

Sir John Moore Foundation



Main theme: Use of building / asset

The Sir John Moore foundation is based a Grade I listed building in Appleby Magna in North West Leicestershire. The foundation was established in 1697 to provide a school for the local community which is still there today as the local Church of England Primary School. In 2004 the building underwent a major renovation and the foundation's aim is now to provide a multi-purpose community venue for use by a wide variety of groups with offices and flats also for rent. Before the renovation much of the building was unused and partially derelict and it took eight years to raise the required funds. Now the building has been restored the foundation's management are determined to become financially sustainable and develop new income streams. Foundation manager Deana Morris explains how they developed their entrepreneurial approach...

"Back in 1996 we were trying to restore the building. Although the school was in it the rest was more or less derelict, and with only a few small sources of income in just wasn't sustainable. We spent from 1996 to 2004 raising £2 million to restore the building with the idea that we'd open it up to the public and have income streams from a couple of flats and four offices we were going to create as part of the re-use of the building. Those were our first steps towards sustainability and that income was enough at first.

At the same time we created a heritage centre which would recreate part of the history of the school and provide an area for community exhibitions. We successfully applied for grants to cover specific parts of the Centre. Originally we thought we would make income from schools we thought we would make income from schools and other groups coming in but it's not proved to be the case, and we began to look for another

source of income. Since 1697 the building has been used as a community venue and people had parties here, and we carried on with that. But there's always been a conflict between the school's place and the foundation's space. We soon realised that it's not ideal having a bar in a classroom so we saw the opportunity to develop one of the building's cellars.

Using our funds we created 'The Cellar Bar' which is in the original laundries – it's been refurbished into a really cool venue that we use for parties and weddings, we even use it for a youth club on Wednesday evenings. Once we had created it, including the obtaining of all the necessary licences and permissions, we were able to access other grants to get other equipment like a PA system. We're stepping towards becoming a fully sustainable community venue The Cellar Bar is key to that because the income stream was for greater than we expected. It shows what you can do with imagination and entrepreneurial thinking on very little money!"

When the foundation renovated their main building they also refurbished some stables on the site. They were occupied by a social enterprise for five years but since they have stopped trading Deana has taken a creative approach to generating income from the space...

"If someone contacts us and wants to set up something that would the local community we can be flexible on the rate we charge for the use of facilities. There's a lady that started an art club for under 5s and their carers, what she does is great but she can't afford to pay any rent until she a few more people coming. I've invited her to come along and we'll promote her in our brochures, she can use the space for two hours on a Thursday but not pay us anything until she is sustainable. We are

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trying to help her out, because helping her out will help us out in the long run.

We only used to charge the social enterprise £1,200 a year for the stables and was just to cover maintenance costs. Now we have an art club that comes in every Wednesday afternoon they only pay £20, but that works out at over £1,000 a year. We have another regular that runs a fitness class every week for two hours and she pays us £30 which is another £1,500 a year. We have just started a guitar and drumming school – the tutors are paid by children coming for private lessons and in return they donate their time to our youth club to help kids form a rock band, Honestly it's unreal what's happened in the last few months the amount of different things we've got going on."

Deana believes other organisations that want to explore trading need to understand how to use grants and volunteers...

"You don't want to become reliant on grants but look at what the funders want and where their focus is. For example the Big Lottery IT grant has enabled us to raise funds from other sources including £10,000 for an archaeology project and £10,000 for a filming project. On the other hand while you do need grants to get things up and running you've got to think about how to make things sustainable. Regular income is really important, even if it's quite small.

Obviously you can look for help from the local council and volunteers within the community but don't rely on them too much. I volunteered here for four years almost full-time, on the one hand I think people should contribute to their communities but on the other hand people need to be paid for their time or at least some of the time they give.

Key lessons:

- There may be opportunities to develop revenue streams through a building or asset
- You may be able to provide a service for free to support a new customer until they can afford to pay
- Try new things – if they fail, understand why and move on and try something else
- Use funding where appropriate to enable you to develop your income streams

Legal structure: Charity
Main activity: Venue Hire
Number of employees: 6
Location: Appleby Magna, Derbyshire
Date formed: 1967
Date written: February 2010
Website: www.sirjohnmoore.org.uk

This case study is one of a series produced by the Capacity Builders funded 'Stepping Up To Enterprise' project in the East Midlands.

The case studies tell the stories of voluntary or community organisations and how they moved to developing trading. The case studies are available on the website www.oneeastmidlands.org.uk/sute.