

Quartet Community Foundation Resilience Grant Programme

Research report into the long-term impact of Resilience grants

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Introduction

Quartet's Resilience grant programme offers grants of up to £10,000 to charitable organisations in the West of England. The programme aims to help organisations to plan and adapt to change and be better equipped to meet challenges and take opportunities. Launching in 2021, the programme has now given out around £1.6m in 180 grants.

Quartet receives information about the use of the grants and how successfully they helped groups to achieve their objectives through end-of-grant reports. These are typically due at the end of the funding period, after about a year. Quartet therefore lacks a way to tell if the grant impact lasted beyond the funding period, or what wider impacts the grants may have had.

Project aim


To assess the long-term impact of Quartet's Resilience grant programme.

Research method

We got back in touch with eight organisations that received a Resilience grant in 2021 to ask about the longer-term impacts of these grants. The organisations were selected to represent a range of size, income, geographical location across the region, and sectors.

We held interviews with representatives from each organisation. The interviewees were asked about the use of their 2021 Resilience grant, with a focus on whether there were any longer-term impacts resulting from their grant. They were also asked for their thoughts on Quartet's Resilience grant programme to see if improvements could be made. The meetings were transcribed, and direct quotes from Resilience grant holders have been used for this analysis.

Since 2024, Quartet has used the characteristics identified by the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) in its framework for resilience. The definition of 'resilience' used throughout this research project has been taken from the CAF's identification of characteristics that show an organisation has the potential to be resilient if:

- a) **Purpose:** They understand what their purpose is, and just as importantly what it isn't. They are able to identify and communicate the need that they meet and the impact that they have.
 - b) **Financial:** They are financially and operationally fit with sufficient income from a diverse range of sources.
 - c) **Leadership:** They have effective leadership with trustees and executives who take time to talk about the bigger picture rather than focus solely on day-to-day matters.
 - d) **Networking:** They are well-networked and able to get support from, and work in partnership, with others.
 - e) **Context:** They have an awareness of the local and national context they work in, regularly looking for signs of potentially important developments, challenges, threats and opportunities.
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Project findings

The project findings are presented in two sections: 1) Resilience and 2) Reflection. The first section uses quotes from the interviews to reflect on how the 2021 grants were used to develop organisational resilience. Five categories, taken from the CAF's characteristics for organisational resilience, are looked at. These can be summarised as: a) Purpose, b) Financial, c) Leadership, d) Networking, e) Context. The quotes have been assembled into sub-themes and trends for each of these categories. The second section of the project findings, Reflection, focuses on more general views of the grant's long-term impact described during the interviews. It also presents findings on any lessons for Quartet to reflect on internally, and general comments on the grant programme. These two categories can be summarised as: f) Long-term impact, g) Lessons for Quartet. Again, the quotes have been organised into relevant sub-themes.

1. Resilience

Our interviews showed that organisations that received a Resilience grant in 2021 have continued to develop the characteristics of resilience after the initial one-year period of the grant. In particular, the characteristics of **effective leadership** and **networking and partnerships** were frequently referred to by interviewees as long-term impacts of the grant. Receiving **financial support** from a range of sources was further invoked as a direct consequence of the 2021 funding, whilst some interviewees noted that they already held a strong understanding of their purpose and impact prior to the funding.

a) Purpose: Understanding and communicating organisational purpose and impact.

Most of our interviewees mentioned that the Resilience grant helped them solidify their organisation's strategy and vision. A common use of the grant was to fund management capacity to focus on strategy, or to hire a consultant. Having a clear strategy was frequently mentioned in relation to improved service delivery. Some noted that it was easy to define their purpose, whilst measuring and understanding impact is more of a challenge.

Having used the grant to fund CEO capacity to develop a strategy, "we knew what we needed to focus on, so when opportunities came up, we could think 'Oh yes, that fits our purpose. Each resilience grant has added momentum to what we are doing and gives you that space to think more strategically."

Investing in a clear strategy to define organisational purpose had the additional benefit of demonstrating greater professionalism which was helpful for both funding and networking.

"As a parent/carer forum, we needed to show the services that we work with, that we're not a group of mums sitting around having a cup of coffee. In order for those services to understand, you have to present yourselves in a professional way."

A focus on data emerged as a common trend in the use of Resilience grant funding. All organisations that prioritised data-driven investment in 2021 continued to use this data in 2026, demonstrating a strong long-term impact. Data was frequently related to improving organisations' understanding of their purpose and impact.



One organisation described their data system as "making us a more fit for purpose and data-driven organisation. It allows us to tell our story to the schools who have invested in partnerships with us so that they can see what they're getting for their money, not only in narrative terms, but backed up by data analysis. The data definitely impacts our understanding of and ability to communicate about impact."

In one case, the data measurement practices embedded through using the 2021 Resilience grant to hire a data officer led to a reassessment of the organisation's national impact:

"We use the data proactively, not just to be aware of gaps in who we're seeing, but also to make big service level redesigns. We took the decision to become the only specialist organisation for children and young people affected by child sexual abuse."

A few interviewees explained that they already had a solid understanding of their organisation's purpose and impact prior to the Resilience grant. However, it was clear that where the grant had been used to focus on strategy and vision – for instance funding additional management capacity to write a long-term strategy – interviewees felt that the grant had directly contributed to a clearer demonstration of their impact.

b) Financial: receiving financial support from a range of sources

All organisations discussed their financial circumstances since 2021, but not necessarily in relation to their Resilience grant. Funding was discussed in terms of diversifying income streams and increased funding opportunities. Funding is evidently a large concern, particularly the need to move from short-term funding to larger or longer grants.

Some organisations used the Resilience grant to fund additional management capacity to focus on financial resilience which increased funding opportunities.

"It's definitely freed up my time, we've created brand new relationships with the local authority, for example, which has opened up funding opportunities."

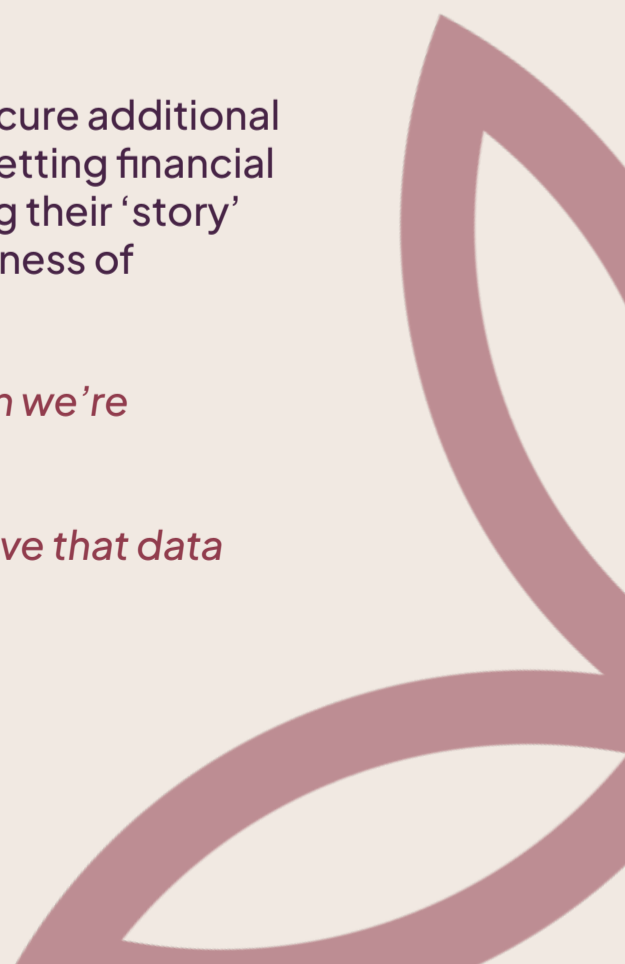
One of the smaller organisations described using the 2021 Resilience grant as general funding to keep them afloat during a challenging time post-COVID.

"The Resilience grant gave us the breathing space to look for funding elsewhere to sustain us again beyond the life of the grant."

Focusing on data was also a popular way of using the Resilience grant to secure additional funding long-term. Organisations used data for forecasting finances and setting financial targets, defining their purpose internally and externally, and communicating their 'story' and impact with others. Accurate data is valuable for showing the effectiveness of organisational work to funding commissioners.

"We are able to have a robust evidence base that we can present when we're applying for grant applications."

"For every single one of those funders, we use our data. If we didn't have that data available to us, we just wouldn't be able to evidence our needs."





At times, it was unclear whether the long-term financial support being discussed was related to the receipt of a Resilience grant in 2021. However, some did provide a strong link between their Resilience grant and receiving financial support from a range of source in the long-term. The most pertinent example was using the Resilience grant to fund an electronic point of sale (EPOS) system that continues to bring in retail gift aid for one organisation (see below). Other interviewees discussed using the grant to fund management capacity to focus on financial resilience, or how data could evidence the importance of their work to funders.

Case Study – Life Cycle

We spoke to Ed Norton, CEO of Life Cycle, who used their 2021 Resilience grant to implement an electronic point of sale (EPOS) system that has directly led to increased long-term funding for the organisation. Life Cycle's mission is to help more people experience the benefits of cycling, regardless of their background. This includes providing bikes, cycle training and bike maintenance skills to groups like prisoners or young people. Installing an EPOS system has saved Life Cycle's finance manager time and allowed the organisation to claim back money from HMRC through tracking data. The EPOS system further enables Life Cycle to track funding to make sure nothing is overspent, and that everything is done accurately.

"We probably are £10,000 better off in what we reclaim every year from HMRC for retail gift aid so basically every year we are gaining the value of the grant that Quartet gave us just from retail gift aid, plus hours of saving in reconciling data, plus better business intel for us to plan as a coherent and well-run organisation."

c) Leadership: effective leadership and focus on the bigger picture

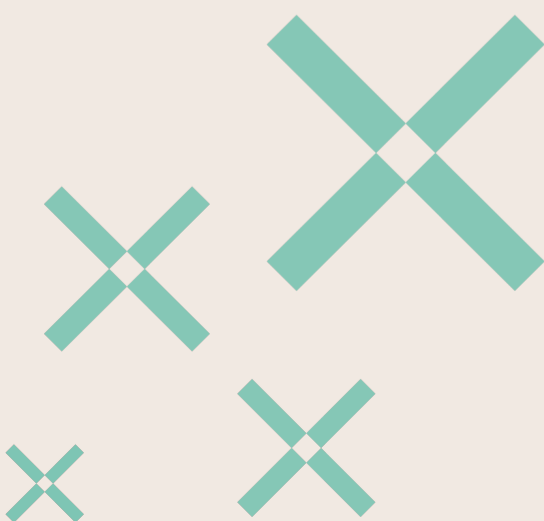
Leadership and management were primary aims for organisations who received a 2021 Resilience grant. Freeing up management capacity by funding additional CEO hours or employing administrative staff was described as very helpful, although interviewees suggested that this increased capacity was not always maintained in the long-term.

"Literally hundreds of hours of time was saved from having a consistent place to input data which increased staff capacity for other work."

Professionalism and confidence were also important consequences of the Resilience grant. One CEO noted that many grassroots organisations are formed from a personal passion for the topic, which can mean that additional skills need to be learned. Strategic and data-driven approaches to leadership were also discussed.

"The conversation between the CEO, senior leadership and the board has become more data driven."

The process of writing a long-term strategy *"gave me more learning, more skills, to get what was in my head onto a proper document that could help me think about the future."*





Effective leadership continued to be strengthened long-term as a result of the 2021 Resilience grant. Most of the interviewees were CEOs, and they expressed how helpful it was to fund additional management capacity. Strengthening effective leadership ultimately contributed to other resilience characteristics too, as staff used their increased capacity to focus on finances, strategy or networking.

Professionalism and confidence were sub-themes that emerged during discussions around understanding impact and purpose, and for effective leadership. This could be the result of taking the time to commit a strategy and vision to paper, or thanks to technology and data that provided a clearer view of operational delivery and more effective discussions within the leadership team.

d) Networking: well-networked and able to work in partnership with others

Most organisations discussed local partnerships, and a few also discussed participating in national networks. Two of our interviewees talked about collaborating with universities. Several organisations mentioned that partnership development was a long-term goal of theirs, but that networking was not always a priority depending on management capacity. Those that had restructured their management since 2021 were able to dedicate time to networks.

"Thanks to management restructuring we re-established the Bristol Homeless Forum with a number of colleagues across the sector."

"Support around leadership and management services means we've got that capacity to engage within the communities and within those networks."

Data continued to be a theme across networking and partnerships, and could help with joining local and national networks.

Data helped solidify partnerships by having "more objective, nationally validated clinical outcome measures that are used by lots of other services."

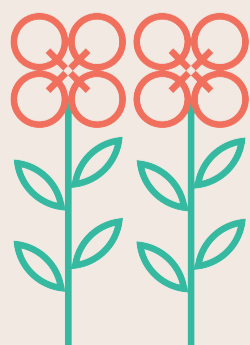
One trend that stood out was that established and resilient organisations were able to teach others in the sector. Three out of eight of the interviewees discussed how their networking included helping and guiding other like-minded organisations.

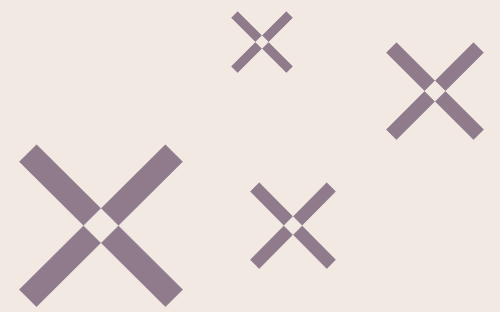
"The finance director here, who had hundreds of hours of her time saved through this system, she's been able to go and talk to some other groups who are doing similar things but haven't got till systems' and want to know how to reclaim gift aid."

"We are doing a lot around helping our membership network to collaborate together".

Networking seems to have been an existing priority for most organisations prior to their Resilience grant, but developing management capacity and data sets were both deemed highly useful for improving networking and partnerships. One important trend that emerged from the interviews was the aim of established and resilient organisations to use networks to teach others in the sector. Interviewees demonstrated a sense of pride from being able to help other like-minded organisations. The ability to help others was attributed to increased staff capacity and the creation of data models that could be shared.

Data emerged as a strong sub-theme within most of the resilience categories. Those organisations that used their 2021 Resilience grant to fund a data-related role or technology continued to use this in 2026, and indeed could no longer picture a time where data was not a central part of their organisation. Data was described as helping define organisational purpose, and communicate their work with potential partners and funders.





Case Study – The Green House

The Green House provides specialist therapy and a support service for children, young people and families who have experienced sexual abuse. We spoke to Megan Andrews and Josh Taylor about using their 2021 Resilience Grant to improve data measurement practices, which has enabled The Green House to improve their service delivery and strengthen their organisational resilience by participating in local and national networks. Since this funding was granted, The Green House have improved their capacity to share their impact nationally, including high-quality annual impact reports and convening a voice practitioner network that promotes young people's involvement in co-production and change-making.

"We're aiming to use data like a site of best practice. So to share our model, which has worked really well, with the rest of the country. We've just started a service evaluation of the last three years of the model, which we're going to publicise so that other organisations and charities can learn. We want to play a role in using data and evidence-based practice to share that for the benefit of services and ultimately children and young people across the country."

e) Context: awareness of local and national context

Not all interviewees brought up their organisation's work in relation to the local or national context. Those that did tended to focus exclusively on the local context if they were smaller organisations, or if they were struggling. Unsurprisingly given the timeframe of the 2021 Resilience grant, the COVID-19 pandemic was referenced multiple times.

Feeling like they could contribute to local or national discussions showed an increase in confidence. With the Renters' Rights Act, thinking about a city-wide response to have the biggest impact for residents,

"it's really great that even as a small organisation, we feel like we can lead those conversation."

The predominant recurring theme in mentions of local and national context was an ability to identify gaps in services.

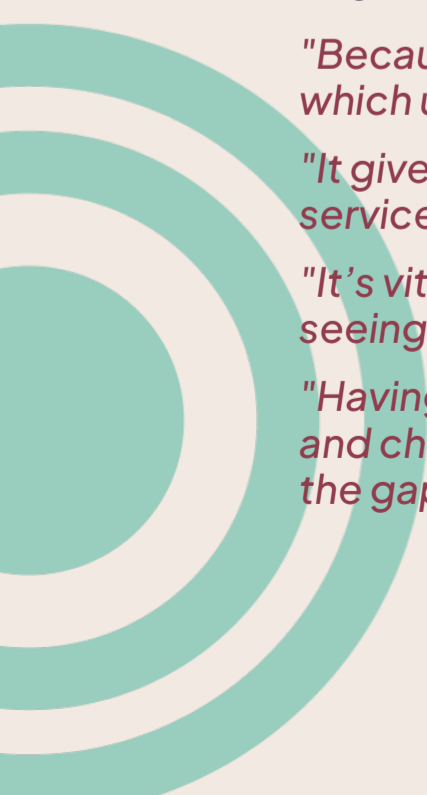
An awareness of local and national context was least likely to emerge organically in the interviews, although this characteristic often merged with discussions of impact and purpose. The most striking sub-theme in discussions of local context was the increased ability to identify gaps in services. This was attributed to having a clearer vision and strategy, gaining concrete evidence through data, and developing partnerships with other organisations in the sector.

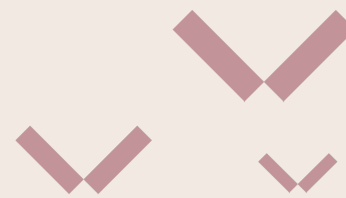
"Because we put each grant stream as different groups on the system, we can track which user groups we are getting free transport out to."

"It gives some clarity around where we want to grow and develop and expand our services."

"It's vitally important to be able to evidence who we're seeing, but also who we're not seeing."

"Having partnerships 'feeds into a local environment where we work really well together and children and families ultimately have better, more holistic support, and fall through the gaps less often."





2. Reflection

Interviewees were given the opportunity to reflect on the broad and long-term impact of their 2021 Resilience grant. This was mostly focused on in terms of financial impact, restructuring of the organisation, and gratitude for support during a difficult period. We also asked interviewees for general feedback on Quartet's Resilience grant programme. This section of the report aims to reflect on the nature of the Resilience grant, identifying its main strengths and areas for improvement. It should be noted that due to the nature of these interviews and appreciation for Quartet's financial support, there may have been a reluctance to criticise the programme.

f) Long-term impact

A common use of the funding in 2021 was to create a new role or fund additional capacity for existing staff members. It was therefore helpful to assess long-term impact by asking whether these roles still existed in 2026. In four cases, roles that were funded through the 2021 Resilience grant either still existed in their original form, or had led to the creation of new roles and expanded the organisation in some way.

"It's created an infrastructure that continues to generate value for us as an organisation everyday and the role of the data analyst has only expanded in the time since we've had the grant."

"Hiring an administrator has] been really pivotal to the organisation's growth and development. I think it was exactly what was needed at the time."

Interviewees saw the Resilience grant as a way of establishing long-term foundations and behind-the-scenes support:

"The Resilience programme is about building really strong, firm foundations."

"We've grown enormously because we've had that back office function that's kept the charity running."

The significance of the 2021 Resilience grant in providing much-needed support during a difficult time was also mentioned. In one case, this did mean that the funds went towards general support rather than specific organisational Resilience-oriented goals.

"It was vital for us. It kind of kept us going. I think if we hadn't had some of these funds coming in, we would have folded."

When asked to consider the long-term impact of their 2021 Resilience grant, interviewees were likely to mention building foundations and behind-the-scenes support. Many of the organisations interviewed had used the grant to fund staff salaries, and these roles were generally maintained long-term.



g) Feedback on Quartet's Resilience grant programme

The flexibility provided by Quartet was praised highly by the Resilience grant recipients, especially because multiple organisations had needed a longer timeframe to put in place their plans for the grant than initially anticipated. The timeframe of the grant could be extended as a result.

"What I think is really great about the grant is that you've been really receptive [if things] didn't quite work out the way we thought; that flexibility was really helpful."

"One of the really positive things about Quartet is the ability to take a longer-term view and sometimes a more flexible and risk-taking view in terms of the outcomes they're trying to achieve with charities than a lot of other funders are."

"If Quartet are going to be ambitious about resilience in the longer term, some of those changes are going to be quite complex and they're going to take longer than 12 months."

Interviewees also felt that Quartet really understands the local context:

"I see Luke and I see Sabita (Quartet staff members) out in the community all the time, understanding what community organisations are doing and being really inquisitive about how networks work and how people are working collaboratively together."

"It's fantastic that Quartet were happy to put money into a salary because it's very hard now to find funding for those key roles that are the real bedrock and infrastructure of any organisation' - too many funders are interested only in 'a bright, shiny new projects."

"Resilience for us is investing in the core infrastructure in terms of staffing and salaries rather than exciting new projects."

"Please continue to invest in the boring stuff because nobody else invests in the boring stuff, but it's really foundational and it's really important."

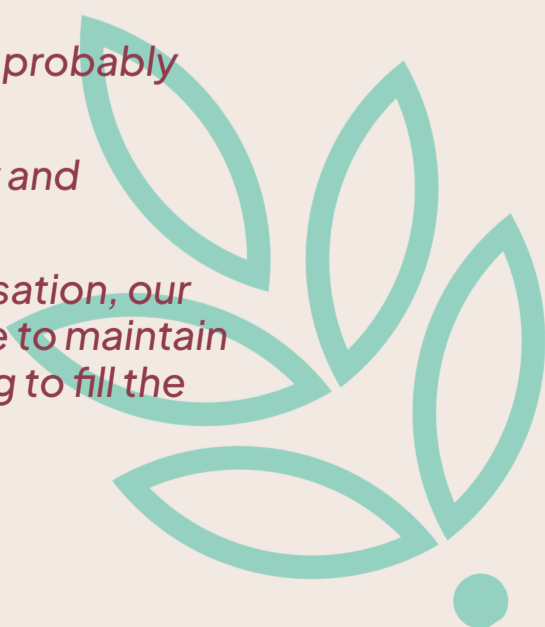
"It's hugely valuable to have a fund like this because it's specifically around organisational development and there's not a lot of trusts and foundations where that is the focus, it's usually on service delivery or supporting people."

Interviewees were also asked for feedback on whether the grant size (£10k) was a useful amount of funding. The majority felt that this amount had a large impact on small organisations. One did note that £10k stretches less far now than it had in 2021, and that more money would now be required to fund a similar role.

"For this type of Resilience grant, I think £10k for multiple organisations is probably better than a bigger grant for fewer organisations."

"From a small organisation's perspective, £10k is actually loads of money and actually makes a huge difference in our overall budget."

"Given where we are with the cost of living and just trying to run an organisation, our greatest expense is salaries [...] there's a huge pressure now on being able to maintain those salaries'. Organisations would probably need '£20k if you are trying to fill the post now, it's a different time."



Interviewees expressed much praise and gratitude towards the funding programme. Quartet was especially praised for its flexibility, in terms of being flexible with the timeframe and in cases where the initial plan did not quite work out. Most of the organisations interviewed noted the value of having a grant that prioritised ‘the boring stuff’ – staff salaries, operational work and running costs beyond service delivery.

Conclusion

Our interviews with representatives from eight organisations that received a Resilience grant in 2021 showed that the grant strengthened organisational resilience beyond the initial 12-month period. Interviewees spoke very positively about Quartet’s Resilience grant programme, and the majority spoke specifically about how this funding had impacted them long-term. In one case, it seems that the 2021 Resilience grant was spent on general organisational upkeep rather than developing characteristics that are considered to lead to organisational resilience. However, most of the organisations presented a clear link between the 2021 grant and characteristics that demonstrated continued resilience five years on.

Effective leadership and networking and partnerships were characteristics of long-term organisational resilience that organisations tied directly to their Resilience grant. By prioritising leadership, such as funding additional CEO hours, the grant often strengthened financial stability, strategy or networking as supplementary impacts. Networking and partnerships were further developed through effective data sets, and organisations benefiting from strengthened resilience were able to pass their knowledge onto others. Awareness of local and national context was less likely to emerge as an individual category when discussing organisational resilience, but partnerships and data-related staff roles were both presented as valuable for identifying service delivery gaps in the sector.

Most organisations felt they had a pre-existing understanding of their purpose and impact, so this wasn’t necessarily overtly prioritised in funding use. Where the funding was used to focus on strategy and vision though, organisations were able to clearly link a developed understanding of their purpose and impact to the Resilience grant. Whilst the present-day financial situation was mentioned without fail, this could not be linked to the Resilience grant in all cases. However, there were several pertinent examples of using the 2021 Resilience grant to directly receive long-term funding from a range of sources, notably by funding management capacity or data collection systems that can support financial development.

The project findings also provide a more reflective view of Quartet’s Resilience grant programme long-term. The programme was praised for focusing on foundational and behind-the-scenes costs that other funders tend to neglect, particularly staff salaries. These were deemed more useful long-term than exclusively funding new projects. Quartet’s flexible approach to the grants’ use was further highlighted, and staff awareness of local context was praised.

