

**SDF Strategy Day, University of Birmingham.**

**17th October 2018**

Below is a summary of the discussions and feedback from the SDF council members who attended a strategy day in October 2018 and of the contributions made by some SDF members following a survey leading up to the strategy day.

**Attendees**

* Dorota Tworek-Uptas - ExecTeam Member
* Danny Hannah - Exec Team Member
* Albina Shashyna - Exec Team Member
* Rossana Espinoza - Exec Team Member
* Ian Whiting - Regional Chair
* Linda Bryant - Regional Chair
* Jane Hay- Regional Chair
* Zoe Irvine - Regional Chair
* Lidija Jones - Regional Chair
* Kate Crane - Head of HR, People & OD. University of Birmingham

**Summary of the Output**

**The SDF is valued.** We recognise there is an inherent value in having a community of staff development practitioners who share knowledge, experience and expertise with each other. We have a large community, over 500 members (on the jiscmail) from over 100 Universities. The regional network meetings are well run and important to us and we think the conference is worthwhile, enjoyable and worth keeping. We don’t want to lose the SDF.

**But it isn't perfect.** We maybe haven't developed or moved with times as much as we could have done. We sometimes stay safe and aren't known for pushing boundaries. Our structures and ways of doing things have stayed pretty static over the last 15 years. We value collaboration and innovation (as reflected through our grants and awards) but aren't known for leading edge thinking in our field. We maybe don’t connect with academic research or other sectors as much as we could. As changes in the sector have led to a greater focus on organisational development within individual institutions, the SDF hasn't necessarily evolved with it. Our communication methods could be improved, our chief method of contact, the jiscmail, is highly valued in the opportunity it presents for knowledge sharing but equally frustrating when it clogs up email boxes. Although the community is large, not all members are active and sometimes responses can be limited to a comparatively small group.

**We could do more.** We could do better at understanding what is important to our members, by listening to and linking together our regional activity. We could engage with new partners to stretch thinking and test our assumptions. We could focus more attention and resources in building genuinely innovative collaborations and we could seek to be a leading force in the field of learning and organisational development. We could build upon our strengths, we have a large base and could seek to involve and engage with more of our members by using new more user friendly methods of communication. We could invest more in our regional activity and keep our eye on new developments in our field.

**Being sustainable.** We have always been primarily funded by the Leadership Foundation although over the last few years this funding has started to reduce. We have also started to develop new partners and sponsors and our income has grown from that. We need to decide who we want to partner with and what purpose those partnerships have. We also need to decide what type of funding model we want move to. Closer union with Advance HE? New partnerships with commercial sponsors? Or a new deal with our members which involves a subscription arrangement.

**The role of the executive team**. since Nick left us as chair in April, the exec team has had to rethink how we work together. We haven't been able to replace Nick, in many respects that was never going to happen, Nick invested a lot of time and energy into the SDF, we simply didn’t have the candidates stepping forward who had the right experience and time to fill those boots. So we have started to work together as a team who operate a collaborative leadership model. We share leadership between us. This can mean decisions take longer to be reached and we are still working through our responsibilities but it has also brought us closer together and it feels more like a team now then maybe it once did. We would like another member, however, to join us as an equal partner. What we decide to do with the future direction of the SDF will have influence upon the sort of individual the exec team need. Maybe we want someone who is interested in building commercial partnerships? Maybe we want someone with an academic research background or maybe we need someone who has more time to help with some of the areas that often get neglected.

**Next steps**

We would like to continue to engage the council with this conversation but to move the debate forward, we would like to offer some propositions to help stimulate the next level of discussion:

**Future Directions**

Below are some possible strategic aims the SDF could pursue. They are listed here as possible aims to help aid discussion.

**The SDF has an explicit strategic aim to:**

* Focus its activities on supporting the understanding, delivery and evaluation of organisational development activity within the sector
* Be at the cutting edge of identifying new thinking and practice in the field of learning and organisational development
* maximise the involvement and contribution of its membership base.
* Develop new partnerships from other sectors
* Become a trusted source of best practice and advice for the sector
* Focus upon and reward collaborations that focus on innovative and cutting edge projects

**Funding**

* We seek new commercial partnerships and are no longer reliant upon Advance HE
* We align our aims with that of Advance HE and seek to agree a sustainable funding arrangement
* We seek to build new partnerships with non-commercial entities within our field in return for a financial contribution (e.g. UHR, SEDA, ODHE)
* We change our status to one where we can ask for a subscription from our members.
* We go solo and ask for voluntary donations (bit like the Guardian)