

WAND UK Strategy

2019-2022

WAND: WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION
FOR NETWORKING
AND DEVELOPMENT

Empowering women to become
agents for their own change



Executive summary

- Time of crisis, girls project

WAND UK delivers valuable services for vulnerable and marginalised women across six London boroughs, covering mental health and well-being, sexual and reproductive health, domestic violence and IT education.

WAND UK engages with women both individually and in groups, to support them to take control over their own lives, improve their health and well-being, increase their self-esteem and to make their voices heard. WAND UK strives to reach out to the most vulnerable women in communities by putting the individual at the centre of its interventions.

Our users rate these services highly, both in terms of quality and in terms of users' willingness to recommend WAND to others.

A number of significant socio-political changes have occurred in a short time frame that are having a cumulative impact on women who are in already vulnerable positions across the communities in which WAND UK operates.

- i) *Brexit* – with no agreement in sight and leaving the EU with 'no deal' a distinct possibility, our users are not only increasingly financially vulnerable, but they are also vulnerable to potentially unclear and rapid changes in immigration policy with a new post-Brexit category of 'settled status'. Applications will also be done via an app-based process, which our users may not have the access or skills to complete
- ii) Universal credit – the roll out of universal credit stands to increase hardship rather than relieve poverty (70% of our users are likely to be on UC). Research from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation indicates that, while 5.5 million people in poverty should see increases to their income, there will be some 3 million people in poverty who will see their incomes reduced, the majority of these being in working families.
- iii) *Austerity, and public service cuts* – the current government's continuing policy of austerity has led to unprecedentedly large central and local government funding reductions that have hit public services of great importance to disadvantaged and vulnerable women, and the full impact of these reductions will continue to unfold over the coming year or more. In particular, the closure of refuges for survivors of domestic violence and cuts in local government spending increase the vulnerability of WAND UK's users

- iv) *Grenfell* – specific to one of our five boroughs and a long-term, critical issue, the fire at Grenfell tower has hit our community extremely hard, with a lot of those affected having already been in vulnerable positions.

Simultaneously, the funding environment has placed great strain on the voluntary sector and particularly on smaller voluntary and community organisations - including WAND UK - that support women.

The financial and social environment in which our users live and the funding and competitive environment in which WAND UK operates are both increasingly challenging. This three-year strategy considers the current situation, upcoming trends, threats and opportunities and outlines the desired end state from various viewpoints: users, market position, services, approach, organisation, funding, governance, communications, evaluation and systems.

Taking this comprehensive review into account, four strategic aims emerge for WAND UK for 2019-2022:

1. **To support and empower women at sustainable scale across the areas in which we operate**
2. **To marshal and maintain the resources needed to deliver our mission**
3. **To organise our resources and activities to maximum effect for those we serve**
4. **To become a widely sought-after and valued partner**

These strategic aims, and the objectives within them, must be managed closely through the period, with Trustees reviewing on a quarterly basis. In the immediate term, the staffing objective - to fund and hire one full-time central staff member - within strategic aim (2) must take priority, as realistic pursuit of all remaining aims and objectives depends on it.

WAND UK at a glance

WAND UK, now based in St. Charles Centre for Health and Wellbeing in Northwest London, was founded in 2004 on the initiative of a group of West African women who had been involved in a similar organisation in Sierra Leone. WAND UK is an independent charity that addresses the problems facing women in isolated and excluded communities through drop-in sessions, outreach services and networking events. WAND UK was set up to work predominantly with African female asylum seekers, refugees and migrants but now it has a wider reach, serving women from a multitude of countries.

Since 2005, WAND UK has supported women in education concerning and management of a range of issues, including sexual health and HIV prevention, computer literacy, mental health and well-being and domestic violence. It has also organised cultural activities for women to meet and strengthen their social networks. Over the years WAND UK has strengthened its expertise in sexual health and well-being and conducted needs assessments to ensure its interventions responded to women's needs and gaps in local service provision.

WAND UK's approach is founded in empowerment and enablement. We support users' holistic health and well-being. This empowering, holistic approach is one of prevention, in particular prevention of crisis points. We look not just to address existing issues but to build resilience that will reduce the incidence of future issues and allow users to deal with them more effectively when they do arise. Such internal resources must be anchored in a supportive environment, so our work is community-based and takes into consideration community context - including social and cultural dimensions - to make change sustainable. Finally, as part of the strengthening of users' resources, we support their awareness of and access to other services.

In the past year, WAND UK has worked with 300 women of diverse ethnicity - with 60% black and 30% Asian - across six North London boroughs. Our services are highly rated by users, with more than 90% of evaluation respondents saying they would recommend them to others.

WAND UK's funding comes through a mix of grant and contract awards. The largest current sources are The Zurich Foundation, The Dalgarno Neighbourhood Fund and the Big Lottery's Awards for All.

We work in close partnership with local and national bodies and deliver our services through volunteer-led interventions.

Mission, Vision, Values

Our Vision

Our vision is a world free from discrimination and oppression, where people respect and value differences, and where every woman and man enjoys all their human rights and has the opportunities to realise their full potential.

Our Mission

In pursuit of our vision, our mission is to contribute to female empowerment by supporting women to become agents of positive change for themselves, their families, their communities and society at large.

Our Values

Equality, inclusion and fairness

WAND UK is committed to equality and non-discrimination. It will ensure that the activities and services it provides are inclusive, accessible and respond to the diverse needs and specificities of women and their families.

Individual-centred and holistic

WAND UK support takes into account all aspects of women's lives, including physical, emotional, social and economic wellbeing.

Inclusion

WAND UK believes that everybody can positively contribute to community life and to society. WAND UK therefore works in partnership with a range of charities, grassroots informal organisations and faith-based organisations for a better future for women and their families. WAND UK also involves its clients in the design of its activities and provides them with opportunities to engage in activities as volunteers.

Users

Women from many backgrounds and ethnicities face a multiplicity of challenges, discrimination and inequality. These include:

- Gender and ethnic discrimination, particularly for asylum seekers, refugees and migrant women
- Poverty and social exclusion
- Discrimination at work and when job seeking
- Housing, particularly for large families
- Lack of participation in political decisions and community life
- Difficulties in sustaining constructive and supportive relationships
- Health, including reproductive and sexual health, and lack of knowledge in how to access health, social and education services

WAND UK recognises how the intersection of these inequalities maintains women in poverty and sustains low levels of self-confidence. It also understands how relationships, discrimination and housing access directly relate to poor mental and physical health.

From housing provision to childcare support, domestic violence services and police funding, the decisions being made by local councils affect women in more than any other section of society¹. Recent research and statistics² show that it is women who are increasingly unemployed or taking underpaid work; women who are losing money for childcare and other basic needs through welfare cuts; and women who are losing vital support from voluntary and community organisations that have closed due to lack of funding. Many of the reforms that have been announced by central government will be phased in over the next two or three years.

As mentioned, WAND UK initially worked with African women in London but has significantly widened its reach. WAND UK continues to pursue this extension to be even more inclusive and work with women across all backgrounds and ethnicities. Additionally, WAND UK is extending some of its activities to families, in an attempt to work with children and men. Refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, women living positively with HIV, female heads of households and single mothers will be particularly targeted by WAND UK's activities.

¹ Dr Claire Annesley (2011), Budgeting for Gender Equality: is government economic policy fair to women? Gender Institute and Department of Sociology Discussion. London School of Economics.

² Women's Resource Centre (2012) Women and the Cuts. Fact Sheet.

WAND UK focuses its work across six London boroughs - Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea, Westminster, Islington, Hackney and Camden.

Current situation

As mentioned, in the past two years, WAND UK has worked with approximately 300 users. Registration information indicates that, ethnically, our user base is approximately 60% black, 30 % Asian and 10% other.

The period ahead

WAND UK sees the opportunity for growth, bringing its support to a greater proportion of the target audience in the boroughs in which it operates. WAND UK will identify opportunities for outreach at multiple 'points of entry' for services, targeting school leavers, expectant or new mothers, the recently unemployed, returners to work and retirees.

Continued misunderstanding of equalities legislation by grant makers and commissioners could lead them to look unfavourably on WAND UK and other women's charities due to the gender focus. WAND UK will continue to educate this group where necessary with respect to our compliance with equalities legislation.

Desired end state

By the end of this strategy period, WAND UK will operate in the same boroughs as now, but will work with a wider breadth of women, girls and their families, supporting users with a greater range and volume of activities.

Market position

WAND UK operates in a crowded charity market. As a small charity, it has struggled to find its place among bigger local or national charities in the health and social sectors. Nonetheless, through community outreach interventions and partnership building with institutional partners WAND UK acts as bridge between users and service providers with the aim of changing lives and empowering those in vulnerable situations.

Current situation

Anecdotally, WAND UK's users report that it is well known in the areas in which it operates, for helping women. WAND UK is also well known and well regarded by its partners and by organisations that have funded its programmes over recent years. We have developed partnerships with local charities, GP surgeries and institutional partners such as the NHS. However, we are perhaps less well known among commissioners, grant makers and 'lead partners' more generally.

The period ahead

With ever greater competition for funds and a trend toward procurement and contracts replacing grant-funded services (see Funding, below), there is a risk that WAND UK and other small providers will be marginalised by large charities and companies that capitalise on commissioners' wish to deal with fewer, multi-service contractors.

Alongside this risk, WAND UK has an opportunity to 'be the face' of local, community-anchored services, of prevention and of holistic empowerment. Such recognition will take concerted networking and communications work, alongside continuing to provide excellent services for users, but the result will be a much stronger position within the market and receipt of resources and responsibility for serving users.

Desired end state

By the end of the strategy period, WAND UK will be a catalyst for North London small provider co-operation and will be a well-known voice for the defining elements of its approach (see Approach, below) to supporting users.

WAND UK will be 'front of mind' for commissioners, grant makers and large, 'lead providers' with regard to the services in which we specialise.

Services

WAND UK engages with women both individually and in groups, to support them to take control of their own lives, to improve their health and well-being, to increase their self-esteem and to make their voices heard. WAND UK strives to reach out to the most vulnerable women in communities and puts the individual at the centre of its interventions.

WAND UK's current service areas include mental health and well-being, sexual and reproductive health and addressing domestic violence.

Current situation

WAND UK's users regard our services highly. Evaluation data from the Happy Healthy Family club shows that 97% would recommend it to others and that 88% rate information provided as very useful (with the remaining 20% rating it as satisfactory).

After our mental health awareness workshops, 92% of participants say that they captured the issues well and gave useful information. Over 97% said that they would recommend them to others.

After our domestic violence awareness workshops, 60% of participants say that they captured the issues well and gave useful information. A further 30% left the answer to the question blank. Over 68% said the information should be shown to others, with a further 10% not answering the question.

A potential weakness of current services is that they only access a relatively small audience relative to the enablement / empowerment needs in the areas we serve but this is likely to grow with increased resources for expansion.

The period ahead

At current volumes, WAND UK has sufficient contacts with its target audience to maintain a deep understanding of community needs and sufficient expertise to meet those needs. WAND UK has an opportunity to build on its services (or to expand activities within current services) to access and support a broader user base, for example, a mentoring/buddying

scheme and a project aimed at girls and school leavers.

Desired end state

By the end of the strategy period, WAND UK will have expanded the volume and range of activity and deepened its expertise in existing services and will have expanded into select related services, for example back-to-work support, support for school leavers and mentoring/buddying.

Approach

WAND UK engages with women both individually and in groups, to support them to take control over their own lives, to improve their health and well-being, to increase their self-esteem and to make their voices heard. WAND UK strives to reach out to the most vulnerable women in communities. By putting the individual at the centre of its interventions, WAND's overarching goal is to empower women and help them to become agents of their own change through education.

The organisation first and foremost addresses the rights and well-being of women from ethnic minority backgrounds. The aim is to intervene to reduce clients' dependence on formal health services and to enable them to better participate in, and contribute to, the community, both socially and economically, ending the cyclic nature of their disadvantaged circumstance. WAND UK believes that by changing and transforming women's lives it can not only positively impact on individuals and families, but also on communities and on society as a whole.

Current situation

WAND UK's approach is founded in empowerment and enablement. We support users' holistic health and well-being. This empowering, holistic approach looks not just to address existing issues but to build internal resources that reduce the incidence of issues in the future and allow users to deal with issues more effectively when they do arise. It is a path of prevention. The internal resources that we help users to build must be anchored in a supportive environment, so our work is community-based and takes into consideration community context, including social and cultural dimensions, to make change sustainable. Finally, as part of the strengthening of users' resources, we support their awareness of, and access to, other services.

The period ahead

WAND UK will be mindful of the success of this approach and will not be distracted by short-term temptations to veer from it. Instead, we will seek to better articulate it, further champion it and use it as a source of distinctiveness in the funding and partnership markets.

Desired end state

At the end of the strategy period, WAND UK will continue to work with its current approach, will have been more widely recognised for this approach and will have made the approach into a source of distinctiveness.

Organisation

WAND UK is a volunteer organisation. We have a few long-term, experienced volunteers in each of the areas in which we operate, and we assemble other volunteer resources to meet specific project needs.

Current situation

WAND UK has very capable, experienced and committed central leadership from its director. We also have long-term volunteers with good intervention and user-group knowledge.

However, WAND UK's central resources are currently too thin, and we are too reliant on the director to carry out the fundraising, administration, communications, project management and evaluation of our vibrant, growing community charity.

The period ahead

The degree of WAND UK's reliance on its director is a risk to the charity. We have an opportunity to fund and secure a dedicated full-time resource to kick-start and maintain a virtuous circle of capacity, capability, funding, activity and impact. We need a Director with fundraising strengths and a community links worker to significantly increase our fundraising, communication, management and monitoring capacity and capability.

Desired end state

At the end of the strategy period, WAND UK will be a robustly managed volunteer organisation with a combination of core, long-term volunteers and a growing set of newer volunteers, many of whom have been users of WAND UK services. The activities of these volunteers will be effectively woven with those of a full-time community links worker to reach and help users in our areas of work. WAND UK will have both capacity and increased expertise to successfully access funding through grants and contracts and we will have capacity and recent success in maintaining a richer, more impactful communication programme with users, partners, funders and other stakeholders.

Funding

The rationale for working with marginalised women seems more compelling than ever, as the charity and third sector is being impacted by budget cuts. Generating more income continues to be the top challenge for 59% of charity leaders (62% in 2017), followed by meeting demand for services (unchanged at 33%) and reduction in public/government funding (32%; 29% in 2017). More than eight in ten charity leaders (83%) saw increased demand for services over the last 12 months and a similar proportion (86%) expect this to continue into the coming year. Amongst those expecting an increase in demand, nearly three quarters (72%) are confident that they will be able to meet it ³.

Funding for women's organisations has been negatively affected ⁴ by:

- Austerity measures since 2010, which have reduced funding available for women's organisations. At the same time, cuts to statutory services and social security cuts and changes have increased the demand on the voluntary sector.
- The move away from local and national grants to competitively tendered-for contracts to deliver services.
- The short-term nature of many contracts and grants.

³ https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/about-us-publications/charity-landscape-2019_web_2620a_290319.pdf

⁴ <https://www.wrc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/WBG-WRC-Funding-Report.pdf>

- Lack of funding to cover core costs and the demand from funders for 'innovative' projects.
- The push for mixed-sex services.

Brexit is likely to have a negative impact on women's organisations in terms of funding available, recruitment of staff and volunteers, and on the demand for services. There may also be opportunities if VAT regulations are drawn more favourably for voluntary organisations and if government creates new more simplified funding streams.

The women's civil society sector is composed of organisations of varied sizes and financial capabilities. However, many organisations in the sector are very small and their survival is only guaranteed on a year-to-year basis. Many organisations that participated in the WBG Funding report have currently little to no income, with close to a third falling in the 'under £10,000' bracket. Nearly half of surveyed women's organisations reported an annual income below £100,000, and over two-thirds of less than £300,000 ⁵.

Governmental funding is a significant source of income for some women's organisations, particularly funding from local authorities. However, funding available from local authorities to voluntary organisations has been severely reduced in the last decade, as a result of the massive cuts of investment in local government by Westminster.

Other forms of income are generated through specific activities such as seeking donations towards a particular event and raffles, but funds raised in this way remain very modest.

Additionally, the move away from local and national grants to competitively tendered-for contracts to deliver services is having a negative impact on many women's organisations' ability to continue to support women. They are struggling in a context of increasing demand for their services.

Current situation

In the most recent reported financial year 2018/19, WAND UK had £41.294 income from various sources, with the most important being contracts from the Clinical Commissioning Group through Kensington and Chelsea Social Council, Comic Relief grants, and the Clinical Commissioning Group through Hammersmith and Fulham

5. <https://www.wrc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/WBG-WRC-Funding-Report.pdf>

WAND UK's funding is predominantly project-specific, making it difficult to ensure core funding for long-term assured sustainability.

The period ahead

The Trustees of WAND UK have made funding and diversity of resources a priority. Critical to pursuing this priority are:

- a fundraising strategy that identifies priority targets and approaches
- securing sufficient resources to systematically execute the strategy.

There are opportunities to tap into 'alternative' funding pools: funds for older people, for prevention-focused activities, for refugee support, for improving social inclusion/cross-cultural awareness, for 'grassroots' programmes, for young girls, for mentoring, for buddying and for increasing volunteering.

Desired end state

At the end of the strategy period, WAND UK will have a well-established core funding on a rolling three-year basis. WAND will also have an annually updated fundraising strategy, with dedicated resources to pursue it. WAND will have a growing track record of successful execution of this fundraising strategy, evidenced by annual income of £100k+ and commensurately expanded activity and impact. Our income will be from a wider set of sources including a mix of directly accessed grants and sub-contracts as partners within larger consortia.

Governance

WAND UK's previous three-year strategy included the objective of strengthening our governance, and we will continue our work in this regard in the next strategy period.

Current situation

WAND UK has enjoyed relatively strong continuity within the board over the past three years, and we are currently looking to add several trustees with important relevant skills.

The period ahead

While improving Trustees' ability to review and manage risk, there is also the opportunity

to involve Trustees in WAND UK's central challenge - accessing funds in a difficult landscape.

Desired end state

At the end of the strategy period, WAND UK will have expanded its board to incorporate members with new functional expertise to help its organisational development. Trustees will even more actively employ both their expertise and their relationships in service of WAND UK's aims.

WAND UK and its Trustees will have an improved risk management regime and improved mechanisms to review and direct progress on the strategic objectives identified in this 2019-2022 strategy.

Communications

Tighter funding, more formal bidding procedures and greater competition make it even more important to effectively communicate WAND UK's services and their impact.

Current situation

WAND UK has recently produced new branding materials for users, and potential users, of its services.

WAND UK has a communication strategy to support its engagement with partners and funders.

The period ahead

There is a risk that, despite its good work in communities, WAND UK may not be 'on the radar' of important potential partners or funding stakeholders because of lack of communication or communication that fails to adequately articulate the distinctiveness of the contribution that WAND UK can bring to funders' aims or to consortia.

There is an opportunity to create a core set of materials that convey WAND UK's distinctive approach and the impact that it achieves for use on social media and in other

online communication.

Desired end state

At the end of the strategy period, WAND UK will have a well-honed set of communication materials, refined over three years of use with stakeholders, tailored to stakeholder groups (small charity partners, large partners / lead bidders, commissioners, grant funders). We will have an annual process for reviewing and updating these assets.

Evaluation

The difficult market and funding environment discussed above (in market position and funding) place a premium on a) continuously improving the impact of our services and b) being able to demonstrate and communicate the impact of our interventions.

Current situation

WAND UK is continuously improving its monitoring and evaluation processes. We are currently undertaking project work in Trusted charity Mark (for organisational quality improvement) and upgrading our monitoring and evaluation processes using Upshot, a performance management software package.

The period ahead

With these new processes in place, WAND UK will be able to generate and provide valuable and tangible reports to bidders and funders and to identify potential weaknesses.

There is an opportunity to standardise feedback collection formats, to improve consistency of collection, to systematise the collation of data, to extract greater learning from feedback and to more professionally measure and communicate WAND UK's impact.

Desired end state

At the end of the strategy period, WAND UK will have well-established tools, habits

and routines for measuring, analysing and communicating impact and for collecting, analysing and incorporating learning from feedback. Trustees will routinely review, understand and helpfully challenge both impact reporting and progress with continuous improvement.

Systems

If WAND UK is to strengthen management, governance, monitoring and evaluation, while growing services (especially with limited central staff capacity), it must get the most from pragmatic use of today's simple organisational technology.

Current situation

WAND UK has a number of desktop computers running Microsoft products on a local network and server. The Trusted Charity Mark project provides access to an online quality management tool. We have recently entered the data from three years of paper registration and evaluation forms into a password protected Excel file.

WAND UK does not have an integrated database of volunteers, users, projects, partners and other stakeholders or a tool to manage communication campaigns.

The period ahead

WAND UK is in the process of putting in place Upshot, a software package that will monitor and produce evaluation reports for future organisational developments.

Some records are still stored on paper, but will soon be systematically saved onto OneDrive.

Desired end state

At the end of the strategy period, WAND UK will have a fit-for-purpose database through which its operations, communications and evaluation are managed. We will also store our documents ~~and files~~ directly online.

Our staff and volunteers will be trained on the relevant aspects of the system's use, and

their routines and habits will fit comfortably with that use.

Strategic Aims and Objectives

Based on the above analysis of WAND UK's current position, of relevant likely trends, and of opportunities and threats over the period ahead, WAND UK's strategic aims for 2019-2022 are:

1. To support and empower women at sustainable scale across the areas in which we operate

Why? - *To increase impact by doing more for more women, to increase community connection through greater points and types of connection, to increase expertise by learning from greater interaction, to increase competitiveness and standing in a crowded and competitive environment*

2. To marshal and maintain the resources needed to deliver our mission

Why? - *At current resource levels, the organisation is not able to completely meet the needs of vulnerable communities and should expand so that more women can benefit from its work.*

To organise our resources and activities to maximize the impact of WAND UK's work for its service users

Why? - *Today's environment demands consistent employment of business-calibre tools and processes for management, learning and communicating*

3. To become a widely sought-after and valued partner

Why? - *More robust funding and operational partnerships are critical to achieving viable scale and impact in today's environment*

We will manage these strategic aims and the objectives below (with priority level in parentheses) and report progress to Trustees quarterly, updating aims and objectives annually, as necessary.

1. Support and empower women at sustainable scale
 - a. Increase outreach with women and girls (1)
 - b. Selectively add services (e.g. back to work support or mentoring/buddying) to increase reach and impact (2)
 - c. Increase activity levels (workshops, events, classes) in both existing and new services (2)
2. Marshal and maintain resources
 - a. Fund and hire a full-time paid Director (1)
 - b. Pursue funding through all reasonable grant and contract routes with which WAND UK shares a relevant dimension (prevention, community-based, women, older people, holistic health and empowerment) to secure three-year rolling core funding and overall annual funding of at least £100k (1)
 - c. Pursue pro bono support for procurement bid writing where possible. (2)
 - d. Continue to recruit trustees with relevant functional expertise and fundraising connections (2)
 - e. Develop more users as volunteers (3)
3. Organise resources and activities
 - a. Put in place a fit-for-purpose customer relationship management (CRM) system to manage operations, communications and evaluation (1)
 - b. Create and maintain a simple monitoring and evaluation plan and process that allow continuous learning and accurate, robust measurement of WAND UK's impact (1)
 - c. Construct more active roles for Trustees in both fundraising and organisation development (2)
 - d. Instigate and maintain a robust risk management approach that reports to Trustees (or a subset Audit and Risk Committee) at least quarterly (2)
 - e. Instigate and maintain a robust process to manage and report on progress on the annual business plan (2)
 - f. Acquire Trusted Charity Mark for quality assurance
4. Become a valued partner

- a. Make WAND UK's approach a true source of distinctiveness that can be effectively communicated and backed with robust measurement of impact (2)
- b. Develop a suite of communication 'assets' (core text, templates, testimonials, quantitative impact results) based on audience analysis of key stakeholder groups (users/prospective users, volunteers, project level partners, strategic partners, grant funders, current/potential lead partners of large service consortia, commissioners) (1)
- c. Deepen / develop relationships with target partners and funders (2)
- d. Create, maintain and continuously refresh a set of impact evidence to draw from for relevant specific conversations (1)