



Heritage
Compass

Qube

Background

Qube is based in Oswestry in Shropshire, and is a community organisation which provides a range of services to local people, including social prescribing, accessible transport, volunteering opportunities, holiday activities for children, and a range of courses and arts activities. As such, it is not a traditional heritage organisation. However, heritage has always been a part of Qube's art programme, and the organisation has delivered successful community heritage projects including a major project to commemorate the centenary of the Armistice. Qube also supports grassroots organisations to deliver their own arts and heritage projects, acting as the applicant and holding funds for unconstituted community groups.



Qube, Oswestry

What Qube needed from Heritage Compass

Qube's services have expanded significantly in the recent past, as they have been successful in securing funding and commissions to deliver extended services. This has in turn led to a larger number of service users, created growth in the staff team and created more complexity in management and administration of a very diverse funding model, which works with anything up to forty income streams. This includes a mix of earned income, grants from trusts and foundations, contracts to commission services and charitable fundraising activity. Qube needed support from Heritage Compass to review the structure of their staff team. The role of Chief Officer had become too large for any one person. The flat line management structure meant that as the staff team expanded, the Chief Officer was taking on more direct line management responsibility, alongside project administration and Qube's day to day running. There was very little time for strategic thinking, and this over-reliance on one individual made the organisation vulnerable.

Heritage Compass therefore offered the opportunity to access critical friend and mentoring support during a period when Qube was reviewing its business plan, internal systems, processes and staffing structure.

Developing a more robust structure

While on the Heritage Compass programme, Qube's Chief Officer and board of trustees have done lots of work on the business plan, staffing structure and strategic direction of the organisation. They now employ an Operations Manager, and a Senior Management Team has been created which provides management support to the wider staff team, reducing pressure on the Chief Officer.

Another benefit of creating a Senior Management Team is that they take part in board meetings, and this has enhanced the board's understanding of Qube's work, and has led to quicker and improved decision making.

How Heritage Compass has been useful

The Heritage Compass programme has been particularly valuable in two respects. During this process, the Chief Officer has benefited significantly from the support of the critical friend and mentor, who have provided a sounding board to talk through the issues and reflect on the changes and implementation of the restructure as it was happening. It was helpful to discuss issues with people who were outside the organisation, but had similar experience and could provide support and validation.

Qube also benefited from the provision of training courses, and in particular they have used the models offered during the sessions on business planning, cashflow and income generation as they have developed their financial planning.

What Qube needs next

Challenges for Qube mirror trends in the wider sector. While there is funding coming in to deliver services, budgets are tight, and the energy bill for this winter is three times higher than last year. There is concern that going into recession will create a challenging financial climate while increasing demand for services. Along with many other organisations, recruitment to new posts has been a challenge and there has been a high level of staff turnover.

However, Qube finds itself stronger as a result of the changes the organisation has made recently. Operationally the organisation has expanded and improved, with a mostly new and bigger staff team now established and working well together. A Chief Executive will start in post in the New Year, and the organisation's future development needs will be assessed depending on the skills and expertise of the new postholder.



Qube Gallery, Oswestry

Advice for other organisations

Give adequate time for strategic planning. It's easy to put it on the back burner while you get on with the everyday tasks but it is important and when it's done it brings big benefits; people know what is expected of them, the direction of the organisation is clearer, and new opportunities are easier to develop.

Be clear about what you can do, and just as clear about what you cannot do. You don't have to become all things to all people.



Qube, Oswestry - Men of the Gates Project