

Ref Code	Organisation Name
2020-05-R022	The Junction 42 Foundation
Visit Date	Visited By
21 st September 2020	Victoria Southwell (Zoom call)
Background to Organisation and governance	
<p>The Junction 42 Foundation (J42F) is a registered charity formed in 2012. J42F employs 20 paid members of staff and has 30 volunteers. A Board of five Trustees support the staff team. They meet every two months and bring a strong mix of knowledge and expertise in HR, finance, safeguarding, the legal system, impact and ethos and faith.</p> <p>A Strategic Plan is in place for 2019-22 setting out their focus during this period and ambitious plans for financial and geographical growth. Work around supporting internal processes and tools is identified as a key priority and this funding request links well to this well. Trustees have ongoing input into the development of the Plan via Board Meetings and sub-group meetings and also have an annual away day where the main business is the Strategic Plan. Since Covid-19 the plan has been reviewed but no changes have been deemed necessary to date.</p> <p>On the call I spoke with Joanne O'Connor (Director and Founder), Laura Grant (Technology Consultant), Natasha Farrow (Income and HR Manager) and Sarah Wade (Trustee). Joanne formed J42F after working for another organisation and leading on their prison visits work. Sarah has been a Trustee since J42F was formally established and has oversight of Safeguarding across the charity due to her experience of being a solicitor working in family law. Laura has previously worked for Accenture and spent the past nine months as interim Business Development Manager whilst the post was recruited to so holds deep organisational knowledge.</p> <p>All participants demonstrated good knowledge of the work of J42F and the purpose of the funding that has been applied for. The Trustee showed high levels of involvement in the charity that appeared to be in place across the whole of the Trustee Board.</p>	
Aims and Activities	
<p>J42F exists to see the lives of offenders, ex-offenders and their communities visibly transformed by hope. A range of projects and contracted services are provided within and prison service and in the community.</p> <p>J42F works directly with offenders and ex-offenders, all of whom face serious lifestyle stability issues and significant barriers due to their criminal convictions. They do this through running; employability and entrepreneurial training; creative education and engagement projects and through the gate mentoring and faith support.</p> <p>Employability and entrepreneurship work is primarily funded by the DWP and focuses on intensive group work and 1:2:1 employability mentoring in the community in Newcastle, Sunderland and Teesside. In 2018, 208 people engaged with this programme leading to 44 going into paid employment, 42 into voluntary jobs and 34 into training.</p> <p>Creative education and engagement work takes place in custody and J42F works in seven prisons across the North East. Art, music or crafts are used as a vehicle to help increase confidence, trust, interaction, engagement and participation with those who</p>	

struggle most. 212 people completed structured education courses and over 530 hours of engagement activities were facilitated by J42F staff.

Faith focused work supports the Chaplaincy departments in prisons by delivering weekly groups and supporting Sunday services.

Finances

Independently examined accounts for the year ending 31st March 2019 show income of £409,020 against expenditure of £403,817 resulting in a surplus of £5,203 for the eight month period that the accounts cover. This shortened financial period was to enable J42F to readjust their financial year from April-March to match the majority of their contracted funding.

The balance sheet shows net current assets of £200,079 of which £145,171 is unrestricted. This represents the equivalent of three months future operating costs in line with the stated reserves policy.

Budgets and funding predictions for 2020/21 remain in line with the previous financial year and there has been no anticipated loss of funding due to Covid-19. In fact some additional funding has been received to cover costs linked to specific activities undertaken during this period and targets around results based funding have been relaxed.

FR's main funding comes from the Department of Work and Pensions, HMPPS, Novus and a range of Trusts and Foundations such as The National Lottery, the Seedbed Trust, Henry Smith Foundation and Mercer's Company.

Good financial systems are in place and there is strong oversight from the Board (the Treasurer is an accountant) and the Office Manager.

Current Situation and need

Since J42F was founded in 2012 the staff team has increased by 17 and they have moved from working in two prisons and community locations to five prisons and six communities. They have also launched two new offices (one in Teesside and one in Scotland) and now have over 6000 client engagements a year.

Despite this growth the internal infrastructure of processes and tooling hasn't been invested in nor developed to match the expansion of programme delivery. Whilst the current systems have been broadly sufficient in terms of being able to satisfy reporting requirements it has become clear that this is no longer the case. To maximise opportunities and support continued growth these systems urgently need to be upgraded.

During 2019 J42F conducted a series of internal audits with the support of an external consultant who looked at the business plan, financial processes, safeguarding and marketing/communications, who then made a series of recommendations on how to upgrade the organisation's infrastructure. This was with the aim of making it more resilient, increasing capacity, reducing inefficiencies and positioning itself for future growth. The majority of these recommendations focused on the automation and streamlining of processes and policies and the urgent implementation of a database which would address these key needs.

Some of the key improvements linked to the implementation of a database will include a reduction in staff administration time and thus the ability for more client appointments

to take place. Other expected improvements that are anticipated include improved communication and relationships with donors, more secure and robust finance systems, safeguarding and risk management, and a decrease in office based engagements allowing more flexibility in where to meet and support clients. Crucially J42F intends to use the database as a vital tool to record and understand their impact. A much richer data set than is currently available will be provided that can be analysed, reported on and acted upon. This will lead to a much greater understanding of client needs resulting in innovative tailored support being developed. There is also the expectation that having better data will increase income opportunities and diversify funding sources due to the ability to be able to share accurate data and robust impact measurements.

Overall aim of the funding

To support the purchase and implementation of new database that will improve staff efficiencies, free up more time for client work and help to evidence outcomes and need. This will enable more funding to be accessed and support long term organisational growth.

Expected Key Achievements in Year 1

EKA 1

To have identified a suitable database developer.

EKA 2

To have identified detailed requirements for database and manage the configuration of these into the end product.

EKA 3

To have trained the entire staff team on the database and new business processes and roll them out across the whole organisation.

Purpose of grant and Budget

J42F is requesting £27,666 over 6 months to purchase a database and employ a Technology Consultant to lead this process and implementation.

£27,666 in year 1 - £16,666 (Technology Consultant costs) and £11,000 (database purchase).

Conclusion

J42F impressed me as a thoughtful organisation who clearly understand what they don't know and how they need to address this. The charity was a recipient of a grant in 2013 at their very early stages and so it is good to see the progress that our support at that time has helped them to make.

This is an organisation that is clearly punching above its weight in terms of the work they undertake and the impact they are achieving. Strong relationships with prisons, local funders and other key stakeholders and their relational model of service delivery has put them in a good position. However, their biggest challenge going forward organisationally is going to be keeping up with the rate of growth and demand. The current approach to impact measurement is more linked to reporting requirements than capturing the impact that the organisation is making as a whole. This not only clearly takes up unnecessary time but doesn't provide an opportunity to talk about their work as a whole and analyse their impact in any deep way. Being able to do this would undoubtedly not only make them more efficient in terms of their process but also support their growth aspirations by being able to evidence their impact more effectively.

The request is well planned and the inclusion of a consultant to lead on this work makes sense. Laura is likely to be a vitally important to the success of the roll out of

this big change to internal processes. Laura has had a long involvement with J42F so understands well both the work they do and the team that will need to start utilising the database and systems. She also fully understands what J42F needs to record on a database so her discussions with the developers will be vital in delivering a database that is able to meet current and future needs.

There has been a lot of thought put into this application about how to ensure that the full value of the database is felt across the whole organisation and staff team. Embedding deep knowledge about how to use the database in all team members is a clear part of the roll out strategy and this will be a crucial component of the work plan. Making sure that it becomes a part of their daily work processes will be key to ensuring that this is something that becomes sustainable in the long term rather than relying on a specific person to implement. J42F recognise this and I feel confident that it will quickly become incorporated into everyone's individual roles. Ongoing costs for the database are expected to be met through efficiency savings and procuring new contracts.

J42F is a Christian charity and came out of another Christian charity, North East Youth for Christ. Their Christian ethos is very visible on their website and a key part of their identity as a charity. J42F does feel very accessible and open to everyone. Whilst having a religion isn't a prerequisite for being able to access support there are also opportunities to explore issues of faith should a beneficiary wish to and a number of additional support pathways linked to this.

This relatively small request would have a significant difference to J42F and have a long term impact. This would likely lead to multiple opportunities for growth both in the North East and in Scotland. With that in mind and the strong team in place to lead this development over the next 6 months I would strongly recommend support with a grant.

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