



**VOLUNTARY ACTION FUND:
Ambition & Influence since 1982**

Grant funding, Volunteering, Organisational Development
Equality & Human Rights, Resilient Communities, Localism
Collective Action, Policy Development, Trusted Relationships
Evaluation, Government, The Good Society, Transparency
Making a lasting difference, Accountability, Social Justice
Together is better, Innovation & Enterprise, Sustainability
Employment & Skills, Every grant counts, Best practice
Responsive and Flexible, Positive Social Change

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Welcome

As Trustees of the Voluntary Action Fund (VAF), it gives us great pleasure to introduce this publication. We hope that by reading it, you will gain an understanding of why we consider VAF to be unique, and how our particular approach is as relevant today as when the organisation was first established.

VAF has come a long way since its beginnings in 1982 when it first emerged as the Unemployed Voluntary Action Fund (UVAF) managed under the auspices of the Carnegie UK Trust. In response to the economic and social challenges of the day, the initial Scotland-wide fund of £400,000 was to support volunteering opportunities for unemployed people, in health, social services and community development.

In those early days, the project depended entirely on the voluntary services of the Trustees, and it wasn't until 1984 that the first paid member of staff, a Project Officer, was appointed. Once established, UVAF became an independent charitable trust in 1990. Later, as the scope of the funding expanded, the word "unemployed" was dropped, and in 2003 the Voluntary Action Fund (VAF) was reborn as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status.

Since its inception, staff and Trustees have demonstrated great passion and commitment to making a real difference through our work, reflecting the enthusiasm and dedication of the community groups and voluntary organisations we have supported.

Throughout its history, VAF has maintained the **ambition** of being more than just a distributor of grants, contributing greatly to many positive developments in communities across Scotland. Working closely with colleagues across all sectors, we have sought to **influence** best practice within funding organisations, the voluntary sector and policy making in Government.

We look forward to growing further as an organisation and continuing to work with others to tackle inequality and promote volunteering and community action as a force for social change.

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We've come so far.... but there's still more to do!

During times of major change it is always wise to pause and reflect on the past, think about our achievements, ponder what we have learned and consider how this can help us face the future.

VAF recently undertook such a process, exploring the impact of our funding programmes and reflecting on the importance of our work today. Having generated a refreshed Strategic Plan that builds upon our past achievements and acknowledges our distinct grant making approach, we have also drawn upon the new and timely evidence of independent research we commissioned this year. Interviews were conducted with a range of organisations that had received funding and support from us – in some cases nearly three decades ago, when the economy was also greatly stressed. Significantly, this process of review also underlined the relevance of funding programmes that support volunteering within communities, and promote equality in society.

VAF recognises that the work of the voluntary and community sector is vital to ensure that communities thrive and develop. However communities face a number of sizeable challenges over the next decade. As the country focuses on the harsh economic reality, we are facing substantial public funding cuts and tax rises which will not only impact on the demand for services, but also the ability of the voluntary sector to deliver them. Undoubtedly, these challenges will have consequences for the entire voluntary sector, but emerging evidence suggests that smaller community

based organisations will be most at risk, as public and independent trust funding declines.

Our experience tells us that relatively modest investments of money, time and tailored support can result in measurable benefits for individuals, organisations and communities. We believe that the experience of the Voluntary Action Fund and the organisations we fund can make a valuable contribution to a socially, economically and environmentally prosperous future - the good society we wish for.

In “**Ambition & Influence since 1982**” we seek to present our values and individual approach to grant-making, consider these within the current social and economic context, and look to the future.

Keith Wimbles
Chief Executive

Distributing Grants...

Our grant programmes reach from the Borders to the Islands, and connect with organisations ranging in size from small community groups to ones that operate with a national remit.

Drawing on our extensive experience of distributing over £32 million in funding since 1982, we are confident in our ability to deliver multiple and complex programmes – whether they be long-term strategic investments or high-volume small injections of support. Throughout the three decades of our work, we have been guided by clear and consistent principles and values. These are upheld through fair, transparent and robust processes that have earned us the respect of the voluntary sector, and the confidence of our public sector partners and independent funders.

We embrace new ideas and innovation whilst supporting existing elements that work well and focus on outcomes. We also understand risk and have incorporated systems into our grant programmes to manage this effectively. This is critical when distributing funding on behalf of others, or working with organisations to ensure their funded projects have a measurably high degree of impact.

As a national organisation, part of VAF's strength is its connection with public sector agencies and voluntary organisations at the grassroots level, enabling us to understand the varied environments and diverse needs of Scotland's communities. At the same time we actively participate in a number of national groupings where we promote best practice in grant funding and building of capacity within the voluntary sector. These relationships and connections enhance the impact of our work, making VAF a vital and relevant player in Scotland today.

VAF is a proven safe pair of hands for delivering national grant programmes and maximising the impact of funding in Scotland.

We currently distribute over £5 million a year of public money to organisations across Scotland:

- In 2009-10 the Volunteering Scotland Grants Scheme distributed funding totaling **£838,561** to 48 organisations with an average main grant of £19,819, with 7 projects receiving small grants.
- In 2009-10 the Equality Grants programme disbursed grants totaling **£3,936,392** to 53 projects in four streams: Gender; Race, Religion & Refugee Integration; Disability; and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender.
- In 2009-10 the Community Chest provided grants totaling **£198,000** to 221 organisations with an average grant of £905. 32% went to areas that traditionally do not access mainstream funding.

More than just money...

VAF has always done things a bit differently. We were the first grant-maker in Scotland to develop a money + support approach to funding, or what is sometimes known as “funding-plus”, and it evolved because we believe in extracting every drop of value from the investments that we make.

We know from experience – and from independent evaluation – that organisations which are well-supported, well-skilled and well-connected will do the best job they can with the money we provide. The work they do will be well-planned and effective, their staff and volunteers will be well-trained and confident; and the wider voluntary and community sector will benefit from this growth in skill development.

It is well-accepted that quick fixes and temporary solutions have limited impact, so our grant programmes include training and support that nurture stronger and more resilient organisations, tailored to individual needs. Our main emphasis is on projects that transform lives – bringing people into the centre of their communities – and it is vital that we can demonstrate the lasting difference that this makes. The VAF approach, whilst distinctive, does not operate in a vacuum and we want the entire third sector to be better-connected and more influential. This means getting people, organisations and agencies talking to each other: sharing information, experience and good practice and making the most of pooled resources.

We create unique relationships with our funded organisations. We are open to learning from them and this, along with our recognition that each organisation is different, engenders a level of trust by which honest dialogue, planning and evaluation can flow. This approach creates a safe space for organisations to realise that despite their individual strengths and challenges, they can learn from their peers and share solutions with them.

It will require more than finance alone to meet the needs of Scotland's communities over the next decade, especially amidst such economic uncertainty. The VAF approach is particularly relevant if organisations are to be encouraged and supported to provide services and solutions that lead to much-needed social change.

We believe in making every grant count

We are committed to maximising the impact of all of our work, and know that post-grant support is crucial if we are to enable organisations to create sustainable solutions to social issues.

We believe that, large or small, every grant is equally important. This is apparent not only in the way that we build relationships with our funded organisations, but also in how we develop and deliver our programmes of support, and how we work closely with public funders and independent grant-making trusts.

By publishing clear aims, priorities and guidance for our grant programmes, we ensure there is clarity about what organisations and activities are eligible. We assess applications using robust and proven processes aligned with clear programme outcomes. Post-award, we meet with organisations to clarify their grant activities, outcomes and responsibilities. We then provide training to embed evaluation practices and improve performance. This means that it is easy to monitor the progress of our funded organisations, measure achievement and minimise risk.

We establish trusted relationships with organisations we fund, which helps us identify their strengths and challenges, then provide tailored support to enable them to maximize the impact of the grant funding. We assist funded organisations to develop effective project plans, and to keep comprehensive records that allow them to capture the difference they make. This means that we support them to do the things they do well, and encourage them to continuously improve.

Having the confidence of our funders is just as critical, and we work with them to agree programme-level outcomes that meet their funding aims. Because we regularly evaluate the training and support we provide, we are able to clearly demonstrate the value added by the VAF approach of grants plus support. This means that we can share a wealth of learning with public and independent funders and the voluntary sector.

Sometimes making every grant count means providing tailored support, and sometimes it means understanding when organisations need a lighter touch. Organisations need time to embed good practice if learning and growth is to be sustained, and occasionally need to be encouraged to review their effectiveness. This is why we believe in making every grant count.

Money + Support Success Story:**Neilston Development Trust, Making every grant count**

Ambition has never been in short supply at Neilston Development Trust (NDT). The group was one of the first to buy a building under the Land Reform Act as part of a larger project to develop and deliver attractive and useful spaces in the town. The Trust was already operating a community café amidst other activities, and aside from being totally dependent on volunteer effort, the Board themselves were simply four local volunteers joined in a common purpose. NDT recognised the need to consolidate and formalise its management team and involvement of volunteers in order to achieve their dreams for Neilston.

For NDT the grant from VAF was a timely lifeline, providing a significant boost to its infrastructure. VAF's offer of two years of funding rather than just the one year initially requested, alerted NDT that this was a funding relationship with a difference. VAF's confidence in it, backed by a two year plan, meant that NDT was free to keep doing what it did best – whilst VAF provided training relevant to the Trust's needs at each stage. One of NDT's core strengths is that they only start a project when they have a clear direction forward, and this has been complemented by access to informal networks of their peers at VAF's workshops where project pitfalls and solutions could be discussed.

Not content with just delivering the agreed funding outcomes, NDT recently led an initiative to develop a Town Charter - created by the people of Neilston for the people – spanning a 30 year vision for their town.

Aided by experts in design and planning who helped create the framework, the Charter has been incorporated into the Council's Local Plan; and Neilston is now Scotland's 1st Renaissance Town in a USA-launched programme to build local capacity and empower communities. The Trust is also looking to co-own a windfarm which will generate substantial income for the community that will be used to support and implement the Renaissance Town action plan and establish a 'common good fund' for the town.

With such achievements under their belt, it seems there are few aspirations that would be out of reach for the NDT team. VAF's grant and support provided the catalyst for NDT to build their reputation and connections to local agencies and other volunteer engaging organisations. For Anne MacDonald of the Trust, the essence of our funding relationship could be summed up as "VAF are always just a call away."

We believe that together is better

The best results are always achieved when communities, the voluntary sector and Government work together and understand the power of collaboration, which is why we are committed to encouraging engagement, dialogue, and debate.

We believe that together is better, and this is evident in the way we build connections between our funded organisations, work with and sign-post to other funders and support agencies, and actively collaborate with partners on mutually important objectives.

By working with other funders and partners to share experiences and learn together, we continuously enhance the value of our collaboration with stakeholders and funded organisations, as well as contributing to the development of the sector. We build relationships with community organisations, often where some funders have less success, by working with them, getting to know their needs and learning from them. This means that we work to ensure everyone from the grass-roots to the policy-makers better understands the value of working together, and is able to identify opportunities for collaboration.

We create thematic networking opportunities and links between organisations for mutual support and learning, and help them to engage with local decision-makers, support agencies and other funders. We provide training to assist organisations to improve access to their services, increase the involvement of volunteers and raise awareness of barriers to participation, helping them to more fully respond to the needs of their communities. This means

that the organisations are providing better services to more people, and are better able to support themselves and their peers.

We work collaboratively with Government to develop grant programmes that deliver solutions to local and national social problems. At the same time, we actively promote volunteering, equality and involvement of people from disadvantaged groups, as vehicles for individual and community change. This means that communities are stronger and more resilient because of greater community involvement, and the lives of many people are transformed.

Sometimes working together means listening and learning, and sometimes it means educating and leading. We cannot achieve our vision in isolation, and our funded organisations are relieved to learn that they are part of something bigger. This is why we believe that together is better.

Money + Support Success Story:**Lochaber Community Care Forum - Together is better**

Take an area the size of Greater London, and picture it with only 20,000 residents – at less than 1% of Greater London’s estimated population, that might be tough to imagine. The Lochaber region on the west coast of Scotland is renowned for its geological uniqueness, but it is also considered one of the most remote areas in the UK, so it’s no wonder mental health is a concern where issues of isolation and limited transport abound. The Lochaber Community Care Forum (LCCF) was already providing some community services, but recognised there was a real need to engage volunteers who were socially isolated and hadn’t previously considered volunteering.

For LCCF the addition of its visiting service – which matches volunteer befrienders (who are themselves socially isolated) with housebound, elderly or disabled people – required a whole new level of connection and learning that VAF enthusiastically fostered. Through achieving greater understanding of the needs of its volunteers and redeveloping their training, LCCF has become more accessible and has seen its volunteer numbers double. At the same time it has transformed the lives of the volunteers and service users alike through new-found confidence, skills and friendships.

But LCCF has not stopped there. Stepping its professionalism up a notch has led to praise from colleagues at Social Work Services, and with VAF’s guidance LCCF has been exploring alternative funding sources through grant applications and the potential development of a social enterprise.

The organisation has also become much better at wider community engagement as its services expanded, and the volunteer-led activity groups are providing a level of community bonding that is proving immensely popular.

But perhaps more telling, is that LCCF now knows that it is not alone! Mervyn James appreciated the more personal funding relationship with VAF staff, finding it very positive and supportive. **“We felt like we were part of a much bigger nationwide effort to support and develop good volunteering practice, despite being geographically isolated.** We were viewed as ‘more of a leader’ as VAF encouraged us to facilitate small workshops with our peers - which is great as we are a small organisation with only 4 staff.”

We believe in accountability

In the current funding environment more than ever before, it is critical to be able to demonstrate and report on the difference that funding makes, and to have robust systems in place for planning and management.

We believe in accountability, and demonstrate this through the training and support on monitoring and evaluation that we provide for our funded organisations, the research and evaluation we commission and share with the sector, and the evidential reporting we provide to our stakeholders.

Undertaking research and evaluation of our programmes and of our unique funding approach has ensured that we continue to evolve and remain relevant – and by sharing these reports with the sector, we add to the evidence of how great the impact of even small amounts of funding can be when properly targeted and supported. This means that funding is most effective when timely monitoring of performance co-exists with a trusted relationship where issues as well as achievements can be openly discussed.

We assist our funded organisations to develop good record keeping, and to understand and comply with funders' requirements for evaluation and reporting. Just as important to their organisational development, we also provide guidance on implementing fair systems and policies, managing money confidently, and understanding the needs of staff, volunteers and service users. This means that our funded organisations are able to report more confidently on their activities and outcomes, and are more resilient in their practices.

Distributing the funding entrusted to us requires transparent grant-making processes, intelligent record keeping and rigorous financial controls, as well as smart risk management. We recognise the importance of undertaking independent evaluation of our grant programmes, the value we add, and reporting on this in a way that meets the needs and expectations of our stakeholders. This means that our partners have confidence in us and our ability to comply with specific reporting requests.

Sometimes accountability means simplifying reporting processes, and sometimes it means meeting legal requirements. When embraced, accountability allows organisations to showcase the difference they make with transparency and ease. This is why we believe in accountability.

**Money + Support Success Story:
Clanranald Trust - Accountability**

Turning a boggy patch of land and one man's dream into a fully functioning Medieval Village as an educational resource and source of local employment, is not a project for the faint-hearted. To achieve construction and operation on this scale with a team of only two staff, and a pool of volunteers largely on Community Service or Return to Work programmes – it is hard to imagine how the project got started, let alone provided props and extras for one of Russell Crowe's latest blockbusters. With so little time and resources available, it is not surprising that there was an initial lack of enthusiasm towards VAF's early requests for robust recording and evaluation processes as part of the funding partnership.

These days however, Malin Heen-Allan can be proud of the way in which **Clanranald Trust has embedded good practice into its information systems with VAF's guidance – as the database now captures everything from what it achieves, to who's involved and how they've done it.** Because of this, promoting the project or responding to the many requests that come in from around the world is a much simpler process.

Providing such exciting and original opportunities for their volunteers, the Trust also recognises the requirement for very realistic approaches to managing risk, health and safety, and volunteer needs. Charles Allan is confident in the improvements to the service delivery achieved with the grant, as the Trust now has clear evidence that they've helped many people to gain new skills and qualifications, work experience, greater social skills and self-confidence. Also the sense of pride and community within the volunteers is obvious from the moment you step on site.

With its more refined management systems, the Trust has even managed to purchase a new van for the volunteers with income generated through some of its additional heritage activities, by carefully ring-fencing it from the operational budget. The van will not only save time and hassle, but also allows the volunteers to feel more professional when they arrive in a modern Clanranald chariot! Charles too, feels it is onwards and upwards. "With the systems in place and having someone dedicated to managing new and existing volunteers, it's had a massive impact on the project! We've been able to meet with many more prospective volunteers and clients, and are much more effective and efficient."

We believe in best practice

In striving to contribute to the development of the voluntary and community sector, it is important not only to raise the bar of our own efforts, but also to help like-minded organisations to become more efficient and effective in what they do.

We believe in continuous improvement and adopting best practice to benefit our organisational outcomes, those of our funded projects and peers, the voluntary sector and society as a whole, and advocate the exchange of learning and expertise across all our relationships.

By using fair and consistent processes and removing barriers to accessing grant funding, we inspire confidence in organisations that apply to us. We also offer pre-grant support, and feedback to unsuccessful applicants, to minimise the guess-work and the risk of their application failing. This means that organisations are better equipped to understand funding requirements and improve the quality of the funding applications they submit to us and other funders.

We provide training that is highly valued by participants, helping them to develop knowledge and practical skills in project management, volunteer engagement and coordination, finance, operations and governance. Combining training with individual support on planning, implementation and evaluation, we help organisations address their specific needs. This means that these organisations are more robust, focused and capable of delivering the outcomes agreed with us and any future funders or partners with whom they work.

Governed by an experienced board of Trustees, and employing highly skilled staff, VAF has robust structures, systems and processes that enable us to deliver our strategic aims and outcomes. Committed to influencing best practice in grant making and policy development, we initiated the Volunteering Round Table and actively participate in the Scotland Funders' Forum, the Scottish Grant Making Trusts Group and the Funders' Forum Frontline. This means that we continue to remain relevant and connected to key national forums.

Sometimes best practice means improving ourselves, and sometimes it means supporting others to improve. This cycle of learning and leading is what allows us to champion volunteering and equality, and help organisations achieve outcomes for their own communities. This is why we believe in best practice.

**Money + Support Success Story:
Linkliving Ltd, Falkirk - Best practice**

The Falkirk Council area not only has one of the highest figures for homelessness in Scotland, but significant numbers of its young people are also joining these ranks due to personal and family crisis. Realising much of this could be preventable with the right building-blocks of information, SmartLiving was established as a peer-education project within LinkLiving Falkirk to raise awareness among young people about the realities of homelessness. Whilst the project itself has achieved great results – with recent Council research confirming that 75% of young people surveyed had received advice and information from them on homelessness – the grant has had an immense impact on the way SmartLiving works with its volunteers, and there is real enthusiasm to share the experience of their success.

For SmartLiving the realisation that its volunteers - who all have personal stories of homelessness – were benefitting so much from delivering workshops, altered the emphasis of the project to include volunteer development as a primary objective. The training and signposting by VAF helped SmartLiving to share good practice with other organisations, create informal partnerships, and evaluate learning. With the project going on to achieve an ‘Investing in Volunteers’ Award, SmartLiving’s volunteer policies and procedures are now being rolled out across the whole organisation. The volunteers themselves have also become involved in the ‘Millennium Volunteer’ and SVQ accredited ‘Youth Achievement’ awards, boosting their employability.

But the influence of the project does not stop there. **SmartLiving has since become a mentor within VAF's grant programme, giving it the opportunity to continue sharing best practice by mentoring other organisations and sharing its experience with other groups.** LinkLiving has secured 'Wider Role' funding from the Scottish Government enabling it to set up two other SmartLiving projects in Edinburgh and Fife, and the volunteers have compiled portfolios of their work, creating a booklet and DVD of their involvement in the project.

Having transformed the way that education on housing issues is delivered to Falkirk's young people, it is inconceivable to think the project may never have started without VAF's support. Irene Blackburn appreciated VAF's commitment to best practice in evaluating outcomes, "VAF did not seem hung up on meeting target numbers. It was much more about seeing the quality not quantity. They recognised the small steps that volunteers were achieving, which may have been missed by other funders."

We believe in innovation and enterprise

Creating space for new ideas and for people to develop different ways of working, is vital if services are to stay fresh and responsive, and communities are to flourish.

We believe in innovation, and this is evident in the way we support our funded organisations as they strive to grow and sustain their activities, how we engage with the sector to encourage action as well as dialogue, and the way we have embraced different partnerships over many years.

By listening to our funded organisations and undertaking research into needs and contemporary issues, we are alert to apparent gaps in support and solutions. We are able to ask tough questions like “So what?” and “What if...?” of our funded organisations, our peers and our own stakeholders – because first we ask ourselves. This means we are alert to, and at times lead, the emergence of good practice and evolving approaches.

We guide our funded organisations to better connect with appropriate funding opportunities, and to be persuasive by aptly demonstrating the difference they make and how they intend to sustain their work. We advocate good planning, development and sound practice as a way of maximising success. We also appreciate that one size does not fit all, and respect the unique strengths and challenges of each organisation. This means that we help them to be as good as they can be, and encourage them to stretch that little bit further as they continuously improve.

We actively seek opportunities for partnership, and host events with other funders and stakeholders to share information and encourage action on emerging issues and trends. By promoting volunteering as one of the engines of social enterprise, we facilitate equality in action – making sure disadvantaged individuals benefit from employment and training opportunities. This means that we blend the best of three decades of experience with a willingness to lead and to learn.

Sometimes innovation means creating a ground-breaking approach, and sometimes it means recognising what works but making small improvements. We acknowledge that change is the only constant, so we must adapt and evolve to remain relevant. This is why we believe in innovation and enterprise.

**Money + Support Success Story:
Merkinch Development Ventures - Innovation & enterprise**

Despite being so close to the city centre, Merkinch is an area of Inverness suffering from multiple deprivation. The community became increasingly concerned about its high level of unemployment, and in particular the number of adults with social and learning difficulties who faced even greater barriers to accessing limited mainstream employment opportunities. Merkinch Development Ventures (MDV) was established as the community's response – to create more local jobs and help those furthest from the labour market to enter training and employment. As a registered company and Social Firm, profits from MDV's trading arms help fund expansion of the business or investment in the community, whilst retaining a focus on providing quality work placement opportunities.

In July 2010, the Ness Soaps trading arm moved from a single room in an adult day centre into more sizeable premises with a Retail Unit to continue expanding its volunteering and operations. This reflects the way the business has grown from selling products in local fetes and fairs, to business-to-business sales and improved consumer channels – exceeding the last two years' sales prediction by over 30%! This was only possible through the involvement of work placement volunteers, whose numbers have grown steadily from 2 to 24.

With VAF's support, MDV has developed a structured volunteer programme to meet the diverse needs of its volunteers, along with enhanced monitoring and evaluation processes that ensure it can demonstrate the difference the project makes. **The evolution of its volunteer policies and procedures not only increased Ness Soaps' organisational capacity by nearly 40%, but also introduced the volunteers to the idea of progress** – with a Personal Action Plan for each volunteer helping them explore what they want to do, with a view to progressing their skills and confidence. Further developing its in-house training, Ness Soaps is aiming to achieve accreditation that will enhance the transferable skills of the volunteers.

As it continues to connect with other key funding opportunities, it is likely that Ness Soaps itself may also be in a position to create a further paid post shortly. In the world of enterprise, responding to change is vital and Jamie McJimpsey from MDV has appreciated VAF's visibility throughout the funding. "It is a very positive relationship. VAF are honest and approachable – there are no barriers, and if you have a query they will answer it quickly or signpost you to other organisations that may be able to help."

We believe in making a lasting difference

Despite funding being finite, an enduring legacy can be created when money is combined with a trusted relationship and development support, delivering far greater value than the funding alone.

Making a lasting difference defines the work we do, from encouraging sustainability and big-picture thinking within our funded organisations, to applying learning across the programmes we manage and choosing to fund work that benefits organisations, their staff, volunteers and communities.

Developing informal networking opportunities that allow the organisations we fund to share expertise across geographic or thematic areas is one part of our commitment to legacy. We also actively apply lessons from the experiences of our funded organisations to the programmes we manage, and share learning across those programmes to ensure that we adapt to the changing needs of the projects we support. This means that there is less effort spent reinventing the wheel, and much more collective use of learning.

We support our funded organisations to more clearly identify the needs they are addressing within their communities, and to be smart about the opportunities to diversify their income streams to ensure activities continue longer-term. By encouraging volunteering not just as a sustainable resource but also as a route to personal development, our funded organisations discover that their work transforms the lives of their volunteers as much as it delivers vital services. This means that communities are stronger and more resilient, and marginalised individuals are more

confident in their ability to access services, contribute to society or find employment.

By funding work that provides routes out of poverty, disadvantage and unemployment, our role is to ensure that our funded organisations support people to develop, progress and move on. This means that we create programmes that assess the long-term outcomes of each application and ensure that they are aligned with key national priorities that demonstrate personal, organisational and community benefits.

Sometimes making a lasting difference means ensuring organisations have survival skills, and sometimes it means changing what is not working. To deliver sustainable activities and services organisations need to be able to plan, organise, manage resources, generate income and maximise volunteering. This is why we believe in making a lasting difference.

**Money + Support Success Story:
Dundee International Women's Centre - Making a lasting
difference**

Never content to rest on its laurels, Dundee International Women's Centre (DIWC) is constantly evolving as it seeks to enhance and expand the valuable support it provides to women from diverse backgrounds in Dundee. VAF has helped DIWC move from its humble beginnings as a project of YWCA to an organisation stretching its wings as it learnt to fly on its own. From the earliest grants that built the volunteering policies and structures that have shaped what it is today, to later grants that saw it creating partnerships and new services, VAF's role has been to support DIWC's development through the embedding of good practice without constraining its momentum.

For DIWC, VAF's three-year funding allowed it to develop and buy into a long-term vision, and comprehensively build its capacity. As the training and support gave it the confidence and skill to manage the growing organisation, DIWC was quick to spot new ways that it could serve its community. Within four weeks of discovering that its Polish cleaner had a degree in English, she was inducted as a volunteer to pilot an English class for Polish speakers, and 7 classes were instantly needed to meet demand! Pouncing on moments like this has allowed DIWC to move from strength to strength. Last year for example, it delivered 32 classes that created opportunities for 564 women, who represented 80 countries of origin, 50 languages and 15 belief systems.

But DIWC has also had its eye on the sustainability of its work, and operates two social enterprises (The Wooden Spoon Catering Co. and Rise and Shine Child Care Service) which not only bring income into the organisation but critically provide work experience for the women volunteers.

Many of these women have never worked before, and volunteering with DIWC often leads to their first chance to enter education, training or the workforce, whilst helping them redefine their role within their family and community.

As the local black and minority ethnic (BME) and immigrant populations expanded, DIWC needed its funding relationship to be flexible if it was to continue responding to the changing needs of the community. Pervin Ahmad found VAF's approachability most valuable. "I felt comfortable to phone VAF knowing that I could be completely open and honest, without fear about any changes that may have arisen in our service delivery."

Progress and Change... moving forward in uncertain times

As Scotland responds to this exceptional period of political and economic change, there will undoubtedly be consequences for all – but particularly for the most vulnerable people and our poorest communities. VAF remains committed to working with like-minded people across all sectors to support and build on the social change and progress towards equality already realised by the voluntary sector.

Over the coming years, VAF will continue to target grant funding and development support at initiatives that make a difference to communities by promoting volunteering, community action, social justice, equality and human rights.

We will further develop partnerships with funding bodies, the public and private sectors, and voluntary sector agencies to help strengthen voluntary and community organisations, and advance best practice in grant making, project management and organisational development.

VAF will also continue to help organisations evaluate their work, and utilise their knowledge and experience to influence evidence-based and outcome-focused policy development, at both local and national levels.

Whatever the future holds, events like the 2011 European Year of Volunteering, the London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games and the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, look set to place volunteering centre stage; and there is a vital role for us in ensuring that these events deliver a lasting legacy for our communities.

VAF is preparing for the challenges ahead with a readiness to learn, adapt and remain responsive to emerging needs in order to progress our vision of positive social change. **We welcome discussion with any individual or organisation on how we can work collaboratively towards a fair society in which strong, resilient communities can flourish.**

Please contact us if you would like to explore partnership opportunities with VAF.

info@voluntaryactionfund.org.uk

www.voluntaryactionfund.org.uk

Acknowledgements

None of VAF's work would have happened without the support and vision of the Scottish Government. We extend our gratitude to all the Ministers, MSPs and civil servants who over the years have consistently shown confidence in our work, and trusted in us to manage public funding in order to deliver our shared objectives.

The **Voluntary Action Fund** (VAF) embarked on this period of reflection in a spirit of learning and enquiry. We sought understanding and evidence of what has contributed most strongly to VAF's influence and success, and clarity for our future ambition and relevance.

All these expectations have been fulfilled. We now know much more about the impact of our work and have gained valuable insights which will help shape our priorities for the future. What we had not anticipated was the genuine warmth and affection that VAF engenders in the organisations and people with whom we have connected. Nor had we expected to be inspired anew by the ingenuity, passion, creativity and resilience of the voluntary and community sector in Scotland.

We are grateful to the many people and agencies that have made this publication possible.

Firstly, a heartfelt thank-you to the many organisations and individuals who contributed their time and shared their stories, photos and experiences so enthusiastically and generously. In particular, we are grateful to the organisations that were willing to stand in the spotlight as Success Stories. Thank you for sharing your knowledge, wisdom and honesty.

Secondly, thank-you to **Red** and **Black** Innovations CIC, the independent consultancy who researched and interviewed many organisations spanning three decades of our funding.

VAF has much to live up to as we move forward into the next stage of our journey, and we undertake to stay true to the values and principles that have guided us to this point. We continue to regard it as a privilege to work alongside organisations with the vision and energy to make a difference in Scotland's communities.

The Voluntary Action Fund's current grant programmes are funded by the Scottish Government Third Sector Division and Equality Unit.

People Behind The Grants

We appreciate that the expertise, passion and diversity of our people powers the success of the Voluntary Action Fund.

Our current team of staff consists of:

Keith Wimbles, *Chief Executive*

Alison Stevenson, *Senior Programme Manager*

Patrick Mbullu, *Programme Manager*

Samantha Forsberg, *Communications Officer*

Chris Smith, *Grant Officer*

Susan Wilson, *Programme Development Officer*

Susan Connell, *Office Administrator*

Susan Fenner, *Programme Administrator*

Irene Glasgow, *Programme Administrator*

Patricia McKibben, *Programme Administrator*

VAF Timeline • 1981 to 2014

The timeline in this review is intended to provide a glimpse of some key political events from the 1980s onwards, as well as significant points in the evolution of the Voluntary Action Fund.

1981

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher announced £4million to further develop opportunities for voluntary service across the UK.

1982

Unemployed Voluntary Action Fund established as a project within Carnegie UK Trust - part of the UK initiative.

1983

£400,000 allocated to 43 organisations including volunteer exchanges, unemployed workers' centres and community education.

1984

Sandra Carter appointed as UVAF Project Officer.

1986

Introduction of Small Grants Scheme of up to £5,000, in addition to Main Grants Scheme which provided funding for a period of up to 3 years.

First formal training programme launched.

1987

Previously funded organisations from Highland Region CAB network commissioned to use their experience to provide training for new projects.

1988

“Monitoring Projects Funded by UVAF 82-87” Report published by the Scottish Office.

1989

Total UVAF funding exceeded £4million!
£4,370,000 funding for 273 projects across Scotland.

1990

UVAF became independent from Carnegie UK Trust.

1991

Reception celebrating the success of UVAF held by the Secretary of State for Scotland at Bute House.

1992

“On the Right Track” – self-study guidelines on monitoring piloted, developed with Volunteer Development Scotland.

1994

Geoffrey Lord, Secretary and Treasurer of Carnegie UK Trust, retired – he was instrumental in setting up UVAF.

1995

Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

1998

Human Rights Act.

Total UVAF funding to the sector topped £10m – reaching 499 projects since 1982.

Ethnic Minorities Grants Scheme (EMGS) launched to tackle discrimination and reduce racial disadvantage.

1999

Opening of the new Scottish Parliament by the Queen.

Scottish Executive published “Social Justice: A Scotland where everyone matters” – a statement of intent on reducing poverty and inequality.

2000

A new millennium.

Death of Donald Dewar, Scotland’s First Minister.

Valuing Volunteers programme launched providing awards of up to £500 to recognise, recruit and resource volunteering within local community groups.

2001

International Year of Volunteers.

UVAF Action Research Project 1998-2001 “Increasing Active Participation and Quality in the Volunteering Experience” published.

UVAF’s highly successful International Year of Volunteers grant programme funded over 400 projects!

2003

Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 - to enable the delivery of public services which better meet the expectations of those who pay for and use them.

UVAF became a company limited by guarantee, and is re-launched as the Voluntary Action Fund.

Scottish Refugee Integration Fund launched to fund projects which assist the integration and support of asylum seekers and refugees.

2004

Scottish Parliament building opened.
Scottish “Volunteering Strategy” and “Closing the Opportunity Gap” published.

2005

VAF became a member of the newly-formed Scotland Funders’ Forum.
Establishment of Race Equality Integration and Community Support Fund - 36 projects supported.

2006

Equality and Human Rights Commission formed.

VAF’s Delivering Change symposium at Our Dynamic Earth.
“Maximising Success” published – research on VAF’s money + support approach.

2007

Scottish Government and local Government Concordat.

VAF’s Silver Jubilee Celebration at Our Dynamic Earth.
VAF’s proposal to the Scottish Government for an integrated Equality Grants Programme.

2008

Establishment of new three-year grant programmes for volunteering, local community groups and equalities.

2009

VAF initiated the Volunteering Round Table with CSV, Volunteer Development Scotland and 10 volunteering organisations.

2010

Launch of “Voluntary Action Fund: Ambition & Influence since 1982”.

2011

European Year of Volunteering.

2012

London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games.

2014

Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Voluntary Action Fund: **Ambition & Influence** since 1982

In 2009/10 VAF supported 324 projects across Scotland from the Borders to the Islands, ranging from small community groups with income under £5,000 per annum to projects within national organisations with an annual turnover in excess of £1,000,000.

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