Philea Forum Satellite Event

Organisational Development Support: A Rough Guide

Top Eight Learnings
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Brief Background
The Organisational Development (OD) Community of Practice organised its second-ever satellite event before the start of the Philea Forum 2023 in Šibenik, Croatia. It provided a safe and trusting space for peers to share their foundations’ experiences of starting OD support programmes before zooming in to various thematic areas of support: strategy development, measuring OD support, internal influencing/fostering OD support capacity within a foundation, and change at the systemic level. To help funders understand what some of the steps are in developing OD support programmes, this document provides the top eight learnings from participants at the satellite session.

Top eight learnings on how a funder can provide OD support to partners

1. **There is no “one way” to provide OD support:** OD support interventions vary between different funders, and this is dependent on their current activities, the contexts in which they work, and the aims of the grantmaker.

2. **There is no “one size fits all”:** When offering OD support, it’s essential to consider the individual characteristics, goals, and circumstances of each grantee, acknowledging that different organisations may be at various stages of development, operate in different environments, and face distinct challenges. Therefore, providing effective support requires understanding and addressing their unique circumstances rather than applying a generic or standardised framework.

3. **OD is an important tool for foundations:** OD support can be a way to further achieve the aims of the organisation, by empowering partners to build sustainable organisational capacities, strengthen their impact, and effectively leverage resources to achieve their mission.

4. **The language and method of communicating with partners on OD is vital:** It is important to avoid technical terms and utilise language that resonates with partners. Open communication and decolonised language is paramount when engaging with partners on OD, as it sets the tone, builds trust, and ensures mutual understanding, ultimately fostering a collaborative and supportive environment for meaningful OD interventions and outcomes.
5. **OD is relational work!**: The provision of OD support requires relationship building as it is inherently relational. In addition, OD support interventions often require difficult choices to be made on the side of the partner, such as: change in orientation, practices and structures. These can be facilitated when they are openly discussed in a trust-based relationship.

6. **Measuring OD is not linear**: Measuring impact/change differs and depends on the type of OD support. This requires innovative ways of measuring support that move away from considering outdated indicators. OD support can lend itself well to outcome harvesting and impact stories, when there are detailed roadmaps with well-defined milestones and change objectives that help to measure progress.

7. **Bring in different perspectives**: OD support can provide an opportunity for many perspectives to be heard (staff from all levels of organisation but also partners, communities and other stakeholders). This, in turn, can model the values that inform it, such as accountability and participation; to name two.

8. **Foundations can learn from each other**: This session reinforced the power of peer-learning and how foundations can leverage the collective wisdom and experiences of their peers to enhance their "OD journeys," gaining valuable insights, best practices, and lessons learnt that can inform and strengthen their own OD efforts.