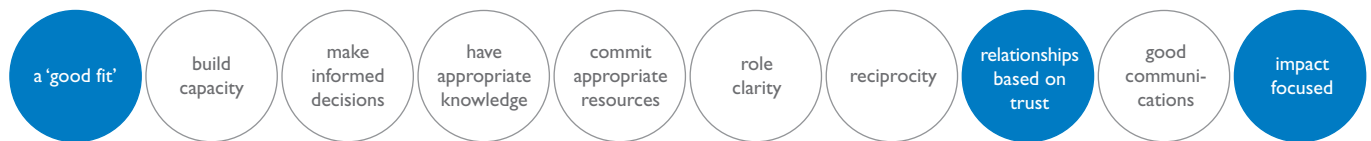


Case 2: STS – Young Endeavour

(Foundation grant to a university for individual students)



Priority areas: post-school transitions; leadership development

About the STS - Young Endeavour

Australian youth between the ages of 16-23 are eligible to participate in the Young Endeavour program. Under the guidance of the Royal Australian Navy, the young people learn how to sail the Young Endeavour and in doing so are exposed to learning and developing a range of life skills, team work and leadership.

The Cowan Young Endeavour Practicum Grants are valued at \$5,000 and include a 10-day berth on the Young Endeavour and additional travel expenses.

The Cowan Trust funds the University of South Australia (UniSA) which selects one to three undergraduate Bachelor degree students each year. The Cowan Young Endeavour grant is one of a number of scholarships supported by the Cowan foundation.

To learn more, visit: www.unisa.edu.au

About Cowan Grants Pty

Cowan Grants Pty is a Family Foundation established in 1994. The Trustee priority areas are financially disadvantaged youth with the ability to undertake tertiary education (primarily from rural or regional locations) and providing opportunity for personal challenge.

The Foundation is based in South Australia. Since its inception, the Foundation has provided \$1.8 million in grants. It funds five tertiary educational organisations, one of which is UniSA. The UniSA and the Trust negotiate funding for five programs each year.

To learn more, visit: <http://www.cowangrant.org>

What we discovered

Good fit – understand what each other's needs.

Trust –

- ▶ set up an expectation of open and candid communication from the beginning.
- ▶ share what is not working so both partners can try and find a solution.

Impact –

- ▶ at the start think about how you will find out what's working and not working.
- ▶ create a process for getting direct feedback from student scholarship recipients afterward their scholarship experience. Allow the student to be candid.



On board the STS Young Endeavour

A 'good fit'

The Cowan Grants were set up by Bob and Gayle Cowan to support young people who may not have access to life, learning and leadership enrichment opportunities due to geographic and/or financial constraints. But finding a good fit with a group in education to distribute the funds was not as straightforward a process as the trustees first anticipated. "Who would have thought that it was going to be hard to give away money?" says Gayle.

Decision making is strengthened by involving those closest to the beneficiary of a grant.

How to select and distribute the grants was an issue. These facets of the grant making process are not part of what the Trust does. One of the Trust's first decisions was that they could not personally select students using the "financial need" criterion. They thought it too intrusive for one individual to delve into another's financial circumstances. Gayle continues, "So we resolved that, though it is onerous, we would ask the organisation receiving the funds to do that. We also believe that they should know their own students' needs. This has proven true".

The Trust started with a small grant to check compatibility, building up one organisation at a time. Some organisations were not compatible for a range of reasons, which included that they couldn't do what was required, the CEO couldn't

agree to the requirements, or an agreement was discontinued with a change of CEO or when it was discovered that the funds weren't being used. In one case, an organisation missed out because they didn't ring back.

Finding the 'right' organisation to coordinate the scholarship grant program was partly serendipitous. However, it also related to finding a partner of relevance (for the Trust, intermediary and recipient). Timing was also fundamental in terms of the readiness of each of the parties. The UniSA became the site for the selection and distribution of the Cowan scholarships, but as Tiffanie Cowan (Cowan Trust trustee) recalls, "There is no way that I would have approached them, had they not approached us. I just hadn't thought of a university as an option for a Young Endeavour program".

Do's and don'ts of a good fit' e.g.

Do start small to check compatibility

Don't take on a grant if you do not yet have the processes in place to implement it properly

Think about how to embed a grant into the organisation. It may take some trial and error to get the best fit.

As a past student, Tiffanie received a letter from the University outlining a new program which challenged students by allowing them to undertake a placement in developing countries. This fitted the Cowan Trust objective 'to challenge students'. The letter invited graduates to think about how they might assist. With family roots in South Australia and the UniSA, Tiffanie sent the University a copy of the Cowan Trust's deed and focus, and invited the university to think about how the scholarship grants might work for them. Tiffanie says, "We gave scholarships for UniSA programs for four years and then I proposed the Young Endeavour program grant to the university."

A 20th birthday reunion of the original Young Endeavour bicentenary delivery crew prompted Tiffanie (one of that crew) to suggest to the Executive Director of the Young Endeavour Youth Scheme and the UniSA that the Cowan Trust offer grants to students to take part in the program. She knew from her own experience that the experience could have a life-changing positive impact on participants. "I would not have had the courage to sail around the world with my husband in our own yacht, without the confidence and skills that I developed while on the Young Endeavour. I thought, why not sponsor places on the Young Endeavour program?"

The Trustees felt that the Young Endeavour grant needed to be attached to a course within the University. Yvonne Martin-Clark, Deputy Director, Development at UniSA agreed. The premise was that if the grant was part of a practicum, then it would be of greater relevance to the young person and more embedded in their chosen course.

Two courses were selected by the University and Tiffanie was invited to give a talk to the students interested in applying for the grant. "Only five students turned up and only one fitted the age eligibility criterion. I can remember feeling quite deflated."

Don't be afraid to approach a foundation with an idea.

The opportunity was left open for several years, but offering the grant to just two courses was too limiting.

The pool of applicants was too small, and many of the students in the pool were mature-aged and so outside the eligible age range for the grant. The funds were simply not getting spent. The Trustees welcomed a suggestion by Yvonne to throw open the grant offering to all students undertaking a bachelor degree at the University. Tiffanie says, "Grant making can be so much work and so to have an invitation from an institution about how to give away money, that's so helpful".

This was the moment that the Trust and University established that there was indeed potentially a 'good fit'.

Relationships based on trust

Relationships are important for effective engagement of philanthropy in education. But it is relationships based on *trust* that are really crucial. UniSA has a commitment to equity and diversity, and its core values support access for financially and educational disadvantaged groups, which fits with the Cowan Trust's criteria. Crucial to building that trust was the quality and nature of communication between Trustees, University and grant recipients.

The Trustees were explicit with the University that they wanted to learn whether or not the grant program was working, and if not, where improvements

Having clear expectations about wanting to learn what *is* and *is not* working helps build trust.

could be made. They also made it clear that they were in it for the long haul, which made it easier for Yvonne to make suggestions. Tiffanie sums up, "They will come to us and say, 'We have five programs that fit within your criteria - the international placement grants, the disadvantaged students, the regional campus grants, the computer repair program, and Young Endeavour. We recommend this division of the total funds, based on our assessment of needs'. Or they will say, 'We only got one application. Can we carry over the unused grants from this year and add them to next year's offerings?' That's how candid our conversations are. As Trustees we don't get it right every time or the first time. So the lesson for us was to listen and work with the university. What we want might not always be the best option."

Impact

Since the Cowan Young Endeavour grants began in 2008 at UniSA, five young people have been recipients of the grant, all of whom have completed the Young Endeavour

Gather feedback that helps get students to reflect on how the 'experience' connects to their life and studies.

program. All Cowan Grant recipients are expected to provide a written reflection to be forwarded to the Cowan Trustees framed around three questions:

- ▶ How are you going in your chosen course?
- ▶ In what ways has the Young Endeavour experience helped you?
- ▶ How, if at all, has the scholarship helped you to advance your studies and your university experiences?

Postscript

The Trustees gather feedback from Young Endeavour grant recipients. Because of their age and limited experience at sea, most find the physical aspects of the journey – sea sickness, sleep deprivation and climbing the tall mast – a key challenge. On the last day of the journey, the young crew is expected to take full control of every aspect of sailing the Young Endeavour. A watch leader is nominated per team for a total of eight watches over a 24 hour period. As Tiffanie knows from first-hand experience, “It’s a real achievement to lead and sail a vessel, let alone one that is worth about 10 million dollars”.

Student outcomes include the ability to apply the learning from one context and experience to another.

The feedback suggests that the overall impact of the program is that “perceived personal limits (working in a team, physical challenges or leadership) are exposed

as dynamic”, says Tiffanie, as illustrated by comments from two grant recipients:

“The Cowan Young Endeavour grant was a great help for preparing for my exchange to Canada in cinema because the experience helped me to boost my confidence when meeting new people. I faced many challenges about sailing and about myself ... I am shocked that in such a short time I’ve become so confident in something I had no previous knowledge. ... I faced my fear of heights ... and taking the helm for three hours straight during our cruise command day was an experience I won’t soon forget.” (Media Arts student)

“The Cowan Young Endeavour grant has given me a greater understanding of different approaches that may be used in order to attain group success”. (Law student)

Tiffanie believes that the impact of the grant is different for everyone because “everyone’s experience is different”.

The networks around the Cowan Young Endeavour grant are expanding. Tiffanie’s direct experience of the Young Endeavour program, feedback from students and ironing out

the wrinkles by Cowan and the university about where best to position the grant offering have led to a decision to expand the grant to other institutions. “I feel we are in a more informed position now to approach another institution and make it work there”, Tiffanie says.

The quality of the relationship established at the UniSA meant that Tiffanie had no hesitation in asking whether Yvonne would support James Cook University, Queensland, in introducing the grant program there too. This will commence in 2012. She is also contemplating approaching other community groups about the possibility of them funding Young Endeavour

berths. While schools cannot apply directly or be the point of distribution for Young Endeavour berths, students (16 years and over) could still be recipients. Connecting with an eligible not-for-profit is the only missing ingredient.

Other outcomes include new and expanded networks and new models of distributing the grant.

Finding an eligible not-for-profit is the only missing ingredient for schools seeking to support students 16 years and over.