

TFN Impact Report

Name of your Organisation:	Bags of Taste
Name of the project TFN funded:	Bags of Taste
Date Funded by TFN:	6/11/17
Were you able to undertake your project as planned?	Yes
Can you describe and/or demonstrate the specific impact that TFN funding has had against your initial objectives?	<p>The primary reason we applied to TFN for the funding was to sustain our first branch outside of London, in Hastings, as proof of concept that it was possible to replicate our work with similar impact outside of London. That funding was secured for a year. In addition, we were able to run courses in several other locations and fund the establishment of 2 new branches, in Margate and Sheffield, with additional money that was raised. Sheffield in particular was our first branch in the North of England, and we were able to show that the concept is as applicable there as it is in London.</p> <p>One of the key things we needed to know was whether it was possible to obtain all the exotic ingredients we use in our cooking at the same rock bottom prices as in London, and thus be able to sell the ingredients bags for £3 for 4 meals, same as in London; also that the meals should still cost less than £1 a portion. It has taken some detailed research, but we have been able to do this, even in Sheffield.</p> <p>Hastings ran 6 courses in the last year, so at 100% capacity. The whole process went very smoothly. What we have learnt are practical things, like that we have had to change the timelines for interaction with branches outside of London as couriers and Royal Mail can be very unreliable and people can't just pop by and pick stuff up if it goes missing or is late. Margate had an initial delay because the woman we were working with there, who comes from the private sector, didn't understand the amount of time it takes for people in the charity sector to respond to things!</p> <p>Sheffield was the real test and I think the area where we made a mistake, as we didn't understand the geography well enough, and the initial location we chose to operate in didn't turn out to be ideal as it was very poorly connected by public transport and this ultimately caused a problem, particularly with volunteers, and we will be changing the location in future. Having said that, in both Margate and Sheffield, the courses eventually ran very successfully and we received excellent coverage. We have learnt valuable lessons from these last 2 projects, Sheffield in particular.</p> <p>We also invested in systems so that we are able to cope with the complexities of managing such a large number of courses running in different locations at the same time, and increased staff capacity to manage that. In our first year of operation we were running 6 courses a year in just one location - now, 4 years later, we ran 10 courses just over the September/October period in 10 different locations. We have clear processes now for opening a new branch and checklists of</p>

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	<p>all the items that need to be covered.</p> <p>Another thing that we were able to fund was the development of training videos for staff and franchisees - so that there isn't the physical requirement of visiting a branch, which may be some distance. Transport costs & time from places as far flung as Sheffield brought it home to us that we would be struggling to train staff on a broader basis. We have been working with the ex-head of training at Leon, the restaurant chain, to refine the processes of training a new branch head.</p> <p>In terms of impact and outcomes from the branches we have established, we have found that the cohorts we work with in these locations are slightly different to London. I think this is largely due to geography. Because populations are more dispersed than in London, this has several impacts. It means that participants are more adherent, because they have less other tempting options of activities to do. That means that overall we are teaching less people per course but they are on average attending more sessions. In addition they are primarily sourced through referrals from other charities and NGOs, as jobcentres can be quite distant and not appropriate for outreach.</p> <p>As far as evaluations, combining all the evaluations has shown us that there is very little difference between the outcomes of courses outside of London and inside London. Average household savings are around £1,200 per annum (London: £1,400); we see an 81% drop in takeaway consumption and a 40% increase in vegetable consumption, all very similar to what we've seen elsewhere. This is very comforting.</p>
What portion of the project did TFN fund?	100%
How many direct beneficiaries did the TFN funded project reach?	180 from courses directly funded by TFN
How many indirect beneficiaries did the TFN funded project reach?	Those 180 people cooked for other people so around 400 people via participants of courses directly paid for. In addition the capacity building we did enabled us to support our whole network better, which is around 600 further direct and 1400 indirect beneficiaries
Were you able to leverage further funding as a result of TFN support?	No
Did you receive any pro-bono support, volunteer offers or introductions as a result of the event?	No
How important was TFN funding in helping you achieve your objectives?	We would have found it difficult to achieve our objectives without TFN funding

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<p>Since presenting at TFN, has your organisation undergone any other significant changes?</p>	<p>This last year has been a major turning point for us. At the point of raising our 2nd round of funding, the organisation was still heavily dependent on the founder. One of the conditions imposed on us by one of the donors was to find a new Chair of the Board, with clear guidelines of what we should be looking for, which we did. In the last year there has been a lot of focus on capacity building at a senior level. Now we have a fully functional board with an excellent, experienced and supportive Chair, who is very involved, visiting the office at least once a fortnight and also visiting many branches. We also have a fully functional management team, mostly voluntary, with individuals with experience of functioning at the highest level in the private and NGO sector. They include an ex Director of Saatchi and Saatchi, a PhD health statistician, and an ex Director of International Food Aid/Nutrition programmes.</p> <p>This has meant that decisions are made on a more collective basis, with management team meetings every fortnight, and overall the decisions made and planning of the organisation are better. We also now have a team of 3 working on fundraising, and have also been able to find more volunteers to work in the Head Office.</p> <p>In addition to this, we have been nationally featured on BBC news, BBC Radio, BBC Good Food Magazine, Delicious Magazine, won Runner Up, Best Ethical Food Project for the Observer Magazine and were featured in local news including the Hastings & St Leonards Observer and Kent Online News. We were also a runner up in the Behaviour Change Category of the International Katerva Awards. We have recently won a contract with Bart's Medical School to teach their 3rd year Medical students about issues & challenges surrounding food poverty; we are increasingly being seen as a go to organisation in this field.</p>
<p>Do you have any other comments or feedback on the experience of the TFN process?</p>	<p>The major change for us came not only from the funding but from a conversation I had with John Spiers, somewhat independent of that process (and before the bid, in fact). He had wanted to engage with me more about our experience of social franchising and it was via that fairly lengthy conversation that he realised what was really needed, which was extra support at management level. Prior to that, at the first round of funding, similar support was given by Jenny Sheridan, again resulting from a conversation (in that case after the funding round).</p> <p>For us those 2 things have been really instrumental with pushing us to the next level. I wonder if you should have a strand of the process that focuses on core costs and core support, as smaller organisations like us have a tendency to focus on service delivery, when in fact what you as an organisation really differ from other funders in, in my experience, is the ability to be much more flexible about where your money goes. Whilst it's always nice to feel you're helping individuals, the greatest good is truly done when you capacity build to allow the organisation to grow faster.</p>

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<p>Can you tell us any personal stories to highlight the value of the project?</p>	<p>Guy had type 2 diabetes and was referred to Bags of Taste by his GP. His BSL(blood sugars) were often higher than 10mmol/L. Guy had 2 diabetic incidences while in the cooking lesson and he often had to sit down due to fluctuating blood sugar levels. He admitted his diet was very uncontrolled and that he regularly ate high fat high carbohydrate meals with very little or no vegetables. Guy said he knew he needed to change but was unsure of what to eat and portion sizes, he said it was hard but Bags of Taste helped him understand the calories of food and what a reasonable portion size was. He is now eating more vegetables and hopes to keep cooking better meals for himself in the future.</p> <p>Brook had had a 10month old baby and said she needed to learn some recipes that were healthy so that she could start weaning her son onto food that was better for him. Brook was on a low income but was still using convenience foods and spending a lot on takeaways because she said it was easier after a long day. However she decided to try Bags of Taste because she liked the sound of the recipes and liked the look of the flyer. Since doing the course she is cooking more and has saved on her food bills and is only buying takeaways occasionally. "I made my son the ginger fish minus the fish sauce and he gobbled it up"</p> <p>Mandy Joined the course and felt very under-confident in her cooking ability. She is on benefits and lives with her partner who is disabled. Because being busy with care duties she ate mostly ready made meals and takeaways. Since starting the course she has stopped buying takeaways altogether and is saving £20 a week. Mandy is also cooking more food from scratch and including vegetables. Mandy reported that her partners blood cholesterol has gone down in just 1 month of eating recipes inspired by Bags of Taste.</p> <p>Louise said her doctor told her to lose weight so she joined the class. Since joining Bags of Taste, she has saved money on her food bills and has stopped ordering takeaways. She has lost 8 pounds in the last 4 weeks. Louise would also like to volunteer for the next course.</p> <p>Linda was referred to us by her social worker, she was very concerned about being able to do the course as she has dyslexia which has limited her ability to read recipes. She therefore would rely heavily on ready meals and takeaways, but this was causing a financial strain. Linda discussed taking classes with her social worker who suggested Bags of Taste. Linda is definitely feeling like she can cook things that are not too complicated and are cheap and tasty. She said "Those Chinese meals you buy from shops and takeaway are all slimy, I'm cooking Chinese food better than them now!"</p>
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