



ESF - A New Chance For Women, Salvation Army

The Salvation Army offering social rehabilitation for women with the European Social Fund

Summary

Armáda Spásy, the Salvation Army of the Czech Republic, through its scheme 'A New Chance For Women', helps women in North Moravia with a history of alcohol dependency to reintegrate to society after undergoing clinical alcohol treatment. For six to twelve months, the participating women live in shared flats, take part in a therapeutic and rehabilitation program and receive individual counselling to gradually build up capacities for an independent life without alcohol.

The scheme started operating in January 2013 as an innovative social service pilot scheme financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) social inclusion funding line. From January 2015 onwards it will be funded by the local government as one of its standard social services to the community. The main success factor in being granted ESF funding for the project was for it to link the ESF funding line with the organisation's and the public social sector's goals.

Before 'A New Chance For Women' was launched, Armáda Spásy had done a survey with institutions offering clinical alcohol treatment to find out the biggest service gaps for the growing number of female patients with recurring alcohol problems. The survey revealed that there was little emphasis on social reintegration in existing services, which translated into patients not being equipped with long-term alternatives to their alcohol-dependent life. The organisation thus designed an integrated follow-up care scheme for women based on the model of a similar scheme that existed for males. The design was adjusted to the specific needs of females, which required a focus on a safe environment for the prospective clients. A project outline was drawn up, combining components of rehabilitation and reintegration for eight female clients at a time, totalling twenty altogether.

Participants are chosen based on their neediness and likely success rate: They have to have undergone the clinical alcohol treatment, and must display a high level of motivation for the programme. A condition for becoming a participant in the programme is to contact a social worker at least once a week on one's own initiative for a period of two months. Once accepted, the selected women move into a shared apartment together with another female in a similar situation, the modest rental and maintenance cost of which they bear themselves as self-contribution.

Clients attend group and individual psychotherapy to deal with the negative longer-term psychological effects of alcohol abuse and receive individual supervision and counselling on follow-up accommodation possibilities as well as job education. Individual therapeutic and counselling decreases during the course of the programme, in order for participants to become gradually more independent. Together with a job advisor, clients find a position to volunteer in an institution or business with an increasing number of hours per week over time, so as to develop skills necessary to obtain and maintain a job in the future, get slowly used to sustaining themselves and to gain self-esteem by contributing something beneficial to society. Assuming responsibilities and building up ties with the institution they volunteer in is seen as a learning process and increases the future employment prospects of the women. For example, a client who volunteered as cleaning staff in a mental health institution started to read to the patients and, by the end of the programme, got a position to spend time doing leisure activities with elderly people in the institution. As a Christian based organisation the Salvation Army also offers to all the women a pastoral care, chaplaincy and a possibility for pastoral counselling. They can also just have a conversation or attend Sunday worships. These services are all on a voluntary basis but the majority of clients decides to take part in them.

From idea to funding and implementation





In 2012, at the time the project was designed and Armáda Spásky sought for financing possibilities, government had cut all funding for new social services in response to the financial crisis, so the organisation had to look into alternate options to cover the cost of the scheme of an estimated €120,000. The ESF which had issued a call for applications in 2012 was a likely choice for the organisation, having a 13-year history of using EU funds. However, as Envoy Pavla Vopeláková of Armáda Spásky points out, a lot of homework has to be done before even thinking of submitting an application with the ESF.

ESF funding involves a co-financing component of the regional or local government. Hence, in the evaluation of the application, local government's support and endorsement of the project features as an important criterion. To achieve this, Armáda Spásky has continuously engaged with the government on different levels, and is involved in the community planning to understand and influence public spending priorities. Ms. Vopeláková emphasizes that it is crucial to align projects under ESF along three dimensions. Firstly and most importantly, the mission, values and competences of the organisation itself should guide the planning, secondly, public development plans need to be considered and thirdly, the ESF funding line has to be matched. In her view, having the idea for a project and a skeleton of its outline ready before looking at funding possibilities is crucial for the success of any project.

Armáda Spásky's experience shows that another success factor for receiving ESF funding is clarity and transparency with regard to budget allocations in the application. For this, it is not only necessary to dispose of project and financial planning skills but also to speak the 'EU language'. Reporting requirements and the overall administrative work load is considerably higher than in projects funded under public procurement schemes. Monitoring reports are to be submitted at least every six months and "follow-up questions from ESF can keep project managers busy until the next report is due", Ms. Vopeláková explains. When the organisation first used EU funding in 1999 during the EU accession process, there was little know-how on the specifics of EU funding modalities within the organisation and among project personnel. A significant amount of time had to be invested in acquiring the skills to write a successful application and in the supervision of project and financial managers. Nevertheless, the effort has paid off. Since then, the organisation has run more than 13 projects with EU funds.

Bringing about long-term change

The successful application of '*A New Chance For Women*' with the ESF covers all personnel as well as inventory, therapeutic and activation programme costs, allowing for individual care and social work with women on their way back into society. 95% of the participants are considered to have completed the program successfully, meaning that six months after leaving the programme, they are still working, lead an independent life and do not consume alcohol. The organisation stays in touch with the women through community evenings and by offering counselling services on a per-needs-basis after the programme which is reduced after half a year. The rationale is to avoid a long-term dependency of the clients on the programme and focus on their capacity to access services offered by the public social system.

Thanks to Armáda Spásky's intense lobbying and advocacy work, local government has agreed to fund the program as it was piloted under its standard set of social services. The organisation is planning to apply for ESF funding to increase the capacity of the scheme by another 35 women, and to introduce further innovations such as an enhanced focus on psychiatric care in the therapeutic component, which, as the experience of the pilot scheme proved, could be a useful addition. This however will only be possible once the next ESF call for applications in the Czech Republic is issued in May 2015. Gaps in funding follow-up projects with the ESF have taught the organisation to not overly rely on ESF or other EU funds, but rather use them as an option to complement services financed in other ways.

Further information:

Armáda Spásky: <http://www.armadaspasy.cz/>

Project website: <http://www.armadaspasy.cz/havirov/vyhlika-pro-zeny>

ESF website: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/home.jsp?langId=en>

ESF Czech Republic website: <http://www.esfcr.eu/index.php?lang=2>



Presentation of Armáda Spásy on ESF funding:

http://eurodiaconia.org/images/stories/2014_events/OPM/esf_experiences%20salvation%20army%20cz%20compressed.pdf

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