



How Pilotlight Works

Pilotlight works with small charities in and around London to help develop their skills base and organisational capacity. We do this through a strategic planning process to which charities bring their vision and ambition for the future and business leaders bring their skills and experience.

A team of four business leaders work with each charity to develop or revise a 3-5 year business plan. The only cost to the charity is the time they must commit to the planning process. The Pilotlight project manager manages the relationship to ensure that the process creates benefit to both parties.

1. Application

a) Application form - Charity

Charities express their interest in working with Pilotlight by submitting an Application Form.

b) Review and Short-listing - Pilotlight

Pilotlight staff review the application and short-list candidates that fit our basic criteria

c) Assessment Meeting

What?

The charity and Pilotlight hold an initial meeting attended by the charity Director, a trustee and two of members of Pilotlight's Project Management team. The Project Managers will take the organisation's representatives through a standard assessment.

Why?

This meeting will allow Pilotlight to:

- Learn more about the organisation and ensure it meets our criteria
- Ensure that the organisation is in a position to capitalise on Pilotlight's input

The meeting will allow the organisation to:

- Learn more about how Pilotlight works and;
- Assess whether they believe the partnership will be beneficial to them

Output?

Following the meeting Pilotlight staff produce a note that captures the discussion and the particular areas the charity would like Pilotlight support.

d) Final Approval - Pilotlight

Based on the note from the assessment meeting and a recommendation by the staff Pilotlight's Project Management Team make a decision on whether or not to proceed with applications. Applicants that are not approved will be contacted by phone and signposted to other capacity builders that might be more appropriate for them.

e) Contract and Charity Trustee Approval – Charity and Pilotlight

Representatives from the charity and Pilotlight sign contracts - a series of statements outlining the organisation's commitment to working with Pilotlight. Along with this, we ask for a copy of Trustee Meeting Minutes from the charity approving the relationship.

2. Business Plan – Pilotlight and Charity

What?

A series of regular meetings will take place over 12-24 months to develop a new three-five year Business Plan, or to review one if it already exists. These meetings look at the mission and objectives of the charity, the strategies required to achieve these and how the charity measures their success. We will also work with the organisation to improve and strengthen their measurement system.

Why?

A robust business plan provides a route map for an organisation's growth and development. In addition, Pilotlight has found that for any specific project work to be really effective (e.g. marketing, fundraising) the objectives of the charity need to be clearly defined. A well thought through Business Plan also provides a strong basis for developing funding applications and for pitching to potential donors.

Outputs?

A Business Plan will be written by the charity with support from Pilotlight staff and members. The team will also agree list of tactical projects necessary for achieving the objectives.

Outcomes?

Improvements in organisational capacity, including: (1) mission and vision (2) timed and measurable objectives (3) strategy for implementation (4) improved measurement (5) robust need assessment (6) financial management.

3. Business Plan Approval – Pilotlight and Charity

Members sign off on the final copy of the Business Plan. This, along with the project list is presented to the organisation's board for approval. A peer review group of members review the plan for quality assurance.

Note: Not all charities will proceed to Project Stage; this will depend on the needs identified at the end of the Business Plan.

4. Project stage – Pilotlight and Charity

What?

Projects will flow from the Business Plan, as outlined above. In order to keep the projects manageable, Pilotlight and the charity work on one or two projects at any one time. Pilotlighters with the specific skills for each project are brought in for the duration of the project.

The original team that worked on the Business Plan will reconvene bi-annually to review the progress being made towards implementing it. We estimate that on average the charity and Pilotlight will work on a range projects for about 3-6 months.

Why?

During this stage of the process the charity are accompanied through the implementation of the strategies outlined in the Business Plan. Charity Directors have an opportunity to work in detail with specific expertise such as marketing to develop organisational capacity in this area. They are also encouraged to review their plan regularly to ensure that it is fit for purpose and on track to being implemented.

Outputs?

The implementation of strategies outlined in the Business Plan and other ad hoc assistance as required.

Outcomes?

Further improvement in organisational capacity related to projects carried out such as: marketing, board leadership, HR, income diversification, IT, legal affairs, senior management team leadership, coaching.

5. Exit

We expect organisations to work with Pilotlight for up to a maximum of 2 years, however the process may come to a natural end before that. Pilotlight will request a closure meeting with all organisations before they exit to share learnings and reflect on the process.