

Experience Papers and Document and Resource Sharing: Opportunities and requirements

Introduction to the Basis Project

The Basis Project is an England-wide service giving one-to-one support to refugee community organisations (RCOs) to help them manage, develop and sustain their work. We focus on developing four main areas: fundraising, project development, financial management and organisational governance. A partnership project led by Refugee Council and Refugee Action, the Basis Project is funded by the Big Lottery Fund. We are also working closely with funders and other mainstream bodies to increase their understanding of RCOs.

Experience Papers and Document and Resource Sharing

An experience paper is a document about the experiences of your RCO that can help other RCOs who are considering doing similar work. We hope to commission experience papers from RCOs who have been successful in a particular area of work, and also those who have faced particular problems or barriers to progressing an area of work. Experience papers will be shared through a variety of media, for example online, written documents and events or training sessions. We are also interested to receive resources or documents such as policies, business plans and planning tools that could be useful for other RCOs.

We would like to commission experience papers around the theme of sustainability and survival: RCOs helping each other to get through difficult times. This has been identified as a priority through extensive one to one work with RCOs, and events such as regional seminars and the Basis Project National Conference.

Within this theme are the following areas:

- Developing social enterprises (for example a catering service), which generate income for the organisation through trading
- Commissioning: RCOs tendering to deliver services for public agencies such as Local Authorities
- Fundraising alternatives: including the range of non-grant based funding options (eg membership structures, community fundraising, events)
- Working together through partnership working, collaboration or mergers
- Building community resilience. Getting the best out of volunteers, building a strong management committee, and making sure people can contribute and have ownership of your organisation whatever their gender, physical disability etc.
- Financial management focusing on internal policies, procedures, roles and responsibilities.

We welcome applications from RCOs from all regions of the country, ethnic backgrounds, communities of interest (for example women's organisations, organisations for disabled people, organisations that bring people together through sport) and Refugee Community Fora.

Some examples of the kind of experience papers we could commission for each theme are as follows (your experience may be of something different - this is just to give ideas):

- Developing social enterprises, which generate income for the organisation through trading. *For example how your RCO set up a catering service or community cafe, to generate income for your RCO's activities.*

- Commissioning: RCOs tendering to deliver services for public agencies such as Local Authorities. *For example how your RCO tendered to deliver mental health support services from your local Primary Care Trust, and delivered a culturally appropriate service to members.*
- Fundraising alternatives: including current funding sources and non-grant based funding options (eg membership structures, community fundraising, events), the possible risks and rewards. *For example, how your community raises money through asking for member's contributions, fundraising events or grant applications.*
- Working together through partnership working, collaboration or mergers. *For example, how your RCO has got together with other RCOs to deliver services together. How your RCO has got together with a non-RCO organisations, for example working together on a sports project or an arts project.*
- Building community resilience. Getting the best out of volunteers, building a strong management committee, and making sure people can contribute and have ownership of your organisation whatever their gender, physical disability etc. *For example, how your RCO has encouraged more women to join, and take an active role in your management committee. How you have helped members of your community with disabilities to volunteer. How you involve users in running activities and services.*
- Financial management, focusing on internal policies, procedures, roles and responsibilities. *For example, how your RCO has successfully implemented financial management policies and procedures, and enabled members who had limited knowledge of financial management to implement these systems.*

How to apply to do an experience paper or share a resource:

Send an email to Helen at Helen.todd@refugeecouncil.org.uk with a brief description of the experience or document you would like to share, and which area of 'sustainability and survival' it fits with by 20 September. Please include your organisation's name, address and phone number.

Requirements:

The organisation should be a Refugee Community Organisation (RCO) or a Refugee Community Forum with a written constitution and a bank account. The definition used by Basis of an RCO is: "RCOs are organisations set up or led by refugees to provide services to refugees and asylum seekers; they are rooted within the communities they serve to act as bridges to mainstream services and other groups. Refugees are involved in the management of these organisations through representing their community group or as a service user."

The Basis Project will provide a template to RCOs who are successful in being commissioned to write an Experience Paper, to make it easy to structure the document. We will expect the RCO to fill in the template, responding to all sections and keeping to the minimum and maximum word allowances.

The RCO is required to submit a copy of the Experience Paper document to the Basis Project by 29 September 2010 by email to Helen.todd@refugeecouncil.org.uk. Refugee Council is taking forward this area of work for the Basis Project.

Fee: we can pay a flat fee of £200 per experience paper that meets our requirements. Fees for document and resource sharing will be agreed on a case by case basis.