



**ROFFEY PARK
INSTITUTE**

INTRAC

Pro-bono Consultancy

Background

INTRAC is a mission-driven, not-for-profit organisation focused on the core belief that vibrant, diverse and inclusive civil societies are essential catalysts for a world where everyone can thrive. They help achieve this by strengthening skills and knowledge for and with civil society, supporting organisations, networks and individuals to work as effectively as possible in addressing poverty and inequality.

The organisation have over 30 years' experience championing and supporting strong, equitable civil societies across the world, providing sector-leading consultancy, research, learning and training with a focus on locally determined, led and owned development.

Challenge

INTRAC's small senior leadership team was newly formed and under pressure, facing multiple organisational challenges. The team had different approaches to leadership and different level of familiarity of the realities of a small NGO. Additionally, the organisation was going through a period of change, although the long-term vision was clear there was significant work to be done to understand the impact of the change on staff roles and responsibilities and different levels of buy-in to the new strategic direction.

Solution

The INTRAC team decided to engage external senior leadership coaching, facilitated by Roffey Park Institute. This coaching aimed to build a sense of team among the senior leadership group and to lead organisational change and while responding to both internal and external pressures.

In six sessions over several months, Roffey Park worked with INTRAC both to address specific topics and to provide space to respond to emerging issues. The goal was to build cohesion and improve how the senior leadership team worked together to implement their new strategy. Additionally, the team wanted to positively and inclusively lead change by helping staff rethink their roles and day-to-day tasks.

Approach

The coaching process unfolded incrementally, starting with each leadership team member sharing their perspectives on what was working and what wasn't. This revealed common themes despite differing perspectives. Rather than a predefined design, the process was more emergent, with loosely structured discussions and flexible strategies that adapted to address issues as they arose.

The new strategic framework responded to three drivers - a commitment to INTRAC's initial mission to strengthen civil society; a wish to respond to sector changes, particularly the calls for decolonisation, anti-racism and power shifts; and a need to strengthen the financial resilience of the organisation. In responding to these drivers, a new vision had been articulated which required new ways of working, relating to other and funding; and importantly a new approach to leadership – one that centred a commitment to anti-racist and feminist practice. At the same time, staff roles needed to evolve to better align with the new strategy, and this was challenging for all involved.

Coaching provided a safe, non-judgemental space for the leadership team to reflect and engage in difficult conversations, especially regarding their relationships and challenges with others in the organisation who were struggling to understand the need for change. Through coaching, the team learned how to address this tension more constructively and have more honest, open conversations.

The sessions allowed flexibility and space to address emerging concerns, for example, after a particularly challenging internal meeting. The team appreciated time out to process these situations in a guided, reflective manner.

Impacts and outcomes

As a result, the leadership team developed stronger trust and mutual respect, fostering a more cohesive and supportive dynamic. The sessions allowed the leadership team to engage in reflective conversations that addressed both immediate concerns and longer-term goals.

In one example, during a particularly difficult moment the team used the coaching session to take a step back, process their feelings and discuss the challenges in an open and constructive way, growing their future capacity for complex problem solving.

In addition to strengthening internal dynamics, the coaching process also helped the team better navigate organisational challenges, aligning their decisions with the broader strategic focus of shifting INTRAC's financial model and re-engaging with their central mission. Finally, while the team did not fully resolve all issues during the coaching process, the tools and insights gained from the experience have positioned them to approach future challenges with more confidence, cohesion and resilience.

Overall, the coaching process supported them in navigating these challenges with a more informed, empathetic approach. INTRAC's leadership team emerged better equipped to face organisational complexities and continue driving strategic change. This shift in focus has allowed the team to take a step back and think more widely about the future of INTRAC and its role in the broader civil society sector.

"I think it was really good to spend the time together... talking in that space of being the leadership team... [it] was more protected and at a more strategic level. It was really helpful to have space that wasn't about day-to-day operational tasks but about the leadership team and our development."

"It was good to have the facilitated space to make us talk about [issues]... it enabled us, having someone slightly outside asking the questions, to face it rather than avoid it and I think that was a good thing." Dr. Kate Newman, Chief Executive, INTRAC.

"I have found the sessions invaluable in guiding and helping us with both the short and long term." Jamie Hewitt, Director of Finance, INTRAC.