

Evolve Annual Report Year 3: 2023

Evolve



Programme Overview

THE EVOLVE PROJECT

In 2023, Evolve entered its third year. A collaborative partnership between Linklaters, UBS, Societe Generale and the Societe Generale UK Foundation, Evolve aims to flexibly respond to the changing needs of community organisations and charities across Hackney, Haringey and Tower Hamlets.

2023 saw further pressure placed upon organisations as the cost of living crisis increased demand on services and staff, and shrinking funds have meant lots of organisations have been 'making do with less'. Evolve aims to respond to these changing needs, and has paid close attention to building relationships with community umbrella organisations across east

EVOLVE ACTIVITIES

In 2023, Evolve delivered 22 sessions focusing on seven different activities. They encompassed a range of themes from the integration of AI into the third sector, to supporting up and coming leaders in community organisations. All of these sessions drew on the skills and knowledge of employee volunteers to address crucial community issues:

- **Compass:** Teams of volunteers collaborate with community organisations to navigate a key business challenge through three months of high impact, intensive-volunteer support.
- **Digital Compass:** Developed from the well established Compass programme, this digitally focused activity saw groups of volunteers working with community organisations over three months on a specific IT/ digital challenge.
- **Leaders in Partnership (LiP):** Pairing current community leaders with senior volunteers for a 10-month, coaching style partnership.
- **Emerging Leaders:** Another new programme in 2023, Emerging Leaders is adapted from LiP. It is designed to support individuals emerging as leaders in the not-for-profit sector, to develop and build leadership and confidence skills.

This report will outline the achievements of Year 3 of Evolve, looking at some key outcomes on community organisations across Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Haringey.

London, building on the programme of support these organisations already offer.

In line with these relationships and continual community consultation, Evolve developed a range of activities across the year. This has included tried and tested programmes such as Priority Planning and Leaders in Partnership, but also a number of new activities that have been rolled out over the year.

SPOTLIGHT ON EVOLVE PARTNERS

We were pleased to be able to feature many Evolve community partners in ELBA's Community Spotlight feature this year, including [Hoxton Health](#), [Shookman](#), [ELATT](#), [Hackney Council](#), and [Skaped](#).

- **Digital Inclusion:** A series of training sessions and capacity building workshops and networking events focussed on enhancing community organisations' digital capabilities.

- **Learning from Leaders:** A series of workshops, training sessions and networking events, providing corporate and community leaders the opportunity to share challenges, learnings and solutions.

- **Priority planning:** Teams of volunteers work through an organisation health-check assessment with community organisations, identifying priority areas for capacity building, and creating an action plan to tackle gaps.

- **Remote Review:** Volunteers collaborate with community organisations to enhance key business documents such as funding applications and resources relating to project management, business planning and finance.

- **Strategic Solutions:** Teams of volunteers work with community organisations to overcome specific strategic challenges relating to business planning, finance, income strategy, and project management.

Key Achievements



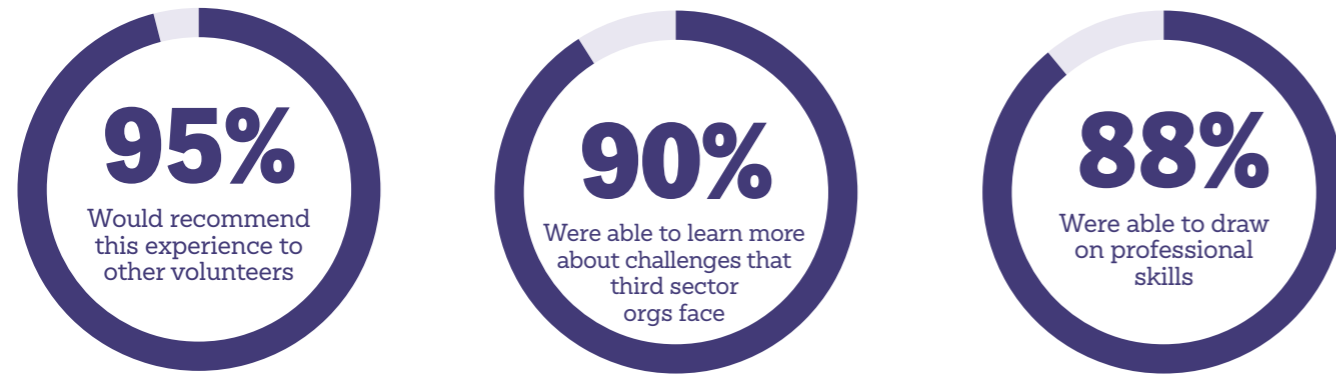
Impact

IMPACT ON ORGANISATIONS



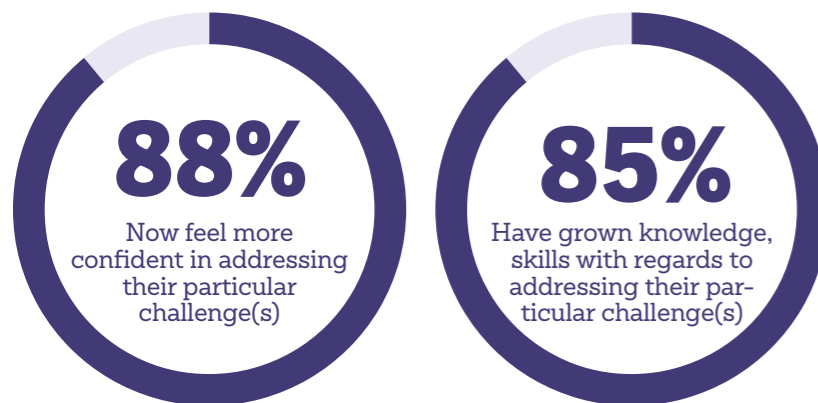
*from responses received

IMPACT ON VOLUNTEERS



*from responses received

IMPACT ON INDIVIDUALS



*from responses received

ACTIVITY FEEDBACK



Evolve Activities

Compass

Compass is a high impact, volunteer support programme, now in its second iteration. Teams of employee volunteers work alongside community organisations to support them in tackling an organisational issue they were facing. [See here for a detailed Impact Report.](#)

3

Community organisations supported



11

Volunteers engaged



200+

Hours volunteered



Digital Compass: a new programme in 2023

Formatted in the same way as Compass, Digital Compass aims to support organisations with a digital focus.

4

Community organisations supported



10

Volunteers engaged



180+

Hours volunteered



“Such a brilliant project, has been a fantastic journey and I've learnt a lot. I feel clearer and more confident about things moving forward.”
- Community Organisation

“It was a great experience, a different environment to how we normally work, but we were very pleased with the outcomes. They were better than anticipated.”
- Community Organisation

“The experience has been brilliant. I would recommend our colleagues to participate... The Compass project provides a great opportunity for professional people to help the community in need.”
- Volunteer

“I'm so used to dealing with trading type people who communicate in a certain way, and you get used to communicating in that way... I learnt about the sensitivity of communicating with people, and it taught me a little bit of subtlety around that, which was good.”
- Volunteer

“Overall the experience was great and really well organised by ELBA - a really worthwhile project.”
- Volunteer

“The Digital Compass programme encouraged us to spend time working on things that we had been putting on the back burner in favour of more urgent and pressing issues as a small part-time team. Having external resources to review and make suggestions was hugely valuable and we now have some concrete actions to work on.”
- Community Organisation



Evolve Activities

Strategic Solutions

Teams of volunteers work with community organisations to overcome specific strategic challenges relating to business planning, finance, website design, income strategy and project management.

5

Workshops delivered



19

Individuals reached



62

Volunteers engaged



“Having expert input into how to create a solid business plan and to understand what investors will be looking for, I found so useful. I had two sessions: one enabled the volunteers to consider my idea and pick out what was the best target to focus on. The second session allowed us to create tangible results that I could work on further.”
- Community Organisation

“It was so clear and expert advice given. Everything worked so well. I feel extremely grateful.”
- Community Organisation

“My group was excellent and the volunteers were passionate and well experienced!”
- Community Organisation

“Excellent session - pitched at the right level and length was perfect.”
- Volunteer

“I enjoy taking a step back from day to day life and giving my time to charitable organisations. This workshop has had a positive impact both for the team I was working within and the charity partner. I aim to continue offering support where needed as even a little goes a long way..” - Volunteer

“Overall, I really enjoyed the sessions and I think they were useful for the people involved. I enjoyed working alongside another professional from a different company and seeing the way they worked or approached the problem.”
- Volunteer

Digital Inclusion

A series of practical training sessions and capacity building workshops focussed on enhancing community organisations’ digital capabilities, including sessions on AI, data management and Excel.

4

Sessions delivered



29

Individuals reached



41

Volunteers engaged



“The three volunteers worked exceptionally well together. They were also very patient when technical issues came up, and were happy to teach me the basics on how to navigate my spreadsheet, how to clear data, create a summary sheet, all of which will come into very good use.”
- Community Organisation

“Overall I really enjoyed it, and felt like it made a tangible difference to the community partners.”
- Volunteer

“The overall purpose of the experience seemed valuable to the volunteers.”
- Volunteer



Evolve Activities

Leaders in Partnership

A ten-month community coaching programme designed to strengthen the leadership of east London's community sector, pairing community leaders with peers in the business sector.

[More details on the impact of the programme can be found here.](#)

17
Partnerships
created



“The experience was very rewarding. I started only with clarity as to what I wanted to achieve and from the start Michael used this as the springboard to organise our coaching sessions. The sessions not only highlighted the challenges that were present but also the ones that lay ahead but for each challenge he took time to take me through a series of questions that eventually led to possible ways of handling them.”

- Community Organisation

“My coach helped me a lot to feel more confident in my role, to recognize what I was already doing and to remember ‘you are good at this’. Even preparing for our meetings was really helpful, as it made me reflect on my priorities, and take the time to think about my role, rather than blindly rushing from one task to another.”

- Community Organisation

“It has been an incredibly positive and enjoyable experience; I have seen how the programme enables people to grow in confidence by being given the opportunity to take some time out from their workday to meet and talk through any issues that they are facing in their day to day role.”

- Volunteer

“The programme approach was brilliant. It was very well-structured, informative, supportive, and provided an excellent framework within which to build a strong partnership with the community leader. I gained a lot from it – I was humbled by how driven, passionate, resourceful and creative my community leader was, which was inspirational in itself; and I learnt that a willingness to be flexible, to listen, to apply suggestions and advice is very powerful, not just to me, but in turn to my team and to my management.”

- Volunteer

Learning from Leaders

A series of workshops and practical training sessions supporting community partners to develop their skills specifically in the realms of leadership, communication and project management.

3

Sessions
delivered



45

Individuals
reached



29

Volunteers
engaged



“The session was well delivered and broken up well with different speakers and the pace of the session was about right. Overall a great session.”

- Community Organisation

“Really useful information and very inspiring.”

- Community Organisation

“Overall I really enjoyed it, and felt like it made a tangible difference to the community partners.”

- Volunteer



Evolve Activities

Priority Planning

Teams of volunteers work through an organisation health-check assessment with community organisations, identifying priority areas for capacity building, and creating an action plan to tackle gaps.

4

Sessions delivered



11

Individuals reached



27

Volunteers engaged



“It was helpful to be able to be honest about the difficulties we are having and still have positive and helpful suggestions for ways forward.”
- Community Organisation

“This session relies heavily (and will do) on focused direct and engaged volunteers - I am not sure if they were vetted but they were brilliant, it wasn't vague, it was specific and useful and really helpful for where we are and who we are.”
- Community Organisation

“This was a very nice and well organised session and gave me a different experience as I am participating in a volunteering activity for the first time. This session motivates me to do such kinds of activities again.” - Volunteer



“The CEO... was an inspiring person and it was a pleasure to exchange ideas with him.” - Volunteer

Remote Review

Volunteers collaborate with community organisations to support in reviewing funding applications for community grants.

3

Sessions delivered



10

Individuals reached



11

Volunteers engaged



“Very impressed with the volunteers' comments which were very useful.”
- Community Organisation

“Successfully got funding!”
- Community Organisation

“The support provided was very useful and enabled me to look at other applications using that knowledge!”
- Community Organisation

Emerging leaders

Supporting middle managers, and emerging leaders across east London, this programme was born out of ELBA's tried and tested Leaders in Partnership programme. Based more on a mentoring framework of support, mentors receive 6 months of 1-2-1 support. This pilot programme will wrap up in May 2024.

8

Partnerships created



“It's great having that space to reflect, [and having an] external sounding board”
- Community Organisation

Looking ahead

EVOLVE AND AI

Evolve has delivered a range of long established, tried and tested activities over 2023 but has also continued to demonstrate its strength in flexibility, dynamically responding to ever-changing needs with activities guided by VCS consultations. This has resulted in the emergence of a mentoring programme supporting middle managers, boosting confidence in leadership skills, and the creation of Digital Compass, a programme designed to meet the ever increasing needs of small charities to be digitally adept.

Evolve hosted its first AI workshop/ networking event in the summer, asking some challenging questions that the third sector faces as AI usage becomes inevitable:

- How do we create a level playing field when using AI as a charity?
- How do we create the time to build the infrastructure and expertise to use AI safely?

AI and digital skills will continue to be themes of activities and workshops in Year 4 as community need in this area grows.

EVOLVE 2024 LOOKING AHEAD

Evolve is pleased to announce a continuation commitment from the Evolve partners (UBS, Linklaters, Societe Generale and the Societe Generale UK Foundation) for another two years from 2024. While 2024 looks set to be another challenging year for community organisations across east London, with the cost of living and the restraints around funding seemingly ever increasing, Evolve hopes to continue supporting organisations and responding to some of these key challenges.

Long-standing partnerships, commitment to collaboration and local impact will continue to sit at the heart of Evolve.

“The panel of corporate volunteers were super knowledgeable and keen to discuss and help.”
- Community partner feedback from AI workshops



If you have any questions, or would like to discuss opportunities within Evolve, please get in touch with The Evolve Project Manager: community@elba-1.org.uk



Evolve



Evolve Compass Impact Report 2023

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