



Session outline

session title	Funding, funding, funding
duration	130 minutes
objectives of the session	• Reflect on their organisation’s current funding landscape and identify potential dependencies, vulnerabilities, and risks linked to their existing funding models. • Explore how funding choices connect to organisational mission, vision, and values, and understand the importance of making intentional decisions about which funding opportunities to pursue. • Develop a resilience-oriented mindset towards funding, by exploring how organisations can prepare for funding challenges, respond to uncertainty, and protect their core mission and activities. • Identify key questions, practices, and next steps that can support more sustainable and values-based approaches to resourcing their organisations.
session description and outline	This session invites participants to start an open and honest conversation about the resilience of their organisation’s funding model. It does not provide a step-by-step guide to achieving financial sustainability or fundraising success. Instead, it creates space to reflect on where resources come from, what risks and dependencies exist, and how organisations can make more intentional decisions about funding.

	Through mapping exercises, guided discussions, scenario-based reflection, and practical tools, participants will explore their current funding landscape, identify vulnerabilities, and consider how organisations can prepare for uncertainty. The session also introduces questions around mission alignment, values, independence, and organisational boundaries, helping participants reflect not only on how to find resources, but also on what types of resources support their long-term goals. By the end of the session, participants will have identified key areas for reflection and possible next steps to strengthen their organisation's financial resilience, while recognising that resilience is an ongoing process rather than a one-time solution.	
methodology	Step 1: Arrival & introduction Welcome participants and introduce the session. Facilitator input: <i>"When people hear about fundraising, they often think of writing grant applications. But funding is much broader than that. Every organisation depends on resources to survive and pursue its mission. Today's session is about understanding where those resources come from, what risks exist, and how organisations can become more resilient."</i> Pulse check Raise your hand if: • Your organisation receives grants. • Your organisation depends heavily on one funding source. • Your organisation has ever lost an important source of funding. • You have ever worried about your organisation's financial future. Briefly acknowledge the diversity of experiences in the room.	10 mins

	Step 2: Mapping our funding landscape Participants individually or in small groups map where their organisation's resources currently come from. Possible categories: • Erasmus+ • Other EU funding • National or local public funding • Foundations and philanthropy • Membership fees • Participation fees • Donations • Corporate partnerships • Services, training, consultancy • Crowdfunding • Other Facilitator prompts: • Which source provides most of your income? • Which sources are most reliable? • Which sources are most important? What surprises you when you look at the overall picture? Debrief Highlight that many organisations discover a strong dependence on one or two key income sources.	15 mins
	Step 3: Understanding funding risks and dependencies Facilitator input: <i>"Resilience is not about eliminating risk. It is about understanding risk early enough to prepare for it."</i>	15 mins

Introduce common funding vulnerabilities:

- Dependence on a single donor or grant programme
- Political shifts affecting funding priorities
- Short-term project funding
- Rising competition for grants
- Conditions attached to funding
- Economic downturns
- Donor fatigue

Small-group discussion:

Ask participants to imagine:

"What would happen if your most important funding source disappeared tomorrow?"

Groups discuss:

- Which activities would be affected first?
- Who would be impacted?
- How prepared would your organisation be?
- What would be most difficult to replace?

Debrief

Facilitator highlights:

- Over-reliance increases vulnerability.
- Financial sustainability is closely linked to organisational resilience.

Transition to next step:

"Understanding risks is not only about identifying what could go wrong. It is also about making conscious choices about how we build our funding models. In the next step, we will explore how funding decisions connect to our organisation's vision, mission, and values. We will look at why alignment matters, and how organisations can consider not only what funding is available, but also what funding is right for them."

Step 4: Aligning funding with your mission & values

30 mins

Not every funding opportunity is the right opportunity. Financial resilience is not only about finding more funding, it is also about ensuring that the resources you pursue support, rather than undermine, your organisation's purpose.

Introduces the idea that funding decisions should always be guided by an organisation's mission, vision and values. While funding can create opportunities, it can also influence priorities, shape programmes, or create dependencies. Resilient organisations regularly reflect on whether the funding they seek—or plan to seek—supports the change they want to create.

Facilitator input

Invite participants to briefly revisit their organisation's purpose.

Reflection questions (for organisations with fundraising experience):

- What is your organisation trying to achieve?
- Which values guide your work?
- Have you ever applied for funding that wasn't fully aligned with your mission? What influenced that decision?
- How do you decide whether a funding opportunity is worth pursuing?
- What would your organisation never want to compromise?

Alternative reflection questions (for organisations with little or no fundraising experience):

- If funding were not a limitation, what work would your organisation most want to do?
- What kinds of organisations or institutions would you feel comfortable receiving funding from?
- Are there any types of funding you would immediately decide not to pursue? Why?
- What values or principles would you want to protect if you started fundraising?
- What concerns or questions do you have about seeking external funding?

After a few minutes of discussion, explain that organisations often need a simple way to assess whether funding opportunities fit with their mission and values. Introduce the following reflection tool:

- **Green:** clearly aligned with our mission and values; we would actively pursue these opportunities.
- **Yellow:** potentially suitable, but requiring discussion, conditions, or safeguards before deciding.
- **Red:** not aligned with our mission, values, or organisational boundaries; we would not pursue these opportunities.

Participants can now use the traffic-light approach to reflect on different types of funding opportunities (or hypothetical ones if they have not yet fundraised).

Guiding questions:

- Which funding opportunities would fall into each category?
- What makes something "green", "yellow", or "red" for your organisation?
- Are there any opportunities that different members of your organisation might categorise differently?
- What conversations would you need to have before making a decision?
- Would it be helpful for your organisation to agree on these principles before applying for funding?

Debrief

Highlight that there is rarely one "correct" answer. Different organisations may make different decisions depending on their mission, context, and priorities.

Conclude by reinforcing the key message:

"Resilient organisations do not simply chase funding opportunities. They make intentional decisions about which opportunities strengthen their mission, which require careful consideration, and which are not worth pursuing, even if they offer financial security."

Step 5: Responding to funding challenges in practice

30 mins

Start by explaining that resilience is not only about anticipating risks. It is also about responding effectively when challenges arise.

Participants work in small groups. Each group receives one scenario (Scenario cards to be printed below) and discusses both the immediate response and what could have been done beforehand to prepare for the situation.

Facilitator to keep a copy of the Scenario Cards.

Debrief

Bring participants back together and invite each group to briefly present their scenario and the key points from their discussion.

Ask:

- What happened in your scenario?
- What immediate actions did your group identify?
- Which responses helped the organisation continue its work despite the challenge?
- What could the organisation have done before the situation occurred to be better prepared?

As participants share, you can capture ideas on a flipchart under two headings:

Preparing in advance (building resilience)

Examples may include:

- Diversifying funding sources
- Building unrestricted reserves or contingency funds
- Developing partnerships
- Investing in fundraising skills and planning
- Regularly reviewing funding dependencies
- Agreeing organisational priorities and minimum viable activities
- Developing internal fundraising strategies

Responding when the challenge happens

Examples may include:

- Prioritising essential activities
- Revising budgets and timelines
- Communicating transparently with staff, volunteers, partners and funders
- Seeking bridge funding or alternative income sources
- Scaling activities while protecting the organisation's mission
- Collaborating with partners to share resources or opportunities

Conclude by highlighting that many resilience practices happen before a crisis occurs.

"Resilience is not about predicting every challenge. It is about putting systems, habits and strategies in place that make it easier to respond when unexpected changes happen."

Step 6: Ensuring continuity & financial resilience - Reflection and next steps

30 mins

This final step brings together the reflections from the previous activities. Participants move from identifying risks and possible funding challenges towards thinking about how their organisations can prepare, adapt, and continue their work under pressure.

The aim is not to create a complete financial sustainability plan, but to help participants identify practical questions, priorities, and next steps that can strengthen their organisation's resilience.

In small groups (if participants are from the same organisation) or individually (if participants are from different organisations), participants reflect on sustainability and continuity in practice.

Guiding questions:

- What are the core activities that must be protected financially?
- What would a "minimum viable budget" look like for your organisation?
- What financial buffers or contingency plans do you currently have in place?
- What would you do if your main funding source disappeared tomorrow?
- What resources, partnerships, or practices could help your organisation continue operating during difficult periods?
- What is one action you could take to make your organisation more financially resilient?

Participants identify:

- 1–2 concrete actions to strengthen financial resilience.
- One practice that already supports their organisation's resilience.
- One area where further development is needed.

Facilitator notes: Key concepts

Minimum viable budget

A minimum viable budget is the smallest amount of resources an organisation needs to continue its essential work. It means identifying what must be protected in order to keep the organisation functioning and continue pursuing its mission, even if resources decrease.

You can encourage participants to consider:

- Which activities are essential and cannot stop?
- Which costs are unavoidable (e.g. basic operations, staff costs, key services, communication, legal requirements)?
- Which activities could be reduced, postponed, or adapted during a difficult period?

The aim is not to maintain all activities at the same level, but to understand what is needed to continue operating.

Financial buffers and contingency plans

A financial buffer is money or resources kept available to help an organisation manage unexpected difficulties, such as losing a grant, experiencing delayed payments, or facing unexpected costs.

A contingency plan describes what an organisation would do if a major challenge occurs. It helps organisations prepare responses before a crisis happens.

Examples include:

- Building emergency reserves.
- Identifying alternative funding options.
- Maintaining relationships with different types of funders and partners.
- Knowing which activities could be reduced or adapted if resources decrease.
- Having internal processes for making financial decisions during uncertainty.

You can highlight that even small steps towards creating financial buffers or contingency plans can increase organisational resilience.

If participants raise concerns about reserves, explain that reserves are not “unused money” or profit. They are a governance and risk-management tool that allows organisations to remain independent and continue their work during uncertain periods.

Closing reflection

Depending on the group composition, choose one of the following options:

Option A: Participants from different organisations

Participants reflect individually and share in pairs:

- What is one insight I am taking from this session?
- What is one question I want to explore further in my organisation?
- What is one action I could take to strengthen financial resilience?

Option B: Participants from the same organisation

Participants develop a short organisational reflection: Next steps for our organisation

	One thing we already do well: One key vulnerability we want to address One action we want to take to strengthen financial resilience: Who will take this forward: When will we revisit this: Facilitator closing message Close by reinforcing: <i>"Resilience is not about having unlimited resources or avoiding all risks. It is about understanding your organisation's needs, making conscious choices about funding, preparing for uncertainty, and ensuring that your mission can continue even when circumstances change."</i> Key messages: • Diversification and clarity about values strengthen independence. • Being strategic about funding choices is more important than simply applying for more grants. • Resilient funding models help protect both the organisation's mission and the people involved.
preparation	Print scenario cards for step 5 and familiarise yourself with the terminology and concepts of the session. You can use the facilitator notes or do your own research.
material/ space needed	• Pens, markers, post-its • Printed scenario cards • Flipcharts, papers for participants

**results/
takeaway/
outcomes**

- Better understand the difference between discomfort and harm.
- Recognise personal reactions to challenging conversations.
- Develop strategies for staying engaged when feeling uncomfortable.
- Build confidence in navigating disagreement constructively.
- Create practical agreements that support respectful dialogue and stronger team cultures.

Scenario cards

Example scenarios

Scenario A – Operating grant discontinued

Your organisation has just been informed that its long-term operating grant will not be renewed. Nearly half of your annual budget depended on this funding. Staff contracts and office costs are now at risk.

Discuss:

- What would your organisation need to do immediately?
- What activities would you prioritise?
- What could have been done beforehand to reduce the impact?

Scenario B – Only half the expected project funding

Your organisation receives approval for a project, but the funder awards only 50% of the requested budget. The planned activities are now impossible to deliver as originally designed.

Discuss:

- How would you respond?
 - What would you change, postpone or prioritise?
 - What preparations could have made this situation easier to manage?
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Scenario C – Political priorities change

A major public funder announces new priorities. Your organisation's core work is no longer considered a funding priority, even though community needs remain unchanged.

Discuss:

- How would your organisation respond?
- Would you adapt your work or seek alternative funding?
- How could you prepare for this type of change in advance?

Scenario D – Unexpected financial shock

A planned fundraising event is cancelled at the last minute, creating a significant budget gap for the coming months.

Discuss:

- What immediate actions would you take?
 - Which existing resources or partnerships could help?
 - What resilience measures could have reduced the impact?
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