What worked well

1. **Community control: Support communities to successfully take more control over decisions and asset**

- Swift community responses based on understanding local needs
- Communities leading initiatives, with quicker access to funding streams
- Using technology to do things differently while recognising the need to include those people who are digitally excluded
- Versatility of community organisations, aware of local issues with person-centred approaches and a 'can-do' ethos.

2. **Public sector leadership: Strong and clear leadership on community empowerment sets the tone and culture of the organisation**

- The Scottish Government recognised from the start the value that the voluntary sector could bring.
- First, the funding package – which predated funding from the UK Government - recognised the vital role of charities and community groups in mitigating the impact of coronavirus.
- In March 2020, a £350m package of support for the Scottish voluntary sector was announced by the then Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government.
- Second, the Scottish Government also recognised the need to work alongside and trust voluntary sector infrastructure organisations such as SCVO in the management and delivery of these funds.
- The Scottish Government delivered many of its Covid-related funds through co-designing innovative models with the sector.
- Third Sector Resilience Fund (TSRF) was a £20m+ emergency fund for charities, community groups, social enterprises and voluntary organisations working in Scotland. Firstport, Social Investment Scotland and the Corra Foundation worked together to deliver the TSRF.
- The Wellbeing Fund made £52 million of funds available to voluntary organisations working in Scotland.
- The Wellbeing Fund was delivered through an innovative model which involved national funders, Corra Foundation, Inspiring Scotland, STV Appeal and SCVO working alongside the 32 Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) as well as colleagues in Scottish Government.
- The Scottish Government's Supporting Communities Fund had an initial £20m investment. This fund provided funding directly to community anchor organisations to distribute through onward giving.

- SCVO worked with the Scottish Government and other partners to establish a shared grant-making platform to manage the Wellbeing Fund and the Third Sector Recovery Programme (Adapt and Thrive, and Communities Recovery Fund). Our platform is now being used to distribute other funding.
- SCVO also established the Coronavirus Third Sector Information Hub. The Scottish Government supported the hub with regular updates as did others. At the height of the pandemic, it was updated more than daily and continues to be the go-to source of information for the sector.
- Funded by Scottish Government, as a direct response to the pandemic, we currently co-ordinate the Connecting Scotland programme.

3. **Effective relationships: Build effective working relationships between public bodies, local communities, and local partners**

- Strong relationships were built from the very beginning in agreeing that the Scottish Government, SCVO, TSIs, and independent funders should be working together and pulling in expertise.
- Positive relationships between SCVO staff and civil servants working in the Third Sector Unit – colleagues were meeting sometimes twice daily – including evening calls – to check in.
- Successful partnership developed to manage Scottish Government's contribution to emergency funds. Good example would be assessment of Wellbeing Applications through involvement of Third Sector Interfaces – national priority but assessed locality.
- SCVO initially oriented over 200 assessors from across Scotland, many previously not involved in assessing funding applications, and a further 100 have come on board since. SCVO trained, on-boarded, and supported assessors.
- SCVO also convened a funders group to bring together independent funders to share intelligence and learning across different funds – government and independent – in Scotland.
- We saw examples of enhanced partnership working elsewhere between the voluntary sector and statutory partners during the pandemic; a strong example of this is the joint work to tackle street homelessness in the early days of the pandemic.
- It is important that we understand, capture, and learn from the factors which lead to these fantastic achievements.

4. **Improving outcomes: Evaluate whether outcomes for local communities are improving and inequalities are being reduced**

- The very nature of the Wellbeing Fund was about improving outcomes for people in communities during the emergency stages of the pandemic.

- The Wellbeing Fund was established to support organisations across the third sector that are providing important services to people who are most affected by the coronavirus pandemic.
- The Wellbeing Fund went on to have two open rounds of funding, but the first round – small grants (in the range of £1,000 to £3,000) – was made through approaches agreed between grantees, partners, and Scottish Government.
- This was about getting funding to where it was needed most at the earliest opportunity, while also ensuring the correct due diligence had been carried out prior to sending funds.
- SCVO and partners, with the support of two Scottish Government researchers, ensured we stopped at key points and assessed where funding was going
- We considered variables such as geography, minority groups, emerging themes, and priority communities. We amended criteria or messaging to ensure we targeted those groups. For example, in the Wellbeing fund we noted that there were a small number of organisations from black and minority ethnic communities that were being successful. We reviewed the processes, communication mechanisms and had conversations with representatives from BAME infrastructure organisations to look at how we could increase the success rate in these areas.
- Organisations across the voluntary sector – not just recipients of the Wellbeing Fund – adapted their services and support to the needs at that time, and they were supported to do so.
- Many voluntary organisations have flexed and adapted to support the people they work alongside in new ways, often without additional resources to do so.

5. Accountability: Be accountable and transparent

- Scottish Government engaged with sector far earlier than UK Government when it came to voluntary sector funding.
- SCVO and other partners – independent funders – persuaded government to work jointly in responding to the crisis – funding and information.
- Things were done differently in the development of emergency and recovery funding for the sector
- There was real recognition that we had to do things differently and to learn from how funding was designed and delivered.
- All parties recognised this was an opportunity to do things that had not seemed possible before.
- While we needed to work with less bureaucracy, flexibly, and at pace, we still needed to think about, and manage, risk within this.

We did this by

- ensuring the right knowledge and experiences were at the table – independent funders, local organisations.

- negotiating the level of risk and what was acceptable based on experience, coupled with these unique circumstances.
- clear roles and responsibilities within joint government/civil society teams – no blurring of the lines.
- Data-sharing agreements and MoUs between each organisation in Wellbeing Fund and Adapt and Thrive and recovery funds.
- light touch but meaningful monitoring from recipients of funds.
- clear governance all the way to the Cabinet Secretary - Aileen Campbell was clear on what was being funded in Wellbeing fund.
- for SCVO-distributed funds, we listed all awards and what they were for on SCVO website afterwards, and encouraged publication on 360 Giving.
- for SCVO-distributed funds, assessors were trained and there was a level of peer review built into the decision-making

- There will be lots to learn from. Such as open competitive grants vs direct grants through prior knowledge of grassroots/need/reliability.
- Wellbeing Fund, Resilience Fund, had greater clarity around accessing funds. Organisations have been in touch with us about other funds and not knowing how they were distributed.
  - For example, with the Supporting Communities Fund there's no way of knowing where money was allocated through onward grants from "community anchor organisations."