



Annex B : Summary of 40 face to face and telephone interviews.

Interviewees were from the following areas and included a range of infrastructure organisations, county council officers, funders and freelance funding advisors, as well as One East Midlands staff. Although the project invited views from across the East Midlands it was only possible to interview those who responded to the invitation.

Newark and Sherwood Derbyshire	Leicester Nottingham	Nottinghamshire High Peaks
Lincolnshire Leicestershire Blaby	Lincolnshire Derby Rutland	Northamptonshire Northampton Regional

The interviewees were asked a number of core questions and the following is a summary of their feedback and comments grouped according to themes. The responses have been anonymised.

What aspects of EMFAN have been most helpful.

The project has **supported the start-up of funding advice networks** which have then continued independently. *“When I started a local FAN they had cut-backs and it died, One EM has got it back up running and we run it as a self-help organisation. Now it can continue without OEM. Heritage & Big attend so they keep it focussed and make it worthwhile.”*

The project offered a network that **enabled funding advisors to link in with other CVSs** and *“build up relationships”*.

The project has offered **support to people new to funding advice** – *“It was a steep learning curve for me when I came into funding and I needed to know about network”*. *“It’s been good in terms of content - I hear stuff from a range a sources”***The newsletter** *“it stands out – really useful”*.

The training and events : *“I did Fit4Funding training a few years ago and EMFAN has been successful with training. It is important that Funding Advice goes beyond funding sources - it should be about encouraging organisations to be entrepreneurial not dependent on grant funding, and much wider. “...”Training works for me, and great for networking – get together know other people, very worthwhile”*.

“The product is more than the sum of its parts”. Events highlight issues that sub-regional organisations need to look at and open up new ideas and thinking. It is really important for local organisations also to get the bigger picture as it enables them to perform better locally. *“At each event there was usually one workshop which was a gem”*.

Fit 4 Funding *“I really got a lot out of that...I was feeling my feet then and it encompassed everything”*.

“I don’t have a dedicated FA more a jack of all trades...I used to make more of an effort to attend but don’t have capacity now”.



“There is a role for both regional and county”

Are the FANs important?

Those in favour of FANS had a number of comments..

*It is important to support Development Workers. A **professional network should be about sharing about good practice and support** and when it works well it is great.*

The networking opportunity is really important: *“Key thing for me is the opportunity to network with people which has resulted in joint work; improving & increasing knowledge and being more confident in role (I’m only person in this role locally)”.*

Those who were not in favour of FANS commented:

There are **clear weaknesses in some of the FANs** and they need a strong external driver for change which the project cannot provide. Some relied on the EMFAN project manager for support and sometimes that worked well but not all COs signed up and some see the FANs as *“a luxury and not a priority”*. *“Not all FANs have really taken off and there are a variety of reasons for this. The different levels of engagement of some of the CVSs have meant that it has not been able to event out the quality of funding advice as was originally hoped”.*

Resources are needed for the FANs to be effective and this is not available. A number of respondents commented that they work part time and do not have the time to participate in network meetings, training or events.

The Challenges affecting the sector

Key challenges are seen as:

There are real **challenges with continuity**, with radical changes in the sector and new people coming into roles and restructuring. There has been a drastic reduction in the numbers of people whose role was 100% funding advice and therefore the premise on which the project was based changed significantly. Some of the original aims of the project were therefore unachievable with fewer resources in the sector and no time for people to use funding monitor. *“We used to have three people doing grants but they have all been made redundant” (local authority contact).*

Funding Advice Networks have to deal with a range of different roles played by funding advisors and it **is a challenge meeting a wide variety of needs**. This challenge also applies to the training. One person who has participated in the Fit 4 Funding accredited training commented *“it was good for my CV but it was quite a basic introduction and although it made me think – for example about how to give effective feedback – I cannot think of a specific example of a change that I put into place as a result or how the training helped me to deliver a more effective advice service”.*

There are also **challenges around the differing needs of the front line groups** and the type of support required. For example, funding advisors may be trained to offer specialist advice but then spend the next 6 months helping groups to fill in Big Lottery applications and have no opportunity to use the new skills.



There is a real **challenge around resources** and organisations lack the capacity to put bids together and are turning to freelance workers to support them. *“I used to make more of an effort to attend regional events but don’t have the capacity now.”* There is also a lot of change in the way outcomes are to be measured and this requires expertise. Public sector funding is going to remain limited and *“although there is a lot of talk about social enterprise it doesn’t seem to be generating real funding opportunities”*.

There needs to be a culture shift. Organisations have been historically over-reliant on government, local or national. *“Organisations need to learn how to cope in the current environment, work smarter. We are being sold trading / contracting as the answer. Grants have a place and have had a bad press”*.

There is **also confusion around fundraising v funding advice** – some of the funding advisors definitely understand the bigger picture and the need for greater diversity of funding streams.

Does a regional network add value?

Those in favour thought...

*“The **regional network challenges thinking**. It enables FAs to learn better approaches, funding sources & . It also can help advocate for the VCS to funders “.*

*“There are **real benefits in meeting others including funders**. The regional capacity does help to bring in speakers and highlight issues beyond the local and creating opportunities for people to meet and discuss ideas is useful. EMFAN added a wider perspective to the local FANs”*.

*“There is very little going on nationally to **demonstrate the impact and value of FANs** and the broad principles of the project made sense”*.

*“Just having funding advisors working in isolation is not good and they **need links to other parts of the sector**. There are new developments around contract and investment readiness, influencing commissioning etc and groups need support to face those challenges”*.

*“For participants the benefits are an opportunity to skill up but there is also **an opportunity for funders** to hear the problems that people are having on the ground”*.

“There are some areas where a regional network can help eg ERDF funding and keeping people up to date For larger charities the regional element could be helpful in developing new partnerships that can bid for larger contracts but there are not necessarily similar needs in different parts of the East Midlands so a regional approach doesn’t always make sense. The main regional role is information sharing and connecting.”

“A regional network can add value by bringing in national funders and delivering more cost efficient training.”

“One EM can cascade information and stand up for the East Midlands”.



Those who were not in favour thought...

Working at a local level was more important: *“In theory it could be helpful but in practice even at county council level we don’t operate on a regional basis or collaborate regionally and our focus is very much on the local”. “There has been a value in good information and e-bulletins but the local is much more important to groups than the regional”. “I tend to ask VAL”.*

“I don’t think a regional FAN adds value at all as Lincolnshire is big enough on its own and we just don’t have time to attend events across the county or network with others. The Lincolnshire FAN is well supported by the county council and this is what makes it really effective. It is also the place where we can offer peer support and advice and we don’t need a regional organisation to do this”.

“The Lincolnshire FAN is really active so we don’t need a regional infrastructure.”

“I don’t really see it as relevant any more – there have been some big name events and they can attract speakers who might not come to a county event but in my view county level events are best and there isn’t much point in networking with other parts of the region”... “Not relevant to me – 18 months ago I went to a local FAN – the workshop was really useful as there are funders there”.

Some of the elements of the regional project were too resource-intensive and ambitious: *“In terms of Funding Monitor, although in principle the idea sounds good, in practice is contingent on all parties playing the same game and not all groups will feed back on whether the advice they have received has been useful or not. You can spend too much time chasing up information”.*

Capacity constraints mean that regional activity is less of a priority *“I question the purpose – networking is lovely but we don’t have the time.... why not conferences on-line need to think about technology”. Another commented “It is not essential to do that face-to-face and you can catch up by email big fan of Skype .”....*

“We are sub-regional and relatively autonomous. We don’t get any value out of the service...not a customer for EMFAN”.

What elements of EMFAN should be continued

There was a **strong view that networking and events were of great benefit.** *“The existence of the network –open to funding advisors from all backgrounds including consultants, has been a real positive benefit, enabling people to make useful connections”....” I have mainly benefitted from the networking opportunities”*

“Through its training and events, the project has also delivered ‘soft’ outcomes by enabling development workers to connect and support each other, offering space for conversations that lead to new projects and ideas”.

But not all were in support of training *“there is a plethora of training that is not needed.... we need more seminars on issues such as ‘what is social value’.*

However funding monitor is not seen as adding huge value by the majority of respondents.



Although some liked the original idea of funding monitor, they see the data as out of date and a missed opportunity. There is a real challenge as groups don't come forward when they get a grant. Very few funders make information public but the monitor depends on the capacity and willingness of people to use it. *"It has been very difficult to get people to complete the data and we didn't have enough resources in the project to do it for them"*.

Funding Monitor *"has not worked for me – we are always asking people for a case study – and we go out and write case studies for groups – not somewhere I would go for case studies. Not emerged as premier resource". ... "Didn't need whole branded project, as costs money. Funding Monitor printing – money wasted"*.

"I have tried to use funding monitor but found it hard to complete. It is very difficult to measure outcomes and groups don't always see results from advice in the short term".

Others saw the underlying challenge *'the challenge is that you never hear the outcome of something'*

"We have a community directory for Derbyshire which lets us record work items against a particular group but feedback is still an issue"

There are also reservations about Fanoogle – *"I am also not sure how many local groups will go to Fanoogle to find their local funding advisor – groups ask each other, then the parish or the CVS and don't tend to think regionally"*.

The operating environment has also changed radically and the project was not seen as current. *"The project was just not relevant for the changed environment"*.

"I never got to use it".

Other comments about One East Midlands.

The following comments reflect a range of views but with a majority seeing continued value in a regional infrastructure organisation.....

"One EM needs to focus on where the gaps are e.g. is one Fan is struggling? FANS should run themselves – One EM should be there as a resource as when – flexible, not a formal membership".

"One EM are helpful and it is good to know it is there and you can go to it when you need to".

"EMFAN is good at organising things that are central to the region. "Their events tell us [funders] a huge amount about what is going on"....."the benefits of regional activity are the bigger picture".

"If they could find a smarter way of communicating with people like me who haven't got time to attend that would be really useful".

"One EM are part of bigger picture - they promote my workshops and raise my profile - I don't want them to disappear they provide a service that creates overall package context, information, training, networking with colleagues and just knowing what is going on out there".



“No. I don’t really connect with them and although I receive the newsletter it isn’t essential for my work”.

“Not sure where else it (FA support network) would fit & don’t think NCVO understand the regional context enough. One EM do understand and are committed....”

“Very efficient and providing services which are largely complementary to local CVS. There is scope for One EM to be more proactive as the East Midlands is missing out on bigger funds and One EM could help bring funding into the region by getting funding advisors better organised and trained”.

“Regional bodies add value by bringing in resources that might not otherwise be available but they are not the best organisations to provide training to FAs as the latter need one to one support - not regional training and events”.

“One EM are not the only possible host for funding advice – the community development foundation would be another option”.

“One EM has relevance in the context of European funding and LEPs but otherwise its role and relevance has diminished”.

“I would like to see more strategic leadership both in enabling training and networking to enable groups to look forward but also in looking for opportunities to bring people together to access national sources of funding. One EM could play a more proactive role in bringing people together and challenging some of the outmoded ways of working”.

“Meetings and networking that enables groups to tackle some of the really strategic issues around the future of funding advice “

“Are there better ways to deliver advice, is the funding advisor generic role still appropriate or would it be better to have a network of experts that could be drawn upon as required etc”

“There needs to be more brokerage to bring people together to seek new solutions”.....someone needs to “match-make to allow big and small to co-operate”.

Views of other regional or sub-regional FANs

The project interviewed three other Funding Advice Networks outside the East Midlands which highlighted a number of trends

- There is inconsistency within Transforming Local Infrastructure partnerships in their approach to funding advice. Some are not including this as a separate element in future service delivery whereas others are creating new funding advice services as part of voluntary sector partnerships. This will increase variability in service across local boundaries.
- In some parts of the country, Local Authorities are continuing to play a key role in providing local funding advice support either directly or through an infrastructure organisation.
- There are some new partnerships developing and new models of funding advice such as the church urban fund <http://www.cuf.org.uk/transformation-cornwall>



- Some of the larger, regional funding advice networks are unlikely to continue in the current format and expect to reduce activity or shift priorities. Access to information about funding opportunities is key and is seen by some regional FANs as the most popular service they provide, but the review could not find any examples of where this has been fully self-funded although in some areas there are charges in place. However, charging is a risk as it can exclude those smaller organisations which have not paid and therefore do not access the support that they need.
- Networking and events can happen by themselves if there are individuals willing to give time and energy – but this is more likely to happen if there is some funded capacity. However if a structure becomes too bureaucratic it can fall apart when funding is no longer available.
- Other regional FANs see value in the bridging role that a funding advisor can offer – particularly for the smaller groups. They have a role in connecting local organisations with bigger funders. Some of the bidding forms (e.g. Big Lottery) can be quite challenging and may deter smaller organisations particularly in areas where social capital is low.
- Funding advice can be the bait by which small groups can be attracted to come to an infrastructure event and that can then lead to wider discussions about governance, organisational sustainability etc which contribute to the longer term viability of front-line organisations. (The theory being that groups don't know what they don't know until someone tells them).