

# COVID-19 and Beyond NFP Recovery Collaboration Project

Final report on innovation in the social sector during COVID-19  
and beyond

26 March 2021

# Introduction

## Background to our work

The COVID-19 and Beyond NFP Recovery Collaboration Project (project) was established by the Sidney Myer Fund, the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation, the Ian Potter Foundation, the Lord Mayor’s Charitable Foundation and Gandel Philanthropy (“The Foundations”). The purpose of this collaboration project is to help the Foundations:

- better understand the innovative ways NFPs in the arts sector are responding to the pandemic, and
- identify opportunities to support organisations retool and re-equip to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

The outcomes of this project will help inform future grant-making decisions by the individual Foundations.

To undertake this project, The Foundations commissioned dandolopartners (dandolo) as an external partner to conduct research into innovation in service delivery in the social and arts sectors. To do so, dandolo consulted widely across both sectors with not-for-profits (NFPs), social enterprises, peak bodies, and sector experts. We conducted consultations via workshops, surveys and one-way video interviews. In these consultations, we sought to determine:

- the specific challenges COVID-19 posed to organisations
- how organisations responded to these challenges, with a focus on particularly innovative responses, and
- what the sector needs to build innovative capabilities going forward.

Based on our findings, we produced three reports – one focusing on each of the sectors, and a third report covering both. This report presents our findings for the **social** sector. It details how COVID-19 affected the sectors, how organisations responded, what innovation in service delivery during COVID-19 looked like, and how the sectors can foster a culture of – and capabilities in – innovation. It also identifies and briefly explores considerations for the Foundations going forward.

### Important points:

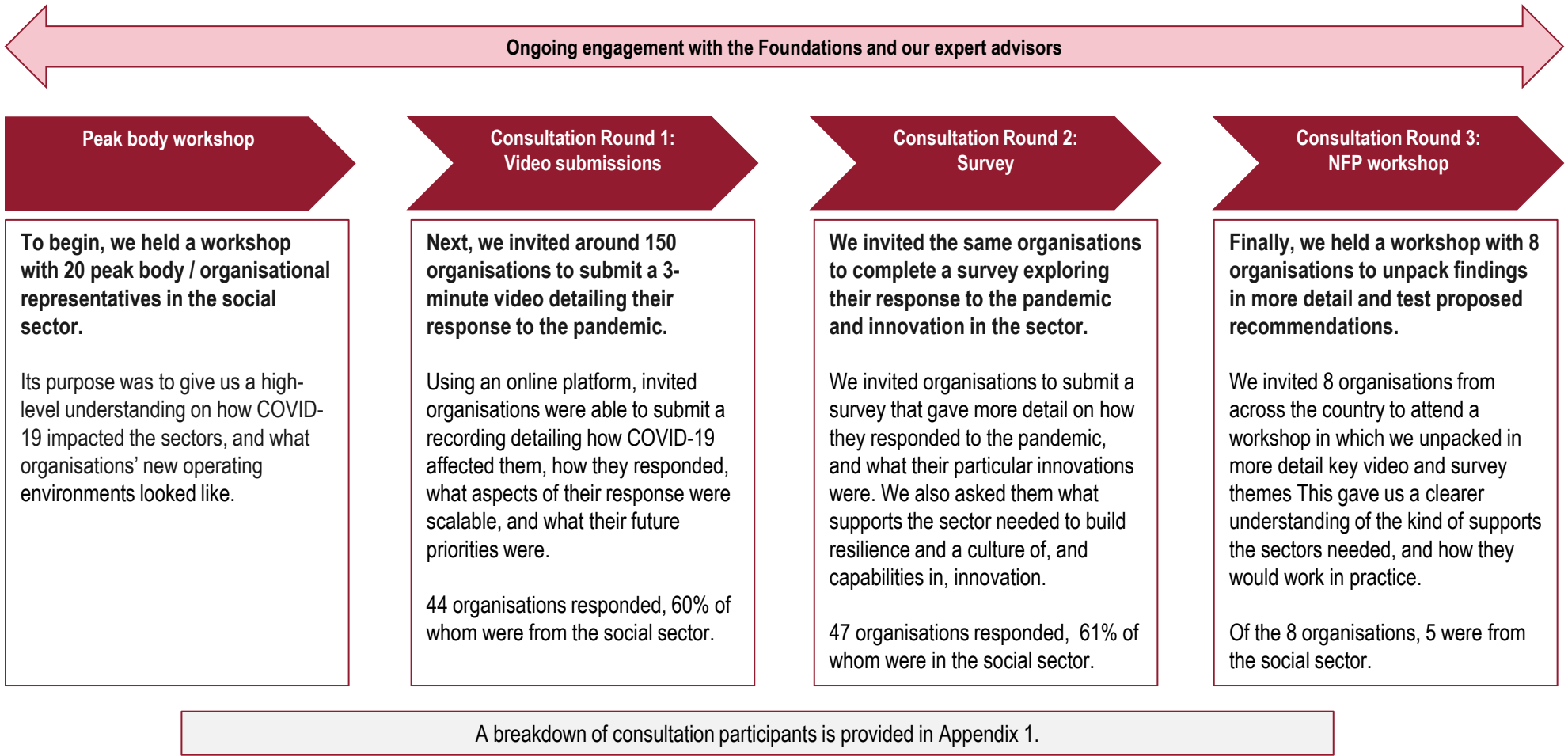
1. For the purposes of this project, we shall refer to NFPs and social enterprises **collectively as “organisations”**
2. It was not feasible in the scope of our work to engage with all organisations in the social sector. Instead, to best capture a diverse range of organisations and views, we invited **a representative sample of approximately 150 organisations in both sectors to consult with us**. These organisations varied in size, scale, geographic location and mission, and were selected based on:
  - i. nominations by the Foundations, and
  - ii. recommendations by Expert Advisors and Peak Bodies.In total, 57 organisations engaged with us across our fieldwork activities, many on multiple occasions.

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# Methodology

35 social organisations (out of a total of 57) engaged in our work by submitting either a video or a survey response, or by attending our NFP workshop. Throughout the project, we also engaged with our expert advisors and Foundations to inform them of our findings and test our hypotheses with them.



# Executive summary

# Executive summary

Many organisations countered COVID-19's challenges by increasing their use of digital platforms to reach their audiences, focusing on employee welfare, and collaborating with one another.



**COVID-19 has presented many challenges to the sectors, particularly around employee welfare and demand for services.**

Survey results showed that COVID-19 had a profound impact on all organisations. Of the challenges organisations faced, the most prominent were:

- increased demand for services;
- employee burnout;
- reduced volunteerism; and
- difficulty accessing key resources / organisational inputs.



**There were common themes in how organisations responded to COVID-19's challenges, particularly around technology use.**

Organisations were forced to adapt to the challenges of 2020 and innovate in order to survive. The most common ways in which organisations responded were:

- innovating their service delivery models;
- collaborating with other organisations;
- strengthening employee welfare initiatives; and
- focusing on the short term.

While many organisations acknowledged 2020 was extremely challenging, it also forced greater innovation and 'thinking outside the box'. Organisations felt they had more 'freedom to fail' than before in trying out new approaches.

To foster innovation, organisations said revised funding models, more collaboration, and foundations leveraging their influence would help. We've identified financial and non-financial levers the Foundations may consider to support innovation.



**While some organisations have demonstrated innovative tendencies during COVID-19, there isn't a widespread culture of innovation across the sectors.**

Organisations said the three key enablers to foster greater and more sustained innovation were:

- greater collaboration among NFPs;
- revised funding models; and
- Foundations using their influence and experience to advocate for the sectors, mentor organisations, co-ordinate them where appropriate, and identify influential research.



**To support innovation in the sectors, The Foundations may wish to make general operating support a priority, incentivise innovation, support purposeful partnerships and collaborations, and use non-financial levers. We recommend the Foundations considering doing this collaboratively.**

The most meaningful ways the Foundations can support innovation are by:

- funding general operating costs;
- revising funding models to better incentivise / support innovation;
- encouraging purposeful and well planned collaborations between organisations; and
- using additional non-financial levers.

To achieve maximum impact, we recommend that the Foundations implement the above in partnership with each other, or other funders.

# COVID-19: Challenges and responses

# Summary of the most common COVID-19 organisational challenges and responses

Organisations struggled to address both increased demand for their services, and emerging challenges in service delivery. They moved quickly to respond by being innovative, partnering with other organisations, focusing on the short-term, and looking out for the welfare of their employees and volunteers.

## Most common challenges

Increased pressure on demand for services

Employee / volunteer burnout

Reduced volunteerism

Difficulty accessing key resources / organisational inputs

## Most common responses

### Innovation in service delivery models

COVID-19 forced nearly all organisations to innovate quickly to find COVID-safe workarounds. Most innovation involved a move to more digital service delivery models. Many organisations moved their services online and / or created new digital content. Organisations also innovated by producing new market offerings in response to emerging consumer / community needs. Going forward, many organisations plan to use a "blended" (mix of both in person and online) service delivery model.

### Collaboration with other organisations

Many organisations collaborated or partnered with others to pool resources, coordinate responses and collectively try to tackle COVID-19's many challenges.

### Focus on the short-term / the 'now'

Many organisations deprioritised longer-term strategic plans / projects. This gave them the time and resources to focus on addressing the crisis at hand.

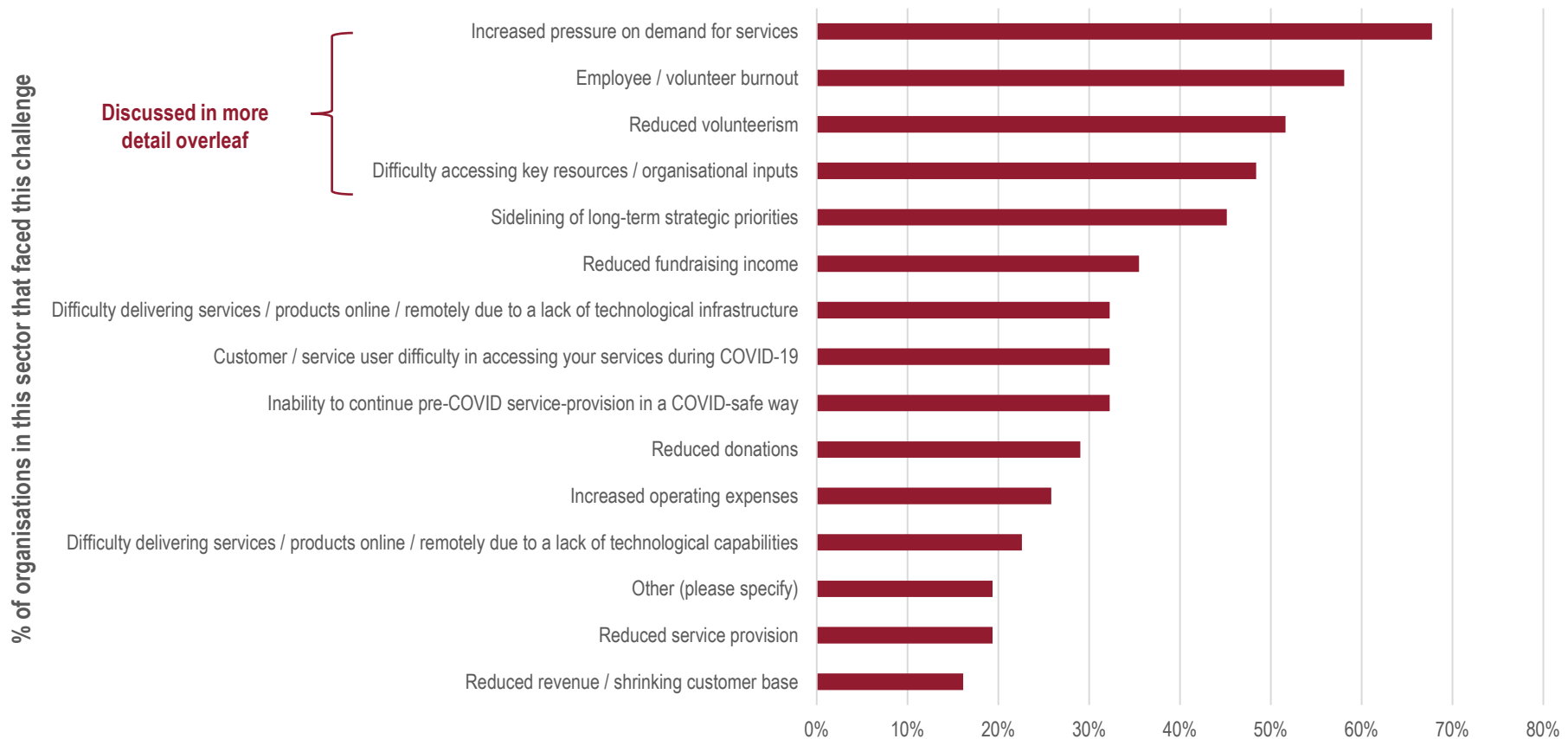
### Strengthening employee welfare initiatives

Many organisations provided additional supports to their employees / volunteers during this challenging time.

# Challenges posed by COVID-19 (1/2)

Organisations faced many challenges as a result of COVID-19. The biggest challenge for social sector organisations was increased demand for their services.

**The most common challenges social organisations faced as a result of COVID-19<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> Source: dandolo analysis of 28 survey responses.



# Challenges posed by COVID-19 (2/2)

Many organisations struggled to meet increased demand for their services while battling employee / volunteer burnout and reduced resources.

## Increased pressure on demand for services

Many social services organisations faced increased demand for their services during COVID-19. Already-vulnerable cohorts were often disproportionately affected by the pandemic, as often did not have financial safety nets and / or were ineligible for government supports. Social services organisations faced increased demand for supports from this already-vulnerable cohort, as well as additional demand from new cohorts who had been affected by COVID-19. As many organisations already operated with limited resources, this placed intense pressure on their delivery model, resources, employees and volunteers.

## Employee / volunteer burnout

Many organisations' employees and volunteers suffered burnout and mental health challenges during COVID-19 due to increased workloads, new ways of working, heightened anxieties, family pressures, financial worries, social isolation, exasperation of pre-existing mental conditions, ongoing uncertainty, and overall disruption to their lives. This left them more vulnerable to burnout, fatigue, exhaustion and mental stress. This risk was heightened for those working with already-vulnerable cohorts during COVID-19 (aged care residents, disadvantaged youths, those struggling with mental health, those living in poverty, First Nations Peoples, asylum seekers, refugees etc.), as witnessing their increasing hardships caused great distress to employees / volunteers.

## Reduced volunteerism

Due to public health orders and social distancing requirements, many volunteers had to stop / reduce their volunteering. This presented a big challenge to organisations who were largely reliant on volunteers to deliver their services. Even in organisations where social distancing was possible, volunteers in vulnerable cohorts (over 65, high risk health conditions, etc.) were unable to continue volunteering.

## Difficulty accessing key resources / organisational inputs

Some organisations faced difficulty in accessing key inputs and resources to operate their services, due to upstream supply chain. Organisations who were very reliant on others for inputs struggled the most. For example, some in the hospitality sector were affected by panic buying and food shortages. Others struggled to get inputs due to transport disruptions / limited flights.

*"The impact of the pandemic on the mental health of our staff and volunteers was evident."*  
- Social sector organisation

*"Funder flexibility didn't always keep pace with the changes and costs associated with delivering support to those most vulnerable during COVID-19."*  
- Social sector organisation

# How organisations responded to these challenges (1/2)

Organisations responded in a variety of ways to COVID-19's challenges. One of the most common was to innovatively use technology and digital platforms to operate in line with public health orders and social distancing requirements.

## Innovation in service delivery models\*

### Moving services / content online

Many organisations moved from in-person delivery to online delivery.

- **Uniting VicTas** moved their face-to-face service delivery online through telehealth, zoom etc.
- **WISE Employment** developed a hybrid 'Clicks and Bricks' model for their Ways to Work Vocational rehabilitation program.
- **Kids Thrive** co-created blended online learning resources for their Kids as Catalysts programs and a suite of online creative resources with teachers and online Kids Ideas Labs.
- **Justice Connect** piloted an online legal clinic, Justice Connect Answers.

### Commissioned / did research

Some organisations undertook or commissioned research to identify new client needs and best practice, and respond accordingly.

- The **Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare** collected evidence on the effectiveness of their approaches and tweaked offerings accordingly.
- The **Grattan Institute** redeployed 50% of its research staff to looking at the health, economic and social impacts of COVID-19.
- **BehaviourWorks** undertook research on behavioural science to inform the COVID response and were available for media and public commentary.

*"We had to rapidly innovate, and didn't know what would work."*  
- Social sector organisation

### Responding to new needs and issues

The pandemic created new issues, needs and challenges for society. Some organisations responded quickly to try counter these. Challenges included:

- *Food shortages from panic buying* - **Collingwood Children's Farm** repurposed areas in their farm to produce food for the community.
- *Remote schooling challenges* - the **Grattan Institute** devised a large-scale tutoring program to help marginalised students who'd fallen behind.
- *Increased isolation of already vulnerable cohorts* - one organisation provided mobile phones to those suffering from addiction to ensure they could stay in touch with – and access – supports.

### Used data effectively

Some organisations increased their use of data to be more targeted in the responses.

- **Justice Connect** analysed internet search data to see what supports people most searched for, and used this information to help determine what resources they created.
- **Foodbank** used data to identify vulnerable cohorts ineligible for government support (for e.g., international students) and targeted supports at them.

### Moving to online working

Many organisations quickly moved to remote working using online platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, WebEx, teleconferencing etc.

- **EdConnect** moved all recruitment and training activities and materials online.
- The **Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare** moved all their training and consultations online.

Organisations said innovation will continue to be a big priority for them going forward. Many intend to use a **blended delivery model**, which will see them integrate new innovations and digital approaches into their previous operating model.

# How organisations responded to these challenges (2/2)

Organisations also commonly responded by collaborating with others, taking a short term outlook, and supporting employee wellbeing.

## Collaboration with other organisations

2020 saw increased collaboration as many organisations galvanised to overcome shared challenges. Organisations partnered with one another, governments, philanthropists and sectoral bodies to try counter COVID-19's challenges synergistically through shared resources, risks, and expertise. Examples of this are:

- **FareShare** teamed up with Woolworths to operate in a more COVID-safe way, reducing the number of people rotating through its kitchens by 90%. They did so by temporarily replacing their 1,000 volunteers with fulltime Woolworths chefs and laid-off hospitality workers. They also increasingly collaborated with other national food charities – including Foodbank, SecondBite and OzHarvest – to distribute meals in all states and territories except Western Australia.
- **Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic)** collaborated with other organisations to run information/innovation sharing events for the youth sector. They partnered with Orygen (Mental Health Royal Commission), ChildSafe (safe digital practice), Victoria University (disability support), and VicHealth (grant writing).

*"We took mental health as seriously as physical health...we talked rest as much as hand washing."*  
- Social sector organisation

## Strengthening employee welfare initiatives

To support employee wellbeing and mitigate the risk of burnout, some organisations implemented proactive employee welfare strategies.

- **Community Resources** increased their existing employee welfare supports by frequently "talking" mental health, regularly checking in on employees' emotions and mental state, running wellbeing activities (shared lunch breaks and yoga via teams) and mental-health first aid training for those in people-leading roles.
- **Good360** offered a free Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to all team members, gifted 3 additional bonus leave days at Christmas as a reward for employees' hard work, created a social Slack channel, and conducted three surveys to get a better understanding of the health and wellbeing of the team, particularly how they were coping working from home.

## Focus on the short-term / the 'now'

Many organisations deprioritised longer-term strategic plans / projects to focus on addressing the crisis at hand. For example:

- **Youth Affairs Council Victoria (YACVic)** developed a specific COVID-19 Recovery Plan in consultation with sector experts and young people.
- **The Christie Centre** had to compress their plans as they focused on supporting people in the day to day aspects of their life whilst trying to promote employment as a viable option.

*"As a response to COVID, we restructured our services and applied learnings from listening to the people we support."*  
- Social sector organisation

Looking forward

# What the sectors say they need to foster sustained innovation

Organisations said greater collaboration, revised funding models, and philanthropic organisations expanding advocacy and co-ordination work would boost innovation in the sector.

Based on our survey insights and workshop findings, the most-requested supports by organisations to foster sustained innovation were:



Greater collaboration

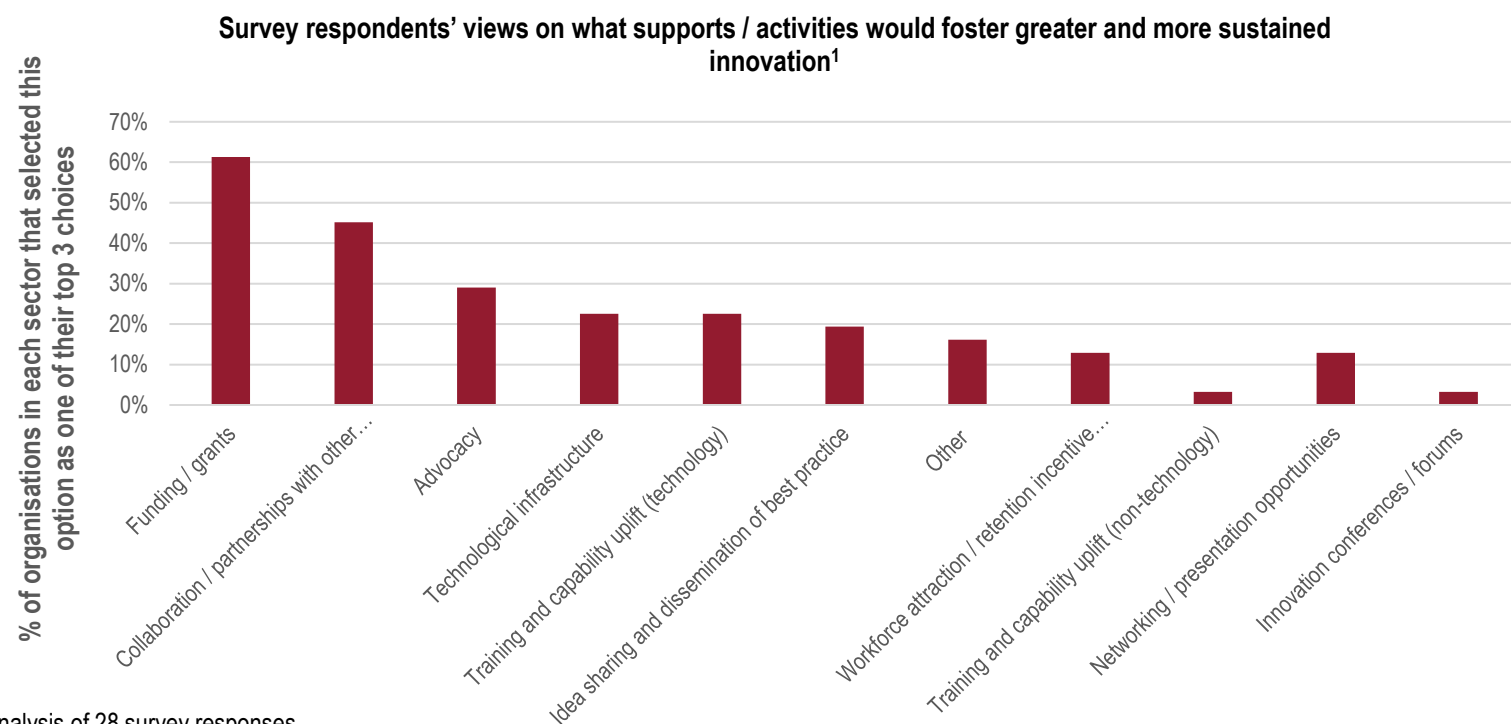


Revised funding models



Leveraging Foundation influence

In our NFP workshop, organisations said that not just more funding, but *revised funding models*, would enable greater innovation. They also commented that philanthropic organisations leveraging their influence and power for advocacy and co-ordinating purposes would foster innovation in the sectors.



**'Other'** activities / supports suggested were: centralisation of resources in the sector, cultural shift towards more stakeholder input, resource flexibility, more capital funding from government and philanthropy.

<sup>1</sup> Source: dandolo analysis of 28 survey responses.



## Greater collaboration

Organisations said greater collaboration with other organisations, governments, peak bodies and for-profit companies would foster innovation and have synergetic benefits.

**Organisations are keen to collaborate more, but face barriers doing so.**

### **Organisations often cannot afford the initial upfront investment required for collaboration**

Collaboration requires an initial investment of time, energy and money. Many organisations already have lean budgets and stretched resources trying to support their communities. They often don't have resources left over to cover upfront collaboration costs.

### **Collaboration requires a long-term commitment, but organisations are generally focused on the short-term**

Building effective partnerships and collaborative practices takes time, as organisations adjust to working with each other. However, many organisations don't have the capacity to think beyond the immediate future due to the reactive nature of their work, diverse and ever-changing client needs, and uncertain cash flows.

### **Organisations lack the necessary skillset for collaboration**

Some organisations said they struggle to allocate resources for collaboration, identify appropriate collaboration opportunities, source and approach suitable collaboration partners (particularly for-profit companies), and figure out what effective collaboration looks like.

### **Research can be complex, contradictory and overwhelming**

Organisations said that there is so much research on collaboration that they often do not know where to begin or which source to trust.

**Organisations said more funding, capability uplift and being matched with suitable organisations would make innovation much easier.**

### **Provide specific funding for collaborative projects**

Organisations said they would be incentivised to identify and pursue collaborative opportunities if there were specific funds dedicated to innovative collaborative ideas. These funds would entice and enable organisations that are currently unable to cover upfront costs to pursue it in the future.

### **Upskill organisations in collaborative skillsets**

Organisations said they would benefit from training and guidance on collaboration. Specifically, they said training on how to strategically plan for collaboration, identify and approach potential partners, decide on a suitable collaboration, and negotiate and manage collaborative projects effectively would be most useful.

### **Match suitable organisations**

Organisations said a matching service, where they were paired with suitable potential partners, would enable greater collaboration.



## Revised funding models (1/2)

Organisations found programmatic funding constrained their ability to innovate. They said more long-term funding with less defined parameters would boost innovation – i.e. funding for project ‘frames’ with flexibility for emerging KPIs; for operational costs; for exploring innovative ideas; and for capacity building.

**Current funding models allow organisations to implement new programs that they otherwise mightn't have been able to. However, they're not quite suited to fostering ongoing innovation.**

**Philanthropic funding tends to be programmatic. This allows for innovations, but only incremental ones. Incremental innovations are not sufficient to solve entrenched social issues**

There is always an opportunity to be innovative in implementing a new program. However, innovation is not the core focus in implementation – it is more of a ‘byproduct’ or additional benefit. This means innovations tend to be incremental. Incremental innovations are insufficient to solve large-scale entrenched and evolving societal problems – organisations need to think ‘outside the box’ and experiment with radically different approaches to try solve these issues.

**Organisations said they needed more funding for operational costs, capacity building and exploring innovative ideas**

Many organisations had a clear appetite for innovation, but just didn't have the time, space or resources to pursue it. Others wanted to be innovative but lacked a well-defined idea. Organisations said that without having the ‘thinking space’ and skills to be innovative, and financial safety nets to experiment with new approaches, they were constrained in their ability to be innovative.

**Being accountable to their application for funding can constrain organisations' ability to be pursue new innovations**

When granted funding for a specific project, organisations must usually deliver what they said they would in their original grant application. While this serves an important purpose in ensuring organisations use funds as intended, it means they cannot ‘change tack’ if they uncover new and better ways of doing things, or potential opportunities to explore. Some organisations said they have had to ignore opportunities in the past, as they couldn't use allocated funding to explore them.

**Organisations said that access to funding to operational funding, funding for idea frames, and additional funding to pursue emerging innovative opportunities would better support innovation.**

**Provide operational funding to organisations**

Funding standalone projects is beneficial – but not sufficient – to solve entrenched societal problems. Organisations asked for operational funding (i.e. funding for core / backbone activities) to support indirect costs and raise their organisation's innovative capabilities across the board.

**Fund an idea frame, not a specific project**

Organisations said moving from funding projects with pre-defined objectives to funding a project ‘frame’ and allowing KPIs to emerge over time would really foster innovation. This is because it would give them more breathing space and autonomy to ‘pivot’ towards new opportunities or try out new innovative approaches that emerged in implementation. In this instance, funders would commit funds to organisations who could:

- articulate a broad vision of what (but not how) their proposed project would achieve, and
- demonstrate that it fit cohesively into a robust strategic plan.

**Build contingency funding into funding models**

Organisations said that if current programmatic funding models remain in place, ‘contingency funds’ would greatly encourage innovation. Contingency funds are standalone and can be granted to an organisation that identifies an innovative opportunity outside the scope of their original funding agreement. This would encourage organisations to explore opportunities as they arose, and potentially pursue them.





## Revised funding models (2/2)

Organisations said other innovation constraints were lengthy grant processing times and a lack capital-works funding. To reduce the barriers to innovation, they called for more proportionate compliance and acquittals processes and specific innovation funds with fast turnaround times.

**Lengthy grant application processing times and the absence of funding for capital works act as barriers to innovation for many organisations.**

**Organisations said that access to funding for capital upgrades - and to funds with rapid turnaround times – would also boost innovation.**

### **Lengthy grant application processing times prevent many organisations from pursuing time-bound opportunities**

Organisations often wait many months from submitting their grant application to receiving the funds in their bank accounts. This time lag means sometimes organisations miss the chance to 'strike while the iron is hot' and pursue new innovations, as by the time they receive funding, the window of opportunity has passed.

### **Establish innovation funds with short turnaround times**

Establishing ring-fenced innovation funds with rapid-turnaround times would allow organisations to pursue innovative opportunities in real-life. These funds would be open to all organisations who identified a really innovative opportunity, but could only pursue it if they got immediate funding. It was access to this type of funding that allowed the Melbourne Digital Concert Hall\* to establish itself in just 10 days in response to theatre closures in March 2020.

### **Organisations need funding for capital upgrades**

Current funding models don't tend to provide for capital works. A key enabler for innovation is access to proper technological infrastructure, especially with the increase in digital delivery spurred on by COVID-19. Many organisations have the ambition or innovative ideas, but not the necessary infrastructure, to pursue these. Without an ability to fund these technological upgrades, many organisations simply don't have the supporting infrastructure needed to implement innovations.

### **Consider funding for capital upgrades**

Providing funding for capital upgrades would enable many organisations to go from having innovative ideas, to having the infrastructure to implement them. Funders could consider providing grants for specific capital works to organisations who:

- had adequately scoped proposed works, including cost and timeframe for delivery;
- had estimated and could articulate the expected benefits (both tangible and intangible, long and short term) of the capital upgrades; and
- could demonstrate how the works aligned with their organisational vision and fit into their strategic plans.

\* Please refer to Appendix 2 for a case study on this organisation's innovative response to the pandemic.





# Leveraging foundation influence

Organisations said philanthropic bodies could boost innovation by advocating for the sectors, mentoring and upskilling organisations, matching potential collaboration partners, and using common grant application forms and contracts.

## Organisations want to be innovative, but need a supporting force behind them

### Many organisations have the appetite – but not the 'know how' to innovate

To many organisations, innovation is daunting. They're not sure how to approach it, how to know if it's working, and when to try a different tack.

### Organisations find the administrative burden of grant applications, contracting, and compliance and acquittals processes reduces their ability to be innovative

Governments, funding bodies and philanthropists use different processes, platforms and requirements for grant applications, monitoring and acquittals. Organisations say this is a drain on their already-scarce time and resources, meaning there is less left over for innovation.

### Organisations feel the value of their sectors isn't recognised

Some organisations feel their overall value (especially their benefit to society) isn't recognised by those outside the sector. This means for-profits, government and other organisations are less likely to commission them to do work or approach them for partnerships.

## Funding organisations can foster innovation in the sectors by leveraging their influence and 'setting an example' of working together

### Provide mentors and guidance on how to be innovative

Organisations said access to mentors and expertise on how to pursue innovation effectively would really help them be more innovative and make it less daunting and risky for them.

### Use common application and contracting processes

Organisations called for funders to use a single common application and contracting platform which stored prior submissions and contracts (saving organisations from saving to resubmit in the future). This would free up many hours of staff time for more value adding activities.

### Reduce the burden of compliance and acquittal process

Similarly, organisations said that standardised and proportionate compliance and acquittal processes would free up valuable organisational time by reducing the administrative burden.

### Advocacy

Organisations said they need greater advocacy on their behalf from governments, senior policy makers and philanthropic foundations. They want this advocacy to not only highlight the valuable work that they do, but also advocate for greater procurement from social enterprises.

### Centralise best practice research

Organisations said access to a single, simple 'source of truth' on how best to approach innovation would be extremely useful.

Where to from here?

# Funding considerations for the Foundations

To best support sustained innovation in the sectors, philanthropy can consider focusing on funding operating costs, incentivising innovation, and encouraging meaningful collaborations. To achieve maximum impact, we recommend Foundations implement these actions collaboratively.

The most impactful actions Foundations can take to support innovation in the sectors are to:

## 1. Make general operational financial support a priority in grantmaking



**Use 'an earned autonomy' to allocate some / all of a grant's value to an organisation's operational costs**

Allow organisations you trust and have worked with before to spend a certain proportion / full proportion of the grant value on core business / backbone activities. This supports their sustainability and growth. In return for greater flexibility, NFPs would need to demonstrate a well-planned strategy, vision, and financial management capabilities.

## 2. Redesign funding structures to more explicitly encourage innovation



**Fund an idea frame, not a specific project**

Commit to funding the 'frame' of an idea, and allow KPIs to emerge over time. This will allow organisations the time and space to 'think outside the box' and pursue innovative opportunities.



**Build contingency funding into funding models**

Set aside funds that can be released to a particular fundee(s) if they recognise a compelling innovative opportunity outside the scope of their original agreement with you. This ensures they won't "miss" an unexpected innovative opportunity.



**Require a certain proportion of all grants be spent on a post-project evaluation**

Require an end of project evaluation using a certain proportion of funding. This prompts organisations to reflect on what worked well / didn't work well, where there were opportunities to improve, and how these lessons can be brought into future projects.

## 3. Encourage, enable and support purposeful and well-planned collaborations between organisations



**Commit to funding organisations that have demonstrably 'thought their collaboration through'**

Support organisations that have demonstrated a clear commitment to and plan for collaboration, and have approached it with rigour and purpose. Organisations who fit this profile will have identified collaboration opportunities that align with their values and goals, can articulate a clear purpose for and expected benefit from this collaboration, and have thought the logistics of it through. They will also have built collaboration into their strategic plan. You may wish to support these organisations financially, through endorsement / promotion, or other appropriate means.

To achieve maximum impact, we recommend that Foundations implement these actions collaboratively, including with other funders



Working as a group will to collectively brainstorm how best to support innovation will allow you to realise synergetic benefits, reduce overlap and use resources most efficiently. Some examples of the ways in which you may wish to consider working together include:

- Collectively funding operational costs and build it into grant-making.
- Establishing a collective fund for idea frames with emerging KPIs, or contingency funds for emerging innovative ideas.
- Working with other organisations to redesign funding models to incorporate contingency funding.
- Collectively fund collaborations that are considered, well-designed and support innovation.
- Work with other funders to make meaningful post-project evaluations a standard element of all grants.

# Non-funding options for the Foundations

In addition to the three core category actions, there are some other complementary yet standalone actions you may wish to consider to support greater innovation.



## **Use common application, contracting and acquittals processes and systems**

Work with other funders to streamline / standardise application processes and forms, contract structures, and develop standard acquittals processes so they are proportionate to the size of the grant. Consider using a single common application and contracting platform where organisations' submissions could be stored in a databank. This would greatly free up more time for organisations to spend helping the communities they serve.



## **Create a scalable mentoring program**

Create a scalable mentorship program that matches experienced CEOs / industry figures with newer / less experienced organisations to guide them through their innovation journey. [Westpac Foundation](#) and [Kilfinan Australia](#) currently offer similar programs to NFPs and social enterprises.



## **Centralise all research and evaluation findings in one place**

Work with other foundations / funders to centralise evaluation findings and the most influential research on does and doesn't work in innovation. This would help organisations approach to innovation and help ensure it's informed by best practice.



## **Advocate for – and pursue – greater social procurement practices**

Commit to using social procurement practices, such as contracting social enterprises, and encourage others to do the same.



## **Consider sharing this report to disseminate research**

Consider publishing this report – or a version of it – to help organisations learn from one another's innovations, and identify suitable collaborative partners. To do so, you may wish to share this report with Philanthropy Australia, A New Approach, and on your centralised research platforms.



## **Do a pulse check in 18 months**

Check in with organisations in approximately 1.5 years' time, to see how they have adjusted to, and are operating in, the 'new normal', how they have innovated, and if / how their current needs have evolved over time.

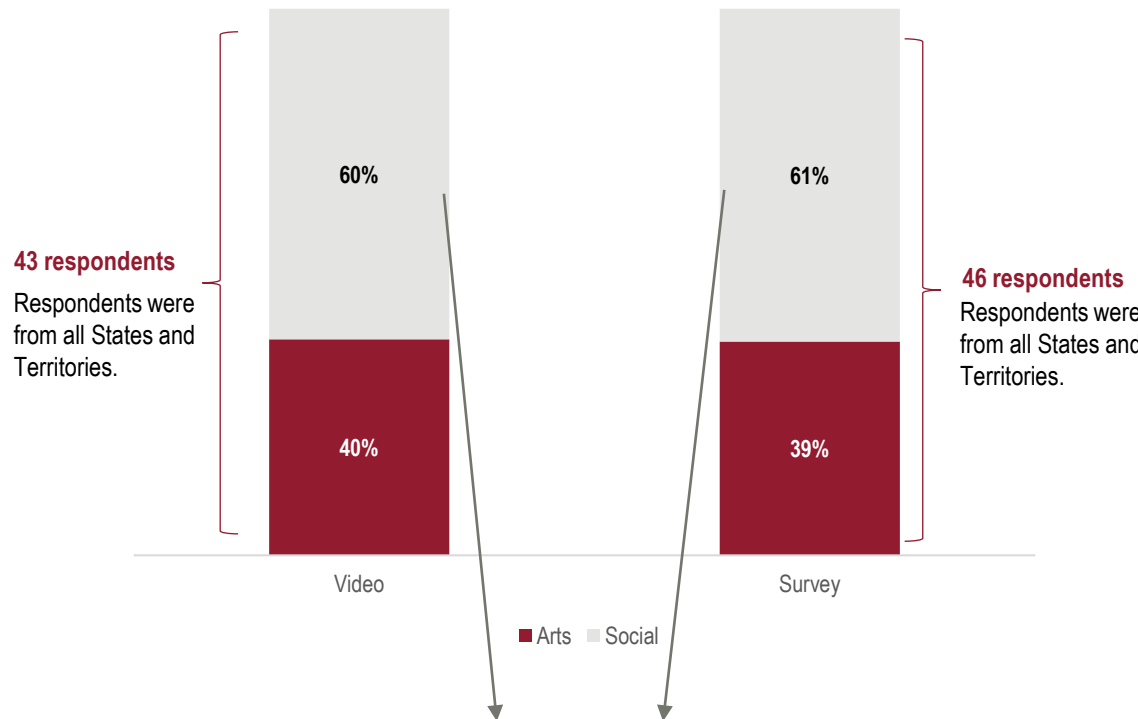
# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Breakdown of consultation participants

# Appendix 1: Breakdown of consultation participants

35 social organisations engaged with us across all three fieldwork activities. 54% of these engaged in both the survey and video submission process. Two-thirds of our workshop attendees were arts sector organisations.

Breakdown of participants in video submission and survey process by sector



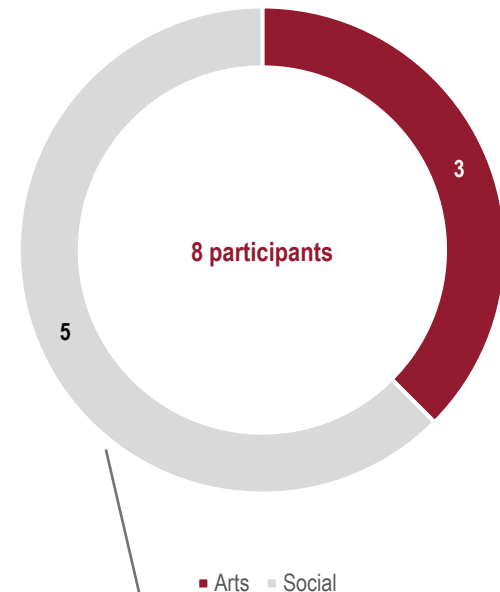
Participation by **social** sector organisations:

- 35 social organisations participated in either our survey or video submission process.
- Of this 35, 54% (19) participated in both.

Participation by **both** arts and social sector organisations:

- Overall, 57 arts and social organisations participated in either our survey or video submission process.
- Of this 57, 56% (32) participated in both.

Breakdown of workshop participants by sector



The 5 participating arts organisation were from:

- Victoria
- New South Wales
- Western Australia
- Tasmania

## Appendix 2: Case studies of innovative organisations



# Case Studies – Social organisations (1/6)

## Asylum Seekers Resource Centre

### Rapidly and innovatively responded, providing essential shelter and health services during the pandemic

#### Introduction

The Asylum Seekers Resource Centre is an independent not-for-profit organisation whose programs support and empower people seeking asylum to maximise their own physical, mental and social wellbeing. For 27 years, it had operated as a 'one stop shop' with all services under one roof. When COVID-19 struck, they could no longer do this.

#### How they responded to COVID-19's challenges

They responded rapidly and innovatively to the challenges by:

- **Changing their service delivery model** – instead of providing food in their main centre as usual, they started delivering food direct to 15,000 families' homes.
- **Establishing telehealth alongside their in-person health clinic.** Supplemented their in-person clinic with a telehealth service to cater to patients who couldn't travel. As hotspots developed, staff called individuals in those areas to ensure they stayed safe and understood the need for testing. They were more conscious of the likelihood of a patient having psychological issues due to COVID-19, and ensured adequate support. The centre is now working with the NSW Ministry of Health and aim to play a significant role ensuring people seeking asylum are vaccinated in 2021.
- **Increased their presence** – were present in more communities by collocating in different areas to be closer to asylum seekers, both through existing and new partnerships. Established a Community Engagement and an Intensive Support Team to ensure culturally appropriate engagement.
- **Increased service provision to meet new demand** – realigned resources to focus on the short term and meet new demand.
- **Partnered with businesses to secure technology for asylum seekers** – in doing home food delivery drops, staff noticed individual didn't have access to adequate technology (i.e. devices) or supporting infrastructure (WIFI, money to top up phones, etc) which they needed for telehealth, maintaining contact with family members, and keeping abreast of public health announcements. Contacted major organisations and got them to repurpose / donate old laptops and devices.
- **Expanded volunteer program to meet new client needs** - created new volunteer roles such as emergency relief volunteers, health navigators, and food delivery drivers.
- **Sourced more housing for asylum seekers** – partnered with investors to gain access to empty housing units at 50% less cost than market rate, then furnished these units through industry partners and fundraising with community groups.
- **Helped those not eligible for government supports** – Offered emergency assistance to people seeking asylum who had no financial safety net, through access to safe accommodation, rental relief and living assistance

#### Why this approach was particularly innovative

- ✓ Used existing unused housing stock and negotiating discounts to provide a solution to homelessness within the refugee community who do not have the same safety nets as citizens and permanent residents of Australia.
- ✓ Responding to current issues – vaccination fears, mental health problems, etc.

#### Do they intend to retain these innovations going forward?

Yes.

# Case Studies – Social organisations (2/6)

## Free to Feed

### Worked around COVID-19 challenges while building resilience towards future shocks

#### Introduction

Free to Feed is a non-profit social enterprise operating in the events, hospitality and catering industries. It seeks to assist people seeking asylum to:

- find meaningful employment opportunities using their existing skills and experiences; and
- facilitate community interconnectivity and break the stifling sense of social isolation often faced by these new arrivals.

#### How they responded to COVID-19's challenges

To respond to COVID-19's lockdown and social distancing requirements, Free to Feed developed a structured and robust response by consulting and taking stock of issues, then responded with 4 scalable solutions:

1. **Rebuilt program and partnerships** – they looked at best practice, integrated the Intermediary Labour Market model into program design, built a tailored training program, established a partnership with Box Hill Institute to provide competitive accredited training, partnered with specialist employment service providers and employers, invested in increased capacity within their commercial kitchen, and invested in a qualified psychologist to join their team.
2. **Co-designed new market offerings** such as 'Brave Meals'.
3. **Went digital for first time** – developed virtual cooking classes and digital offerings (videos, recipe booklets). Also began shipping kits nationally for the first time, and designed a Leadership and Communications stream.
4. **Built capacity to weather storms** – focused on retaining talented core staff and revamping their HR to ensure staff are well looked after. Also established a new HQ community space.

#### Why this approach was particularly innovative

- ✓ Took the opportunity to develop a forward-facing approach and not just focus on the current issue.
- ✓ Their response catered not just to their audience, but also their employees.
- ✓ Reached audiences outside Victoria for the first time.
- ✓ Evidence based – looked at best practice and widely consulted with those effected.

#### Do they intend to retain these innovations going forward?

Yes.

# Case Studies – Social organisations (3/6)

## Justice Connect

### Developed data-driven service delivery reforms and online offerings which increasing the quality and quantity of service delivery

#### Introduction

Justice Connect are a legal service that design and deliver high-impact interventions to connect people and community groups with the help they need and make systemic changes that progress social justice.

#### How they responded to COVID-19's challenges

They responded to COVID-19's challenges using data driven technological responses.

1. **Used data to identify market needs** – used data to see what supports people were searching for, and developed new online resources and a consumer outreach program to meet these needs. Through a targeted digital marketing campaign, accessing of their self-help resources increased by 470%.
2. **Online legal clinic** – launched a pilot using existing online infrastructure, enabling pro-bono lawyers across Australia to provide free legal advice to people online. This was initially in response to lockdowns due to COVID-19 but has now also eliminated the challenge of remote or rural community members accessing in-person legal advice.
3. **Developing AI to increase equity of access.** Developing AI (in partnership with the University of Melbourne) to increase access to legal services through an automated plain language legal advice service.

#### Why this approach was particularly innovative

- ✓ It was evidence based – they used Google search data to inform their service delivery methods.
- ✓ It was resourceful – they used existing online infrastructure to provide a different service offering.
- ✓ They enabled more flexible service delivery for pro-bono lawyers.
- ✓ They increased access to rural and remote community members.
- ✓ They partnered with a university to utilise AI for access to legal services.

#### Do they intend to retain these innovations going forward?

Yes.

# Case Studies – Social organisations (4/6)

## Weave Youth and Community Services

### Accurately identified changing client needs in response to the pandemic, and responded quickly

#### Introduction

Weave Youth and Community Services (“Weave”) provide tailored, wrap around support for children, young people, women, families and communities impacted by systemic disadvantage and intergenerational trauma. During COVID-19, they experienced a surge in demand for their services, especially those related to domestic and family violence and support for early release prisoners. Lockdowns made it harder to support isolated people, those with mental health issues, and those who didn't have access to technology.

#### How they responded to COVID-19's challenges

Using grants, fundraising and in-kind support, Weave quickly implemented the following initiatives in direct response to COVID-19:

1. **Upgraded security measures for women and children** – Weave identified a big increase in domestic violence rates during COVID-19, so they upgraded home security for those experiencing domestic and family violence to provide them more safety.
2. **Supported early-release prisoners** – increased their team's capacity to support those who were released early from jail due to COVID-19.
3. Created **“Emergency transport vehicles”** – used existing vehicles equipped with masks and cleaning products to transport clients in a covid-safe manner. They used them to transport people experiencing suicidality and mental health crises to access critical support, and people experiencing homelessness into emergency accommodation.
4. **Delivered events online** – They moved usual events and projects online and created an online music program, an online youth mental health program, and a podcast.
5. **Provided devices to vulnerable children** – Weave audited client's tech capability and provided them with donated devices so children wouldn't fall behind on their education.

#### Why this approach was particularly innovative

➤ They identified multiple new challenges their clients faced as a result of COVID-19, and rapidly developed tailored, targeted and pragmatic responses.

#### Do they intend to retain these innovations going forward?

Yes.

# Case Studies – Social organisations (5/6)

## Gather My Crew

### Developed a new model in response to COVID-19 challenges and emerging client needs

#### Introduction

Gather My Crew is an online rostering tool that has been developed specifically to support people in crisis, to enable them to ask for and coordinate the practical help they need. Lockdowns and social distancing restrictions meant it was much more challenging for volunteers to provide support to those in crisis.

#### How they responded to COVID-19's challenges

In direct response to COVID-19, Gather My Crew launched a new program called 'Connect' with Gather My Crew, which they developed with the support of Volunteering Victoria and Red Cross. This model provided a new way to volunteer locally, flexibly and informally. It:

- Modified existing technology, governance and support desks to create 'neighbourhood support crews' that are mobilised by registered referrers (e.g. local council, GPs, social workers) to care for vulnerable people in the community.
- Provided structure, safety and sustainability to the 'informal volunteering' that was seen during covid.
- Provided volunteers with online training, insurance, police checks and support from our team to ensure the safety of all involved.

#### Why this approach was particularly innovative

- Worked with others to develop a new, COVID-safe model of operating
- Met new community needs through a specific new model
- Ensured the safety of all involved was a top priority in the new model's design

#### Do they intend to retain these innovations going forward?

Yes.

# Case Studies – Social organisations (6/6)

## EdConnect

### Continued to support its community while focusing on volunteer recruitment, development and engagement

#### Introduction

EdConnect trains, supports and places volunteers in local schools to improve the lives of vulnerable students. They do so by placing volunteers in schools to develop meaningful connections, share life experiences, and build relationships. School closures in Victoria and restrictions on in-person visits meant volunteers could no longer visit students in schools, which was the core crux of their operating model.

#### How they responded to COVID-19's challenges

EdConnect has introduced more flexibility in all operating aspects of their program delivery. They:

- Developed a virtual volunteer model to run alongside the core "in person /in school" program.
- Continued their efforts in volunteer recruitment by shifting to online interviews and volunteer portals
- Delivered volunteer training via an interactive e- learning module for training volunteers as mentors;
- Increased volunteer engagement opportunities with virtual morning teas/ catch ups/ quizzes

#### Why this approach was particularly innovative

- Found new ways to support students in schools despite school closures
- Continued to recruit volunteers and train them for when schools reopened
- Ensured volunteers felt supported and engaged during lockdowns

#### Do they intend to retain these innovations going forward?

Yes.

# Thank you

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