required to promote and support methods of analysing key audiences, appropriate content, language, tools and methods of dissemination for different audiences.

When the Joseph Rowntree Foundation realised that social change does not happen simply because the evidence/research/demonstration is there, it pioneered approaches to dissemination specifically aimed at policy makers, restricting its *Findings* to a series of front-page bullet points and no more than four pages in total – the most busy people would read. Similarly, it started to run media workshops for grant recipients, teaching them how to communicate effectively beyond the pages of esoteric journals with very limited audiences.

To encourage effective communication funders would need to make preparation of final reports by grantees suitably designed for dissemination to facilitate replication, as well as an outline dissemination plan, a condition of grant aid. This requirement would have obvious practical benefits, but would also signal to grant recipients that the funder places dissemination high on its list of priorities thus encouraging broader cultural change in operating organisations.

Funders would need to work with, or employ others to work with, grant recipients to help them learn about effective communication to different audiences, and, if necessary, provide grants for technical assistance in designing

disseminations for replication, as well as funding the dissemination process itself.

Effective dissemination to encourage replication would mean operating on a number of fronts. Policy makers and funders/purchasers need to be convinced of the value of the project, potential champions need to be convinced and enthused, as do potential professional gate-keepers, users and partners. At the same time, potential adopters and implementers need information both about the value of the project and, crucially, how to do it.

Supporting personal contact between projects and those wishing to learn about it would be another important method of supporting dissemination for replication. This might involve providing funding, or other incentives, both for the visitor and the visited. Written material is a good start but has obvious limitations. Personal contact provides the opportunity for exchange of customised information and for transmission of passion.

Funders committed to supporting an infrastructure for replication might give awards for successful dissemination and would almost certainly need a special category of grants for dissemination.

### **Funding an Ideas Bank**

An Ideas Bank – a virtual bank with a website and chatrooms – is one specific initiative to encourage replication foundations, and other funders, might support. Organisations without either the capacity or the desire to expand/replicate their activities might contribute demonstrated schemes/projects that they considered worthy of replication. Although issues of ownership, branding and reputation may sometimes inhibit encouragement of replication by others, there may be some charities that are happy to give away things not central to their brand. Much effort has gone into establishing a charity bank for financial resources. The same effort, or probably rather less effort, might be put into establishing a bank of learning and knowledge.

Organisations and/or funders could be encouraged to submit accounts of projects/methods with proven outcomes to a central point for posting on a carefully designed website. Contributions would need to satisfy certain criteria and provide details according to a common format. Organisations might be encouraged to submit entries either as a condition of future funding, or by generating sufficient prestige around having an entry on the website.

Guidestar may be one possible platform on which to build the Ideas Bank. Academic bodies with departments with specialist voluntary sector interest could also play an important role. Funding might be sought from the New Distributor and/or *future*builders.

The Ideas Bank could be taken a step further if it also offered advisory services to help prospective users take ideas forward for implementation, much like some commercial banks offer services to small businesses.

### **Funding Network Creation**

The importance of networks in replication has been a recurring theme in the discussion so far. As part of their commitment to funding an infrastructure for replication, funders might give priority to funding networking skills and the creation of networks. At the least, foundations might put people/organisations making applications for similar projects in touch with each other, as a small minority already do. They might also fund, and possibly facilitate, creation of local networks of grant applicants and potential champions and funders.

Similarly, funding of international, national, regional, local networks of organisations already involved in implementing the same/similar projects could contribute to development, standard enhancement and sustainability.

Encouraging and funding gatherings of ‘unrelated’ projects could also encourage diffusion of ideas, learning, adoption and implementation. Bringing projects together to reflect on what’s worked, what hasn’t, drawing out common patterns

and themes, and what can be learnt from those, could add to more structured evaluation and dissection, and could have the added advantage of creating both formal and subsequent informal contact, learning and ‘copying’ between organisations.

### **Funding Opportunity Analysis, Adoption and Local Piloting**

Foundations might also fund organisations to engage in opportunity and market analysis, including opportunities for partnerships with other statutory and voluntary agencies, as well as the difficult phase of ‘selling’ the potential replication for adoption. This might include funding for local pilots. This might be done independently or via associations and national and regional support organisations, or via organisations adopting the type of ‘partnership’ approach taken by, for example, Save the Children Fund, Revolving Doors and Groundwork.

### **Funding Intermediary and Support Agencies**

This study suggests that intermediary and support agencies and associations play a crucial, if sometimes intangible, role in encouraging high quality replications. Intermediary and support agencies and associations provide knowledge and advice as well as credibility, championing, and a focal point for access to information. Without a national champion or ‘lead’ agency, the diffusion of innovations that work is largely left to chance. Arguably, the development of social franchising has been hampered in part because it no longer has a dedicated support agency.

Encouraging an infrastructure for replication would involve looking favourably on applications from organisations and associations that champion and support potential, embryonic and ‘adolescent’ replications, and attempt to ensure that these have the necessary knowledge, skills and competence to make them work. Encouraging an infrastructure to support sustainable replication would involve recognising that, in

many cases, organisations/replications take longer to reach self-sufficiency than is commonly assumed, and that there may be important static phases through which organisations need additional help. Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's 'Time for Growth' grant programme to community foundations is an interesting model here.

### **Funding Development**

Supporting an infrastructure for replication might involve more general funding for development of the capacity of organisations to adopt and implement projects they see as worth replicating. One foundation interviewee recounted a time when the foundation had decided to make replication of a particular type of project a priority; nothing happened, virtually no applications came in. *'It was a very, very good lesson for us. Things don't spring up overnight just because there's money there. That set us on a path of development – how do you develop a variety of models for a variety of situations? That can only be done with communities. If you develop, reproduction happens. It's about creating a situation and a context in which models can thrive.'*

### **Funding Learning**

Many of the suggestions above have been, in effect, to do with valuing and funding learning. Funding to build an infrastructure for replication would mean adopting learning as a key value, paying much more attention to how learning can be maximised.

For example, some foundations already encourage and support projects to visit and learn from each other, or bring funded projects, evaluators and others together to identify patterns and recurring factors contributing to both success and failure. Bridge House Trust's learning networks is one example here. Maximising learning might also mean supporting study visits and exchanges between organisations interested in what others are doing, with a view to replication. As noted earlier, community foundations have benefited

considerably from US foundations' support of transatlantic exchanges. Obtaining funding to attend conferences has become more difficult in recent years and conference fees have risen dramatically. A real commitment to funding learning might include a new look at the value of paying for conference attendance, study tours and other means of gathering new ideas and learning. (It is worth noting here that three of the four case study organisations drew on ideas and strategies from the US). But, if funding learning is to be fully effective, it must include a requirement for (and, if necessary, funding for) clearly planned and well-implemented processes for use and dissemination.

Learning does not necessarily mean 'looking out' or going elsewhere. Funding learning might also involve providing support to enable organisations to organise and build on the knowledge they already have, and then communicating that within and beyond the organisation.

### **Cultural Change**

Supporting an infrastructure for replication would require changes in foundation and other funders' cultures, and development of capacity to assess applications for infrastructure building activities. Board and staff would need to understand the nature of the process of replication and be fully committed to the importance of evaluation and dissection and dissemination. This would be a significant change for some.

To assist in this process the Association of Charitable Foundations might hold regular meetings for trustees and staff to exchange learning from projects funded for potential replication. Key points from these exchanges might be written up and circulated to central and local government funders. Similarly, local and central government funders might commit resources and effort to develop processes to encourage learning and exchange to assist in replication of projects that work.

### Clarifying Responsibilities

The costs of funding an infrastructure to support replication would not need to be borne alone. Indeed, working in partnership with others would achieve far more than any one funder could do alone. Funders from all sectors need to discuss who, in the current policy context, is responsible for what in the process of replication. In particular, funders need to clarify responsibilities for innovating and sustaining projects with proven outcomes.

### Recommendations for Voluntary Organisations

The development of an infrastructure to support replication will only produce effective outcomes if voluntary organisations play their part. Voluntary organisations with projects that work, and support agencies, need to:

- Press for funding for, and undertake, evaluation, dissection and effective dissemination
- Put a high premium on mining and managing knowledge and learning within and beyond the organisation
- Assist in adoption of projects by others
- Contribute to the Ideas Bank.

### Recommendations for the Charity Commission

To encourage development of an infrastructure to support replication of proven projects and, more generally, the spread of learning in the charity sector, the Charity Commission should consider requiring charities to report on what they have learned. Learning and wider diffusion and implementation of learning should be seen as an outcome as valuable as any other. Learning outcomes might be part of the Standard Information Return recommended by the Strategy Unit.

## Conclusion

### Replication and Learning

It has been emphasised throughout that replication is a short word describing a complex process involving several stages. The challenges of successful replication depend in part on 'fit' with the environment, as well as other conditions outlined above, and in part on the characteristics of the activity to be replicated. For example, a simple method or activity is likely to present fewer challenges than replication of a complex service.

Is replication a 'good thing'? The answer to this question depends in large part on what is meant by replication. How close must the resemblance be between two activities or services before one is legitimately called a replication of the other? In many respects, of course, the idea that innovations that work should be replicated is very attractive. But if replication is seen as cloning, the 'next quick fix', or painting by numbers, then it may prove disappointing.

In an important sense, lack of support for replication may be a symptom of the general lack of value attached to knowledge and learning. Support for replication needs to be accompanied by a more fundamental focus on learning, and the extraction, building, communication and implementation of cumulative knowledge. Unlike making a copy, learning is an on-going process. Unlike copying or cloning, learning allows for change and diversity to remedy false confidence or uncertainty, and to accommodate individual, social and regional differences and changing environments. Because learning is an on-going, evolving, adaptive process, a focus on learning solves the problem of when to stop replicating x or y.

The Fannie Mae Foundation in the United States illustrates the approach to learning suggested here. After 20 years of grant-making the Foundation came to see its store of information as its most valuable asset. This led to the development of KnowledgePlex (KP). The goal of KP is to

promote innovation, enhance best practice and strengthen the analysis and implementation of projects that have an impact. The KP website for policy makers, practitioners, scholars, non-profits and researchers, provides a one-stop forum for gathering and sharing information and practice news on current housing issues, national housing policy debates, and the latest in housing research. Seeking information from other knowledge leaders, the aim is to make KP a truly collaborative partnership and comprehensive resource. KP hosts on-line communities of interest and practice with live, moderated chats and threaded discussions on various housing topics. Community of interest members can retrieve items from the KP library and submit items for discussion. The foundation works closely with university research centres and emphasises the importance of dissemination and debate, publishing newsletters, scholarly journals, research reports and other publications. It has sponsored or co-sponsored numerous conferences of leaders, academics, policy makers and practitioners, in the hope that the 'synergistic effect of these exchanges will add to the overall knowledge and inspire the continuing efforts' to ensure affordable housing for all citizens.

Focusing on continuing learning, and the dissemination and implementation of learning, is relevant to those who see the voluntary sector as providing services and to those who see it as contributing to the development of civil society. Rather than '*how do we replicate?*' the more fundamental question may be '*how do encourage learning and sharing of learning to create cumulative knowledge building?*'.

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## Case Study websites

**Association of British Credit Unions Ltd website:**

[www.abcuk.org](http://www.abcuk.org)

**National Mentoring Network website:**

[www.nmn.org.uk](http://www.nmn.org.uk)

**Resource Unit for Supplementary and Mother-tongue Schools website:**

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

**Time Banks UK website:**

[www.timebanks.co.uk](http://www.timebanks.co.uk)

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## Appendix

### Methods

The study was guided by an Advisory Group made up of representatives from: Association of Charitable Foundations; Baring Foundation; Community Fund; Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund; Esmée Fairbairn Foundation; and Camelot Foundation.

#### The study included:

- Reviews of the US and UK research, and other, literature on replication in the statutory, voluntary and commercial sectors
- Semi-structured interviews with 10 funders to explore their views on the meaning, desirability, policies, practices and observations on replication
- Semi-structured interviews with, and analysis of material produced by, organisations working in four areas chosen by the study Advisory Group: development of credit unions, time banks, buddying and mentoring, and supplementary and mother-tongue schools
- Interviews with, and attendance at meetings held by, other organisations and funders involved in replication.

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Diana Leat has recently completed a Visiting Research Fellowship at the Centre for Civil Society at the London School of Economics. In addition to academic appointments with a number of universities and research institutes, Diana has been a consultant to various grant-making foundations in the UK and Australia reviewing their policies and practices. For the last three years Diana has spent several periods in Australia, most recently as Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies at Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane. She has also worked on a world-wide collection of case studies of community foundation support organisations for Worldwide Initiatives for Grantmaker Support – Community Foundations (WINGS-CF). Diana has published extensively on the voluntary sector, foundations and social policy.

There is growing interest in encouraging the spread of voluntary sector projects that work: replication. This report, based on a literature review, case studies and interviews with funders, explores the issues in encouraging replication of voluntary sector projects that work, emphasising that replication involves recipes rather than blue-prints. The report outlines seven stages in the process of replication. It discusses the different tasks, requirements and obstacles at each stage, and suggests that each stage needs systematic encouragement. Associations and other support agencies often play key roles in fostering replication; but that role is frequently under-valued.

One fundamental problem in encouraging replication of proven voluntary sector projects is that responsibility for funding key tasks is left to chance in the hope or assumption that someone else will do it. Funders need to work together to encourage development of an infrastructure for effective replication.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations for funders, voluntary organisations and the Charity Commission. The deeper challenge for all those involved is to develop a real commitment to learning from success and failure: building, managing and communicating a cumulative stock of knowledge about what works, how and why.

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