

“A Lifeline to the Sector”
**The Impact of RAFT Immediate
 Response Fund**

In Spring of 2020, as lockdown was announced, The Fore launched a different type of support for the charity sector. In partnership with Lovington Foundation, The Fore raised over £1 million from businesses and trusts with the aim of helping vital small charities and social enterprises weather the coronavirus crisis.

Through the generous support of our partners RAFT Immediate Response Fund offered 224 urgently-needed, short-term, unrestricted grants of up to £5,000. Any registered charity or non-profit in the UK with a turnover of under £500,000 p.a. was eligible to apply. The first grants were made just 15 days after the UK entered March lockdown. In late summer 2020, The Fore sent a survey to these organisations to evaluate the impact of the funding. The findings were striking:

Impact of RAFT

- 40% of grantees reported that they would not have survived the pandemic without RAFT
- One in five grantees received no other form of emergency support
- Grantees that used RAFT funding to build their capacity on average expanded the number of people they reached by 87%
- 49% were able to keep on key staff
- 85% of grantees said being able to deliver services remotely would continue to be valuable after lockdown ended
- Grantees that used RAFT funding to unlock additional revenue streams generated £5.18 for every £1 we gave them

Strengths of RAFT:

Grantees cited factors that set RAFT apart:

- **SIMPLICITY** – the ease and usefulness of the application process compared to other funds
- **SPEED** – how quickly funds were distributed relative to other programmes
- **FLEXIBILITY** – funds were noted as especially valuable because they were more flexible than grants from other sources. Many grantees also mentioned that most other funding was limited to organisations specifically fighting COVID

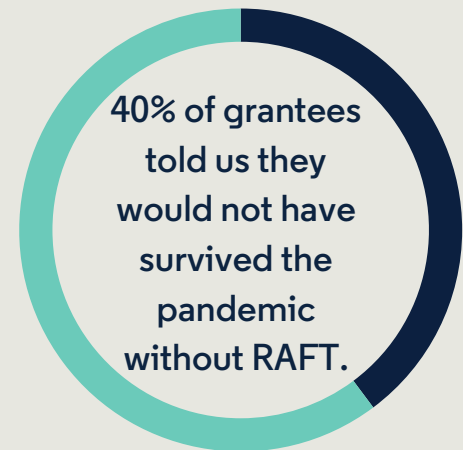
“RAFT Fund has been by far the most responsive, efficient and accessible fund we applied to during the COVID pandemic... Trust, efficiency, flexibility and listening to the needs of charities and their beneficiaries are at the heart of the approach and we believe it is a model that many other funders in the sector could learn from.”

A unique collaboration

The RAFT Immediate Response Fund demonstrated the power of funders and businesses working in collaboration. The Fore created a unique partnership, bringing together skills and funding from its corporate partners including BlackRock, Moody's, Rothschild & Co., UBS and LGT Vestra, and financial underpinning from its foundation partners, including Lovington Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, Golden Bottle Trust, Postcode Local Trust and numerous family trusts. Grantees had access to vital skills support alongside the flexible grant funding reported here, through one simple [charity-led application process adapted from our core programme](#). See thefore.org for more details.

The importance of RAFT

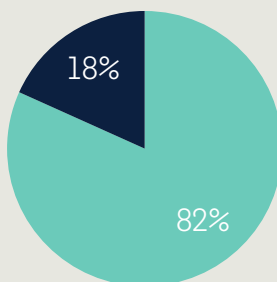
Grantees told us that RAFT provided them with a vital lifeline. At a time when most funding in the sector was focused on fighting the direct consequences of COVID, there was little to help other organisations survive. Grantees also frequently told us that what made RAFT unique was the speed with which funds were delivered and how flexibly the funds could be used. Grantees told us that RAFT helped improve their resilience over the longer term. Thanks to RAFT, 49% said they were able to keep on key staff, 63% told us they were able to keep their programmes running, and one in ten (9%) told us they were able to keep their premises when they otherwise would not have been able to. 40% told us that without RAFT they would not have survived the pandemic.



“We received funding from [other funders]... While RAFT’s funding was 50% of [the value of] that funding, the unrestricted nature meant it was more valuable.”

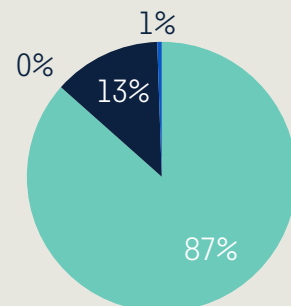
“RAFT was more flexible and came quicker than all other funding that was available to us so it helped during a particularly difficult time.”

One in five RAFT grantees received no other form of emergency support



■ Received other emergency support
■ Received no other emergency support

87% of RAFT grantees said RAFT met a need not met elsewhere.*



■ Yes ■ To an extent ■ Don't know

*0% of respondents answered “No”.

“The RAFT Fund gave us the confidence to keep going initially, and not just shut everything down and furlough the team, which would not have been in the best interests of young people who really needed our support.”

“It felt like an investment in our future - it was really important to feel that we were being 'backed' at a time when confidence was low.”

Improving digital capacity

The most common use of funding from RAFT was to switch programmes to remote delivery. Of the grantees that requested funding for this purpose, 93% enacted their plans successfully. 62% of these grantees said that they would not have been able to deliver services remotely in lockdown without RAFT, and 61% said that their improved digital capacity had enabled them to help more people. In a

sector that has historically struggled to incorporate digital technology into its services, partly due to a lack of available funding, this transformation could be game-changing for these organisations.



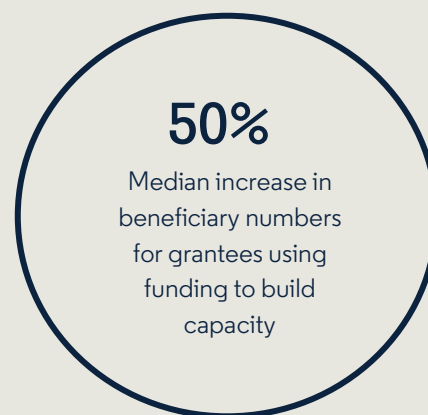
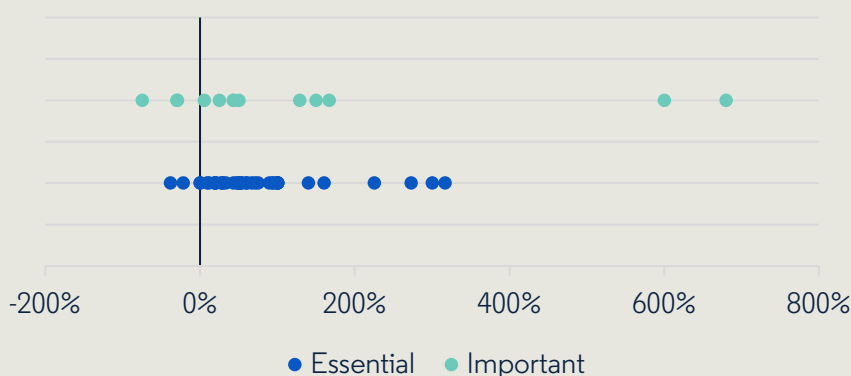
“We now know that we will be as much about online delivery as face to face in the future - there really is no going back!”

“We have learned a great deal from delivering our services digitally; it has increased our reach and impact and it has made our sessions more accessible... We are therefore committed to delivering further sessions digitally.”

Building capacity to meet demand

37% of RAFT grantees used their funding to build their capacity. These grantees were asked how many beneficiaries they reached before RAFT and how many they reached afterwards. The median grantee saw a 50% increase in beneficiary numbers (the mean increase was 87%, as some grantees saw exceptionally high beneficiary growth). These grantees were also asked to assign how important RAFT funding was in facilitating this change in beneficiary numbers. 68% said RAFT was essential for this change, 21% deemed it important, 1% said it was useful, and 10% said they did not know. None said RAFT was not helpful.

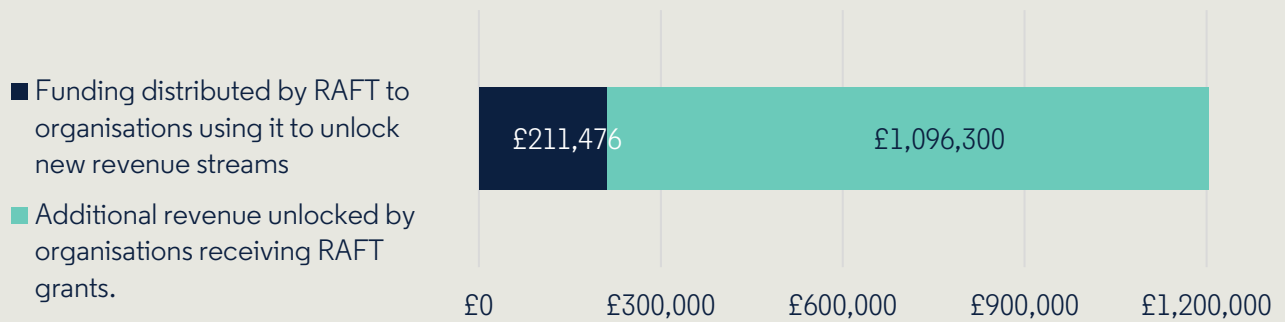
Percentage change in beneficiary numbers (by self-reported importance of RAFT in causing that change)



Unlocking additional revenue

24% of RAFT grantees told us that RAFT enabled them to pursue additional income streams (by enabling them to start programmes that were eligible for further grants, or create services that could be sold, or by other means). These organisations told us that RAFT helped them generate an additional £1,096,300 (with an average of £24,362 each), or £5.18 for every £1 of funding they received from RAFT.

“Not only have you provided essential and targeted funding, we have found that the funding received from yourselves has proven to be a recommendation to other funders.”



Planning for the future

71% of grantees told us that RAFT funding helped them plan for the future post-lockdown. This was often because grantees had developed new services, or new digital modes of delivery, which they intended to continue even after lockdown had ended. Most importantly, grantees also told us that funding from RAFT gave them “breathing space”, which enabled them to take a step back and think strategically about the future.

“The breathing space has allowed us to reconfigure what services we need to deliver to meet our community’s needs. The funding has been invaluable in that regard.”

“It has given us the flexibility and space needed to plan properly beyond the crisis.”

Case Study: Cambridge Online is a vibrant and forward-looking education charity and social enterprise, taking on the challenge of digital skills for all. Many of the people Cambridge Online (CO) supports are disabled or experiencing severe disadvantage, and half usually have no access to the internet at all. The organisation operates out of a Learning Centre in Cambridge city centre, where up to 400 people can access a suite of computers and a team of volunteer Digital Champions. Clients use the internet to apply for jobs, learn new skills, connect with friends and family, and access public services. Coronavirus demonstrated a vital need for CO’s work, however, lockdown forced CO to close the Learning Centre and significantly restricted the organisation’s income.

CO used funding from RAFT to keep the organisation afloat, and to grow the volunteer team in anticipation of considerably increased demand after lockdown ended. The impact of this funding was striking. The organisation received no other emergency funding, and told us that without the RAFT grant at this critical moment it would likely have not survived. By growing the volunteer team, **CO was also able to go from supporting 400 per year people to 800, doubling its reach.** In addition, CO was able to develop new programmes to be delivered remotely, which will continue to be of value after lockdown ends, and has helped them plan ahead for the future.

RAFT funding partners included AOK Trust, BlackRock, Four Acre Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, Golden Bottle Trust, Henry Oldfield Trust, LCCP Foundation, LGT Vestra, Lightbulb Trust, The Lovington Foundation, Michael and Sarah Spencer Foundation, Moody’s, Netherby Trust, Postcode Local Trust, Power to Change, Rothschild & Co., Tribe Impact Capital and UBS.