

The Impact of The Laidlaw Foundation's Funding 2008-2012

"It is with your generous contribution that our organization has been able to accomplish what we have in five short years, captivating young enthusiasts of the arts and bringing the community closer together."

The Impact of Laidlaw's Investment in Youth-led Organizations 2008–2012

Executive Summary

In the summer of 2012 the Laidlaw Foundation hired independent evaluator Fiona Scott to undertake an evaluation of the effectiveness of their engaged grant-making strategies and to assess the impact they were having on the groups they were funding and on the issues that these groups were working on. The foundation was interested in understanding the impact on young people's positive youth development, for example the extent to which it provided opportunities for positive relationships and skill and talent development, as well as understanding grantees' relationships with the foundation and other groups.

The information in this report was gleaned from 61 grantee final reports of the 211 initiatives funded by Laidlaw from 2008 to the present. The evaluator also incorporated into the report, information referred to in these final reports, insight learned from interviews with some grantees to solicit candid information about the granting process, the review of Foundation materials stemming from the Most Significant Change process, the report of a formative evaluation undertaken by First Leadership in 2010/11, and a database of factual information from the Laidlaw granting period 2008-2012. One should take into account that the information presented in this report does not reflect all of the activity that has taken place during this period of time.

Although there was a lack of data to understand the full impact of the initiatives, the information suggests that the Foundation's funding provides many youth with a variety of opportunities to build friendships, develop skills, earn qualifications, refine talents, create and participate in community events, gain meaningful work experience, and access jobs. These are all factors that have been identified by research as being important in addressing social problems including violence, mental health and poverty.

As one of few of youth-led initiatives, young people are grateful for the respect that is implied by the Foundation's mission of supporting them. Grantees' relationships with the Foundation were very positive and young people feel supported by staff. The Foundation addresses a gap in funding where young people are seen as positive change agents in creating thriving communities. Opportunities to increase the effectiveness of projects and programs include increasing young peoples' capacity, implementing systematic data collection and considering funding deeper rather than wider.

Introduction

The success of young people relies on the support of people and organizations committed to providing them with opportunities for personal development, forming relationships, learning essential skills, discovering talents, and accessing employment and education opportunities.

In order to understand the impact of its most recent strategic plan on young peoples' development, the Laidlaw Foundation commissioned this evaluation of the programs it has funded in the last five years. The foundation is interested in knowing the impact of its funding on positive youth development including being able to identify:

- Are we making a difference?
- How do we know we're making a difference?
- How we work with our groups and grantees?
- Are we providing young people with opportunities to discover their talents?
- Are we facilitating relationships with supportive adults?
- Once they're discovered talent are we giving them opportunities to master them more deeply?
- What are their experiences and relationships with other groups?

Methodology

All final reports received by the Foundation between January 2008 and May 2012 were reviewed to identify outcomes of the projects that relate to positive youth development, including quantitative and qualitative data that would demonstrate the impact of the project. This included 61 of the 211 projects (29%) that were funded during this time period. The other 71% of projects were either still ongoing or were just coming to the end of their funding and had not yet submitted a final report, therefore the data presented only represent the outcomes for almost a third of funded projects. Existing information including Most Significant Change data and reports were also reviewed. In addition, 10 funded groups were interviewed in order to collect qualitative data on their experiences with Laidlaw processes and relationships with the foundation.

The quantitative data that was available was aggregated to identify the overall impact of the programs. Qualitative data was coded into the key themes that emerged.

What is Positive Youth Development?

“Human beings become a reflection of the world in which they develop. If that world is safe, predictable, and characterized by relationally and cognitively enriched opportunities, the child can grow to be self-regulating, thoughtful, and a productive member of family, community, and society. In contrast, if the developing child’s world is chaotic, threatening, and devoid of kind words and supportive relationships, a child may become impulsive, aggressive, inattentive, and have difficulties with relationships. That child may require special educational services, mental health or even criminal justice intervention” (Perry, B., 2005)

All youth have experiences that can be detrimental to their development and wellbeing. The difference for some youth is that they face a significant number of challenges (poverty, parental substance abuse or mental health problems, family conflict), and lack enough of the factors that other youth have that protect them against negative outcomes (increased social status, positive role models, meaningful opportunities) including crime, violence, mental health, and poverty.

Promoting healthy youth development means providing young people with the skills, resources, relationships and experiences that instill in them a sense of value, confidence, self-esteem, and hope for the future. In positive youth development, “youth are not broken, in need of psychosocial repair, or problems to be managed (Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998 in Lerner, 2005). Rather, all youth are seen as resources to be developed” (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003a, b in Lerner, 2005).

The findings of the research on positive youth development are echoed in The Laidlaw Foundation’s theory of change that identifies supporting young people in enhancing and further developing their capabilities as critical in addressing today’s social problems (First Leadership Limited, 2011).

Positive youth development means increasing the protective factors, and reducing the risk factors that contribute to negative social outcomes.

What are the Factors That Influence Positive Youth Development?

Extensive research has identified the factors that impede positive youth development and that can lead to negative social outcomes. Preventing these problems means addressing their causes. We know that many young people succeed despite difficult circumstances while others do not, also known as resilience. Studies that have followed young people at risk have found that the difference between those who thrive and those who don't is the presence of quality relationships in the young person's life (Schonert-Reichl, 2008). A number of other personal and systemic factors have been identified that contribute to violence, mental health problems and poverty. Knowing what causes issues will lead to the solutions.

Violence

The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence (McMurtry and Curling, 2008) identifies many of the systemic issues that contribute to violence:

- Lack of economic opportunity
- Lack of a youth voice
- Poverty
- Racism
- Health
- Issues in the education system
- Issues in the justice system
- Community design

Dr Bruce Perry, leading international expert on trauma, has identified 6 personal factors that serve as vaccines against violence (Perry, 2005):

- Attachment – being able to form and maintain healthy emotional bonds and relationships
- Affiliation – being able to join and contribute to a group
- Tolerance – understanding and accepting differences in others
- Respect – finding values in differences, appreciating worth in yourself and others
- Self-regulation – containing impulses, the ability to notice and control primary urges as well as feelings such as frustration

Mental Health

The Canadian Population Health (2009) Initiative defines mental health as:

- The ability to enjoy life
- Dealing with life's challenges
- Emotional well-being
- Spiritual well-being
- Social connections and respect for culture, equity, social justice and personal dignity

The Public Health Agency of Canada (2011) has adapted a definition of positive mental health from Keyes (2007) and defines it as:

- Having a purpose in life
- Positive relations with others
- Experiencing personal growth
- Social acceptance, social coherence and making contributions to society

Skills, Employment and Poverty Reduction

In both education and business, leaders have identified a gap in skills among young people. The Conference Board report suggests that young people leaving school were lacking in the following essential skills for success at work (The Conference Board et al., 2006):

- Oral and written communications solving
- Professionalism and work ethic
- Working in diverse teams
- Leadership and project management
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Applying technology

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills has identified the following skills as crucial for young peoples' success in 21st century jobs (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009):

- Creativity
- Critical Thinking
- Collaboration
- Information, Media and Technology
- Global Awareness

The Partnership has also identified how the arts can help develop 21st century skills. See resource here: http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/P21_arts_map_final.pdf

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) suggests that:

- “Investing in youth to give them a fair chance in the world of work is more than ever a key policy priority in all countries.”
- “Tackling youth unemployment and under-employment or inactivity no doubt requires a comprehensive policy strategy that removes the different barriers in order to achieve productive and rewarding jobs” (Scarpetta and Sonnet, 2012).

These are the evidence-based factors for the conditions that are known to contribute to violence, mental health problems, and poverty. The answer to solving these social ills, therefore, is to address these factors by creating opportunities for young people to be involved in projects that they create, where they can build relationships, learn skills, gain meaningful experiences, access jobs and connect with their culture and community.

What Works in Promoting Positive Youth Development?

Programs aimed at improving outcomes for young people have existed for many years. Some of these interventions have been effective in improving young people's development while others have not. Researchers have identified a number of factors that contribute to the effectiveness of interventions. Understanding the principles of what has worked can help create effective and sustainable programs.

The Learning Partnership's report to the Canadian Council on Learning identified the following key attributes that are common to successful practices aimed at increasing resilience in young people (The Learning Partnership, 2008):

Community centric

Using a community engagement model – people working collaboratively, through “inspired action and learning to create and realize bold visions for the common future” of their youth at risk

Child and youth centered

Including a focus on youth-driven programs

Applying a positive approach

To see all individuals as “at promise” rather than “at risk”

Governance structure and integrated funding:

Including co-ordinated planning, integrated service delivery and long-term funding and recognition for the time it takes programs to work (i.e. more than 18 months)

Foundation of evidence-based research and evaluation

Decisions should be based on the best available evidence

What Works in Prevention: Based on extensive research and reviews of hundreds of programs, the authors identify several important principles in implementing effective programs (Nation, 2003). Programs should:

- Be comprehensive
- Include varied teaching methods
- Provide sufficient dosage (enough of a program or activity to have an effect)

- Be theory driven
- Provide opportunities for positive relationships
- Be appropriately timed
- Be socio-culturally relevant
- Include outcome evaluation
- Involve well-trained staff

See also Bond and Carmola-Hauf. (2004) Taking Stock and Putting Stock in Primary Prevention: Characteristics of Effective Programs. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Spring 2004

These evidence-based criteria should be applied to any initiative in order to ensure that the program or project will be effective in reaching its goals. By their nature, youth-led programs are youth-centered, community centric, apply a positive approach and provide opportunities for positive relationships.

What is the Impact of Laidlaw's Investment in Youth-led Programs in the Last 5 Years?

The Laidlaw Foundation has been successful in facilitating a variety of events, programs, and projects that contribute to positive social outcomes for youth. Note that the data is not a full reflection of the impact of Laidlaw's investment.

As a result of The Laidlaw Foundation's funding in the last five years:

61 youth-led projects resulted in the development, planning and implementation of **3959** events or programs that enabled at least **91** young people to gain work experience and an income. These projects engaged **58,124** other young people and community members to attend the events and programs.

Young people have different passions and talents, as reflected in the variety of program types funded by the Foundation, including:

- **8** Arts/Media/Science Alternative Learning and Education programs
- **4** Performing Arts projects
- **3** Homelessness Arts projects
- **3** Criminal Justice programs
- **7** Advocacy / Awareness / Knowledge Development projects
- **8** Cultural projects
- **4** LGBT projects
- **2** Recreational/Drop in programs
- **1** Sports and life skills project

NB some groups were funded twice within the five-year period but were only counted once

The projects reported partnerships with **124** different organizations including community groups, educational institutions and local and provincial government. These partnerships provide opportunities for young people to build relationships with peers and other positive role models who are involved in other community-building initiatives. The list of organizations that groups reported working with can be found in Appendix B.

Social Outcomes

Below are the numbers of projects that reported outcomes related to the risk and protective factors for social issues as per the research evidence. Appendix A contains the activities, outcomes and indicators based on grantees' final reports.

21 projects had outcomes related to **mental health and wellbeing** (for example young people built friendships, received mentorship, connected to culture, built confidence and self esteem)

15 projects had outcomes that related to **capacity building** (for example created a Board of Directors, established a governance structure, built a team, secured a space)

26 projects had outcomes related to **skill and talent development** (for example, learned IT skills, budgeting, event planning, or discovered or refined a talent)

12 programs reported **reducing barriers** for youth participation (for example, provided TTC tokens, free programming)

4 projects reported outcomes that related to facilitating **work experience or employment** (for example provided internships, work experience, skills, income)

9 projects had outcomes that related to **increasing awareness and knowledge** (for example, produced reports or policy documents)

Qualitative Data

Some qualitative feedback that was provided in the reports included:

"The collective has made me more aware of my strengths as well as the possibilities of community involvement. I find myself actively searching for ways to be more involved with social justice issues that I am passionate about. I have learned that there are opportunities out there and all I have to do is find them."

"This type of project is important to me because it is how I can contribute to the community through things I love most: Discussion and art. And through discussion and art we are able to provide work that is effective, fun and ever changing."

"Youth are not always listened to and don't have opportunities to express themselves. And yet, youth are an essential part of the community. This project was important for me to feel like I can make a difference and because this was also an art project, I felt I was able to develop creative skills."

"I like this place because it reaches out and teaches in a way that the schools don't teach and makes it more interesting for kids."

Relationship to the Foundation, Granting Process, and Organizational Process

All of the groups reported extremely positive relationships with the Laidlaw Foundation and its staff. The Foundation's commitment to youth-led programming has given opportunities to young people who would otherwise unlikely be able to access funding for community initiatives. The youth are after all the agents of change, but as youth, they also require significant resources and support in order to develop effective programs and projects that are cost effective for the Foundation. There were a number of successes as well as challenges faced by grantees, many of which were common between the groups.

Successes

Philosophy and Approach

"The thing that's different about Laidlaw is that it is flexible, which is super important for grassroots groups or startups. When you're on the edge of something, unless you have the money to play around, you're never going to get to that language or that method or whatever it is that you know is there but you don't know exactly what it is."

"The most valuable has been the partnership – their willingness to be proactive and responsive, not static and traditional. They have a willingness to allow things to be what they are – not prescribing a predetermined outcome. And they are great at creating the conditions and environment for innovative work to happen."

"Philosophically and terms of a way of practice they set the bar very high and they opened up the field. Laidlaw is the first funder that has broken down the wall. Violetta is the spearhead for so many of us in this work. The way the whole program has been approached and reconfigured to work in more open platform, has changed how we feel about approaching funding bodies."

"Laidlaw understands the importance of relationships in this work. You can't be successful without relationship-building and trust-building."

Support

"It's been a really positive experience, not only for the participants, but for the staff and our growth and development. Because of their funding not only have we been able to develop, implement and sustain the project, we have also made connections with other groups and other funders, and have been able to attend different conferences and trainings in order to make our programs stronger. I don't know if Laidlaw even understands the impact that funding has had on me as an individual. Having someone like Ana that you can reach out to at any time has been so valuable. She always makes herself available, and we always get support from her."

"Laidlaw staff are exceptional. They are hands-on, which gives us a chance to demonstrate we are the real deal - that we're doing what we say we're doing."

"They are remarkably attentive, they are what I would describe as real partners in community development – they really care about what is happening."

"The Laidlaw granting process is one of the easiest we have ever encountered. The one on one support that Ana provides is absolutely essential to the smooth efficient process. Ana makes herself available whenever needed to help with guidance, suggestions, feedback critics and advice the whole way through. This type of support for youth led groups is crucial to our success, without it our ability to progress and continue would be much more difficult. Ana makes the process feel easy and breaks down every single thing we need to know. "

"In terms of the grant-making practices of the Laidlaw Foundation, its guidelines, priorities and processes were made clear to our organization immediately. As well the assistance provided by grant officer Ana Skinner was readily available and immensely helpful in attaining feedback and answering any and all inquires about the granting procedure. "

"Your support has given us the confidence to dream big and the means by which to succeed."

"Violetta and Ana are remarkably attentive. They are what I would describe as real partners in community development – they really care about what is happening."

Although each group appreciated the ability to explore and make mistakes, they are also keen on receiving support to help them avoid mistakes. There was concern that

Laidlaw's flexibility could also lead to being taken advantage of. Some groups reported that they would be happy to receive feedback from Laidlaw along the lines of "we like what you're doing but we'd like to see you develop in X". The group reported: "we might have been more focused and intentional if we'd had more help." Another group reported: Laidlaw has an amazing ability to be flexible, however within that nature some added layers of process may be helpful."

Challenges

Many projects have been successful and continue to be while others face significant challenges and still others fail. What is the difference between groups that succeed and groups that don't? Several factors have contributed to projects not working out as planned, or not working out at all.

Funding/Staffing/Resources

Projects that did not have adequate budgets for full time staff had significant challenges. The young organizers have big dreams, but are limited by small funding. Several young people were working on projects part time, while working other full time jobs, since project funding mostly had to be spent on expenses incurred in implementing the project. Programs are also heavily reliant on volunteers, which often creates challenges.

While organizations are meant to be implementing programming, they are also constantly having to try to secure other funding. Fundraising can be a full time job, especially for youth-led initiatives, where there are few organizations that fund the sector. They are not eligible to apply for many grants and rely on fundraising events that take a significant amount of time and effort, often for little return. This means that they take on extra work in their already-busy schedules, which creates stress. With so many different groups, each doing their own administration, significant time is spent on this. For those projects that do not receive the full amount requested, re-visioning and re-planning is required, and groups often underestimate the amount of work still required to complete their objectives.

For example one group determined that it was going to have to find, write and submit 18 funding proposals if they were going to be able to continue with what they were doing – they had nowhere near the capacity to do this. This meant they had to let go of staff which 'caused turbulence'. Other groups reported:

"The financial funding was a concern and did not support any full-time staff. Without full-time staff support, we were largely dependent on volunteers...The amount of dependency on volunteers needs to be realistic. There is a delicate balance between part-time staff and a very keen volunteer that needs to be respected. The workload of a part-time staff should only be accountable to the staff, not the volunteer. The dynamic between a volunteer and staff also needs to be recognized and carefully managed."

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“Due to the staffing shortfall, projects were left in mid-course. This caused delays in some projects and jeopardized its launch plans. “

“Resources and scope: While we revised our scope as much as possible to reflect the resources secured in 2010, it was not enough to cover incidentals and still stretched our volunteers to the edge. In the future, when we are looking at the scopes of our projects in accordance to the resources available, we will need to build in incidentals to buffer shortages in manpower and budget.”

At times it is easy to misread the enthusiasm and energy of young volunteers for ability to take on more workload than their schedule actually permits. “ This causes accountability issues when it comes to deadlines and critical check points, as well as leaving the volunteer vulnerable to burn-outs. When the line is blurry between the responsibilities of a staff and a volunteer, it is a quick route to festering feelings of resentment, competitiveness and/or jealousy. The power dynamic between staff and volunteer can also be detrimental to working relationship within the organization and should be carefully monitored.”

“Although the funds provided by the Laidlaw Foundation allowed us to stabilize the core of our infrastructure, the majority of the human resources of our organization were stretched in handling the duties of program development and delivery as well as event planning/implementation. “

“We could only hire one full time staff that had the responsibility of managing multiple programming activities while attending to the project participants and our stakeholder needs. We relied heavily on volunteer staff and had a limited programming budget to hire consultants that proved to be desperately needed throughout the project term. “

“As there is a high staff turnover, programs and services in the past have been abandoned or not carried out in quality.”

“We needed a more senior person to get guidance from about some of the challenges, but we had limited resources.”

Some groups have had significant challenges including personnel, however they lack HR resources and polices, and as a result projects can suffer. For example:

“this situation required a lot of time and attention from our advisory board which resulted in some burning out. It has taken us a long time to rebuild the relationship with those volunteers and some may not return.”

Lack of Skills/Experience

Some young organizers lack the skills and experience to properly plan and manage an event, as well as an organization. Although Laidlaw projects provide young people with the chance to learn these skills, some groups have too little experience to get them to the next level. There is a lack of knowing what can reasonably be accomplished in a certain time frame, as well as some of the skills required including grant writing, dealing effectively with advisory groups, Boards of Directors and other professional relationships, as well as financial management, youth and community engagement, evaluation and governance. Some groups started projects without a clear vision, agreement or plan from stakeholders on the project or organization’s goals, or how they would be achieved.

“Having a clearer sense of the goals of the company. Half the company was interested in producing professional level productions, while the other half was invested in educating younger youth in performing and developing their voice. It seems important to specify if a project’s primary goal is to produce the art or to create educational opportunities.”

“We also had setbacks with getting people, at every step. We found it hard to attract young people who were not already performers or were in high school. In addition, we found it difficult to find community groups to speak to, although this was more manageable. Even so, we sent out a number of e-mail and made numerous phone calls to groups with little response. We also found it difficult to attract audience members to the shows.”

“We began the year with a business model and plan that looked solid on paper. However, as we began to offer our services, we quickly learned the assumptions underpinning it were false...Without a clear model, it becomes difficult to apply for grants or other sources of funding.”

“We had a lot of setbacks in terms of time. Most of the shows had longer rehearsal periods than intended, as it took our writers a significant amount of time to write and revise the scripts. It was also difficult to stay on schedule as it was a full season, but we did not have people who could work fulltime on the company.”

“Back-up of all IT information and equipment: We had trusted all of our IT information and equipment to one person and upon reflection, this was a mistake. Just as any business, we must set protocols and back-up systems for important data and

technology. The use of our equipment should only be for the purpose of the organization and with defined consequences if damages, lost and/or detainment. One option we are pursuing is a basic legal contract when staff or volunteers are managing confidential information and equipment.”

“I was disillusioned about the capacity I needed to run an organization.”

“The structure of the company lead to some challenges. Even after we had had discussions and made company plans, new members would join and vote to have things all changed, leading to re-discussing the same issues and redoing work. This made it difficult to have a direction. Equally, many members would only join for the time of the show they were involved in and leave as soon as it was finished, again making it difficult to develop a company and a consistent year. This also meant that the few people who stayed were left carrying a lot of the work.”

Lack of secure, affordable space

Everyone is well-aware of the lack of public space for youth. Several groups had difficulties accessing secure, affordable space to create and deliver programs and projects. This also causes delays, and sometimes problems with budgets when groups have to pay more than they planned for. Young people have suggested that the best solution would be to adapt a similar approach to the Centre for Social Innovation who purchased property to rent to social programs at a reasonable cost. Logistics and finances aside, the potential for knowledge sharing and collaboration among Laidlaw-funded groups could be significant in such a situation, as well as reduced stress and cost to programs.

Grant Review Process

Several groups indicated wanting more clarity on the people and processes involved with reviewing grants, and expressed some concern about the objectivity of the process given that in some situations, members of groups who were being considered for funding are a part of the team deciding who will receive funding.

Some Key Learnings and Suggestions Reported by Groups

The groups faced a variety of challenges and as a result, had a variety of learnings. Many groups reported information that would be valuable for other groups to know. Although it was outside the scope of this evaluation, there is the potential to create a resource with examples of successes, challenges and learnings among the groups based on this information. Some of these learnings are copied below.

Knowledge Sharing and Increased Connection Among Groups

Several groups indicated that they had received helpful tools and resources from The Laidlaw Foundation staff and had attended several events. Others reported that they wanted more and/or different events and resources.

Events

Some groups reported wanting better communication and access to other groups to talk, share successes and challenges, and collaborate, however they lack these opportunities, including a space to bring everyone together, the manpower to organize it, and the resources to make it effective. One group suggested quarterly convening opportunities where learnings are shared. Two other groups reported:

“We would have liked Laidlaw to take one more step of gathering the YSI team – do an annual thing with all YSI funded groups – to gain an understanding of how we are related in the city and our impact collectively.”

“We need a networking activity event with lots of interaction and sharing. Somewhere where you can learn what people do, what you would like to know, and who can do it. Need a lot of interaction and sharing between people who have an identity as a group of people funded by Laidlaw.”

“Laidlaw could do more convening, bridge building, and inspirational leadership, e.g. bringing funders together. They are well-placed to do some of that convening – they are a small player in terms of money but a big player in terms of leadership capacity.”

The Laidlaw events that young people had been to were found to be productive and lead to other outcomes including events and collaborations. One group reported that events could be created and implemented by the groups themselves.

Resources

Another group suggested that there is an extensive amount of knowledge that should be shared about the development of the youth-led/youth-organizing sector that is a phenomenon in Toronto, and which was spearheaded by The Laidlaw Foundation. The group felt that a written narrative of the development of youth organizing would help groups understand what has happened, in order to understand where they are in the process. Other groups were keen to have other resources, for example, information on other arts-based organizations that could help and give advice on organizational issues.

On running an organization, business, or social enterprise

One group reported the following comprehensive learnings on running an organization, business and/or social enterprise:

Social enterprises are NOT nonprofits

They are businesses, or at least business operations that form part of a nonprofit's revenue stream. They need to be treated, planned and executed like businesses. That is also to say that in a social enterprise, the social motive does not come second to business operations, however, the two need to be separated. We recommend treating your social motive as a pre-requisite of your social enterprise, and then focusing on the business of business to fulfill your goals. Finances are impartial – they will not be easier on you because you have a social motive.

Decide what you are at the start

It is extremely difficult for organizational cultures to change. We found it nearly impossible to switch from a nonprofit mode of operating, to a for-profit mode. The narrative of this identity indecision is one that our advisors picked up on early and warned us about from the start. They were right. Decide whether you rely on yourself for revenue, or others. Then plan, operate and evaluate yourself that way.

Determine early if you have a sufficiently paying market (or not)

We did not. But it took us too long a long time to acknowledge it. If you don't have a paying market, you need to find ways that others can pay for your beneficiaries.

*Move to data-driven decision making as soon as possible
Your organization generates all sorts of data. The key is to capture the data that informs you about your progress. Too many organizations make decisions based on hunches, feelings or emotions. Data is always incomplete, but is evidence. Data will allow you to make far more accurate hunches about what to do next. Focusing on data was a cultural shift for us, but should be credited with lengthening our financial livelihood threefold, from 3 months to 9 months.*

Social enterprises need coherent business models: which is different from knowing one's cause, or one's business "idea". A business model is the full map or rationale of how you will gather, produce and deliver value.

Sustainability

All of the groups are understandably concerned about sustainability. One group reported that it would be good to know Laidlaw's road map, i.e. knowing from the outset how long Laidlaw would potentially be able to support them for, and along the way helping to build a plan for sustainability, including an exit strategy and other funding solutions. For example facilitating relationships with funders that could continue to support programs that Laidlaw has invested in. They also felt they needed help from Laidlaw with things like evaluation, to build an organizational profile that would set them up for success post-Laidlaw funding.

Groups who were initially funded by Laidlaw but who were unable to secure subsequent funding from the Foundation despite being deemed successful, sometimes struggle with seeing new groups being funded to do new projects, or projects similar to their own that they have already built. Although initial funding gives them opportunities they wouldn't have otherwise had, the disappointment at working hard at a project, only for it to be discontinued, can be disheartening.

"Everything is project-based. I would hope to see a bit more sustainable stuff – 2 or 3 years – something that you know can continue. The problem we have is we start a good project, put it together then it's done in a year. That project can't continue and you can't go back to Laidlaw with the same idea. I would like to see more continuous grants."

Other suggestions and advice included:

- Teambuilding is the key piece – the team needs to be solid. You need to build a team rooted in the same values.

- Friendship has to be friendship and business has to be business.
- Our venue pulled out 2 weeks before program. We learned we should have contracts with partners as well as other places in mind. You need to have ongoing follow-ups with partners.
- The key things we learned is that fundraising is the most important aspect of an organization. You can be an award-winning program...but still be broke and have to lock your doors because fundraising is not happening. Once an organization realizes this, their life expectancy increased dramatically.
- Youth respond better in settings when it is their peers leading them, they are more encouraged to participate and take part in growth experiences.
- In order to avoid conflict, we would have mapped out roles and responsibilities earlier in the year and more thoroughly. We would have made it so that everyone initially had a defined, significant role with equal responsibilities so that everyone could have equally pulled their weight.
- The one aspect that might be helpful is that instead of our collective having to look back on an entire year; it would be great if we could have a log in which to keep track of our progress with better accuracy. It could either be at the half-year mark or on a month-to-month basis. That way, when the final report is needed, it is more easily compiled. This would be a great extra way to keep the group on task throughout the year.
- Establishing clear job descriptions and adhering to the set roles and responsibilities is a challenge with a small team. We are constantly forced to go beyond their scope in order to get things done. Not having set job descriptions though and a more formal team can result in lack of clarity and interpersonal issues, especially amongst such a small team.
- Burnout can be a major factor with a small team. Having scheduled check ins (though this might seem like a formality with a small team) are a good way to make sure that everyone is on track and not getting overwhelmed. Having regular check - ins with advisors, etc often takes a backseat to frontline work, but is key in ensuring that the organization and team are strong and staying on mission.
- “We continue to have great success when we bring youth out of the city, have very hands on exercises and workshops, and different generations and disciplines coming together.”
- I learned that a true understanding of how planning a project on paper is much different from the outcomes of the project delivery once other individuals and their needs influence the potential direction of the project delivery.

What can Laidlaw do to Identify and Understand the Impact of its Projects and the Foundation's Collective Impact?

Increase Data Collection Efforts

Given the Foundation's focus on positive youth development, and a desire to be able to identify the impact their funding, indicators need to be in place to measure the success of projects. Business, health care and environmental sectors rely on solid evidence for their best solutions. Similarly, by using data and research, the youth organizing sector can make informed and evidence-based decisions about what really works.

The data suggest that Laidlaw is having an impact on positive youth development, however the lack of data does not allow for interpretation of how big the impact is. Data is important in order to know how many youth are accessing programs (need programs to report on numbers of participants, attendees, events etc), what is being provided, and how young people are benefiting from the projects. If projects deliver a series of events, attendance rates can tell us whether or not young people are engaging in it. One of the programs ran a series of 3 workshops – at the beginning they had over 40 participants, and by the third they had fewer than 10. This doesn't mean it was a failure, but it suggests that further investigation is required to figure out what's going on.

It's not only quantitative data that is important – “no numbers without stories and no stories without numbers. Quantitative data can tell us whether or not something worked, while qualitative data is also important to tell us how something worked, and why.

The current reporting structure made it impossible to find data to determine the outcomes of all of the groups. There is a question on the current reporting form asking groups how they measured their outcomes, and more often than not, groups reported what they did, but not what they found. Some of the groups were reporting on particular outcomes that others weren't, and often I was familiar with a program and knew that they had more positive outcomes that they could report on. However the groups aren't necessarily aware of the indicators they could use to measure their success.

Other programs provided so little information that it was not clear what the project was or what had been accomplished. One group was unable to say how many youth they had worked with, how many partnerships they had, or how many sessions they held, while other groups reported for example 300 individual sessions, 5 community workshops, and 17 public events. The same group that was unable to identify any outcomes failed to respond to the invitation to participate in this evaluation. Based on the information available, I would have concerns about the effectiveness of this group.

Young organizers need help with identifying their outcomes and the indicators that can be used to measure these outcomes. Increased accountability and understanding of the need for information will support the effectiveness and sustainability of groups.

Examples of Known Indicators That Programs Have not Tapped Into

Through conversations with Sketch for this evaluation, it transpired that young people are actually getting off the streets as a result of the funding provided by CUE/Sketch, as well as gaining an income. These indicators are in line with the Calgary Homeless Foundation's System Planning Framework (Calgary Homeless Foundation 2012) that identifies increased income and housing as measures of an organization's effectiveness in ending homelessness. This information is not contained in the final report.

Another example is the Somali Youth Association and Amadeusz, who are both involved in providing alternative learning opportunities for young marginalized people. Both groups have enabled young people to complete their GED and both groups felt that because they only had a few young people successfully complete qualifications that the data wasn't that powerful. On the contrary, research data on the costs associated with dropping out of high school reports lifetime costs of over \$300,000 in lost earnings etc. This means that even only 2 people gaining an educational qualification can potentially reduce costs to society by \$600,000. This is therefore important data for organizations to collect and disseminate.

One more example is The Remix Project. Through working with them over a 6 month period, I was able to identify a variety of data as evidence of their effectiveness that they had not been using before, including: the number of people who re-engaged with school or graduated high school as a result of participating in the program, the total number of youth who received post-secondary scholarships through Remix, and the number of youth who accessed internships or jobs through the program. These are all indicators of positive youth development. The Remix Project is the most effective program that I'm aware of in terms of positive youth development. The program addresses more risk and protective factors than any other program, meets many of the criteria of effective interventions, and has significant tangible outcomes that are undoubtedly saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in mental health, crime and poverty.

The type of data that Laidlaw could collect would help the Foundation demonstrate its impact to other funders and stakeholders, and help raise the profile of the effectiveness of the youth organizing sector.

Suggested Revisions to Reporting Template

It will be important for Laidlaw to create an environment where data collection is understood to be able to help the projects do their work successfully. Groups might be resistant at first, however it's the only way Laidlaw will be able to identify the impact and cost-effectiveness of their investment, and the only way for projects to be able to determine their impact. I do believe that it will help groups identify and measure their outcomes.

The attached revised suggested reporting template is based on the outputs, outcomes and indicators identified in the reports as well as the research on positive youth development. It is designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. It is simply a suggestion to elicit the data that is required to understand Laidlaw's impact, with the understanding that Laidlaw is seeking the answers to other questions, as well as the fact that the template has been revised in the past to reflect requirements that will need to be taken into account.

What can Laidlaw do to Increase its Impact on Positive Youth Development?

The Laidlaw Foundation has been effective in promoting positive youth development, however some programs are more effective than others. Below are some ideas on how Laidlaw could increase the effectiveness and impact of its funded projects, based on feedback from groups, as well as the research evidence on positive youth development, and the criteria of effective programs.

- Increase youth capacity before beginning project - ensure adequate resources, knowledge, training, skills and support for groups. Experience and skills in grant writing, project planning, governance, evaluation, indicators, facilitation, finance (e.g. ArtReach workshops, but also they need and want one-on-one help)
- Create tools for collecting data, measuring impact and reporting and increase data collection
- Make sure goals are attainable and agreed upon by all stakeholders
- Facilitate more communication and knowledge sharing, including best practices, among groups. Perhaps some case studies on groups who have succeeded and what they have done along the way, as well as groups who have struggled, and what they learned that would have helped them be more effective. A number of groups reported developing toolkits and resources – these could be collated and disseminated
- Facilitate more support by providing external expertise on a particular topic, including financial literacy, governance, evaluation
- Ensure funding enables successful project completion including adequate staff
- Facilitate access to, and training in, technology tools e.g. project planning
- Mobilize knowledge on the effectiveness of the programs in promoting positive youth development
- And/or invest more heavily in existing organizations that can demonstrate effectiveness and sustainability, and less so on startup groups that have yet to gain essential skills and experience, but invest in providing/facilitating opportunities to develop those capacities within existing successful programs.

Conclusion

The Laidlaw Foundation's commitment to giving young people a voice is commendable. Many of the programs become the proverbial villages it takes to raise a child – a community of peers and elders who are positive role models, where there are opportunities for meaningful learning and experience. In today's climate where young people are increasingly marginalized, and then blamed for their problems, there is an urgent need for organizations like the Laidlaw Foundation, who recognize the importance of providing relationships and opportunities to develop skills and talents in order to help young people succeed.

Programs and projects do suffer a lack of resources, particularly for staffing, to enable them to commit to and successfully complete the project. Although funding and resource struggles are not uncommon to the nonprofit sector, a deeper investment in programs that can demonstrate effectiveness and sustainability might be more cost effective by creating a stronger impact in the long run.

The Laidlaw Foundation's mission of "promoting positive youth development through inclusive youth engagement in the arts, environment and in community", meets many of the criteria for effective youth programs: being community-centric, youth-driven, and applying a positive approach. For many young people, the mere opportunity to try to create change in their community, whether or not it works, provides opportunities for learning. In order to ensure a deeper impact however, the sustainability and effectiveness of projects and programs also depends on:

- Increasing young peoples' capacity: providing more training and skill development opportunities as well as developing and sharing more resources and expertise
- Increasing data collection to identify effective programs
- Re-evaluating funding policies: considering funding fewer projects that are deemed effective for longer periods and with increased resources.

The current data limits the interpretation of the full impact of its investments, however the Laidlaw Foundation's funding provided more than 60 opportunities and almost 400 events to over 3000 youth to build relationships, develop skills, discover talents, gain educational qualifications, access employment opportunities, connect with their culture, and to have a voice in their futures and their communities. By addressing these factors, Laidlaw's investment contributes to the positive development of thousands of young people in Ontario.

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Appendix A

The Laidlaw Foundation Logic Model

Activities/Outputs	Outcomes	Indicators
	Health and Wellbeing	
<p>Events Workshops Conferences Lecture Series Festivals Showcase Artist talks Day trips/field trips Performances Camps Fundraiser Retreat</p> <p>Programming Alternative education/after school program -creative arts -media arts – film, graphic design, photography -recording arts -performing arts -sports -general recreation</p> <p>drop-in/safe space</p> <p>Produced film, report,</p>	<p>Built friendships and relationships Created connections with other community members and organizations Positive role models Connection to culture Sense of belonging Hope for the future Confidence Self-esteem</p>	<p>How many formal relationships did young people build as a result of your program (e.g. an assigned mentor)?</p> <p>How many informal relationships can youth build as a result of your program (e.g. how many other participants in the program, how many other community members are directly involved)?</p> <p>Self-report by participants – brief questionnaire to ask if the program helped them connect to culture, develop sense of belonging, confidence, etc.) including qualitative/anecdotal feedback and stories from participants</p> <p>Self-report by artists about what the program/project meant to them, how it helped them</p> <p>How many films/report/videos/performances etc?</p> <p>Number of young people who accessed the space, participation</p>

<p>video, article, play, performance etc</p> <p>Social Support Provided mentoring/positive role models Provided tutoring</p> <p>Research (including focus groups) Developed campaigns or other documents, materials, resources or movements (including videos, digital media, blogs, newsletter) Advocacy Outreach</p>		<p>rates, what did it mean to them to have the space?</p>
	<p>Poverty/Social Inclusion</p>	
	<p>Employment Internships Work Experience Employment skills - Help with resumes, interviews, job searching Provided an income (e.g. grants, honoraria, full or part time employment, or contract employment)</p>	<p>How many people gained income as a result of the project that Laidlaw funded (e.g. how many project staff as well as how many contractors, facilitators, consultants, artists were paid)</p> <p>How many young people gained work experience as a result of the program?</p> <p>How many young people found other work experience, internships or employment as a result of the program?</p>
	<p>Education and Training Gained formal</p>	<p>How many young people received an educational qualification as a</p>

	<p>educational qualification (high school diploma, GED) Accessed education (e.g. facilitated post-secondary education) Attended/graduated from alternative learning program Facilitated scholarship</p>	<p>result of the program?</p> <p>How many people accessed other community programs or training opportunities as a result of the program?</p> <p>How many people accessed post secondary education as a result of your program?</p> <p>How many people received scholarships as a result of participating in your program?</p>
	<p>Skill and Talent Development</p> <p>Communication (oral and written) Collaboration and Teamwork Creativity Critical thinking and problem solving Global awareness Technology and Media (including film and recording/editing software – FinalCut, Protools etc) Financial literacy Administration Event planning Budgeting Evaluation Grantwriting Leadership Conflict resolution</p> <p>Discovered, explored or improved talent –</p>	<p>What skills did people learn? Participants can complete brief surveys about the skills they learned. Demonstrate how the youth acquire these skills (e.g. through a 6 month program, through a series of workshops etc)</p> <p>What did you accomplish?</p> <p>How did you develop capacity? How many new advisory committee members?</p>

	<p>art (dance, visual art, media arts, creative arts, music)</p> <p>Capacity building Established governance structure Secured a space Developed organizational policies Gained charitable status Created social enterprise Built a team or advisory committee Developed curriculum Created partnerships Increased network Developed Resources</p>	<p>How many new partners, what are their roles? How many new members, supporters etc?</p>
	<p>Housing Facilitated housing</p>	<p>How many people accessed housing as a result of your program?</p>
	<p>Increased awareness Increased knowledge Changed public perceptions</p>	<p>What documents did you produce? How many people accessed them (online, in print etc)? What feedback have you had? How many events did you hold? How many people attended? If you ran a series of events, did participation rates rise or fall? By how much?</p>
	<p>Connected youth to services or other</p>	<p>Which services? Which resources? How many referrals?</p>

	resources	
	Engaged youth in social justice	<p>Numbers of young people involved, increased participation rate, increased membership</p> <p>Numbers of youth volunteered or got involved with other programs/campaigns/community work</p>
	Increased parent or community involvement	How many parents? How many community members became involved?
		<p>How many events, workshops, festivals, conferences, retreats, dance classes, etc,. Number of attendees</p> <p>If a series of events, or annual events, what are participation rates?</p>
	Reduced barriers	How did you increase access to events and opportunities? E.g. how many ttc tokens, how many free tickets for events?

Appendix B

Partner Organizations Reported by YO and YSI Groups

1love moment
Aeroplan
Alexandra Park Community Centre
aluCine
Barrio Nuevo
Breaking The Cycle
City of Toronto – Councillor Anthony Peruzza
Film Stars
Hispanic Development Council
Art Starts
Artreach
B2DS
Beat the Street
Beautiful City
BFA
Break Even
Breaking the Cycle
CAMH
Canadian centre for policy alternatives
Canadian Training Institute
CAS
CBC
Centre for Urban Ecology
Child and Youth Advocacy
Children’s Breakfast Club
City of Toronto
Civic action emerging leaders network
CSI
Deloitte
Dixon Hall
Dream Now
Dub Poets Collective
Dufferin Conflict Mediation Centre
East Scarborough Storefront
Educational Attainment West 35

35

Eva's
Every Kid in Our Community Coalition
FPYN
Freedom to Create
Frontier College
FYI
George Brown College
Girls and Their Allies
Google
GYC
Harmony Movement
High Class
Hispanic Development Council
Humber College
Identify n Impact
InSol: Womyn of Colour Collective
jamestown neighbourhood action Partnership
Jane Finch Youth Justice network
Justice for Children and YOUTH
Lakeshore Catholic High School
LAMP
Lost Lyrics
Luminato
Manifesto
MaRs
MCSCS
Metrac
Michaëlle Jean Foundation
My city, my story
Nia Centre for the Arts
Novita Interpares Ltd
NWMO
One Stop Media
OneToronto
Ontario Justice Education Network
Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS)
People Project
Proctor and Gamble
Psyche Africa
Royal Khaibah Foundation
Scadding Court Community Centre
Scaddingcourt Community Centre

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Second Base Youth Shelter
Shoot With This
Shout
Sketch
St Joe's Withdrawal Management
Steeles-L'Amoreax Youth Network
Streets to Homes
Schools Without Borders
Toronto Catholic District School Board
Toronto Community Housing Corporation
Toronto District School Board
The Spot
Voces Latinas 1610 AM
Techsoup canada
TELUS
Temple Street Productions
The Arising Women Place
The Remix Project
Tides
Tonya Pillay
Toronto Police
Toronto Public Health
Toronto Women's Bookstore
Toronto Youth Cabinet
TRIP!
Tropicana Community Services
University of Toronto Student Council
University of Toronto
Urban Alliance on Race Relations
VoteTO
Walls of Hope
Womynation
WORC IT
Yonge St. Mission
York
York Youth Coalition
Yorktown Family Services
Young Women's Initiative
Younited
Youth 4 Youth
Youth Justice Network
Youthlink inner city program 89

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YWCA