

The Foundation started its five year review process in 1935: a look back shows a remarkable consistency in approach over time

City Parochial Foundation's five year approach towards planning its funding goes back almost 70 years.

A review of the seventy years of Quinquennial reports show the value of the review process. It shows that, over an extended period similar issues come up time after time. It also shows that there has been a remarkable consistency in approach:

- far sightedness of the Trustees;
- readiness and enthusiasm to take initiatives;
- the elusive nature of the 'poor';
- alertness to take up new issues;
- addressing the role of a grant-making Trust;

developing themes

- ready co-operation with other Trusts;
- the need always to take account of external factors and legislation; and
- an over-riding sense of responsible trusteeship.

The words and phrases may have changed but throughout, the underlying motivation and approach has remained much the same.

Statutory provision and grant-making

It was in 1935 that the first Quinquennial review was produced. From the start concerns were expressed about the need to establish principles to be applied in the making of grants towards objects for which statutory provision existed.

Ten years later in 1945, policy was

reaffirmed when the review noted:

"That the Trustees' general policy be to continue to refrain from subsidising Schemes which can be financed out of the rates and/or Exchequer, and that if and when grants are made in aid of Schemes for which statutory provision exists the object should be not merely to relieve local authorities of expenditure which primarily falls upon them but to encourage the undertaking of Schemes which the Trustees desire to promote."

The same issue arose in the 1980s when concern was expressed about government changes brought in with little prior consultation – and not to be forced into replacing statutory funding. It was pointed out that work could be *"impressively improved"* by relatively small grants for purposes for which public money was not available. The review added that:

"Charitable trusts and foundations must be prepared, as always, to resist the suggestion that they become alternative funding bodies where statutory sources fail to provide, for whatever reasons. Instead, we believe that the role of charitable trusts and foundations continues to be primarily to fund voluntary organisations which are undertaking new initiatives or which require supplementary funds to complement those already being received from central government and local authority sources in support of their day-to-day work."

In 1987 Trustees reiterated their view that government should discuss issues with the voluntary sector before Trusts were asked to take on subsequent funding, and also backed regular liaison with the London Borough Grants Unit.

Defining 'the poor'

Trustees often reviewed their approach to

'the poor'. In 1961 trustees worried about a tendency for benefactions intended for the very poor to fall into the hands "of a somewhat higher class". It was noted that destitution in the old Poor Law sense had disappeared – it was important to ensure frequent re-interpretation of the terms 'the poor' and 'the poorer classes'.

New approaches

At the same time they were concerned about their own roles – and to look at new approaches. The 1961 discussions noted:

"The importance of the functions that may be performed by a Trust such as the City Parochial Foundation cannot be over-estimated and the responsibility resting upon the shoulders of the Trustees is great. The effective discharge of that responsibility calls for an awareness of changing conditions and a readiness to adopt and develop ways and means of meeting the new needs disclosed by such changing conditions."

The Trustees came back to it in 1967 when they reviewed the previous 30 years, reaching the conclusion that

"... one of the most fruitful ways of helping the poorer classes of London is by making major grants to schemes designed either to test new ideas or else, with special reference to the needs and opportunities of the day, to repair the unavoidable gaps and inadequacies in the statutory social services".

The review also pointed out that

"... pioneering is one of the Foundation's most important functions". It was noted that *"the Foundation should give priority to schemes which break new ground provided they seemed sound and viable, though not to concentrate on them exclusively".*

Later, in 1987, it was felt that *"above all trustees should be imaginative".*

Needs v procedures

There was also a growing wish to ensure that bureaucracy did not get in the way of the Foundation's aims. For the 1992-96 Quinquennium, the review stated that

"Care needs to be taken to ensure that funding strategies are not in fact determined by the administrative requirements of the funder rather than the needs of the beneficiaries. What best meets those needs is the essential question. Yet how are those to be assessed and who can best do it are the two questions which then follow. Funding strategies which are arrived at from too great a distance can appear attractive but miss the needs, whilst a succession of small grants responding to declared needs may miss longer-term ones. The balance is not easy to achieve though awareness of the dynamic helps."

This was prompted by a concern to ensure that money was spent wisely. This meant being sure that applicants really could tackle the problems and were not simply so overwhelmed by needs that they had to "do something". Similarly the Foundation had to know what it was doing and recognise its limitations.

In 1976, Trustees were allocating up to 40% of funding to projects of more than three years, though noting: *"there is no reason to suppose that applicants can see into the future more clearly than anyone else."*

Monitoring and appraisal

Alongside this, Trustees began to see the need to monitor the work. By 1987 Trustees decided to increase their awareness of the impact of their grant-making through annual monitoring. They also aimed to distribute information about procedures and policies and concerns of the Foundation.

This aim to achieve greater knowledge of funding and to ensure the right sort of funding was apparent from the review for the Quinquennium 1992-96.

Trustees agreed to programme funding, strategic funding, general funding and

community on London and outer London estates was a concern – as they are today. Housing was also an important funding matter for the Foundation – in 1951, approval was also given for building of a block of flats in Islington, and a decision was made to apply to become a housing association under the 1936 Housing Act.

In 1972, issues raised included the problems of addiction and care of ex-offenders, themes which carried through into the 1990s.

New thinking

One innovation over the past decade has been the introduction of mid-quinquennial reviews, to check progress against the funding themes.

The first, held in 1994, revealed that no significant changes were made. But new thinking was also revealed: was there a need to consider ‘investment’ in certain organisations, rather than a series of grants? Trustees noted:

“... could the possibility of funding over ten years not be considered? The view was taken that in certain circumstances it might well be responsible and appropriate to do so.”

Changing roles

The next mid term review was in 2000. This revealed that not everything always goes to plan, and that crime reduction and tackling racial harassment priorities had not attracted the expected number of applications and neither did the policy change priority. Thus organisations in these areas were targeted for further publicity to remedy the situation.

But it was the wider picture that was highlighted. Trustees noted that the election of the Labour Government and the establishment of the Social Exclusion Unit impacted directly on the work of voluntary organisations and therefore on CPF and TFL priorities:

“By the year 2000, the Social Exclusion

Unit had produced reports on school exclusion and truancy, homelessness and teenage pregnancies. It had also set up 18 policy action teams, which would eventually produce reports on ways to tackle poverty.”

Also very close to home was the imminent election of the Mayor and Assembly for London and the implications this would have on a variety of welfare issues. Moreover, CPF’s position had changed:

“The relative position of the Foundation as a funder when compared to other significant new funders, such as London Borough Grants, Bridge House Estates Trust Fund and the National Lottery Charities Board has changed dramatically since 1996 when the priorities were being developed. There had also been a diminution in real terms of the Foundation’s distributable income in the period 1989 to 1999 from £8million to £5million (actual rather than adjusted for inflation).”

Throughout these reviews, Trustees came back to the long-standing debate on the blurring of the distinction between state funding and voluntary sector provision. Now things were beginning to change even more dramatically – the voluntary sector was being expected to take on huge areas of responsibility which were traditionally always accepted as being matters for the State....