

ORGANISATIONS

Empower - Be the Change

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<http://www.empower-bethechange.org/>

Founded in 2016, based in North Wales

Staff: 1 Turnover: £17k last year, £35k and counting this year

Mission: To empower individuals and communities to achieve more

When she set up a new social enterprise in Wales, Jo Clay knew it was important to get impact measurement right from the start. Measuring the Good helped matched her with a mentor who became a great sounding board and helped her to get the right metrics in place early on, enabling the organisation to secure an interest-free loan.



CEO - Jo Clay

“I love my job but it can sometimes be lonely - the opportunity to work with someone to help me to get measurement up and running seemed like a good thing to do.”



I set up Empower - Be the Change to help young and unemployed people to realise their own potential. The organisation was less than a year old when I came across the Measuring the Good programme, but I knew that it was important to have measurement in place from the start. I'm the only staff member, I love my job but it can sometimes be lonely - the opportunity to work with someone who I could bounce ideas off and help me to get measurement up and running seemed like a good thing to do. It's great seeing the difference our programme makes to people's self-belief and confidence but we need to prove our results in order to secure funding and grow our work

I traveled down to London to meet Payal our volunteer face to face – when we couldn't meet in person we had phone and Skype meetings. Working with Payal didn't feel like working with a consultant. She took a much more personal and very practical approach. We work in very different sectors but this didn't matter at all. Other consultants had simply told us what we already knew, but Payal got really involved. The programme was more than just a review, it gave us something really useful at the end.

“We now have really robust measures in place and these are included in every grant application and application for investment.”

Having an outside view really helped us to ensure that we were measuring the right things and made the process much more refined. We now have really robust measures in place and these are included in every grant application and application for investment.

“We now have clear ideas about how many people we will be able to work with and what difference our work will make... Even after this short time we're finding that we are getting a lot more 'yeses' than 'nos' to our grant applications.”

We've now been collecting data for 6 months, looking at the findings had helped us to identify our strengths and focus on where we'll look for investment. We no longer chase every kind of funding but target funds that support the areas where we are really strong. We now have clear ideas about how many people we will be able to work with and what difference our work will make. Because we're more focused, we've been able to make sure that the quality of information is there and that we have proven results. Even after this short time we're finding that we are getting a lot more 'yeses' than 'nos' to our grant applications. We've secured a £30k interest free loan which has been fantastic.

With this new funding we've been able to significantly grow our work - we've delivered more programmes in the last six months than in the previous twelve months, so we've more than doubled. We plan to produce impact reports or short videos and case studies to help investors understand our impact. Having the right measures in place was vital for putting these together and having both in-depth anecdotal comment as well as robust tangible measures. I'm going to a training session on impact measures soon and will be keen to share what we've done so far with others there.

“It's helped us to win funding that's been crucial for our expansion”

Even for a tiny organisation it's definitely worth taking part – the sooner you start collecting the right data the better! When you're setting up you are stretched in so many different directions – it might seem like this is a big commitment, but in the long term it saves you time. In our case it's helped us to win funding that's been crucial for our expansion.

“The programme worked well because Measuring the Good matched us with a volunteer who was genuinely interested in what we were doing.”

We're still in touch with Payal, I think the programme worked well because Measuring the Good matched us with a volunteer who was genuinely interested in what we were doing. It's been good to check in with her and look back on how far we've come in 18 months, sometimes you're so immersed in day to day that you forget to look up and acknowledge that it's going in the right direction.

Creative Futures

Creative Futures

www.creativefuturesuk.com

Founded in 2011, based in North Westminster, London

Staff: 2 with a network of 200 artists Turnover: £250-300k

Mission:

Julian Knight is a social entrepreneur with fifteen years' management experience in the arts sector. In his role as CEO of Creative Futures he realised that the organisation had a good understanding of the impact of individual programmes it ran, but decided to work with a volunteer from Measuring the Good to help him understand the bigger picture.



Photo by Paul Grover: Creative Futures' 'Music for Change' project

CEO - Julian Knight



Creative Futures provides sessions using all art forms, including music, poetry, drama, dance and story-telling with a focus on early years, special education and looked-after children. Our projects are quite varied and have different outcomes. It's great to see the impact on children but our programmes also help people to get to know other local families and strengthen communities.

We are quite an outcomes-focused organisation and are involved in lots of research in collaboration with the Institute of Education at UCL. We were already using a variety of tools to measure the progress of each of our programmes, but hadn't consolidated this across the whole organisation. We were good at understanding the impact of a particular project, but not so good at assessing the overall picture. Measuring the Good seemed like it would help us fill that piece of the jigsaw.

"It was really helpful to approach this supported by someone with approach with an analytical approach and a business mind."

I was keen to work with someone with a different background, it's good to get an outside perspective. I think it depends a lot on who you're paired with but this mentoring relationship worked well because we were really well matched. Payal and I met about six times, we spent the first few meetings getting to the core of what Creative Futures did. We went right back to basics to looking at our mission and objectives – we needed to be clear on what we were trying to achieve before measuring how well we achieved it. I discovered that I didn't know what the original mission statement was, we couldn't even find it! The core objectives on our charity commission documents didn't really match up with our strategic and operational objectives so we decided to set them aside and start again. We sat down and started to streamline all these things, it was really helpful to approach this supported by someone with approach with an analytical approach and a business mind.

"Once we had defined our mission it made it much easier to decide what the indicators of success were."

Once we had defined our mission it made it much easier to decide what the indicators of success were. It wasn't an arduous process as we were tracking most things anyway. What we did was to consolidate all the information we had, moving it all into one spreadsheet identifying common elements to the outcomes of our projects. Now we have a really useful log of all our programmes with details of how many children and artists we work with as well as new data we wanted to gather. We whittled down the key outcomes and decided on three questions that we would ask everyone in order to have universal data across all projects.

We've switched our impact reporting to school year calendar which is far more logical for us. Making sure we follow-up and get feedback from everyone is a new challenge, but the data is starting to come in. We're also using the tracking spreadsheet to set growth targets and measure brand recognition (e.g. our social media followers, press articles and speaking opportunities) so we have a far clearer idea of our market reach.

“We’re planning to put together an impact report with the data”

We now use the consolidated spreadsheet to review key measures every board meeting, it’s a really useful tool. What we have now pulls together all organisational details in one place, we’re planning to put together an impact report with the data which we’ll be able to publish on our website, take to meetings and use to present to corporate philanthropists.

“Being more strategic means we’re more likely to win funding to enable us to deliver more programmes”

What we now have a much clearer idea of our objectives. It feels like the organisation is much more stable - being more strategic on devising projects that meet specific needs means we’re more likely to win funding to enable us to deliver more programmes. We’ve won two new big contracts recently, our earned income has shot up. I think we learned that there’s nothing wrong with being grant reliant, but it is of course good to have diversified incomes.

Being clear on what we do and what we do well has also helped us to create more partnerships with other organisations – for example our new Maternity Champions work with Paddington Development Trust. We will be expanding Family Drop-ins in North Westminster and now even have projects starting up outside London which is exciting for us.

“It was definitely worth it and perfectly doable!”

I’m still in touch with Payal, she was fantastic and even came along and co-presented what we were doing in a board meeting. There is a bit of time investment involved in the programme but considering what we got out of it, it was definitely worth it and perfectly doable! It’s useful to be accountable to someone and have scheduled meetings with someone who keeps you on track.

Borderland Voices

<http://www.borderlandvoices.org.uk/>

Founded in 1998 based in Leek, Staffordshire

Staff: 1, part-time

Mission: Promoting health and wellbeing through the arts

Borderland Voices is a tiny charity working across the Staffordshire Moorlands to promote mental health through the arts. CEO Andy Collins worked with a volunteer to find a way of measuring impact that made sense for a small organisation – it has already helped them to win new funding.



CEO – Andy Collins



We're a really tiny organisation, we employ freelance artists to deliver art sessions and are supported by a handful of volunteers, but I'm the only member of staff and I only work part-time. My main priority is to find funding and I quickly realized that in order to secure the money we need we have to be able to justify and evaluate what we're doing. I was trying to do bits and pieces of impact measurement but was conscious that there might be better ways to do it – I'm a one man band, I don't have anyone to bounce ideas off. None of the trustees have expertise in this area so I applied to Measuring the Good.

“For the collaboration to work that chemistry has got to be right with the volunteer”

I was happy to get outside expertise and have someone looking at our organisation with fresh eyes. Liz, the volunteer who we were matched with, was happy to travel just to see our set-up so that she could fully understand the shoestring that we operate on as well as the artworks that our participants produced. I got on well with her, for the collaboration to work that chemistry has got to be right with the volunteer. Liz really went above and beyond she did all sorts of research to understand the field we work in and made all sorts of useful suggestions.

“With an organisation the size of ours, qualitative data is the best you can do...we are not big enough to do reliable statistical studies”

I'm a mathematician by training which means that I like things to be ordered and always look for good ways to do things for least possible effort! With only tens of participants, you can't analyse numerically, we are simply not big enough to do reliable statistical studies, qualitative data is the best you can do so I worked with Liz to put together a really robust feedback questionnaire for

participants. The language needed to be non-threatening, and simplified for participants with learning disabilities. Our aim was to get feedback to understand what people get most satisfaction out of doing – and the impact of a service offering, if something clearly hasn't worked we wouldn't do it again.

“I've used the information in three grant applications... the feedback has given me lots of ideas”

Since we put this in place I've used the information in three grant applications – two of which have been successful. We are now presenting our annual report differently and including more narrative about our activities – it has developed into a useful marketing tool that we can submit with grant applications. The feedback has given me lots of ideas about things that that we could in the future. There have been suggestions about services we could deliver e.g. for local cottage hospital, and things like self-help groups (e.g. a knit and natter or a coloring group) that I'd be keen to start. We haven't made any radical changes but the information has allowed us to keep ticking over and fine tune our activities.

“Having deadlines means that you set aside the time to do what you said what you were going to do”

It was really helpful to have an outside impetus to keep thing going – I relied on Liz to check that we were progressing through the Measuring the Good handbook and keep us on course. This allowed me to focus on making sure that were achieving the things that I was hoping for and that we had concrete outcomes from the process. Liz and I would set dates to speak again at intervals, our meetings were spread out over 15-18 months. Having deadlines means that you set aside the time to do what you said what you were going to do.

“It doesn't need to take up vast amounts of time”

I would really recommend Measuring the Good to other small organisations – I work part-time, I do everything from admin to grant-applications – if you feel sorting out your impact measurement is something that needs doing, you'll find the time to do it. That said, it doesn't need to take up vast amounts of time, it depends on how much you've done already - most charities will already have some basic understanding and measures in place.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer - Payal Jain

Payal Jain is a senior Director of a bank who uses data analytics in her job every day. Also a qualified teacher, Payal has volunteered for two organisations with a strong educational focus. For Payal, Measuring the Good is a fantastic way to use her experience in robust analytics for the benefit of wider society. She's been overwhelmed and inspired by the passion of those CEOs that she's met as part of the programme.



My day job is in banking, I have quite a senior role helping banks get more value out of analytics - I know that there are so many charities out there that could be getting more out of data. Getting the right measures in place is so fundamental and enables an organisation to story-tell about their progress.

“The Measuring the Good programme is an opportunity to work with an organisation at enterprise level, it's a privilege to know that you're going to have the boardroom listening to your advice.”

I'm used to working for large organisations that are divided into departments and services, the Measuring the Good programme is an opportunity to work with an organisation at enterprise level, it's a privilege to know that you're going to have the boardroom listening to your advice. I'm a mathematician and a trained teacher, so the opportunity to bring my passion for education and analytical mind together to help education charities seemed like a good fit with who I am.

“Because of the work that we did together, they can now can articulate their story in such a strong way – it was very rewarding.”

Every project is different. With one organisation we spent a lot of time working to refine the organisation's vision, core objectives and enhancing the vision statement. To create useful impact measures you have to have a clear vision and mission, this kind of discussion is so interesting, it reaches deep into core of an organisation's identity. Because of the work that we did together, they can now can articulate their story in such a strong way – it was very rewarding.

With another organisation that was still in start-up mode we spent lots of time talking about priorities. The CEO had a really thorough business plan and the work that we did has helped her to identify what the areas of focus should be, and having the impact measures set out has helped them to win funding.

I'm still an advisor to both organisations I worked with, it's not expected but nice to keep the connection. Being a CEO can be a lonely job, and I think that having some outside expertise is useful.

“The people I’ve worked with are so passionate and committed...they are able to move mountains, their energy is amazing!”

My biggest learning is how important passion is – the people I’ve worked with may not have a corporate background but they are so passionate and committed to what they are doing, they are able to move mountains, their energy is amazing! In the corporate world we’re big on strategy but passion can often be lacking. Charity leaders do what’s expected and then go beyond, it’s so impressive. Seeing how far passion can take you is certainly my biggest learning and I’ve talked a lot about it with my own team at work.

I have quite a senior role so I’ll admit that there have been patches when fitting this in has been a challenge - you need diaries to align but it’s worth persisting and you can work together to set a pace that is realistic for everyone! I preferred to do meetings face-to-face where possible, it’s just more effective for everyone. I manage my time so that I can be available to do this, sometimes it means taking calls when I’m on holiday, but to me that’s a good use of my spare time.

“Volunteering is an opportunity to learn and use lots of soft skills... When you really count up the hours it isn’t that much time”

Working with such passionate people has been a real joy! Volunteering is an opportunity to learn and use lots of soft skills such as how to give feedback, how to have challenging conversations in a constructive way – it’s great for your own leadership skills. Working alongside a CEO means that you are able influence at a key level – the decisions taken affect the whole organisation and you start to see things in a more holistic way.

To anyone thinking of volunteering I’d say that it’s a great learning experience and you’ll work with some fantastic people. When you really count up the hours it isn’t that much time. Having holistic influence on an organisation is really rewarding.

Volunteer – Liz Frost

Liz Frost took a career break from her project management role at an outsourcing company to put her skills to work as a volunteer with Measuring the Good. She realised just how transferable her skills were and is now passionate about pursuing a career in the third sector.

“It’s a great privilege to be able to support someone leading an organisation.”

I used to be a project manager for an outsourcing company but I took a sabbatical from work to do voluntary work for charities and apply my professional skills in the third sector. Measuring the Good seemed like a great way to do this – I was able to use my project management skills which I really liked. When you work with small charities, you are working with the people who are doing things on

the ground, it's completely different to a big company where you have decisions by committee. It's a great privilege to be able to support someone leading an organisation.

"People working for charities are giving their all and they work really hard!"

My opinion of the charity sector has changed a lot, Andy who I worked with at Borderland Voices is immensely clever, she has amazing skills. I realised that people working for charities are giving their all and they work really hard for funding! A charity like Borderland Voices might be really tiny and it only helps a really small group of people, but the impact on that group is huge, and when you look at impact on the community, it's massively beneficial.

"I didn't know much about impact measurement when I started... now I've become quite passionate about it!"

I didn't know much about impact measurement when I started, I had set targets in the private sector, but wasn't sure how it worked in charity sector. I could see the theory of it and how it would help – now I've become quite passionate about it! Having a data set to prove that what you're doing works is really important, but you have to work out how to get to those figures. You need to approach it with a fundraising lens, thinking of ways to 'sell' the charity and anticipating what sort of things funders want to hear. There might be lots of difference in terminology between the corporate and charity world but what you're applying is the same, 'impact measurement' is just another way of saying 'success factors'.

"It's really not onerous... There's loads of support from the team"

I'm based quite far away from Borderland Voices, I spent time seeing the charity on the ground in Leek but everything else was done by phone which worked well. In total, it requires one long meeting and then five hours of calls so it's really not onerous. If your workplace is supporting you, you could just do the calls from the office. There's loads of support from the team at Measuring the Good.

"Now I've seen how I can apply my skills in the third sector I wouldn't want to do anything else!"

Volunteering for Measuring the Good has definitely influenced my career path. I decided that I don't want to go back into the private sector, now I've seen how I can apply my skills in the third sector I wouldn't want to do anything else! I still provide support to charities I have worked with on an ad-hoc basis. I think that having a different view-point and an external sounding board is helpful for many leaders of small charities.

"It's very fulfilling ...and it's nice to be able to apply your skills."

To anyone thinking of getting involved I'd say that it's very fulfilling, I'm hoping to do another project soon – it helps you to learn more about your community, get a different perspective on charities and social issues and it's nice to be able to apply your skills. On a personal level I got on really well with Andy – building that rapport is really important, more so with smaller charities. Andy is quite on her own, so just chatting about what's going on is helpful, sharing in her struggles and successes. I really enjoyed the experience!

Volunteer - Richard Allen



Richard Allen is a retired civil servant who splits his time between writing and consultancy. Volunteering for Measuring the Good is a great way to use his experience and help charities, while still leaving him with enough time to see his grandchildren.

I was a Civil Servant for 35 years, my work was always project-based - I'm used to looking at objectives and considering what a project is going to deliver. I took early retirement and now work as a consultant. I spend a lot of time writing, we travel when we can, and have grandchildren to see but I still have time to fit in Measuring the Good and I really enjoy doing it - I prefer this kind of volunteering to an ongoing regular commitment.

I've done four projects so far and I've love the fact that they have all been completely different, you face a new challenge each year. I like the fact that I can do a few hours here or there, I'm keeping my skills going, using my experience and even learning from every project I work on – I knew nothing about the charitable sector beforehand.

I don't have any personal connection to the organisations or causes I've worked with, Measuring the Good introduce me to the CEO and off we go. I've realised that the charitable sector varies enormously. My advice is really just a helping hand, putting them in the right direction, the people that ask for this type of help are relatively clued up. It is good to be able to use my experience to help an organisation realise whether or not it is achieving its charitable goals.

Volunteering is a very enjoyable experience. You've got to be able to listen and put yourself in other people's shoes but you learn a lot from it. It feels really worthwhile and you leave the organisation with something really useful and tangible. I don't tend to stay in touch that much at the end of the project, not being involved long-term allows me to move on and do a number of projects which keeps things really interesting.