Action for Archives

Strategic planning and fundraising programme final evaluation

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1. Introduction and background

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Strategic Planning and Fundraising Programme formed part of MLA’s Action for Archives Programmes. It combined and developed methods successfully piloted by the following initiatives:

- The Strategic Planning and Influencing Mentoring Programme 2007-08 which delivered a strategic planning and change management capacity building programme for 8 archive services across 4 English regions
- The Fundraising Mentoring Programme 2007-08 which provided one-to-one consultancy on fundraising to 6 organisations.

1.2 Aims of the programme

1.2.1 Action for Archives provided practical support and development to build the capacity of England’s archives to achieve the Archive Task Force’s vision of “An archival heritage unlocked and made open to all citizens in a way that engages them and empowers them to use archives for personal, community, social and economic benefit.”

1.2.2 This vision informed the Strategic Planning and Fundraising programme’s aims to provide a cross sample of English archives workforces with practical and transferable skills in planning, strategic management, fundraising and advocacy in order to bring archives to all citizens.

1.3 Delivering the Aims

1.3.1 The programme described in this evaluation report aimed to take into account learning from the pilots and enable participants and their services to:

- Explore their approach to strategy and planning
- Develop and apply solutions to critical strategic problems, particularly around advocacy, income generation and fundraising
- Learn from the way other services have addressed similar issues.

1.3.2 The programme combined group learning with dedicated one to one support with the longer terms vision of assisting archives services in achieving lasting change in the way they plan and deliver their strategies.

1.4 The Consultant Team

1.4.1 The FPM team that delivered the programme combined learning facilitators with specialist consultants. The core facilitator team had a combined total of over 100 years experience of facilitating learning and development with managers and staff in all sectors. The facilitators exceeded the requirements of LLUK for adult learning tutors.

1.5 Approach

1.5.1 Most archive services are small (with many having only one or two members of staff) and many are located in larger organisations. In small services managers face huge pressure to promote the service effectively to key stakeholders, whilst also doing the day job. Where archives are part of a
larger organisation, many have found it difficult to position themselves effectively in the wider change processes. Managers need space and support to develop their strategic thinking so that they can move away from reacting to events and build their capacities to lead their services and teams.

1.5.2 FPM is a long-standing advocate that, to be effective, the management learning by individuals, teams and organisations should be connected together. There is ample research evidence to show that this leads to more change and greater impact. We have used this approach in the AFA Strategic Planning, Influencing and Mentoring programme and in the Leading Archives and Museums programmes.

1.5.3 In addition we are strong proponents of the view that for individuals to become more effective as strategic thinkers and leaders requires a journey of development – it cannot be achieved by isolated learning events alone.

1.5.4 The approach used was built around action learning, which is a proven process for developing managers. The design took account of learning from FPM’s experience of running action learning sets:

- It works best with a clear and definite structure that participants understand and agree to from the start
- Participants prefer that everyone taking part is treated in a similar way i.e. everyone commits to the same programme and process
- Individual face to face coaching is used as a parallel process. It is negotiated by each participant rather than made as a generic offer
- The role of the facilitators is crucial. It is extremely valuable for the facilitators to be able to draw from each other’s experience (hence there were a small team of facilitators).
2. Description of project

2.1 The diagram below provides an overview of the complementing elements of the Strategic Planning and Fundraising Programme.

[Diagram showing the complementing elements of the Strategic Planning and Fundraising Programme]

Evaluation

- Aims and objectives
- Strategies and plans
- Amends to approach
- Feedback and progress
- Feedback and progress
- Feedback and progress
- Report on initial impact to MLA
- 6, 12 and 18 month impact follow ups

Group Learning

- Project inception, marketing and recruitment
- Diagnostic service visits
- Strategic development workshop
- First action learning set
- Second action learning set
- Third action learning set
- Review of progress Possible national event

Mentoring

- Suitable informal peer mentors in the field identified
- One-to-one mentor support and coaching
- One-to-one mentor support and coaching
- One-to-one mentor support and coaching
- 1:1 specialist consultancy and/or bespoke workshops
2.2 Recruitment to the programme

2.2.1 The aim of the programme was to recruit 20 archives services with a reasonable spread across the nine English government regions that would form 4 action learning groups.

2.2.2 Every local authority archive service in England was invited to apply for the programme through an open competitive process. Appendix A provides a copy of the application form and selection criteria used that was jointly agreed between FPM and MLA prior to launch.

2.2.3 In total we received 23 applications for the programme with 21 being assessed as meeting the entry requirements. The 2 unsuccessful services were contacted by letter and offered feedback on their applications. Appendix B contains a list of all services that applied for the programme.

2.2.4 All successful services were informed and assigned a lead consultant acted as their coach throughout the life of the programme.

2.3 Diagnostic service visits

2.3.1 The first stage in the programme was for each service to be visited by their lead consultant so that they could meet and talk with the service leaders before conducting a diagnostic audit of the strategic challenge the service was addressing by specifically looking at:
   - What success would look like when the strategic issue was addressed
   - Where the service currently was in relation to the issue
   - Perceptions of the main blocks and barriers to success (individual, team and organisational).

2.3.2 The key purpose of the diagnostic was to validate the information presented by the service in their application form relating to:
   - The organisational commitment for the service taking part
   - Ensuring the issue being addressed was strategic rather than operational.

2.3.3 Prior to the visit the lead consultant reviewed each service’s application and any other relevant strategic documents such as service plans. Appendix C contains a copy of the diagnostic report used by the consultant team.

2.3.4 During the visit the lead consultant highlighted the time commitments involved and ensured the service had made suitable arrangements for embedding the programmes learning within their organisation.

2.3.5 Following the diagnostic visit it was agreed between FPM and MLA that one of the services should not complete the programme. The reason for this was that the diagnostic visit discovered that the strategic issues identified during the application were very close to being fully addressed. Feedback was given to the service to this effect.
2.4 Strategic development workshops

2.4.1 Following the diagnostic visits FPM invited all the remaining 20 services to attend a strategic development workshop. This was run twice to ensure equality of opportunity, once in Sheffield and once in London.

2.4.2 The purpose of this workshop was to equip service leaders with the necessary knowledge, skills and motivation to enable them to return to the workplace and produce an action plan for addressing their strategic issue. Therefore, the content for the workshop was developed in consultation with MLA following the diagnostic visits. Appendix D contains the programme outline.

2.4.3 In total 32 leaders and managers from 19 of the 20 participating archive services took part in the opening strategic development workshop. Feedback from the days was good with 95% scoring the session as Excellent, Very Good or Good.

2.4.4 Each service was asked to complete a baseline assessment following the workshop and to hand it back in to their facilitator during the first action learning sessions. Appendix E contains a copy of this assessment.

2.5 Action learning sets

2.5.1 The 20 successful services were spread over a significant geographical distance, with representatives from 8 of the 9 regions. This did however pose FPM with a logistical issue of locating groups within reasonable travelling distance.

2.5.2 Therefore, it was agreed with MLA that FPM should deliver the programme through 5 groups as opposed to 4 in the following regions:

1. North London and the East
2. South London and the South East
3. West Midlands and the South West
4. East Midlands and South Yorkshire
5. North West and North Yorkshire.

2.5.3 All 5 action learning groups met 3 times each over a period of around 15 weeks. To ensure maximum attendance the specific timings were adjusted to suit participants but each session lasted a full day.
2.5.4 Attendance at the sessions was good with 91% attendance across the board; the table below provides a more detailed breakdown by group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Session 1</th>
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<th>Session 3</th>
<th>Totals</th>
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<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5.5 The format for each action learning session was for the time available during the session to be split equally amongst the participating services. Each service had a dedicated amount of time whereby they worked with the learning group and the facilitator to explore their specific strategic issue.

2.5.6 At the end of their allotted time the service leaders committed to a set of actions they agreed with the group to undertake between sessions that would make progress in addressing their strategic issue.

2.5.7 Each set was facilitated by an experienced action learning facilitator who played a key role in supporting the learning by group members. At the end of the session the facilitator also agreed with the group what resources they needed in order to complete their actions. These resources were made available as online resources through the Virtual Learning Environment.

2.6 Online resources

2.6.1 Following each action learning group session, the facilitators met to share the progress of each group and agree what resources needed to be sourced or developed to support each groups learning.

2.6.2 This led to a body of resources that were made available to participants through our dedicated online Virtual Learning Environment. Whenever new materials were made available participants were notified by email.

2.6.3 The Virtual Learning Environment was an effective support tool during the action learning sets. All services registered onto the site and 85% used it on a regular basis. During the 15 week action learning set period FPM published 33 resources to the online site for participants onto download.
2.7 **Service Coaching and Mentoring**

2.7.1 Evaluation of the AFA Strategic Planning, Influencing and Mentoring programme identified the need to have more one to one support for participating organisations. Therefore, this programme provided each service with eight hours of personal coaching from their action learning facilitator.

2.7.2 The purpose of this personal time for each service was to allow them to discuss progress and action in a safe place in between sessions.

2.7.3 FPM also offered services the option of being linked with a peer mentor whom they could work with on an informal basis to discuss learning and actions arising from the programme. The initial interest in this was very low with one service wishing to explore in further detail.

2.7.4 Feedback from services suggested that the intense nature of the programme coupled with learner-centred elements already in place (such as coaching and action learning) reduced the need for another form of support.

2.8 **Bespoke workshops**

2.8.1 Where services were seeking expert advice and guidance on similar issues FPM agreed with MLA to run a series of bespoke workshops that would be made available to all participating services.

2.8.2 Following consultation with the 20 services it was agreed that FPM would run the following 2 workshops:

- Influencing and advocacy for archive service leaders
- Enterprising archives focused upon innovative ways of delivering services generating revenue.

2.8.3 Materials and content were developed by FPM in liaison with MLA; Appendix F contains the two workshop programme outlines.

2.8.4 Both workshops were held in Birmingham to allow access for all services and recruitment was organised directly by FPM through emails, letters and phone calls. In total 13 services signed up to the seminars and feedback was excellent with 100% rating the sessions as Excellent, Very Good or Good.
3. Summary of strategic issues and learning expectations

3.1 Strategic Issues

3.1.1 As described in Section 3 each service went through the following process of identifying a strategic issue to explore:

- Written application identifying what the issue is and why it needs to be tackled
- Diagnostic visit for action learning facilitator and coach to validate issue
- Strategic workshop and action learning sets to generate action plans.

3.1.2 From each of these stages we have been able to draw out a summary of the strategic issues that services were choosing to address through the programme. It is worth noting that the quality and scope of ambition shown by services in the issues they wished to tackle was both impressive and variable.

3.1.3 Whilst the specific services and their issues are confidential to the groups and their facilitator, the following anonymous examples provide 2 particularly ambitious strategic issues from the programme:

- One service wished to use the programme to assist the creation of a formal heritage partnership amongst its different cultural services and explore the feasibility of using Trust status for the partnership
- Another service wished to develop a long term strategy encompassing new-build specialist storage for new media and digital preservation.

3.1.4 The following themes provide an overview of the key strategic issues that were being faced by archive service leaders. Interestingly they echo many of the same issues that FPM encountered during the Strategic Planning, Influencing and Mentoring programme a year earlier:

- Raising the profile and enhancing the reputation of the service within the local authority and beyond
- Forming alliances, in part to maximise capacity in the context of dwindling resources and in part to extend range of services and add value
- Developing services (outreach, educational projects) with limited – and in some cases diminishing – numbers of staff
- Extending reach to penetrate new markets and connect with wider audiences
- The challenge of moving to new premises and merging provision
- Digitised preservation of records and other technical developments
- Fund-raising and income generation.

3.1.5 Of the issues summarised above it was both digitised preservation and moving to new premises that were identified as being the most common strategic issues with almost half of services working on them.
3.2 Organisational learning expectations

3.2.1 The broader learning objectives identified by the 20 participating services were clearly very closely aligned to their strategic issue, as ultimately addressing this was the primary goal of their involvement in the programme.

3.2.2 A common underlying issue the majority of services were facing was their relatively low profile within their directorate of the local authority. Services were hopeful that by addressing their strategic issues and communicating progress effectively to their line managers they could begin to raise this profile.

3.2.3 Finally, most services also raised the need for them to develop their own culture, processes and practice of team and partnership working to ensure it is both collaborative and effective.

3.3 Individuals learning expectations

3.3.1 Each service was invited to nominate between 2 and 5 leaders and managers from their organisation whom would take part in the programme.

3.3.2 The expectation was that participants should be involved in all elements of the programme so FPM recommended the optimum number of learners as 3. Across the 20 participating services the average number of participants per organisation was 2.

3.3.3 During the application, diagnostic visit and baseline assessment participants were asked to identify specific skills and knowledge they were expecting to develop during the life of the programme.

3.3.4 A summary of the key areas participants were hoping to develop is below:

- Managing change with a specific focus upon how to manage the need for cultural change within a team or organisation
- Strategic thinking and planning tools and processes
- Specific technical knowledge around the issue of digitisation
- Influencing, advocacy and negotiation skills including the use of marketing and communication
- Being more effective at working collaboratively; be it through a team or partnership.
4. Impact and progress made

4.1 Evaluation methodology

4.1.1 FPM proposed a series of follow up questionnaires as the primary data capture method from the programme. All questionnaires were developed in consultation with MLA and the facilitation team. In total there were three structured questionnaires used at the following points:
- Post programme: August 2009
- 6 month follow up: March 2010
- 12 month follow up: September 2010

4.1.2 Questionnaires were emailed out to all participating services and a 2-week deadline was given for returns. FPM actively monitored responses and followed up leaders via phone calls and email to maximise the number of responses and thus provide as valid a survey as possible.

4.1.3 Responses to each of the evaluation rounds were excellent in terms of participation with 80% of services taking part in the evaluation. Specific returns from each of the evaluative data capture rounds breaks down as follows:
- Post programme: 65%
- 6 month follow up: 65%
- 12 month follow up: 75%

Copies of all three questionnaires can be found in Appendix G.

4.2 Findings from the evaluation

4.2.1 (a) Embedding the learning at an organisational level

One of the key aims for MLA of investment in the programme was for archives services to begin embedding strategic thinking and planning throughout their organisation. The application and diagnostic stages of the programme designed by FPM ensured that all services addressed embedding the learning to some extent.

4.2.2 In total 85% of services went to put in place additional systems and processes designed to spread the benefits of the programme across their organisation, examples include:
- Setup of learning groups with frontline managers and staff
- Regular reporting and staff presentations
- Careful selection of strategy and candidates to align with organisational goals
- Programme update, feedback and ideas added as regular agenda items on meeting structures (both staff and management).
4.2.3 During the follow up evaluation all services identified that they had been successful to some extent at embedding the learning of the programme outside of their core group, with 68% claiming their actions had been highly successful.

4.2.4 (b) Actions taken as a result of the programme
The post programme survey asked respondents to identify any actions they had taken or planned to take as a result of the programme. As you would expect there were a range of actions taken including:
- Extending stakeholder involvement in service plans and developments, including:
  - Setting up external user groups, and;
  - Development of team contribution and feedback meetings.
- Development of clear distinctions between strategic leadership roles and operational management
- Positioning service more favourably within local authority, either through management, members or local MP
- Extending reach of service users through development of new audiences such as children and young people.

4.2.5 One of the most common areas of action related to succession planning with two notable comments being:
- "I will also be actively considering how best to plan for handing over the service to the next generation of staff, including revising job descriptions”
- "On the wider succession planning issue, we have moved from a general awareness of vulnerability to making specific commitments (in our service plan, for example) to spread strategic planning capacity more widely across the service”.

4.2.6 (c) The impact of actions taken
The 6 month follow up evaluation asked services to identify any successes they had achieved since completing the programme and to reflect on how the programme had contributed to that success.

4.2.7 All respondents were able to identify at least 2 strategic successes they had achieved as a result of the programme. Their actions taken can be grouped into the following themes:
- Strategic thinking and planning
- Joint working
- Positioning and advocacy of service
- Sustainability, diversification & fundraising
- Digitisation.

4.2.8 It is excellent that the areas identified as being successful link directly back to the strategic challenges identified by services upon joining. The only notable
exception was the lack of a specific reference of success in developing and managing cultural change.

4.2.9 The most commonly reported impact was greater confidence and cogency with which respondents are able to argue their case and position their service within the local authority.

- "We may consider taking this approach (action learning) again if we want to make progress in a particular area in future, as it has been useful ground work. It has also highlighted the wider impact of actions across silos, which could be a model which we could use again for future projects”.

4.2.10 95% of respondents reported progress made with the most frequently cited example being better positioning of the service and aligning it more closely with other services so that they can better subscribe to broader corporate priorities.

4.2.11 This is very important in view of the dynamic leadership called for in the government’s recently-published draft consultation paper1:

- “Archive services need to actively demonstrate where they add value to policy targets both in their own right and in co-operation with other culture, learning and information partners. Although in local government, archives are not explicitly included within local performance frameworks, there is potential for archive services to make a major contribution to overall delivery of many of the local authority priorities”.

4.2.12 Further examples of progress were more proactive leadership and greater confidence in taking on issues. One respondent reported that:

- “Timeout has been helpful in creating a more concentrated approach that lets us question ourselves more critically and break the issue down into addressable chunks”.

4.2.13 This reflects what others intimated; that whereas previously they had been skirting around strategic challenges the programme had enabled them to examine them more closely and identify actions to take.

4.2.14 One service as a consequence of the programme has enabled more members of the team to understand and address strategic questions, think about longer-term service developments and share responsibility for decision-making.

4.2.15 (d) Return on investment

Although the short-term return is perhaps less tangible respondents regarded their time well spent with it resulting in changes to thinking and planning.

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1 ibid
4.2.16 There has also been benefit in facilitating staff to become more involved in shaping the development of the service. One respondent said that the programme made minimal demands on her time but with disproportionately positive outcomes. Others judged the return to be longer-term with, for example:

- "The increase in numbers of outreach events and participants, feedback given through focus groups and consultation with young people which will all effect future planning and service development. The main short-term investment, which is difficult to quantify, has been made by allowing time to consider planning, reflect on best practices and as a result progressing plans to improve service delivery”
- "Participation in the course was really useful and represents an excellent long term investment in personal and service development”.

4.2.17 However, a minority were less sure with one service feeling the results would have happened anyway without the programme. For this service the benefit was found in the networking. Another respondent chastised himself for not developing the good habit of recording thinking and lessons learned and thus not securing as great a return as he could have.

4.2.18 (e) Assessment of impact by senior officers and managers
Participants reported that senior colleagues are finding archives managers bringing greater confidence and boldness to some of their strategic planning.

4.2.19 However, it is worth flagging up that respondents generally found this difficult to assess. The impression was that senior colleagues take a fairly reductionist view of impact and are only really interested in improvements to footfall, user satisfaction, profile and value for money.

4.2.20 They went on to say that areas where improvements could be made and would be valued by The National Archives – e.g. cataloguing and preservation – are of little interest to senior corporate executives in the local authority. Perhaps the most telling response testified to the willingness to take a more audacious approach to strategic questions, something that might be:

- “More subtle than perhaps would be appreciated by any senior officer. A key benefit of the programme was sharing mutual problems or ‘issues’ and having the confidence to tackle them in new ways perhaps with a slight element of risk taking which had not been present previously”.

4.2.21 (f) Learning acquired as a result of the programme
Some of the responses indicated that the learning has concerned more operational than strategic matters. Examples include new builds and processes or techniques for identifying the outcomes of training events on records management for council staff.

4.2.22 However, most of the respondents had acquired new insights and understanding about leadership and management and had particularly valued some of the ‘modern’ management thinking they had been exposed to in the action learning sets. They felt they would now be in a better position to make
use of them in their work. The importance of developing skills for influencing others and positioning the service was reaffirmed.

- "The professional goals and standards that had become somewhat rusty in our service."
- "Better understanding of the policy framework and strategic context in which service provision and change operates. It has benefited the service by allowing me to better position the project I am leading on within national, regional and local policy context and to provide incontrovertible evidence that the project fits agendas, so giving the authority less cause to dismiss it as a ‘nice’ optional extra."
- "It was incredibly useful to share problems and responses from different services and to use this knowledge to improve our service."

4.2.23 The most widely reported development was collaboration, as managers began to see the benefits of sharing the load for strategic thinking and planning and gaining the benefits of colleagues’ ideas.

4.2.24 Creative and lateral thinking were also seen as additional assets acquired, including the ability to re-frame problems and to draw on the experience of others both in doing so and in identifying solutions. In other words, leadership can be distributed, not lodged solely in one officer who has leadership functions written into a job description.

4.2.25 This entails being open to other people’s thoughts and opinions and being seen to acknowledge their worth by entertaining a broader range of alternatives than had originally been conceived.

- "The need to align tasks, projects and programmes is essential. The identification of the stakeholders and the understanding of how one project elsewhere may impact on your project bring an awareness of obstacles, issues and commonality which can then be negotiated in order to obtain achievable outcomes."

4.2.26 (g) Less tangible outcomes

The most widespread benefit that respondents attributed to the programme was an increase in confidence with all respondents citing it in some form. A collection of their insights is contained below:

- "Feedback from my line manager and others suggests that I demonstrate noticeably more confidence as a leader, compared with six months ago. This was one of the key aims we cited in our original application"
- "I have gained more confidence in directing the team to shared values, improved ability to focus and motivate team and generally a better ability to take a step back and reflect and question actions/decisions"
- "Through the support and encouragement of other members of the action learning group, I do feel more confident, resilient and resourceful"
- "The programme has enabled exchanges of information and ideas between different authorities. This has already proved useful"
• “Knowing when to give and when to take is something that you cannot always get right but in being willing to try it does feel like some progress is being made”
• “We have both certainly gained in confidence and feel that we have achieved more than we perhaps realised. This has given us fresh impetus to maintain standards at a time when we have lost staff, our budget is getting smaller and the future is uncertain”.

4.2.27 This confidence was considered to be generated from the sharing of experiences and ideas with colleagues in the action learning set. For one, the programme had been an effective reminder that nothing is likely to be solved on one’s own and that “a shared way forward is the only one which will be achieved”.
5. Conclusions

5.1 Summary of the programme

5.1.1 Responses to all three questionnaires reflect a generally very positive response to the programme with participants feeling more confident, aware of the skills and qualities needed to become more strategic and proactive, in raising the profile of their services and influencing the policy agendas of local authorities.

5.1.2 The learning process itself has been commended for enabling ideas to be shared, questions to be asked and viewpoints to be critically appraised. It has enhanced solidarity, confidence, resilience and resourcefulness which are likely to be priceless commodities at a time of reduced budgets.

5.1.3 It is clear that those who have taken part in this programme have gained insights into the kind of leadership required for these straitened times and, hopefully, the determination and resolve to use what they have learned in providing a better public service.

5.1.4 Feedback from the facilitation group suggests that the programme helped participants position their services more strongly within the local authority. They also highlighted the benefits of participants attending in teams although the hierarchical nature of some meant that much of the air-space was given to senior managers to whom their subordinates tend to defer.

5.1.5 This could at times be mitigated by the formality of the structures and processes embedded in action learning sets, ensuring that all participants had time and opportunity – usually taken – to express their views and have them subject to the same discipline of questioning. The process also enabled some of the braver participants to ‘own their weaknesses’ in front of their peers.

5.1.6 With only one exception, the respondents appreciated and understood the benefits of action learning. As one reported it had been a useful process because it places the onus on taking actions rather than passively acquiring knowledge. As one respondent expressed it:

- “The focus on real problems that we could all share in and understand was very beneficial. At the same time the discipline of not offering solutions, but helping develop thinking through questioning was applied/enforced and was an important part in making us adjust our normal ways of behaving. Maybe what we were learning was that we must change our way of approaching problems, not just looking for a new tool or solution”.

5.1.7 When and if frustrations were experienced with the process it was seen as inevitable to some extent but it led to learning and positive results:

- “The self-consciousness that comes from asking questions in a ‘non-natural’ way inhibited group participation in some instances. However, if direct questioning made a group see something they had not considered
before, the process is undoubtedly worthwhile...sometimes in decision-making it is easy to ignore a circumstance which you know to be problematic. In facing questions during the action learning set, it is not so easy to ignore some uncomfortable truths!“

5.2 Changes to the programme
5.2.1 The only changes proposed concerned the period of the programme and the time intervals between each session. Some respondents and all the facilitators felt that three sessions at monthly intervals made the experience too compressed for this form of learning.

5.2.2 It might have had more immediate impact if there had been more sessions and they had been staged at longer intervals - two months rather than one was suggested. This would have allowed more time between sessions for decisions and actions to be taken, as these tend to be drawn-out processes in local government. There would then have been more to report on at the subsequent meeting(s) of the action learning set. But an alternative view was also expressed:

- "The temptation is always to say that we all needed more time and so the programme should be longer – I am not so sure about that. We might just come to depend on it as a prop if it continued, rather than realise that we have to make ourselves change if we are going to apply the learning”.

5.2.3 A further point mentioned by participants and facilitators concerned the composition of the sets. In one case an archives service was outnumbered by records management teams and that entailed a bias in the issues selected; in another the balance between small services and large was skewed.

5.2.4 One recommendation was that sets should be formed on the basis of sharing common issues and interests rather than on the basis of proximity; but in the same sentence recognised that would present logistical difficulties that may make the idea unworkable.

5.3 Sector Development
5.3.1 In this sector the capacity for management and strategic leadership tends to be underdeveloped. The hitherto low level of investment in management training and development were evident in some of the participating services. This means that the full benefits of a programme that highlights strategic planning and fund-raising may not be felt until and unless the building blocks of a deeper understanding of modern management ideas are in place.

5.3.2 Having said that, this programme did yield some good examples of the more advanced service managers mentoring the less experienced in an informal manner. As a result some of the newer managers increased their confidence and began to get a firmer grip on some of the challenges of leadership.
5.3.3 However the corollary of this practice meant that in some instances the more experienced participant would stay in role and unwittingly forfeit the opportunity of becoming a learner.

5.3.4 The latest National Archives strategy document\(^2\) identifies the following key recommendations for creating modern archive services:

- Develop **bigger and better services** in partnership – working towards increased **sustainability** within the sector
- Strengthened **leadership** and a responsive, skilled workforce
- Co-ordinated response to the growing challenge of managing **digital information** so that it is accessible now and remains discoverable in the future
- Comprehensive **online access** for archive discovery through catalogues and to digitised archive content by citizens at a time and place that suits them
- Active participation in **cultural and learning partnerships** promoting a sense of identity and place within the community.

This programme has enabled most of the participants to take steps to:

- Broaden and deepen public access to their services
- Place continuous improvement at the heart of their activities
- Integrate with other cultural, learning and information services to offer essential resources that meet people’s needs
- Innovate, become more entrepreneurial and able to adapt to new working methods
- Provide attractive and enjoyable places for people to visit and use.

5.3.5 There is no doubt that there is more they can do. This programme and the processes it has established has given archivists and records managers the confidence to be more enterprising and collaborative within the sector and across departmental boundaries inside and outside local authorities so as better to meet the strategic and resource challenges that lie ahead.

5.4 **Current Challenges and Support**

5.4.1 Following the emergency budget in June and the comprehensive spending review in October nearly all public services are facing reductions in the amount of resource available to deliver their work.

5.4.2 This is certainly the case in archives services with 100% of evaluation respondents identifying the budget cuts as the most difficult strategic challenge they are currently facing. Our sample suggests an average budget reduction of around 28% with some services being asked to reduce spending by as much as 40%.

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\(^2\) Archives for the 21\(^{st}\) Century in action; National Archives and MLA; March 2010
5.4.3 The timescales within which services are being asked to make reductions is also forcing archive service leaders to think and act both strategically and innovatively. By telescoping cuts into periods as short as 18 months there is a real threat of decimating services if the process is not lead and managed effectively.

- “The main strategic challenge currently facing us is the impact of the Coalition Government's requirement for 25% reductions in spend, which in Norfolk need to be found over a three-year, and not four-year, period.”

5.4.4 Clearly there will be significant issues for service leaders and providers over the next funding period as a result of the budget cuts. Key issues highlighted by respondents during the evaluation were quality of provision and staff morale.

- “We are not realistically looking at service, but rather looking at survival of our services or virtual close down.”
- “Our budgets are likely to reduce by 25% within a short timeframe. This also, of course, impacts on pressures on staff and staff morale. I don’t remember a time like this since I started work in 1973.”

5.4.5 In this time of extreme pressure strong service leadership across the organisation will be vital if archives are to continue their excellent work. Whilst it is clearly early days, the initial signs are positive, with three quarters of respondents already planning strategies designed to address the budget cuts.

5.4.6 Examples included both new ways of generating income through partnership, contracts and bidding as well as systemically streamlining processes through lean thinking to reduce cost from both service delivery and support. Support for archives services in addressing these challenges comes from a variety of places; the following were identified during our survey:

- Sector bodies and professional associations such as MLA and National Archives
- Corporate council or employer provision (i.e. training and human resource departments)
- Line management and supervision systems
- Locally supported learning groups.

5.4.7 Though worrying a significant proportion of respondents identified they have no support in addressing their challenges. As the funding landscape unfolds and resources begin to dry up from corporate teams, management and sector bodies (as is already happening) it is possible archive leaders will be forced to address the biggest challenge of their careers in relative isolation.
5.4.8 Moving forward leaders identified the following as development needs that would assist them in facing their service cuts:
- Dedicated training and development linked to cost reduction, service options and action planning
- Time with peer networks and groups, most are already in place and the issue is securing time out of office and travel costs
- Access to advice and guidance around advocacy issues
- Links to national best practice, ideas and solutions from other services.

5.4.9 Where archive leaders go to try and access this support though is quite unclear due to the fragmented and variable support offered by employers and changeable situation at a national level.
Appendix A: Application form

Strategic Planning and Fundraising Programme 2008/09
Application form
Submission deadline: Friday 31st October 2008

Please read the Criteria for selection before filling in this form and if you then have any queries please contact:

Susan Dheer from FPM on 0116 249 5000 or email susan.dheer@fpmonline.co.uk

Please complete this part of the form by giving contact details for the proposed team members for the programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Service and parent body</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is your parent body? (e.g. local authority, business, charity)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name of main contact person</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposed programme team member</td>
<td>Name:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service’s line manager’s name</td>
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<tr>
<td>e-mail</td>
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<td>Phone number</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Action for Archives: Strategic Planning and Fundraising Final Evaluation
Prepared by: Chris Owen
Date: October 2010
1. What is the strategic planning issue that your service is currently facing? This issue should be something that requires a degree of strategic thinking and will stretch your team.

2. What experience do your proposed team members have of strategic development and change management within your current service? Are you aware of your strengths and weaknesses? You do not have to have these skills to participate in the programme as it will support professional development but your readiness to benefit will be assessed.

3. What will motivate you and your team members to take new approaches to your work in order to develop your service?

4. What do you feel the programme could offer your service: why change and why now?

Declaration
We want to be considered as one of the twenty services to participate in this programme.

We understand that:
1. We will need to commit to attendance at all group and individual sessions
2. We have relevant and timely strategic and change management issues that can be addressed at this time by the programme, and we will commit to focus on these issues in formal sessions and daily work
3. Our line managers and our service are fully committed to our participation in this project.
4. We will support the cascading of learning from this project through our service delivery
5. We are happy for our learning and experience to be shared across the sector [e.g. through case studies, participation in regional or national events].

Signature of applicant on behalf of service

Signature of line manager in support of application
Date

Please return completed applications to:
Susan Dheer
Marketing Manager
FPM
7 Jarrom Street
Leicester
LE2 7DG
susan.dheer@fpmonline.co.uk
Fax: 08707 059 361

Closing date for receipt of forms is noon on Friday 31st October 2008.
Strategic Planning and Fundraising Programme 2008/09

Criteria for selection
Submission deadline: Friday 31st October 2008

Programme Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Would you like to participate in a programme that will:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support the strategic development of your archive?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support your own professional development?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Strategic Planning and Influencing Mentor Programme will support archive services to develop the skills, confidence and understanding to plan strategically and manage sustainable change. It will address core management competences for strategic planning, change management, advocacy and relationship and partnership development.

MLA Council will be appointing experienced consultants to mentor 8 archive services across four English regions (East of England, South East, North East and Yorkshire). The programme will run from September 2007 – March 2008.

This is an exciting opportunity to be a pathfinder in the first year of MLA Partnership’s new national programme Action for Archives. MLA Council is fully funding places on this programme in 2007-08.

About the programme

The programme will take forward the methodology successfully piloted by MLA London in 2006/7.

The key features of the MLA London programme were that it:

- Worked with small teams from each service, rather than just individuals, to facilitate learning and change across each service, rather than just within each individual
- Worked to address real-life challenges identified by each service
- Provided coaching and mentoring tailored to meet the needs of each service and individual
- Provided learning sets to bring together the participating teams
Developed a mechanism for the on-going support of participants beyond the programme

The core elements of the programme are expected to be:

- The delivery of a practical mentoring programme to develop the strategic planning and change management capacities of each archive service
- To build on the capacity of the participating archive services to analyse and respond to the broad strategic contexts within which they operate, and the specific drivers of their parent bodies
- To build on the skills of individuals or small teams from the archive services in strategic and business planning, advocacy, evaluation and evidence gathering.
- The signposting of relevant development tools and frameworks

**Level of commitment**

The Strategic Planning and Influencing Mentor Programme is a programme of change. The programme will be designed around the individual needs of participants and delivered through an action-oriented programme – where services will be supported to start changing and developing their service. Organisational change can be a challenging process for everybody involved, and it will require high levels of commitment from the organisation. Participants will need to invest time and effort to varying degrees and will need to commit to attending all formal group and individual sessions (as agreed with the consultants at the start of the programme).

**Selection Criteria**

Eight archive services from across the East of England, the South East, the North East and Yorkshire will be selected to take part in the Strategic Planning and Influencing Mentor Programme. The aim of the programme is to support archive services that are facing a real-life challenge that impacts upon their strategic development. Through the application process we are looking for evidence of:

1. Your readiness and willingness to change
2. Commitment from key decision makers and senior management
3. A clearly identified strategic planning issue that the archive service is currently facing

Examples of strategic planning and influencing issues include:

- The development of a collaborative cross-service plan to deliver educational services to local schools
- Developing a business case or advocacy plan for the relocation of your service or the outsourcing of part of your service
- Developing options for ensuring the delivery of your service reflects the needs of your community (whether internal or external) – going beyond consultation
- Repositioning your service within your parent organisation

**Eligibility requirements:**

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**Action for Archives: Strategic Planning and Fundraising Final Evaluation**

**Prepared by:** Chris Owen

**Date:** October 2010
Applicant archive services:

- Must be geographically located within the East of England, the South East, the North East or Yorkshire
- Must offer a level of public access to all or part of their collections
- Can come from any sector, including business, local authority, health authority, higher or further education, charity, professional or learned society

Applications will be assessed by a panel made up of representatives from the MLA Council, with advice from the MLA Partnership. Each application will be judged against the criteria given above. MLA Council will take the final decision on applications.

In the event that more than eight applicants meet all of the criteria, the Panel will give priority to those projects which demonstrate a range of issues and will test the pilot methodology.

All applicants will be informed in writing of the decisions during September 2007.

Application and closing date

Applicants are strongly advised to discuss their interest in the programme with their Regional Agency:

Please complete the application form and submit by noon on Friday 31st October 2008.

For more information on the programme please call:

Susan Dheer from FPM on 0116 249 5000 or email susan.dheer@fpmonline.co.uk
Appendix B: Services applying

Successful
London Borough of Brent
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
London Borough of Haringey
Hertfordshire
Norfolk
City of Westminster
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Hampshire
Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames
Rotherham
Derbyshire
Nottinghamshire
Cumbria
Lancashire
North Yorkshire
Cheshire
Herefordshire
Dudley
Somerset
Walsall
Plymouth

Unsuccessful
Middlesborough
Durham
Appendix C: Diagnostic form

MLA: Action for Archives
Strategic Planning and Fundraising Programme

Note of Diagnostic Visit

Name of service

Name and contact details of link person

Essence of the strategic challenge, including the team’s starting-point and intended destination:

Support and materials they might need:

☐

☐

☐

Any matters arising:

☐ for FPM administration

☐ for Programme Co-ordinator

Consultant/ALS Facilitator:

Date:
Appendix D: Strategic workshop

Strategic Development Workshop

Purpose

This one day event will bring together participants involved in the Strategic Planning and Fundraising Programme. The workshop will enable participants to:
• Explore and develop the questioning techniques used in action learning
• Clarify key principles and tools for strategic thinking and planning
• Identify the essentials of an income generation strategy (including fundraising)
• Get started in their action learning groups.

Preparation

Please make sure you have refreshed your understanding of the key strategic issues in your service that you aim to tackle through the programme. Please also read the attached short resource on strategy.

Outline Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.30</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>The essentials of strategic thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Putting strategy into practice: communication and fundraising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.30</td>
<td>Break-out group &amp; feedback for session one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.45</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>Communicating your strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>Break and refreshments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>Action Learning: using effective questions to solve problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initial meeting of the action learning groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>Review of the day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>Close</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Baseline analysis

Strategic Planning and Fundraising: Baseline Assessment

Name of service:

As concisely as possible please specify the strategic challenge your team is facing

What do you see as your strengths in tackling this issue?

What do you see as your weaknesses?

What do you see as the principal opportunities in front of you as you seek to make progress?

What do you see as the principal threats?

How will you judge whether or not the SPAF programme has helped you make progress in meeting this strategic challenge?

If you can, please return this to your facilitator prior to the first meeting of the set. Otherwise please complete it and bring it with you.
Appendix F: Workshop outlines

Enterprising Archives

Course introduction
Enterprising archives are those that add value to their organisations and communities. There are plenty of examples in the public sector where services are tailored to meet specific needs of the local community, take advantage of special collections, or offer a service that helps set, as well as support, local government agenda. In addition, private sector archive services (which have developed in relatively recent years) can be pioneering in their entrepreneurial approach to record keeping and customer service. This workshop encourages participants to share experiences, exchange ideas and through case study learnings, gain an understanding of the strategies behind enterprising archive services.

Programme outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.30</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>Session one - public relations, business development and service flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.30</td>
<td>Break-out group &amp; feedback for session one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>Session 2 - developing partnerships, exploiting technology and income generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>Adrian Steel, The British Postal Museum &amp; Archive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>Break-out group &amp; feedback for session 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Recap on learnings &amp; workshop evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>Close</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Influence and advocacy workshop

Aims
To give participants the opportunity to develop the confidence, insights and skills to become effective at influencing stakeholders in local archives services so that they can better position the service within the local authority and the wider community.

Key insight for participants to acquire
The way to influencing people lies in knowing their needs and interests and showing how you can help

Programme Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.30</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the difference between influence and advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.50</td>
<td>Learning from experience and trying to wield influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.30</td>
<td>Input on influencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>Recognising the needs of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>What kind of archives service are we working towards?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>What are the key requirements for influencing others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Break and refreshments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>Scenarios: practising advocacy for archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>Whole group – one thing I shall do differently as a result of today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>Close</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G: Evaluation questionnaires

Post programme evaluation

1. When you consider the initial challenges for your service you brought to the programme, can you identify the **progress** that you have been able to make as a leader or manager as a consequence of this programme?

2. What **action** has your service taken as a result of participating in this programme that you think might not otherwise have been taken?

3. What has been the **impact** of these different actions
   a. within the service
   b. within the local authority
   c. among service users
   d. among any other stakeholders (please specify)

4. Can you identify any particular **learning** that you have acquired as a result of this programme? How has it benefited you yourself and the service you lead?

5. Can you identify any new and helpful **insights and knowledge into leadership**, strategic planning and fund-raising as a result of this programme?

6. Can you describe and account for any significant **developments in leadership skills and styles** demonstrated by leaders and managers in your service team as a result of the programme?

7. Can you identify any **less tangible outcomes** achieved as a result of this programme e.g. confidence, willingness to take risks, resilience, resourcefulness?

8. How would you describe and measure the **return on the investment** you have made in this programme – e.g. the time that staff have taken to participate in the action learning sets, read materials and record their learning?

9. How have you found the **action learning** process? What have you learned from it that you might not have learned through other processes?

10. Are there any **changes to the programme** that you think might have brought you and your team greater benefits from the learning?
6 month follow up evaluation

1. Preparation and Support

a) How did you and your organisation initially prepare in ensuring that the learning from the programme was implemented into the workplace?


b) Was this successful and what would you have done differently?


2. Reflection on Success

a) What have been the three most significant successes you have had since joining the programme and how did the programme contribute to this success?

Success 1:
Programme Contribution:

Success 2:
Programme Contribution:

Success 3:
Programme Contribution:
12 month follow up questionnaire

Dear x

Thank you for providing feedback on the MLA and FPM’s Strategic Planning and Fundraising programme back in <enter date of last questionnaire> 2010.

All feedback collected to date is being collated and analysed before forming a final evaluation report that we hope to be able to share with you in the autumn. We have just three final short questions we would appreciate your time in responding to.

1. What are the strategic challenges you are now facing as a leader of archives services? How do they differ from those you faced when joining the programme?

2. What strategic support is available to help you address these challenges? (i.e. through your employer, council, sector bodies, etc.)

3. What additional support would you value being made available to you and why?

On behalf of MLA and FPM I would like to thank you for taking part in a programme that has been a pleasure to be involved with.

If you have any questions please feel free to give me a call.

Best wishes,

x