

Ref Code	Organisation Name
2020-05-R004	Finding Rhythms
Visit Date	Visited By
11 th August 2020	Victoria Southwell (Zoom call)
Background to Organisation and governance	
<p>Finding Rhythms (FR) is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation that was registered in 2013, although informally projects started to be delivered in 2005. FR employs three paid members of staff and works with 12 freelance musicians and sound engineers who deliver the programmes in prisons. A Board of seven Trustees support the staff team. They meet every three months and bring a strong mix of knowledge and expertise of the criminal justice sector and wider business and management skills.</p> <p>A detailed Strategic Plan is in place for 2020-23 setting out ambitious plans to adapt and grow services. The strategy aims to build on the accomplishments of the previous eight years and clearly utilises the strengths of the operational team and board. Clear aims and targets are set out in the plan with clear areas of ownership and responsibility. This is being regularly reviewed by the Board in light of any impact Covid-19 will have on the plan.</p> <p>On the call I spoke with Dami Solebo (Business Director), Robin Harris (Founder and Creative Director) and Herb Nahapiet (Chair of Trustees). Robin formed FR after working as a music teacher at Wormwood Scrubs. He believed passionately that enabling someone's authentic voice to be heard helped their rehabilitation and ultimately their chances of improving their prospects.</p> <p>Herb has a long professional relationship working in the criminal justice sector. He was the first MD of what is now Sodexo Justice Services. He is also Vice Chair of The Koestler Trust. Dami joined FR in April 2020 and is responsible for fundraising and business development. Robin and Herb have strong knowledge of the sector they work in and deep expertise in the approaches they deliver.</p>	
Aims and Activities	
<p>Finding Rhythms' aim is to create a generation of prisoners who are less likely to reoffend. They aim to change people and society through making music.</p> <p>FR runs intensive education projects in prisons and community settings where learners are challenged to write, compose and record an album of original music. Learners build personal and social skills and have the chance to earn an Edexcel accredited BTEC in employability skills. Sessions are led by a team of highly skilled professional musicians/educators.</p> <p>To date FR has worked with 589 learners in 25 prisons and five community venues. 318 offenders have been helped to earn a BTEC award and published 43 albums of original music. Community programmes are aimed primarily at young ex-prisoners.</p> <p>In 2019 FR worked with 100 prisoners and 60 individuals gained BTEC certificates.</p> <p>FR has recently become an Approved Centre for The Princes Trust.</p>	

Finances

Independently examined accounts for the year ending 31st March 2019 show income of £185,524 against expenditure of £157,560 resulting in a surplus of £27,964 for the year.

The balance sheet shows net current assets of £127,186 of which £90,619 is unrestricted. £35,000 of this is designated as a Contingency Fund that is managed by the Trustees and represents 6 months operational costs and is not able to be used for project costs. This policy is reviewed annually.

Budgets and funding predictions for 2020/21 had been predicted to increase by around £80,000. These figures will need to be reviewed due to the impact of Covid-19 and the inability to generate new business but equally staffing costs for facilitators etc have reduced due to not being able to access prisons and run courses. So expenditure has also decreased.

FR's main funding comes from Trusts and Foundations such as The Grocers' Company, The National Foundation for Youth Music and a wide range of other smaller grants. A much smaller proportion of income comes from commercial service fees and contributions from prisons for programmes.

Good financial systems are in place and there is strong oversight from the Board (where a lot of financial expertise is evident) and the Operational Manager.

Current Situation and need

FR has been working with prisoners delivering their effective music programme since 2012. What started as a passion project for a professional musician who was also a teacher has now developed into a professional organisation that has designed an effective personal development programme. This programme prepares for release but also enables prisoners to gain key vocational qualifications.

FR uses a desistance approach and so the programme they have developed is strongly linked to the 14 identified components of effective desistance. Desistance is viewed as a journey that is influenced by someone's circumstances, the way they think and what's important to them. Each individual's experience is different and support aims to help those with a previous pattern of offending to abstain from crime.

As the programme has become more formalised the format of each session has also evolved. Currently a FR course consists of 6 sessions over 36 hours and is run by three facilitators. These are a Project Leader with a background in music production, a guest musician and a recording engineer who brings in the recording equipment. This mix is essential to provide an authentic high quality musical experience for each participant and enable them to honestly engage in the process. However, the complexity of the dynamics of working with these groups has identified a gap in conflict resolution skills and managing issues that come to the surface during sessions. Enhanced training of facilitators around conflict, mental health and engaging with disaffected individuals is something that has been identified as being urgently needed to give the programme additional credibility and continue to produce strong outcomes for participants. Formalising a training and recruitment programme will ensure that there is a bank of high quality facilitators more equipped in areas focused on building the emotional intelligence of beneficiaries. Training will also be given to provide people with the skills to become coaches who will be able to offer additional support outside of sessions. This approach will involve working with partners (such as LEAP Confronting Conflict) to deliver training in specific focus areas.

<p>Improving relationships with prisons and moving to a purchasing system with them is a key objective for FR in terms of securing long term financial security. Building stronger partnerships directly with prisons and local authorities will ensure that FR is able to more effectively plan their offer and embed services into institutions.</p> <p>The Creative Director role is crucial in being able to continue to develop high quality content for programmes which underpins the ability to market and sell a programme that provides strong outcomes for participants. Currently this role is only one and a half days a week and realistically this needs to be increased to three.</p> <p>The team at FR have identified that the two greatest risks to the organisation going forward are linked to financial and planning challenges. The request that has been made for funding will directly impact both of these areas.</p>
<p>Overall aim of the funding</p>
<p>Funding will enable FR to recruit and train an improved bank of expert facilitators to run session and manage challenging behaviours and conflict. The grant will also be used to increase the hours of the Creative Director to enable the ongoing development of new projects with more specialised outcomes. This will improve FR's commercial offer leading to more commissions from prisons and reduced reliance on Trusts and Foundations.</p>
<p>Expected Key Achievements in Year 1</p>
<p>EKA 1</p>
<p>New training programme in place for facilitators and coaches.</p>
<p>EKA 2</p>
<p>To deliver the new enhanced programme to two prisons in the South East.</p>
<p>EKA 3</p>
<p>Development of improved tools to measure the impact of the programme on learners.</p>
<p>Request and Budget</p>
<p>FR is requesting £40,000 over 2 years towards extending the hours of the Creative Director and a contribution towards recruitment and training costs for programme facilitators.</p> <p>£20,000 in year 1 - £10,000 (contribution to Creative Director's salary), £2,000 (external support for recruiting new coaches and musicians), £3,500 (training and follow up sessions focused on conflict resolution and behavioural management) and £4,500 (1 day pilot projects).</p> <p>£20,000 in year 2 - £10,000 (contribution to Creative Director's salary), £2,000 (external support for recruiting new coaches and musicians), £3,500 (training and follow up sessions focused on conflict resolution and behavioural management) and £4,500 (evaluation costs).</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>
<p>FR do really interesting work in an extremely challenging environment and clearly connect with prisoners in a meaningful and impactful way. As with many arts based interventions the ability to cut through issues and barriers with these kinds of projects is very effective. But where some projects are just about the process of taking part in the activity for recreational purposes there is deep social development built into this programme. And the added benefit of being able to gain a BTEC enables participants to take something tangible away from the programme alongside the personal gains.</p>

It was interesting at the assessment to hear FR talking in terms of desistance rather than reoffending and the programme is clearly focused on ensuring that the key elements of desistance are linked in. The development of the programme therefore to ensure that the team's leading each project have the additional skills to both address and work through conflict and provide more of a coaching focused role seems like a natural one.

This is a thoughtful organisation with a strong board who provide valuable advice and support to the operational team. It is quite incredible what Robin currently achieves working one and a half days a week so the increase in hours for him will make a big difference to the organisation at this crucial time.

To be able to move from an income model that currently relies on project commissions to long term contracts with prisons would have huge benefits for the organisation and address the funding challenges that have been identified by the Board and team. By embedding more skilled interventions into the project this will likely improve outcomes for participants further and enhance the programme, making it an attractive purchase for either Reducing Reoffending or Education Units in prisons. FR predict that income generated through the work supported via Triangle Trust funding has the potential to help them grow income to around £400,000 annually eventually.

There is more work to be done around being able to prove outcomes and show the benefits of the programme in terms of the impact for beneficiaries once released from prison. FR do recognise this and understand that it is crucial for making a business case going forward. The current impact data held is very anecdotal and more linked to soft outcomes and how people feel about themselves after participating on the programme rather than anything that strongly shows any clear change in offending behaviour. We discussed this at the assessment and it is an area that is covered in the Strategic Plan but does need further thought and development. The contribution towards this area of work in the second year of the grant will therefore be important in helping them to build this kind of evidence base.

We talked about the impact of Covid-19 on their work currently and in the future as access to prisons has become extremely restricted. Since lockdown FR has demonstrated how agile it can be by developing an online offer that can delivered as a distance learning programme without needing facilitators to physically be in the prison.

For an organization of this size the board make up is impressive and will likely make some of the growth aspirations possible. The grant has a clear and direct purpose and funding would have a strong benefit. Therefore I would strongly recommend support with a grant as requested.

Recommended Priority Rating		
Risk = Low	Difference to organisation = High	Priority = High