



LEAP INTO THE FUTURE! FUND

We at the Roots & Wings Foundation believe in long-term strategic programmes yet we felt called upon to respond quickly to the human and economic emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To be honest, it was not that quick! In February and March of 2020 we saw the pandemic coming but when lockdown, the closure of schools and other tough measures were announced, we just froze! For about 2-3 weeks we tried to reschedule and redesign our planned activities. Then the realisation came: we need to think differently and then started to do something different.

Thanks to the flexibility of our donors, we created the **LEAP INTO THE FUTURE! FUND** to give as quickly as possible small grants to NGOs working at the local level to alleviate the human suffering and socio-economic losses brought about by the pandemic. We wanted to emphasize the values that are important to us: strengthening social trust along with networks of interpersonal and professional relations and social solidarity, as well as securing the conditions of freedom for autonomous community action.

BACK IN MAY 2020 WE SUPPORTED 9 ORGANISATIONS WITH FUNDS €9,500. One organisation planned to do something new and creative as a way to respond to the unusual situation, six organisations wanted to stabilise their existing work and two organisations asked to use the grant to provide online education to poor and marginalised children when the state totally failed to do so.

BY NOW ALL 9 ORGANISATIONS FINISHED THEIR WORK, submitted their final narrative and financial reports. **IT'S TIME FOR US TO SHARE WHAT WE LEARNT AND WHAT WE THINK NOW** (here is what we thought when we read the proposals).

1. USING CONNECTIVITY, TRUST AND CREDIBILITY WORKED AND PAID OFF. We asked the Foundation's friends and partner organisations to recommend and validate projects. As a result, within 4 weeks of announcing the call for proposals, we had decisions and contracts to sign and funds to transfer. Using our partners' knowledge and networks we could cut on due diligence process while our relationships with them became more valued and both sides felt empowered.

2. SMALL GRANTS CAN PRODUCE BIG RESULTS. An organisation, providing housing to homeless people, used our funds to hire a fundraiser who raised about €13,000 in the next few months. Another organisation, providing food for people in the streets, with the help of our grant expanded its volunteer base and started supplying food to institutions as well. Finally, a radio station providing visibility and publicity to the whole civic sector, which was in a fight with a government over taking its frequency away, took it as a boost to its confidence when we increased the amount requested.

3. FLEXIBLE FUNDING MEANS A LOT MORE THAN JUST THE AMOUNT GIVEN. Our grants supported specific activities and projects, but we made it clear from the beginning that we were open to modify the project budget as long as the usage of the money served the purpose of the Fund. Three organisations took advantage of this and used our funds to cover different expenses than originally agreed to ensure the (relatively) smooth running of the organisation.

4. SURVIVAL ABOVE ALL. While we were hoping to invest into projects that would lead us to the future, most of the projects were about completing projects that had been suspended, continuing services and activities when other donors pulled out or the mere survival of the organisation.

5. INEQUALITY IN THE RELATIONSHIP – TO OUR DISADVANTAGE. We put a lot of effort into providing good quality funds quickly to organisations doing important work in difficult times. We were hoping to spend considerable time on understanding the work of our grantees. Unfortunately, we could not since many of our grantees were unwilling to fulfil the basic administrative and reporting requirements. At the end they did, but the process left us with the feeling that the grant was more important to us than to them. We were also wondering how we could convey better next time that the most important currency of flexible funding is trust and taking responsibilities very strictly.

Last but not least, **THE LEAP INTO THE FUTURE! FUND HAD AN AFFECT ON US TOO:** we were delighted to provide immediate help to a few NGOs, show the public that NGOs can respond appropriately to the crises, try out new approaches and work differently within our own organisation. **WE LOVED THE FUND! IT BROUGHT PURPOSE, PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGE AS WELL AS A SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT AND JOY TO OUR TEAM IN THE REALLY PROBING FIRST MONTHS OF THE PANDEMIC.**

