



# **OPERATIONAL SUPPORT OFFER**



DARTINGTON  
SERVICE  
DESIGN LAB

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## **OPERATIONAL SUPPORT**

**It makes pragmatic and economic sense for small to medium-sized charities to share 'back-office' administrative functions. The Dartington Service Design Lab are able to offer this service to other charities working towards a similar social purpose.**

The Dartington Service Design Lab is a modern research and public service design charity. Our charity has operated in one form or another for over fifty years (previously as the Dartington Social Research Unit, operating under the rubric of the Warren House Group at Dartington).<sup>1</sup> We are relatively small and nimble: 15 full-time staff plus a wider team of associates and Fellows.

We have also embraced technological advances and streamlined our processes to more effectively and efficiently manage the administrative support of the Lab. Our operational team is now just two permanent and full-time members of staff. Our offices could be anywhere – but we have remained in Devon as we are served by fast broadband and all of our activities can be supported by a virtual presence.

Many charities struggle under the weight of fulfilling all their statutory returns, governance duties, meeting data protection regulations, HR, financial record keeping as well as day-to-day admin and banking. It can place a disproportionate burden on organisational overheads, creating financial strain and reducing competitiveness.

**In our process of streamlining we recognised that because charities generally operate in a very similar way, the operational support staff could also outsource their time to other like-minded charities to virtually pool our administrative resources, creating efficiencies for all involved.**

In May 2016, initially as a short-term trial, the Devon-based operations team took over the immediate support needs of the charity 'Success for All' based in York. The partnership went from strength to strength and has continued on a formal basis since then. In the near future Success for All, now based in Peterborough, are going through a rapid scaling-up exercise, and now have the resources to invest in their own dedicated Operations Staff.

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<sup>1</sup> A company limited by guarantee registered in England and a registered charity (Company No 04610839, Charity No. 1099202). See [www.dartington.org.uk](http://www.dartington.org.uk)

The Lab operations team now have the capacity to support other charities; this can be picked and mixed to cover the potential gaps or needs that other charities may have. The type of support the Lab can provide, but not necessarily limited to, is as follows:

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## TRUSTEES AND GOVERNANCE

- Board secretary, coordinator and record keeper;
- Charity commission returns.

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## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- Management reporting and strategic insight for the Executive and Trustees;
- Cash flow, forecasts, 1 to 2 year budgeting and forecasts, financial planning;
- Monitor department and project by project spending;
- Oversee outsourcing of financial processing and accounting (inputting to Xero, payroll, pensions, VAT and year end accounts);
- Operate and implement the payroll and associated HMRC returns;
- Oversee annual audit, year-end accruals and grant finance reports for audit;
- Companies House returns;
- Company signatory;
- Efficient purchasing of all supplies and services, invoicing customers and payment of suppliers;
- Operate credit control system;
- All banking, credit cards, transfers of cash and petty cash (sterling/dollars and Euros) and personal business expenses.

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## GRANT AND CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

- Review draft funding contracts, oversight of standard (project related) contracts;
- Provision of accurate financial and resource reporting to grant donor;
- Establish financial controls and systems for new grants/programs, for associates managing projects and for new staff;
- Maintain database of project suppliers contract, payment terms and history.

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## HR

- Develop, implement and maintain human resources policies and procedures and, where necessary, oversee outsourcing of HR activity;
- Maintain the Staff Handbook and staff records;
- Take responsibility for all recruiting processes and procedures of new staff at all levels and administer the induction process;
- Operate the Barring and Disclosure process.

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## OPERATIONS

- First line maintenance of the staff's working environments including IT (Office 365 platform) and ensure the provision of cost effective support services;
- Issue returns to the ICO and implement appropriate data and information security procedures and protocols;
- Ensure a planned and timely maintenance programme for repair and refurbishment of buildings and sites as well as all of the support services;
- Lead on all H&S matters.

A service level agreement for the shared responsibilities can be arranged with an agreed remuneration package.

Our Operations team consists of our Head of Operations – Brian Warren – has 13 years in the third sector including the roles of CEO (Royal Agricultural Society of England), Project Manager (UTC Plymouth) and for the last 4 years with the Lab. Prior to this Brian had over 30 years' experience in the military. He is assisted by Ella Baillie (PA to the Lab Director and Business Administrator) who has two years' experience with the Lab.

If sharing administrative support is something that your charity might be interested in then do get in touch either by email: [brian.warren@dartington.org.uk](mailto:brian.warren@dartington.org.uk), or by telephone: 01803 762400.