

Sustainability of Multicultural Organisations in Queensland

Phase 1 Report: The Challenges to Sustainability



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Introduction

Australia is a nation with a very high level of cultural diversity. Multicultural Community Organisations [hereafter MCOs] play a vital role in settling migrants and providing ongoing support for diverse ethnic communities. Like all organisations with a social mission, many of these organisations are facing challenges in relation to their ability to continue operations.

The Queensland Government has provided support for this project which sought to provide an initial base line analysis of the challenges facing multicultural organisations. Specifically, the question: ‘How can the sustainability of multicultural organisations be maintained or enhanced?’ was examined. Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland [ECCQ] received the funding for this research and contracted Queensland University of Technology [QUT] to undertake this research on their behalf. Initial assumptions were that there were different types of multicultural organisations, such as:

- Focus on the support and maintenance of a specific culture or faith,
- Advocacy on behalf of a specific ethnic or religious group,
- Provision of services to a specific ethnic or religious group, and
- Social enterprises.

Two main methods of data collection were undertaken: a survey and focus groups. Using two methods has the advantage of leveraging the strengths and minimising the weaknesses of each method. Data collection was undertaken with Human Research Ethics Clearance.

The findings initially examine what sustainability means for MCOs and then focus on a range of resources which are known to affect organisational sustainability. Following this, the barriers and enablers for accessing these resources are examined. Finally, the roles that other organisations can play in supporting MCOs are outlined.

Representing the first stage in a multi-year project, this report seeks to outline many of the challenges facing MCOs. A second project is expected to involve consultation to establish how best to address these challenges.

This report was provided to stakeholders in draft form for feedback and clarification before finalisation.

Scope and Focus

The key question this report seeks to answer is:

How can the sustainability of multicultural organisations be maintained or enhanced?

Before beginning to explore how multicultural organisations might be enabled to be more sustainable, we first present a brief exploration of multiculturalism and multicultural organisations for the Australian context. As noted above, the focus of this report is primarily on the challenges facing MCOs, with a subsequent research project needed to explore how these challenges might be addressed.

Multiculturalism in Australia

Multiculturalism as an idea and as a formal government policy has evolved over time under different Australian governments. While multiculturalism has its detractors, it is widely considered helpful in terms of cultural diversity and social cohesion¹. One evidence of the success of this policy is the rise in percentage of people born overseas, currently living in Australia, as a percentage of the total population. In April 2024, 30.7% of the Australian population was born overseas (8.2 million people) [See Figure 1 below].

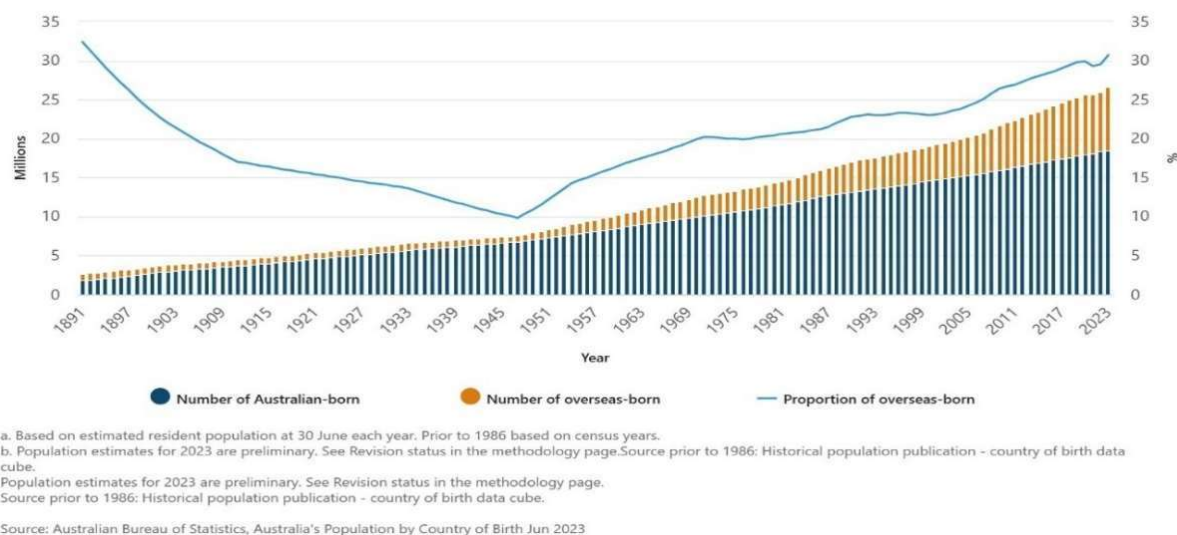


Figure 1 - Estimated resident population - proportion born overseas ²

¹ (Pietsch)

² (Australian Bureau of Statistics "Australia's Population by Country of Birth")

To put that in perspective, the overseas born population of Australia is twice that of Europe and the USA and one of the highest in developed nations around the world³ [see Figure 2 below].

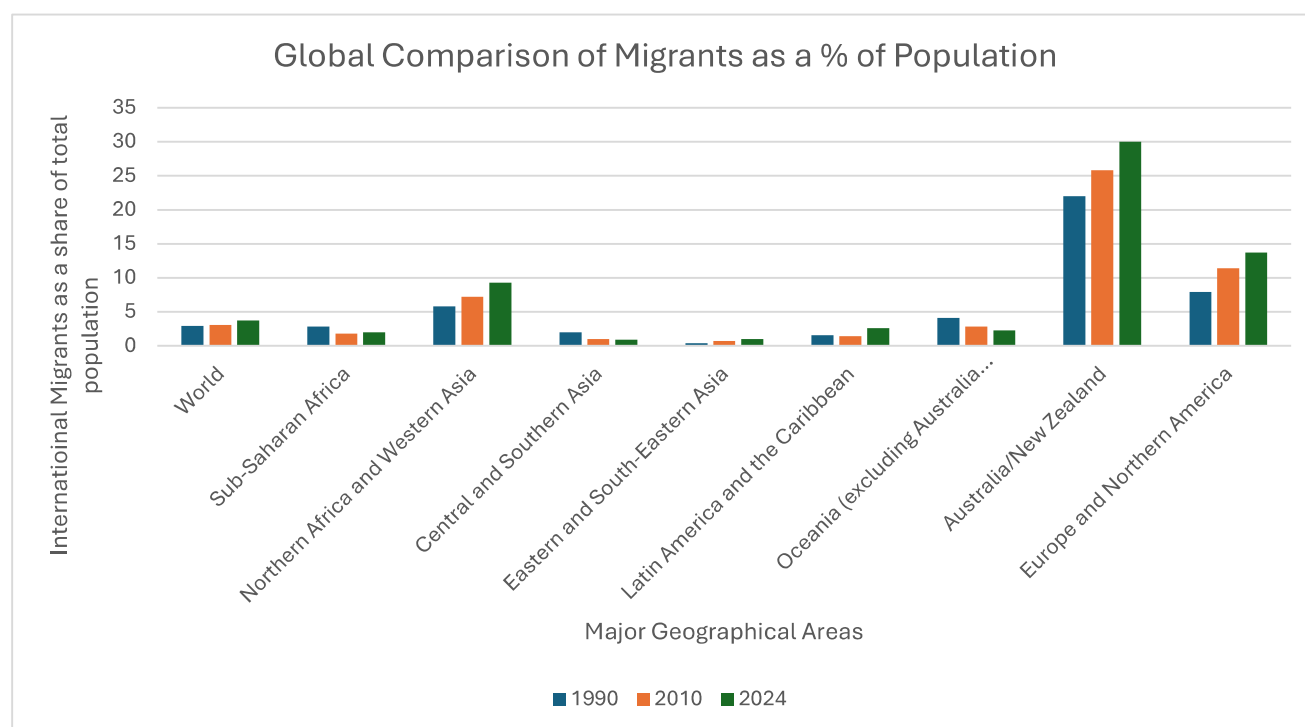


Figure 2 - Migrants as a percentage of total populations - global comparison⁴

Australian multiculturalism differs from other Commonwealth countries in that support for multicultural activities extends beyond newly arrived migrants, and many multicultural organisations engage with people who are Australian born⁵, with a focus on improving the social and economic outcomes of migrants⁶.

As Pietsch notes, ⁷ “while there are many ebbs and flows in government policies and public debates on multiculturalism and immigration, there is a fairly consistent level of public support for multiculturalism”.

While the overall percentage of residents born overseas is around 30%, there is variation between the states, with Western Australia having the highest levels, followed by Victoria, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia and Queensland [see Figure 3 below]. Migration levels in Queensland sit in the middle range in comparison to other states. However, the proportion of migrants in Queensland has nearly doubled since 1971, so the growth rate is higher than other states.

³ (Australian Bureau of Statistics "Australia's Population by Country of Birth")

⁴ (based on data from United Nations "International Migrant Stock 2024: Key Facts and Figures " 10). Figure is author's own

⁵ (Jupp).

⁶ (Pietsch)

⁷ (Pietsch, n.p.)

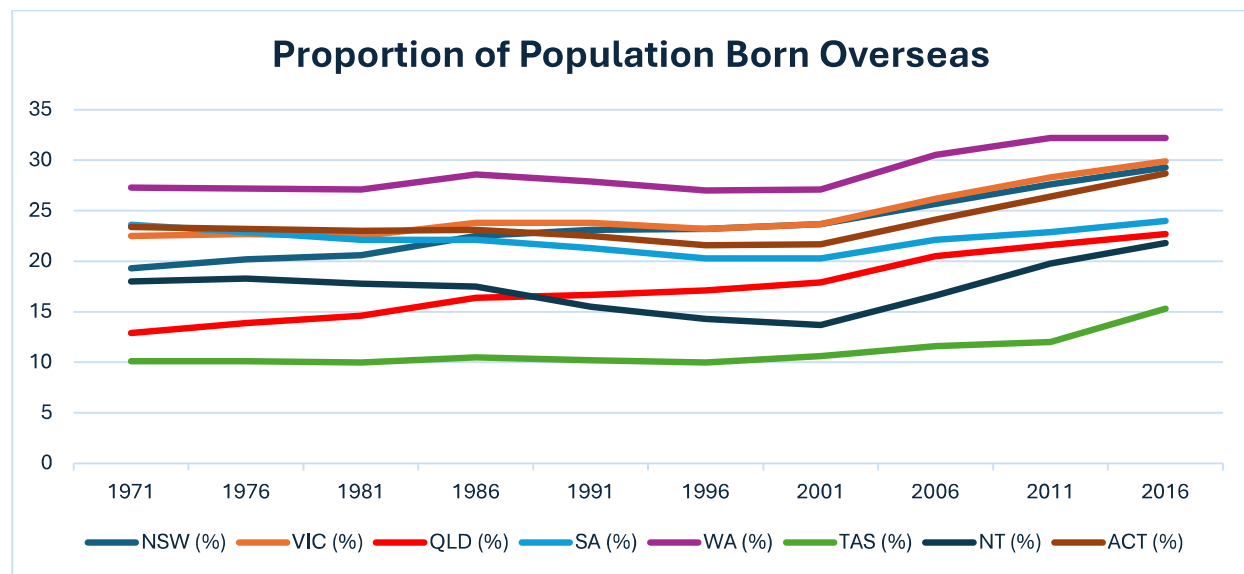
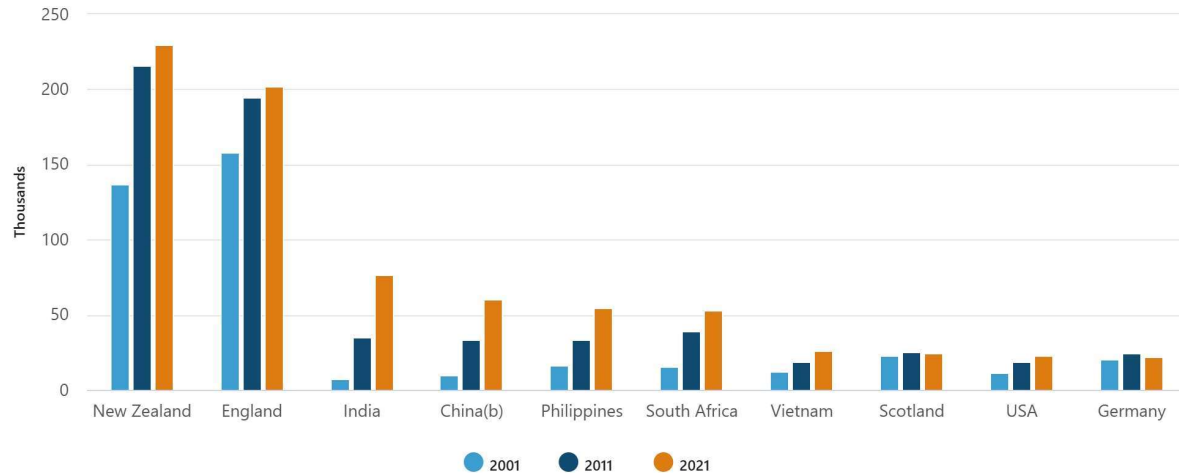


Figure 3 - Migrants as a % of the population by state Source: ⁸

In terms of the actual countries of birth for resident migrants, this varies by state and over time. For example, in 2021, the country from which the highest number of migrants came was for NSW - China; Victoria - India; Queensland - New Zealand, NT - the Philippines, and for the other states - England⁹. The change over time for Queensland is shown in Figure 4 below.



a. Top 10 countries of birth for residents of Queensland as at 30 June 2021 (excludes Australia).
b. Excludes SARs and Taiwan.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia's Population by Country of Birth Jun 2023

Figure 4 - Top 10 Countries of birth for residents born overseas living in Queensland ¹⁰

⁸ (Australian Bureau of Statistics "Cultural Diversity of Australia: Information on Country of Birth, Year of Arrival, Ancestry, Language and Religion")

⁹ (Australian Bureau of Statistics "Cultural Diversity of Australia: Information on Country of Birth, Year of Arrival, Ancestry, Language and Religion")

¹⁰ (Australian Bureau of Statistics "Australia's Population by Country of Birth")

Thus, migrants are a significant part of Australian society, and multiculturalism is a very important policy which reflects the cultural diversity of our state. The challenges associated with supporting migrants and refugees to settle in Australia is vital to avoid significant long-term costs to society¹¹. While integration of migrants into a society results in significant economic benefits for both migrants and their adopted country¹², lack of integration has been shown to result in economic cost to migrants and government, as well as psychological and social harm, particularly to refugees¹³.

Multicultural¹⁴ Organisations

Just as non-profit organisations fulfil a vital role in the provision of a range of social services in Queensland, MCOs fulfil a particular purpose catering to the needs of migrants, English as a Second Language, cultural, language and religious minorities. While some authors refer to ‘multicultural organisations’ as those which are culturally diverse¹⁵, for the purposes of this project, multicultural organisations tend to exist to support or provide services to people from a specific ethnic or religious community, or to support migrants more generally, such as the ECCQ. To avoid confusion, the term multicultural community organisation [MCO] will be used. One of the few extant research papers on MCOs found that multicultural community organisations create “important informal networks and learning spaces that connect people from refugee backgrounds to the wider Australian community”^{16 17}. The comparative lack of research on MCOs¹⁸, together with their importance to migrant populations, gives importance to this study which focuses on how these organisations might become more sustainable in the long term. For the purpose of this report, MCOs are considered organisations that provide direct support to people from migrant, refugee, asylum seeker and/or Australian South Sea Islander backgrounds.

Organisational Sustainability

The term ‘sustainability’ as it applies to organisations has a variety of meanings. It is not clear which of these might resonate the best with MCOs. This leads us to the first research sub-question:

¹¹ (Miralles-Lombardo, Miralles and Golding)

¹² (Fratzscher and Junker)

¹³ (Ukrayinchuk and Havrylchyk)

¹⁴ Within Australia, the term multicultural and multiculturalism also has multiple meanings including a descriptive concept, policy framework, a contested discourse, a rights-based framework or a practice-based framework (Sengmany). For the purposes of this study, we are using the term in its descriptive sense.

¹⁵ (Cox Jr; Beniflah and Veloz)

¹⁶ (Miralles-Lombardo, Miralles and Golding 8).

¹⁷ (Miralles-Lombardo, Miralles and Golding 8).

¹⁸ Google Scholar returned just 26 articles with variant spellings

RQ1a: What is sustainability?

The concept of ‘organisational sustainability’ generates a wide variety of meanings and interpretations depending on context, past experiences, and the current focus of an organisation. Given the lack of agreement, a broad and multidimensional approach to organisational sustainability will be undertaken¹⁹. A brief overview of perspectives is provided below.

Sustainability as organisational continuance or survival

One view of sustainability is simply that of survival or the ongoing persistence of an organisation²⁰. In this way, organisational sustainability can be viewed as simply the ongoing survival of an organisation. While this makes some general sense, it has less use in a non-profit context. As Searing et al.²¹ explains:

“Survival simply measures the persistence of the legal organisation. Though important, this singular view toward survival is too simple; if a non-profit was only interested in organisational persistence, then they could cease delivering services and sell popcorn. But nonprofits are caught between decisions that might optimize the chances of organisational persistence (such as stockpiling assets) versus those that allow continued delivery of human services.”

Financial Sustainability

Funding is crucial for organisations to deliver projects, activities, and opportunities for their communities²² and these organisations can face difficulties attracting and sustaining adequate, appropriate, and long-term funding to deliver their mission²³. Consequently, strategic, entrepreneurial, and effective fundraising activities are crucial for supporting financial sustainability. As an example, some organisations have made a transition away from ‘traditional’ fund-raising events (e.g., raffles, bingo, bake sales) to more ‘sophisticated’ fundraisers (e.g., special events, formalised donor programs, and licensing agreements). Alternatively, other organisations struggle to raise funds through donations and must diligently work on generating revenue from viable commercial operations and fee-for-service options²⁴.

Operational Sustainability

Aligning closely with financial sustainability, strong operational sustainability requires employees to develop robust financial strategies, programs, and management tools to ensure the success of the organisation. The four pillars of strong financial management include record-

¹⁹ (Shava)

²⁰ (Searing, Wiley and Young)

²¹ (Searing, Wiley and Young 182)

²² (Keck and Kathryn)

²³ (Abiddin, Ibrahim and Abdul Aziz)

²⁴ (Weerawardena, McDonald and Mort)

keeping, budgeting, internal control and financial reporting²⁵. Fuelled by the competitive environment and inspired by for-profit organisations, some nonprofits are responding by taking a more ‘business-like’ approach to their operations²⁶, particularly when competing for funds in uncertain environments²⁷.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms also help ensure community projects and programs reach the most in need members of the community, while staff evaluations and needs assessments are also beneficial²⁸. Good governance is another important element of operational sustainability requiring an understanding of why boards are beneficial, their roles, obligations, and functions. The relationship between the organisation and the board also needs to be respected and upheld so that resources are managed efficiently and with accountability²⁹.

Overall, a drive to achieve workforce sustainability has resulted in organisations adopting strategies aimed at achieving financial stability based on revenue improvements and operational cost reductions whilst also acting on social mission³⁰.

Sustainability of Mission

Beyond mere survival or finance, or being able to continue operations, organisational sustainability also needs to consider the additional need to fulfil mission, deliver services, and meet the needs of beneficiaries and contributors in an ongoing manner³¹. Another word for this might be organisational purpose – its reason for existing. Organisations with a strong focus on sustainability efficiently use their resources and wealth generation to “positively contribute to a functioning economy, society and physical environment”³². While financial viability is imperative, non-profit organisations exist to deliver a social benefit, not just make a profit.³³ Therefore, being viable and sustainable enables organisations to successfully continue their social mission³⁴.

Strategic development consequently requires an ability to manage competing priorities to bring about a harmonious balance and focus between mission and money³⁵. This is because it is possible for an organisation to be relatively well off but not be pursuing a mission which is valued by a significant part of the population; or alternatively be pursuing a mission with high importance to society but still be struggling financially³⁶.

Environmental Sustainability

The term sustainability is most often used generally in the context of environmental issues and relates to efforts to support the future viability of the natural world whilst also supporting

²⁵ (Lewis)

²⁶ (Manville and Greatbanks)

²⁷ (Weerawardena, McDonald and Mort)

²⁸ (Abiddin, Ibrahim and Abdul Aziz)

²⁹ (Abiddin, Ibrahim and Abdul Aziz)

³⁰ (Weerawardena, McDonald and Mort)

³¹ (Weerawardena, McDonald and Mort; Shava)

³² (Shava 394)

³³ (McDonald et al.)

³⁴ (Weerawardena, McDonald and Mort)

³⁵ (Weerawardena, McDonald and Mort)

³⁶ (McDonald et al.)

society's social and economic dimensions³⁷. Sustainable community development requires the integration of two concepts: sustainable development and sustainable community. In this way, a sustainable community should adapt to meet the changing needs of its community whilst protecting and preserving the environment's ability to support these needs³⁸. By encouraging communities to become self-sufficient, communities learn to use natural resources efficiently to achieve their goals. MCOs can promote sustainable community development that balances environmental concerns with development and social connections. Strong, resilient communities also provide the economic stability required for people to improve and protect the environment³⁹. If MCOs desire to have a voice in the process of corporate governance and sustainable development, they too must also be prepared to disclose their environmental and sustainability reporting⁴⁰. Some nonprofits may argue that this is a cost burden that cannot be maintained. However, demonstrating a commitment to environmental sustainability reporting would indicate strong action within the sector.

So, sustainability at its core is about organisational continuance or survival. For this to occur, ongoing finances are needed as well as essential operations. For a non-profit there must be the addition of fulfilment of mission. Finally, all these need to occur in a way which does not harm the environment.

Conceptually this can be seen in terms of a series of overlapping goals: firstly, organisational survival is needed, to be able to generate financial sustainability and operational sustainability to fulfil mission and not harm the environment.

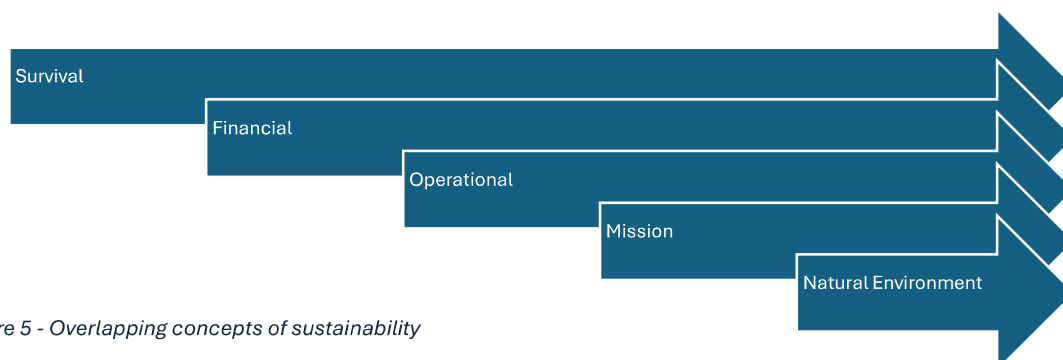


Figure 5 - Overlapping concepts of sustainability

As Shava ⁴¹ put it:

sustainability in NGOs is regarded as the efficient use of resources and generation of wealth to positively contribute to a functioning economy, society and physical environment. Fulfilling NGO mission, goals and serving stakeholders is fundamental for NGO sustainability. The availability of funds, innovative leadership and well-managed programmes contribute to the sustainability of NGOs.

³⁷ (United Nations Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, - also known as the Brundtland Report)

³⁸ (Roseland)

³⁹ (Abiddin, Ibrahim and Abdul Aziz)

⁴⁰ (Crespy and Miller)

⁴¹ (Shava, 394)

Theoretical considerations

As noted above, sustainability is a multi-faceted idea when it comes to MCOs, and importantly includes the idea of resources, for which the financial, operational and mission fulfilment elements of sustainability should be considered. To examine this further, two theoretical perspectives are relevant: resources as internal strengths, or resources as a form of external constraint.

Resources as internal strengths

One way to consider sustainability is to think about the resources which enable the organisation to effectively operate, or more accurately, provide it with some form of performance edge. A frequently used approach for this is termed the ‘resource-based view of the firm’⁴² [RBV]. There are several studies which have explored sustainability of social purpose organisations, examining many of the core resources typically scrutinised in relation to organisational sustainability, such as finance, human resources, social networks, and reputational capital⁴³. As noted above, the core argument with this approach is that to survive, organisations need to have access to certain resources, and without that are unlikely to be able to continue.

More recent developments in applying a RBV to non-profit organisations have focussed on leveraging partnerships for mutual advantage⁴⁴, as well as extending RBV to consider aspects of organisational resilience⁴⁵, and extending human resources to include volunteers⁴⁶. An additional new development is a critique in the way that resources have been provided, as approaches to contracting by government have constrained the ability of non-profit organisations to create value for their communities⁴⁷. An example of this might be conditions placed on a grant or a contract which restrict what the resources might be used for. These notions are explicit in the research questions of this study.

In summary, the RBV perceives resources as essential for the long-term success of an organisation as they constitute capabilities that are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and cannot easily be substituted⁴⁸. The focus is thus on resources the organisation holds and owns which create advantages for the organisation in its operations. Phrased as a research question, this is stated as:

RQ1b: How do resources support sustainability?

⁴² (Barney, Wright and Ketchen Jr)

⁴³ (Iwu et al.)

⁴⁴ (Clarke and MacDonald; Gee et al.)

⁴⁵ (Singh, Martins and Tefera)

⁴⁶ (Lee, Park and Kim)

⁴⁷ (McMullin)

⁴⁸ (Barney, Wright and Ketchen Jr)

Resources as external constraints

A second view of resources focuses not on the resources an organisation has, but on the ability to acquire resources from outside the organisation. Pfeffer and Salancik argue that “the key to organisational survival is the ability to acquire and maintain resources Organisations must transact with other elements in their environment to acquire needed resources”⁴⁹. Resource Dependency Theory [RDT] suggests that organisations are dependent on external resources, which they must obtain from their environment to survive and thrive. In the context of MCOs, these include volunteers, donations, and access to other resources. Combining RDT and RBV is considered a fruitful line of inquiry as they provide a complementary view on resources⁵⁰.

While RBV focusses on unique internal organisational resources, RDT emphasises the interdependence of resources, and the idea that to survive, organisations often need to be able to “interact with other individuals or groups that control resources”⁵¹. Froelich⁵² notes that this application of dependency can readily be applied to fundraising income, corporate donations, philanthropic grants, government funding and contracts, and commercial income. In terms of risks to financial sustainability, overdependence on single revenue streams can expose organisations to the adverse impacts of donor power and influence which can consequently impact funding⁵³. As donors modify their funding priorities and make certain demands, organisations can find themselves powerless – ‘caught in the rip’ of shifting focuses and budget constraints. Over-reliance on one funding type can also result in distress to employees and clients when a revenue stream is abruptly ended⁵⁴.

Changes in political leadership, shifting social and governmental priorities and the short-term nature of certain governmental goals have resulted in financial uncertainty and instability within the nonprofits. A key driver of this uncertainty involves changes to government policies⁵⁵, many of which have resulted in NPOs (Not for Profit Organisations) and NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) becoming service providers of government. However, service delivery, which under policies operate under classic notions of market efficiency, might not necessarily align with the social justice objectives of multicultural policy in Queensland⁵⁶.

The political environment has impacted the wider competitive landscape by increasing intra-sector competition (amongst nonprofits) and inter-sector competition (between nonprofits and commercial organisations). For-profit providers often target the most lucrative segments of commercial non-profit industries, making it difficult for nonprofits to receive funding in these areas⁵⁷. Government inefficiency and resource constraints have also placed further burden on the sector⁵⁸.

⁴⁹ (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978, 2 cited by Pfeffer and Salancik 357)

⁵⁰ (Hillman, Withers and Collins)

⁵¹ (Froelich, 247)

⁵² (Froelich)

⁵³ (Shava)

⁵⁴ (Bingham and Walters)

⁵⁵ (Brunt and Akingbola)

⁵⁶ (Liebergreen)

⁵⁷ (Brown and Slivinski)

⁵⁸ (Abiddin, Ibrahim and Abdul Aziz)

External issues such as declining income from the wider donor community, a lack of block grants and sustained funding, and high competition for donations have also impacted on the financial stability, service delivery, and long-term viability of many NPOs⁵⁹. An external landscape filled with increased turbulence and competition has resulted in many organisations moving away from experience-based decision-making towards new innovative practices and strategic responses to enhance their resilience and survivability. A potential downside of this is that in tight financial circumstances, some managers may feel forced to attract funds from donors that are not aligned with their mission and vision. They may also feel they have limited choice as to who they associate with for financial support⁶⁰.

While money is obviously important, it is not just access to money or income which is an issue, but how dependant you are on any one source of income. Anheir ⁶¹, Froelich ⁶² and Bowman ⁶³ argue that non-profit organisations should seek to diversify their income from several different funding sources, whether that be donations, sales, or income from government. A strategy which provides diversification and reduces reliance on government funding often becomes imperative as new revenue streams strengthen an organisation's financial sustainability⁶⁴.

These new opportunities can also generate fresh perspective, new initiatives, and innovative ideas for service delivery which may not have been initially considered. Nonprofits for instance can develop social partnerships with commercial organisations looking to address their corporate social responsibility agendas⁶⁵. These mutually beneficial alliances can also reduce financial costs for both parties involved⁶⁶. Collaboration, which connects financial sustainability with social sustainability, becomes an important part of this, including setting clear expectations and boundaries, relationship-building, and trust⁶⁷.

It should be noted that although these types of revenue sources can bring positive attributes such as additional funding, lower financial risk, and increased services; they can also result in issues regarding power imbalances, asset allocation priorities, and long-term partnership uncertainty⁶⁸. Additional issues that may arise include conflicting vision and culture, influence over the priorities of the organisation, and compromising on mission and goals. As an example, a reliance on certain donors can result in a tendency to tailor programs to their preferences⁶⁹.

In summary, organisations possessing resources are in a position of power, whereas organisations which are dependent on others are at risk of being controlled by others ⁷⁰. This leads us to our third research question:

⁵⁹ (Shava)

⁶⁰ (Shava)

⁶¹ (Anheier, Toepler and Wojciech Sokolowski)

⁶² (Froelich)

⁶³ (Bowman)

⁶⁴ (Bingham and Walters)

⁶⁵ (Bingham and Walters)

⁶⁶ (Weerawardena, McDonald and Mort)

⁶⁷ (Shava).

⁶⁸ (Bingham and Walters)

⁶⁹ (Abiddin, Ibrahim and Abdul Aziz)

⁷⁰ (Malatesta and Smith)

➤ *RQ1c What are the enablers and barriers to accessing resources?*

MCOs need assistance from and collaboration with the wider Australian community to develop social capital in order to maximise refugee and migrant community's English language, literacy, learning, and employment outcomes ⁷¹. While the first part of this external approach involves negotiation with external stakeholders, there are a wider variety of organisations which may be of assistance to MCOs to be considered. This leads to the question:

➤ *RQ1d How might other organisations support the sustainability of multicultural associations?*

MCOs provide a unique opportunity to examine how resources contribute to organisational sustainability. This is because the important role of culture can be considered together with external partnerships, thus extending the range of resources typically considered in an RBV. Additionally further considerations under each resource, such as volunteers in Human Resources and donations in economic resources extend typical approaches to RBV. It is beyond the remit of this report, to provide an exhaustive review of all the different types of capital.

An overview of the main research questions explored in this report is provided below

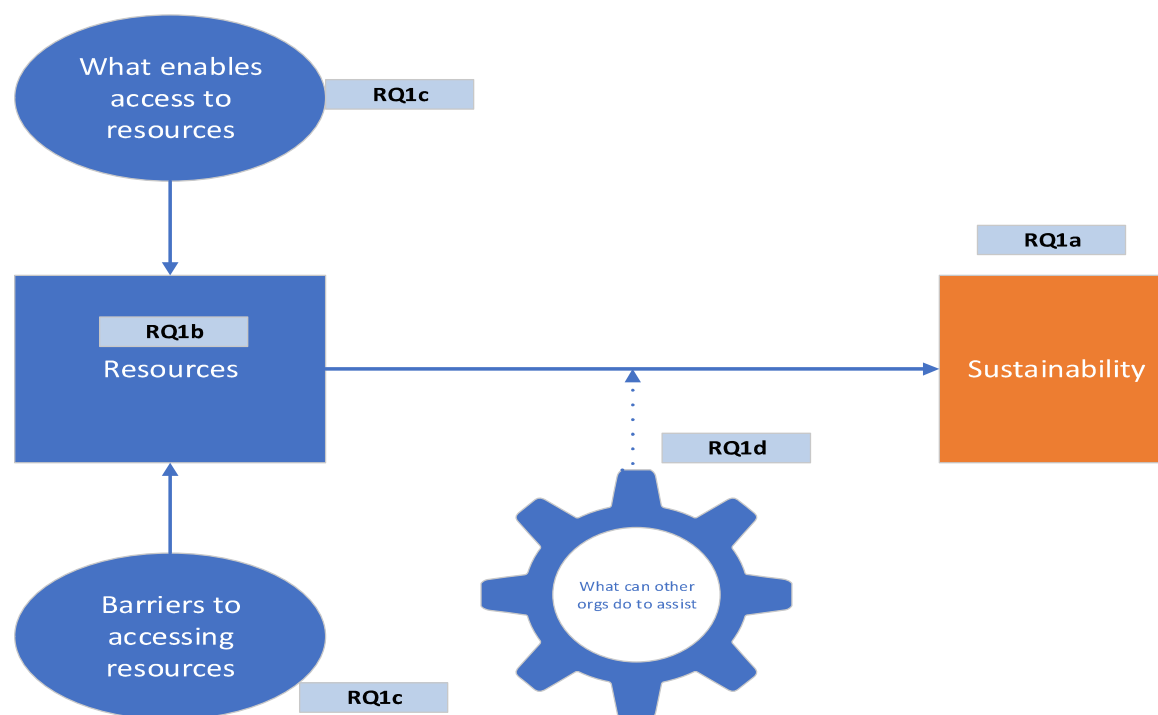


Figure 6 - Overview of the research project including research questions

⁷¹ (Miralles-Lombardo, Miralles and Golding)

Types of resources

Several different types of resources can be readily identified in academic literature.

Table 1 - Summary of types of resources

Type of Resource ⁷²	Description	Resource role in sustainability	Additional comments
Financial capital	Money / cash and cash like assets. Also known as economic capital.	Finances enable organisations to produce goods or provide services. Organisations need a surplus to be sustainable and sufficient reserves to cover crises.	Sometimes finances come with conditions (such as grants or bequests) which restrict use of finances. Diversifying income sources can mitigate risk. .
Human capital	Employees, volunteers, board members	People are critical to the operations of organisations at all levels – particularly in community-based organisations. People enable the transformation of one type of capital into another.	Volunteering patterns are changing in society, which impacts availability and reliability of volunteers for organisations ⁷³ . Examples include episodic or more caused based volunteering. Migrants in different generations may have different motivations for volunteering. ⁷⁴
Knowledge capital ⁷⁵	Know-how, intellectual property, organisational capability, innovation. (Also called intellectual capital).	It is one thing to have resources, but another to be able to manage them well. Knowledge in this context focusses on organisational capability and ability to adapt.	Knowing where the resources are, how to access them, and how to navigate the various approaches to gathering money (e.g., fundraising).
Social capital	Networks of people.	People outside the organisation are essential for obtaining new resources, of all types.	Organisations can be over or under embedded in their networks which affects their access to resources.
Reputational capital	The reputation of the organisation in the community – public trust.	Organisations with a good reputation can more readily raise financial support.	Sometimes over publication of donations can backfire ⁷⁶ .

⁷² (based on Bourdieu; Gleeson-White)

⁷³ (Hyde et al.)

⁷⁴ (Alfieri, Marzana and Damia)

⁷⁵ Some authors combine knowledge capital with human capital, but given the rise of data bases knowledge has increasingly seen as within, and without, individuals

⁷⁶ (Wang and Tong)

Type of Resource ⁷²	Description	Resource role in sustainability	Additional comments
Physical and Technological capital	Buildings, plant equipment (also called manufactured capital). Computer systems, software.	Being able to record, store, analyse, and report data and create organisational records is a key element of organisational sustainability.	Buildings are fixed assets which have specific zoned purposes and can be expensive to maintain. Different operating systems use different software requiring a sunk cost decision for the organisation.
Cultural capital¹	Culture can be understood in terms of the 'lived disposition' ⁷⁷ of a culture, so what we might differentiate between the French and German peoples, as well as a more concrete form – the 'cultural goods' created in terms of language, music, art, and food. Spirituality has been added as another form of cultural capital ⁷⁸ .	For many migrants, culture is linked to their identity and has a positive impact on transitioning to a new country ⁷⁹ .	Migrants tend to support people from their own culture or religion. To survive long term, migrants need to be able to navigate Australian culture as well as their own.
Natural capital	Environmental resources such as wilderness.	Environmental Social Governance [ESG] implications face all organisations. Some cultural groups have particular affinity for land or sea.	All organisations are increasingly being asked to consider their environmental impact.

These types of resources are noted below in more detail.

Financial Capital

Financial capital is readily defined and understood as money. Having sufficient financial income to enable operations is uncontested as an important internal resource⁸⁰. There are three major

⁷⁷ (Bourdieu; Throsby)

⁷⁸ (Verter)

⁷⁹ (Presbitero; Hersberger-Langloh et al.).

⁸⁰ (Singh and Mthuli)

revenue strategies in non-profit organisations: fundraising/charitable donations, foundation and government grants, and commercial activities⁸¹. To this we could add membership fees.

However, as noted in the RDT above, it is insufficient to focus just on having money, but also to consider how dependant an organisation is on any one type of revenue as this opens up the organisation to more risk⁸². Imagine an organisation had received most of its revenue from a single government grant for many years – the cessation of that grant will cause significant challenges for the organisation⁸³, particularly if the organisation is relatively small in size⁸⁴. The standard advice to minimise this risk is to generate income from diverse sources, and types. Additionally, organisations should maintain sufficient reserves to prepare for adverse events⁸⁵. Again, this is harder to achieve for smaller organisations.

However, diversification of income sources involves a cost to organisations, and necessitates the development of specific forms of capability or structure to be successful⁸⁶. This too may be difficult for smaller organisations. For example, a shift to government funding can cause indirect and direct consequences for nonprofits such as mission drift, goal displacement, and cumbersome reporting and evaluation procedures⁸⁷. While government funding was once considered to be a relatively stable form of income,⁸⁸ this may no longer be the case.

Nonprofits should avoid this sort of resource dependency as it can result in organisations over-focusing on donor relationships at the cost of serving their communities⁸⁹. If boundaries are not established, respected, or understood, this can also create issues surrounding power dynamics and dependence⁹⁰. It is a cynical form of the Golden Rule: The person with the gold makes the rules⁹¹.

In contrast, commercial revenue to date has not been associated with goal displacement of nonprofits but has been seen to offer flexibility for nonprofits to support existing programs and develop new programs to support their mission⁹². However, one study found that dependence on commercially earned income can inhibit collaboration with philanthropists and with other community-based nonprofits⁹³.

Financial income, debt and equity are the three main subtypes of financial capital found in the literature⁹⁴. Money easily allows the purchase of goods and services and having a budget surplus is an important source of non-profit sustainability. Debt can include bank loans, mortgages, and both government and corporate bonds are a common source of external capital

⁸¹ (Froelich)

⁸² (Bowman; Chang, Tuckman and Chikoto-Schultz; Chang and Tuckman)

⁸³ (Froelich)

⁸⁴ (Hager et al.)

⁸⁵ (Irvin and Furneaux)

⁸⁶ (Sacristán López de los Mozos, Rodríguez Duarte and Rodríguez Ruiz)

⁸⁷ (Froelich; Hung and Hager)

⁸⁸ (Froelich)

⁸⁹ (Banks, Hulme and Edwards)

⁹⁰ (Santos and Eisenhardt)

⁹¹ (Duska)

⁹² (Young; Froelich; Adams and Perlmutter)

⁹³ (Galaskiewicz, Bielefeld and Dowell)

⁹⁴ (Yetman)

for nonprofits. In terms of equity, while earnings are typically reinvested into non-profit organisations, program related investments and new forms of equity have emerged as sources of financial capital in the non-profit sector⁹⁵. Research into how nonprofits manage the vitally important mix of financial capital (debt, capital gains, and internal funds) to fund capital projects, including buildings, is lacking in comparison to our understanding of for-profit capital structures⁹⁶.

Drawing upon the existing literature on financial capital within nonprofits, financial capital is a key resource for MCOs to fulfil their mission and serve their beneficiaries and members. However, the growing body of research indicates over reliance on a single form of income is risky in the long term. Moreover, there are direct and indirect challenges associated with each revenue stream that need to be considered. Finally, while many charities continue to exist with virtually no finances, this can make it even more difficult to access resources in the first place⁹⁷. For example, some donors may insist on financial audits before providing funds, which many nonprofits may not be able to afford, meaning they are not eligible to even apply.

Human Capital

Multiple researchers have found that human capital, such as employees, volunteers, and board members are vital for organisations⁹⁸. The skills of individuals are at least as important as physical or financial capital⁹⁹, particularly people are needed to create other forms of capital. Some authors even argue human capital is more important than other forms of capital^{100,101}.

Leadership is an important aspect of workforce sustainability, and it is imperative that non-profit leaders demonstrate good leadership skills to manage effectively¹⁰². These include: the ability to balance demands, leave a legacy for the organisation, display a willingness to take on a variety of roles depending on the situation, creatively merge their vision with community needs¹⁰³ and manage stakeholders such as donors and government officials¹⁰⁴. Training should consequently be provided to support these skills and roles¹⁰⁵.

Recruitment is another important component of workforce sustainability with nonprofits in particular requiring managers and staff who can think critically, innovate, and have networking skills to attract funding and support. Arik et al.¹⁰⁶ agrees that human resources are a critical resource, and therefore organisations which recruit, retain, and reward volunteers have a core competence. Offering an almost free resource, the role of volunteers in influencing competition

⁹⁵ (Yetman)

⁹⁶ (Yetman; Mayer et al.).

⁹⁷ (Shava)

⁹⁸ (Singh and Mthuli)

⁹⁹ (Throsby)

¹⁰⁰ (Buonomo et al.)

¹⁰¹ (Mourão, Pereira and Moreira)

¹⁰² (Abiddin, Ibrahim and Abdul Aziz)

¹⁰³ (Abiddin, Ibrahim and Abdul Aziz)

¹⁰⁴ (Apostu)

¹⁰⁵ (Abiddin, Ibrahim and Abdul Aziz)

¹⁰⁶ (Arik, Clark and Raffo)

between organisations is an interesting one. Volunteers are loyal to the organisations they work with, donating not just their time, but also their money to the cause¹⁰⁷.

Volunteers provide not only free general labour but also skills which can be integrated into an organisation's professional operations¹⁰⁸. Volunteers can be included in fundraising efforts without incurring fundraising expenditure, and a healthy number of volunteers indicates to donors a vibrant and valuable organisation which people want to be involved in¹⁰⁹. Public awareness events can be a key to attracting volunteers whilst alliances with businesses can provide strong groups of volunteers in both size and shared ambition¹¹⁰. There seems to be some recent shifts in how people volunteer, with the rise of more one-time volunteering¹¹¹, and volunteering more for causes, e.g., the environment, rather than specific organisations¹¹².

Knowledge Capital

When considering knowledge in organisations, it is important to note that this exists at both the individual and group level, and as both tacit and explicit¹¹³. Explicit knowledge is information such as databases, websites, procedures and policies, and so resides outside of individuals; whereas tacit knowledge is based on experience (know how) located in individuals and groups and is based in organisational contexts - like using a computer or running an event¹¹⁴. This tacit dimension of organisational knowledge, often embedded in organisational routines, is often missed in understanding what organisational knowledge is, focussing on the explicit more obvious forms of knowledge, rather than 'know how'¹¹⁵. Lettieri et al.¹¹⁶ argue that of all organisational resources, knowledge is the most important.

Knowledge has risks as well, with tacit knowledge easily lost when someone leaves an organisation, resulting in a loss of capability or corporate history; or alternatively an over reliance on people's memory rather than taking the time to share knowledge and make it explicit¹¹⁷. Knowledge can also be gained via networks¹¹⁸ and can be a vital resource for operations¹¹⁹.

¹⁰⁷ (Omura and Forster)

¹⁰⁸ (Weerawardena, McDonald and Mort)

¹⁰⁹ (Omura and Forster)

¹¹⁰ (Weerawardena, McDonald and Mort)

¹¹¹ (Cnaan et al.)

¹¹² (Fairley, Gardiner and Filo)

¹¹³ (Farnese et al.)

¹¹⁴ (Farnese et al.)

¹¹⁵ (Buonomo et al.)

¹¹⁶ (Lettieri, Borgia and Savoldelli)

¹¹⁷ (Ragsdell, Espinet and Norris)

¹¹⁸ (Granados, Mohamed and Hlupic)

¹¹⁹ (Uzzi)

Social Capital

While money and people tend to mean the same thing to everyone, social capital has a variety of meanings depending on which author is being cited¹²⁰. For the purposes of this report, social capital can be understood as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition”¹²¹. For example, a beach safety provider has a successful partnership with a large business which provides a helicopter for surf patrol and rescue¹²². Another example would be partnering with media companies which provide in-kind donations such as advertising and industry knowledge¹²³.

Maintaining long-term relationships are fundamental to the success of many organisations due to combined energy, a reduction in competitiveness, and better outcomes for clients. Organisations can form alliances with other organisations to address resource deficiency by locating, collating, and sharing assets¹²⁴. Working with other agencies requires reciprocal transparency, accountability, and regular communication which, and is key to establishing and maintaining strong partnerships¹²⁵. Like money and people, networks of partners as key resources for sustainability are supported across multiple research studies¹²⁶. Collaboration with the wider Australian community will help to maximise refugee and migrant English language, literacy, learning, and employment outcomes¹²⁷.

Just as with other forms of resources, networks can come with challenges. One of these is when an organisation works exclusively with a small number of organisations over an extended period and can become what is known as ‘over-embedded’ in that network¹²⁸. As noted above, a RDT argues that organisational survival depends on both its resources as well as its relationships with external stakeholders¹²⁹. Generally, it is better for organisations to have a mix of weak and strong network relationships¹³⁰.

Reputational Capital

Reputational capital can be understood as “the value that can be attributed to the perception of the firm as a responsible domestic and global corporate citizen”¹³¹. It includes brand and public perception and can take years to build. Reputational capital might also be termed trust¹³² or credibility¹³³.

¹²⁰ (Bixler and Springer)

¹²¹ (Bourdieu 84)

¹²² (Weerawardena, McDonald and Mort).

¹²³ (Weerawardena, McDonald and Mort)

¹²⁴ (Weerawardena, McDonald and Mort)

¹²⁵ (Mukute and Marange)

¹²⁶ (Singh and Mthuli)

¹²⁷ (Miralles-Lombardo, Miralles and Golding)

¹²⁸ (Uzzi)

¹²⁹ (Hodge and Piccolo)

¹³⁰ (Granovetter; Uzzi)

¹³¹ (Petrick et al. 60)

¹³² (Furneaux and Wymer)

¹³³ (Singh and Mthuli)

Transparent and accountable structures create public trust in charities¹³⁴ which in turn attracts funding from the donor community. Poor disclosure, governance, and performance have a negative influence on organisations and the trust towards their projects and ambitions¹³⁵.

Organisations can also benefit from increased credibility and visibility when funded by a high-profile organisation. On the other hand, an organisation's reputation can be damaged when partnering with an organisation that has a tainted or negative association¹³⁶. So, trust is vital for MCOs, however trust is slow to earn and quick to lose¹³⁷.

Physical¹³⁸ and Technological Capital

Physical and technological capital might also be termed manufactured capital¹³⁹. While some organisations can operate virtually, for many nonprofits, mission fulfilment is impossible or at least very difficult, without a physical building. Take for example a hospital – delivery of health services requires significant human capital, knowledge, and physical capital¹⁴⁰. Another example would be that of religious organisations. While a church, temple or mosque can be understood in terms of its people, their buildings create the basis of service delivery¹⁴¹ – a form of 'social infrastructure' without which it is difficult to think of the organisation itself. This is because such organisations belong to a specific place and community, with their identity partially visible in the building itself¹⁴².

Comparatively less research has been undertaken on technologies and charities, although in general, smaller organisations are likely to be less technologically proficient compared to larger organisations¹⁴³. While within the for-profit context, technological investment is linked to increasing profit, in a non-profit context, technological development creates better value for stakeholders¹⁴⁴. Some studies have noted though that investment in new technology, such as client management systems, can create efficiency and effective outcomes for charities¹⁴⁵.

Thus, for effective performance, nonprofits require access to the necessary physical resources and quality facilities which support service delivery¹⁴⁶. However, physical capital such as buildings also requires significant expenditure of financial capital to create and maintain¹⁴⁷.

¹³⁴ (Furneau and Wymer)

¹³⁵ (Shava)

¹³⁶ (Galaskiewicz and Colman)

¹³⁷ (Suchman)

¹³⁸ Buildings were at one time included under cultural capital, but has become seen as separate over time

¹³⁹ (Cochrane)

¹⁴⁰ (Pauly and Redisch)

¹⁴¹ (Flora et al.)

¹⁴² (Flora)

¹⁴³ (Hackler and Saxton)

¹⁴⁴ (Cipriano and Za)

¹⁴⁵ (Yigitbasioglu, Furneau and Rossi)

¹⁴⁶ (Brunt and Akingbola)

¹⁴⁷ (Woronkowicz)

Cultural Capital

Throsby defines cultural capital as “ideas, practices, beliefs, traditions and values which serve to identify and bind together a given group of people”¹⁴⁸, interpreting culture in terms of the dominant culture of a country. Culture from this perspective was focussed on ‘high-status’ culture – such as ballet and opera - which tend to be favoured by the relatively wealthy¹⁴⁹ as opposed to lower class cultural activities which might be favoured by the working class¹⁵⁰. Unfortunately, this concept of cultural capital has often been discussed from a Euro-centric perspective, with very little research on cultural capital in multicultural contexts¹⁵¹.

In contrast, Collins¹⁵² argues that culture is something which acts as a form of ‘glue’: “cultural capital refers to knowledge of basic vocabularies, concepts, styles, and sacred objects in any set of rituals ... emblems, terms, phrases, gestures, or other representations that have currency in particular settings”¹⁵³. Culture can be seen as a resource which enables outcomes, or as meaning which facilitates interactions¹⁵⁴.

Natural Capital

With the increasing awareness of the environment and its impact on economic activity, economists have acknowledged natural capital as the ‘stock of renewable and non-renewable resources provided by nature, including the ecological processes governing their existence and use’¹⁵⁵. An example of natural capital and its depletion is overfishing in ocean waters, or the deforestation of rainforests. Natural capital might also be termed the environment and is a key part of the sustainability mantra: profit, people and planet.

Natural capital is seen to be critical to sustainability as it supports life overall, and produces a variety of benefits to society, some of which are commonly valued, such as clean water, whereas others are more intangible (a beautiful landscape)¹⁵⁶. Barbier¹⁵⁷ notes that natural, or ecological capital, differs from other forms of capital in that it is difficult to value, and once converted to another form of capital (such as a building) cannot be converted back. There does not seem to be any research which has examined natural capital in the context of multicultural organisations, although generally organisations are being increasingly required to report on the impact, they have on the environment^{158,159}.

¹⁴⁸ (Throsby 7)

¹⁴⁹ (Davies and Rizk)

¹⁵⁰ (Bennett and Silva)

¹⁵¹ (Wallace)

¹⁵² (Davies and Rizk 340)

¹⁵³ (Davies and Rizk 340)

¹⁵⁴ (Davies and Rizk)

¹⁵⁵ (Throsby 3)

¹⁵⁶ (Barbier)

¹⁵⁷ (Barbier)

¹⁵⁸ (Pratici et al.)

¹⁵⁹ (Machaghoul)

Methods

Given the relatively low number of studies specifically focussed on understanding sustainability in MCO contexts, a mixed design study has been developed involving both quantitative and qualitative data collection. The study was codesigned with Multicultural Affairs Queensland and the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland.

Quantitative survey

A quantitative survey was undertaken to provide the opportunity for many respondents to provide their views. Quantitative studies have the advantage of being able to ask many people a large volume of questions which can lead to statistically significant findings. Surveys are suitable for examining questions which seek to understand what is happening, such as what source of income do different types of MCOs rely upon. The survey was conducted online using the Qualtrics platform. There were 146 anonymous responses to the survey. Several respondents commenced the survey but did not complete any portion of the survey and so were removed from the dataset as they were blank. This left 100 usable responses. Some respondents started but did not complete the survey, and these responses were retained.

Focus groups

Additionally, a set of group interviews, or focus groups, were undertaken to explore notions of sustainability and resources, particularly as the meaning of these terms for MCOs may not have been adequately captured in existing literature. Focus groups have the advantage of being able to dig deep on a smaller number of topics and explore matters which do not exist in the literature review. The benefits and challenges of different types of resources are critical to examine as part of the study. Qualitative studies are helpful for investigating ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, such as, why is it difficult to access certain resources? Focus groups were conducted both online and face to face, with a mix of urban and regional groups represented. Additionally, MCOs which were known to be ethno-specific, faith-specific, social enterprises, advocacy organisations, and service providers were invited as well as small and large groups. A total of 70 people attended 9 focus groups. Focus groups were with stakeholders held in regional areas: Logan and Gold Coast, Central, Southwest, North and Far North Queensland, Toowoomba and Darling Downs, and two focus groups were held online for people unable to attend face to face meetings. In Brisbane several focus groups were held which focussed on groups providing advocacy, representing faith or ethnic communities, offering service provision or conducting a social enterprise. Some focus groups also completed a ‘dot-mocracy’ activity which ranked the importance of various types of capital.

A visual representation of the study is provided in Figure 7 - Overview of the research process below. The research design was developed, or codesigned, in collaboration with staff from Multicultural Affairs Queensland and Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland. The intention was to try to ensure the research was designed to be as helpful as possible to multicultural associations in Queensland.

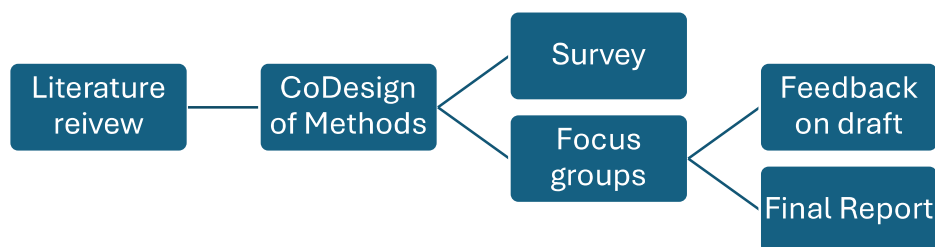


Figure 7 - Overview of the research process

The alignment of the specific methods to each of the research questions is provided in the table below.

Question	Survey	Focus groups
What does sustainability mean	X	X
How do resources support sustainability?	X	X
What are the enablers or barriers to accessing resources?	X	X
How might other organisations support multicultural organisational sustainability?	X	X

Research ethics was approved for the design of the study: **QUT Ethics Approval Number LR 2024-9086-21271** and informed consent was obtained from all participants before conducting research. All data was deidentified before analysis and reporting.

Findings

Data analysis will focus on descriptives and data visualisation for demographic data. Some data was highly correlated and so this complexity was reduced through statistical techniques such as factor analysis and cluster analysis. Additionally categorical was occasionally combined into larger categories, such as size being recorded as either small or large organisations, which is discussed in the section below. These steps where necessary to enable analysis of data¹⁶⁰. Additionally, where possible, data was tabulated or visualised to help demonstrate differences

¹⁶⁰ Factor analysis helps to identify patterns in data. Additionally, the data was not normally distributed, and so the analysis process also included a process to normalise data and ensure it was not overly correlated. For the categorical data, responses which result in very small categories cannot be analysed statistically and need to be combined in order for them to be analysed. These are all part of a data cleaning process,

between types of organisations. To analyse research sharing between organisations, social network analysis provides a way of identifying connections between organisations or individuals and secondly examine how resources are shared across that network^{161 162}. Finally, thematic coding in NVIVO was used to analyse data from the focus groups.

Survey Sample

100 valid survey responses is a fairly low sample size, and ideally this would have been higher. It is also difficult to gauge how representative the sample is as there is not complete census of MCOs in Queensland. What can be said is that respondents where from organisations which operated across the state in a range of sizes, locations, providing various services and serving differing beneficiaries. So, there are certainly diverse groups who responded to the survey.

Participants were asked to report the size of their organisation in terms of annual income.

Frequency	
Less than \$50k	34
\$50k to \$100k	3
\$100k to \$250k	5
\$250k to \$500k	8
\$500k to \$1M	2
\$1M to \$3M	11
\$3M to \$5M	0
Over \$5M	5
Don't know	13
Missing	19
Total	100

As can be seen from the report, a significant number of organisations were small or large, while there were very few in other categories. Such small numbers make analysis very difficult as each range of income becomes a separate category. Consequently, size was recoded into Small (Less than \$100,000) and Large (More than \$100,000). Many respondents did not provide their income or stated they did not know their income, so this has been coded as 'Missing / Don't Know'.

Organisations were also asked if they were a registered charity or not. The tabulation of size and charity status is presented below.

¹⁶¹ (Li, de Zubielqui and O'Connor; Haythornthwaite)

¹⁶² As this is difficult to interpret the graph has been moved to the appendices and a short verbal summary provided in the main text.

Table 2 - Compilation of Organisational Size and Registered Charity

		Size		
		Small < \$100,000	Large > \$100,000	Missing / don't know
Registered charity	Yes	15	27	12
	No	20	4	11
	Don't know	2	0	4
	Total	37	31	27

Most of the large organisations in the sample are registered charities, while there is a more even split on the smaller charities.

A significant proportion of respondents did not answer questions in relation to financial matters. It may be that there was an unwillingness to disclose this information or not having the information at hand.

Mission

As there is very little data on the operational matters of MCOs, participants were asked to rank their objectives¹⁶³. Three clear clusters of respondents were primarily evident.

- Providing services to a specific ethnic community
- Advocating on behalf of a particular community
- Working with a particular community.

There was no statistically significant difference in mission focus based on the size of organisation.

Location

Respondents were asked which region of the state they operated in, and whether this was in urban, peri-urban (outskirts of urban areas but not truly 'rural'), rural or remote areas. This is tabulated below.

¹⁶³ A Principal Component Analysis was undertaken with an Equimax Rotation Method with Kaiser Normalisation on the main beneficiaries. 100% of variance was explained after 3 rounds.

Table 3 - Number of responses by location and region (respondents could choose more than one option)

	Urban	Peri-Urban	Rural	Remote
Southeast Queensland	56	18	9	4
Darling Downs / Southwest	12	8	7	3
Wide Bay / Burnett	11	6	7	3
Central Queensland	14	6	6	3
Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday	8	4	9	3
North Queensland	13	8	6	4
Far North Queensland	9	6	8	6

There are respondents who operate across the state. 69 respondents indicated they operated outside the Southeast Queensland, and 56 from within. Most respondents operated in urban and peri-urban areas. Respondents could select more than one area or location.

Respondents could select more than one option in terms of who their beneficiaries where and also what services where provided. These are tabulated below and indicate that respondents to the survey provided a range of services to a range of beneficiaries.

Table 4 Comparison of Beneficiaries and Service Provision

Beneficiaries	Administrative and support services	Accommodation and Food Services	Arts and Recreation Services	Education and Training	Health Care and Social Assistance	Other Services	Total Beneficiaries
Migrants, Refugees, people seeking asylum	8	3	19	21	21	11	83
Other people from CALD backgrounds	7	4	26	21	25	11	94
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	3	1	5	8	8	1	26
Australian South Sea Islanders	3	1	6	7	9	0	26
General Population	4	2	14	12	17	6	55
All of the above	5	2	5	7	18	2	39
None / other	1	0	1	1	2	2	7
Total Services	31	13	76	77	100	33	330

*Respondents could pick more than one beneficiary group and more than one service provision

The survey thus has a selection of respondents from organisations which vary in terms of size, location, mission, and whether they are a registered charity. While only 100 valid survey responses were submitted, 330 beneficiaries and services where identified. This indicates that

most organisations served more than one beneficiary group and provided more than one type of service. This all goes to underscore the variety of multicultural organisations.

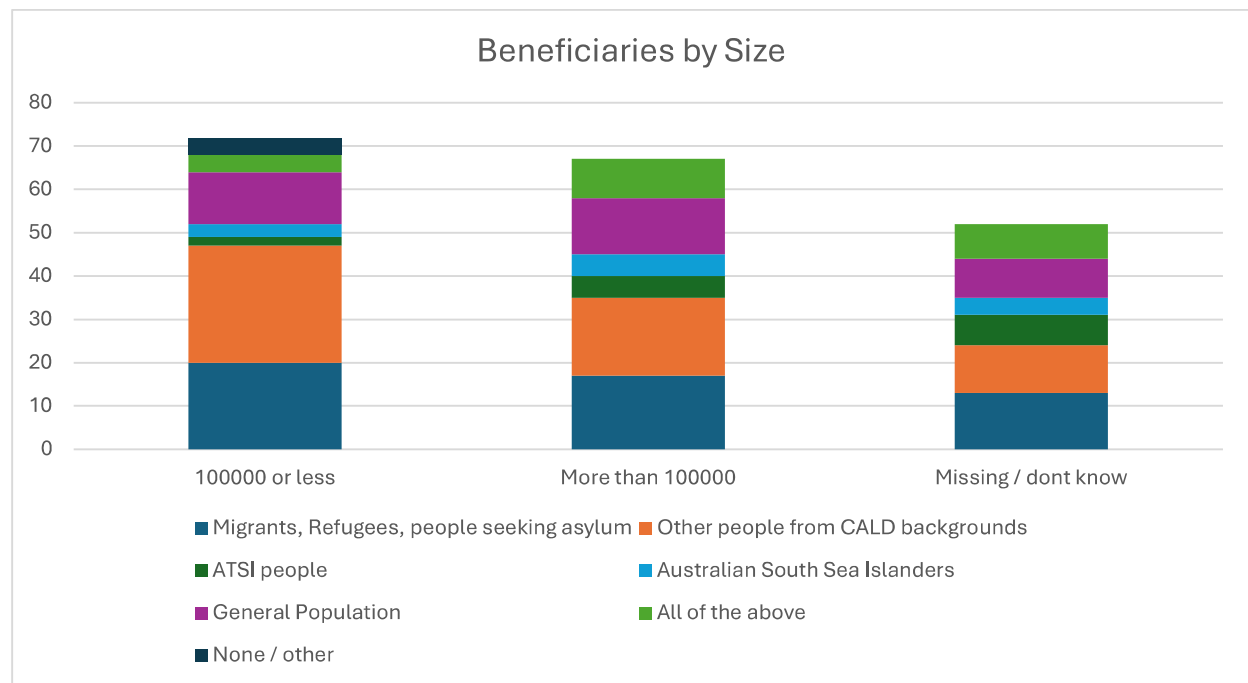


Figure 8 - Beneficiaries by Size of Organisation

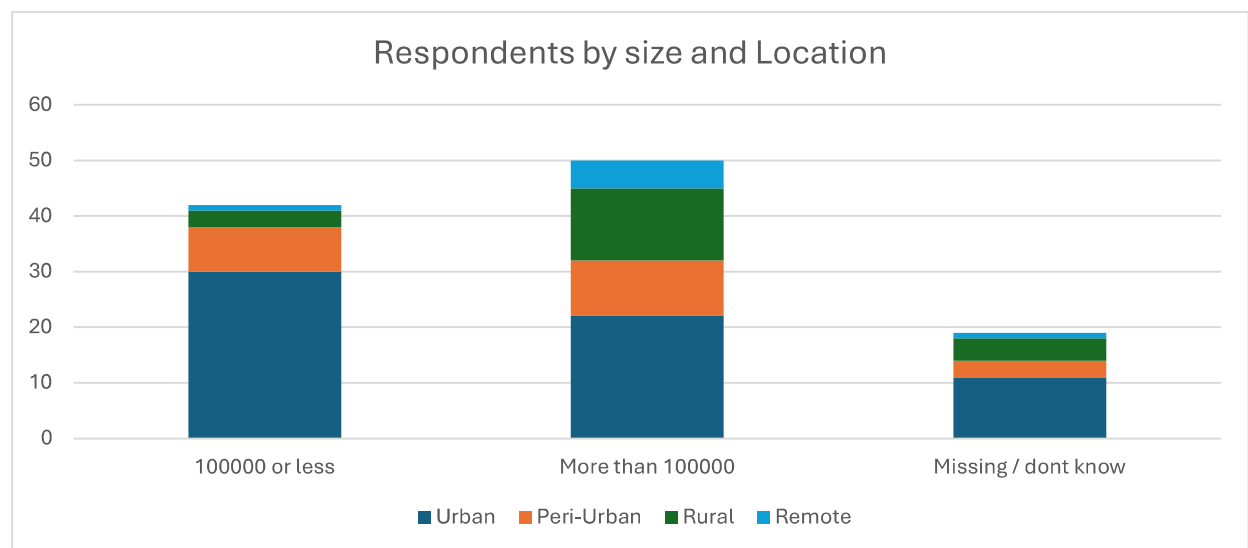


Figure 9 - Respondents by size and urban location

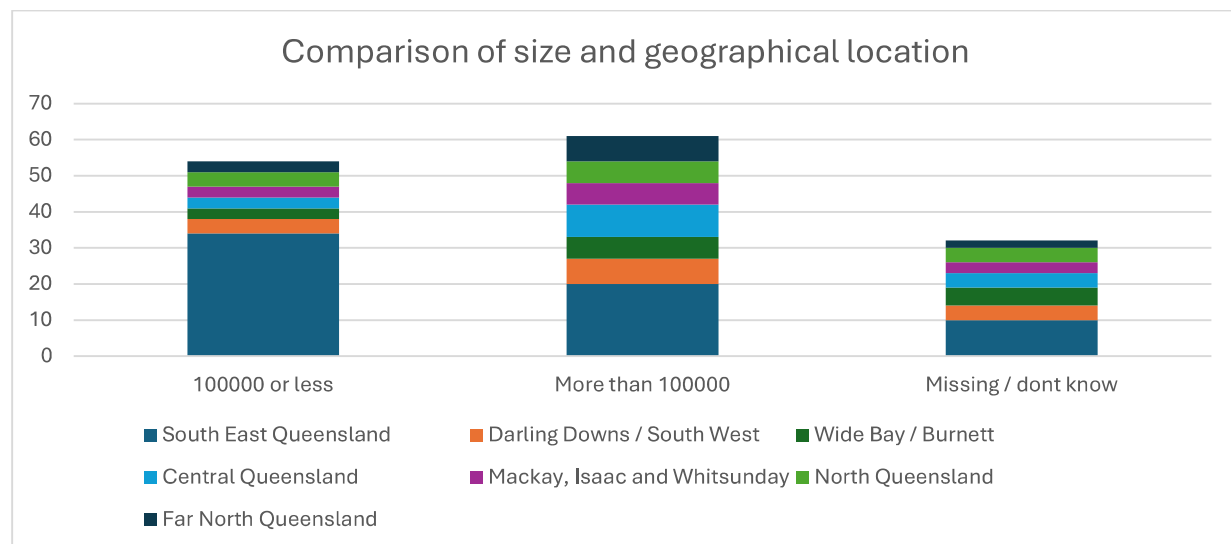


Figure 10 - Size and geographical location

RQ1a: What is Sustainability?

5 types of sustainability were identified in the literature review: Organisational continuance, fulfilling mission, making money (profit), people, and planet. To this culture was added given that the survey was focused on MCOs.

In the survey, respondents were asked to rank, in order, the importance of a number of objectives to sustainability, following the purpose, planet, profit, purpose model, while adding in culture. The average importance of purpose respondents was (4.5), people as (3.7), culture was (3.3), with profit (1.8) and planet (1.6) last. Purpose, culture and people were by far the most important.

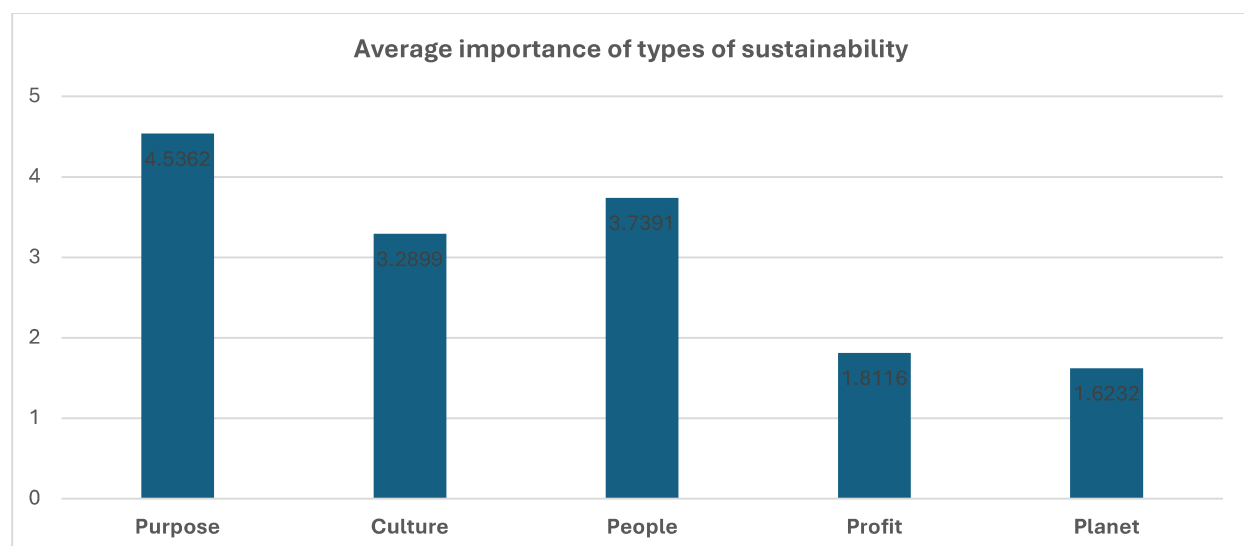


Figure 11 - Comparison of the importance of different types of sustainability

Given that MCOs exist to support a particular ethnic group this makes perfect sense.

This is also backed up with an analysis of the responses in focus groups. Participants were asked what sustainability meant to them. In the main body of the report, only specific exemplar quotes are included which are indicative of the sentiment of respondents. The overall coding for each main research question is compiled in Appendix B.

Some quotes from respondents provide further details on this:

Organisational continuance

Sometimes respondents discussed sustainability in terms of simply continuing the organisation, without reference to resources.

Craig Furneaux¹⁶⁴: So, can you tell me, what does sustainability mean for your organisation? Does anyone want to be brave and kick that off?

FG7P1¹⁶⁵: Find ways for continuation.

FG5P1: our most serious issue for our association is just keeping going, keeping communication going and making sure you continue with our focus which is history and culture.

Sustainability of Purpose

Another theme in the focus groups from respondents was being able to continue with the program or meeting the needs of clients and community.

FG3P5: when we talk about sustainability, the amount of gaps that there are in the services out there, puts pressure on organisations having to deliver things that they're not funded to do and this is such a huge issue for our organisation ... ¹⁶⁶ has a huge impact on our staff, but those other services just aren't available, and if you want to continue those relationships with community and continue that trust, you've got it... someone's got to offer it.

¹⁶⁴ Text which is set out in this matter is a direct quote from a focus group participant.

¹⁶⁵ Respondents are not identified. The letters and numbers follow the following pattern: FG#P#, so this respondent is from Focus Group 5 and is person 1 who responded in the group.

¹⁶⁶ Text has not been amended from focus group participants. However, some quotes contain a number of different points so where some text has been omitted for coherence, this is indicated with an ellipsis '...'

Profit

When finance was mentioned, this is never seen as a goal in itself, but rather as a means to fulfilling mission.

FG7P2: I agree with FG7P1 in terms of continuing on, but for us is so, I represent OrgGA. So, we're a not-for-profit organisation that supports refugees and humanitarian entrants into employment, paid employment and it's about economic sustainability for us, for our organisation is to be able to have the money to trade, continue to trade so that we can advocate or seek out opportunities for our participants.

Environment (Planet)

Similar to the survey results, environmental sustainability was not mentioned as often, however it is important for some respondents.

FG7P2 ... there is another component to sustainability is around environmental sustainability, is in ensuring that our footprint in the work that we do is not contributing to environmental harm. So, where we can limit the number of trees that we kill to print.

A couple of themes emerged from the discussion which were not explicit in the literature review, which involve change, and also the idea of creating a lasting legacy.

Being able to adapt

FG3P4: for me sustainability is being able to be flexible with change, because change is constant and start being relatable to the ever-growing needs of the community that we're serving ... When you're trying to service a number of cultures, having that adaptability into really meet the need on an ongoing basis as it changes, the flexibility to be able to do that.

Reputation legacy

FG2P1: reputation legacy could ... be like very key for the sustainability for organisation.

RQ1b: How do resources support sustainability?

As was outlined in the previous section, there were several important elements to sustainability. Resources was a large focus of both the survey and focus groups, as without resources, an organisation is not able to fulfil its mission.

In the survey it is possible to explore each of the resources in turn, which is outlined further in this report. Firstly, however, it is important to be able to explore how the resources interact with each other.

Focus groups also provided some ranking of the importance of different types of resources:

Resource	Average Rank Order ¹⁶⁷
Human Capital	1
Financial Capital	2
Social Capital	3
Cultural capital	3
Reputational capital	4
Knowledge capital	5
Physical Capital	5
Technological	6
Natural capital	7

This can be compared to the information from the survey which provided a different result

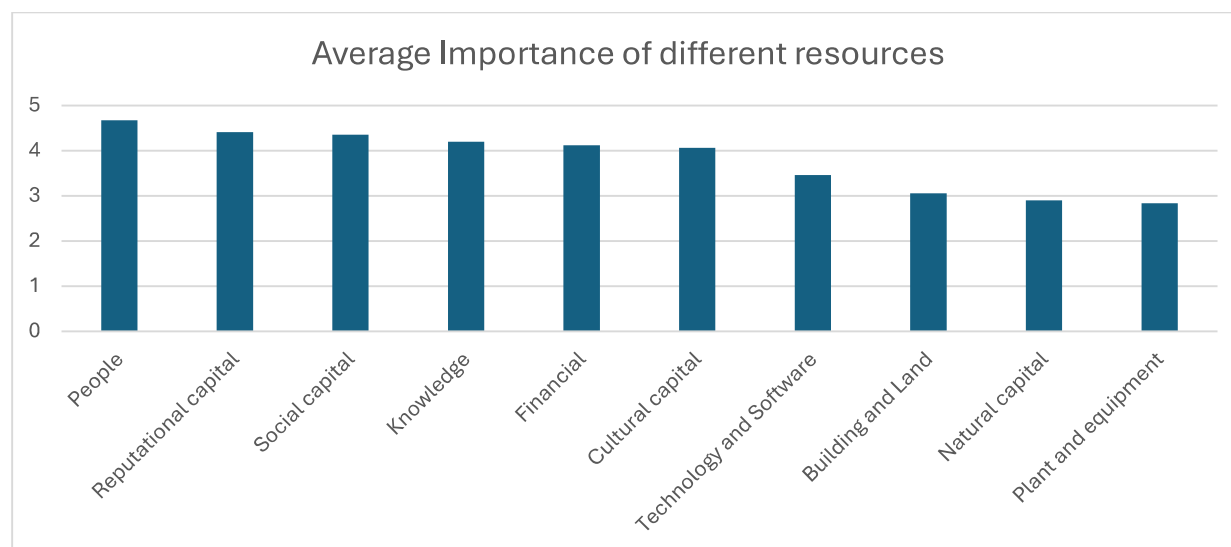


Figure 12 - Average importance of resources (survey) ranked in order

Organisations were asked in the survey to indicate how often they worked with other organisations. More advanced matrix analysis and correlation analysis of this response is provided in Appendix A, but a verbal summary is provided here.

¹⁶⁷ Average rank order was used as each group had different number of participants, so the absolute average may have been misleading. These were derived from voting mechanisms such as dotmocracy.

Two types of correlation analysis were undertaken. The first just considered the importance of each type of resource separately in relation to other types of resources. This showed that there was a very strong correlation between social capital and reputation, followed by people. People were highly related to knowledge, and knowledge to finance, technology and cultural capital¹⁶⁸. While direct one on one correlations are important, this misses the overall interaction between all different types of capital at the same time.

For this second type of analysis the overall interaction was calculated using a co-occurrence matrix, which was then graphed¹⁶⁹. This shows that knowledge and people are central to all other resources, as is reputation and social capital. In other words, people, internal to an organisation, are critical for knowledge, and networks of people outside an organisation are highly important for reputation.

Financial capital

Two main sizes of organisation were identified in the data: large (income over \$100,000) and small (Income under \$100,000). There were also a few organisations which were registered charities and those which were not. The average importance of financial capital for current operations is shown for each of these groups.

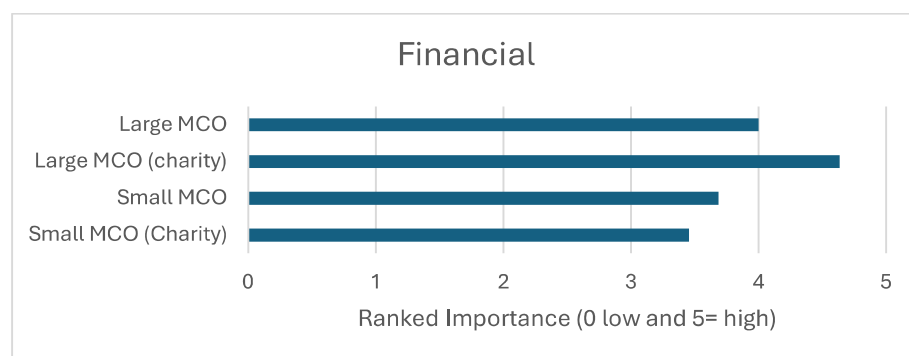


Figure 13 - Ranked importance of finances by MCO type

As a total proportion of income, across all participants, grants and contracts were the highest percentage, followed by donations and events.

¹⁶⁸ For a full list of correlations please see Appendix A.

¹⁶⁹ Methodology is summarised in Appendix A

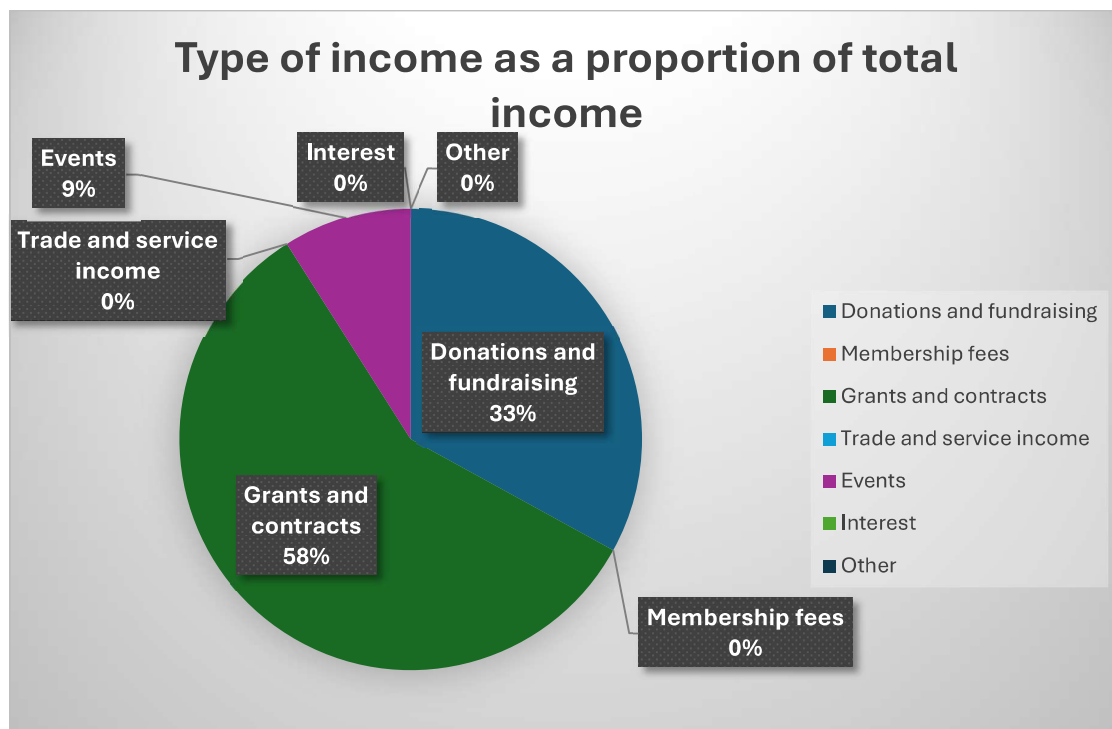


Figure 14 - Overall proportion of different types of income

While grants and contracts were on average the most important, the actual percentage of income varied by the type and size of the organisation. These are shown in Figure 12 below, showing the average income by type of income: donations, membership fees, grants and contracts, trade and service income, events, interest and other.

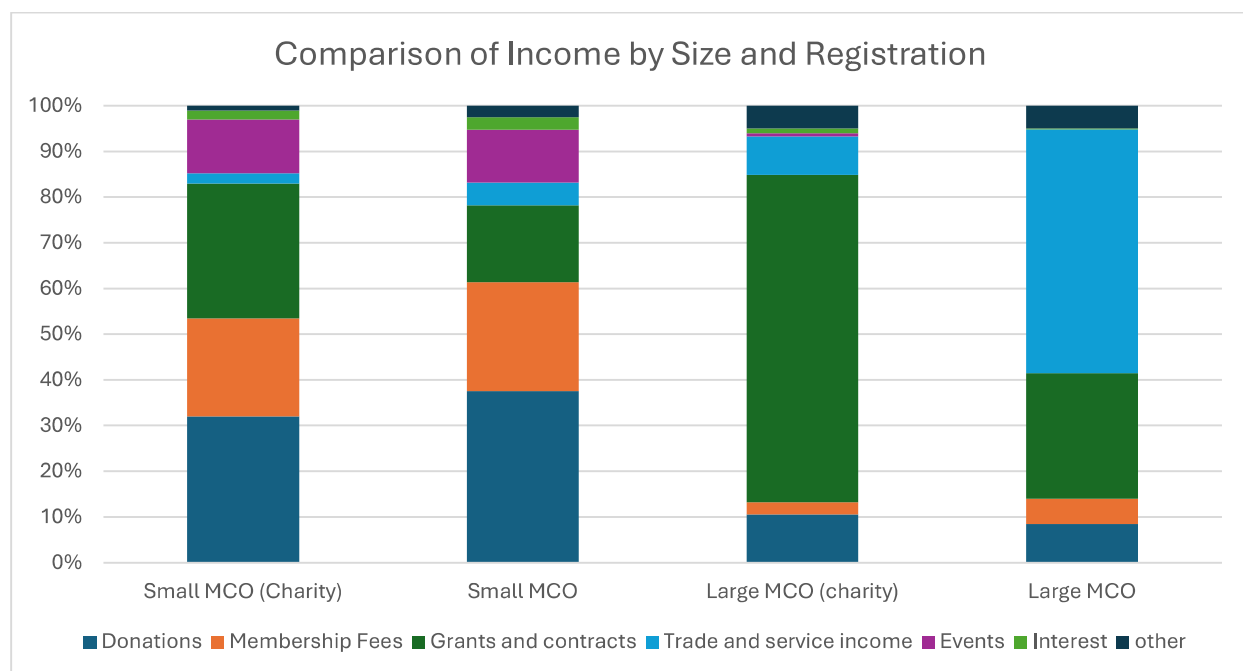


Figure 15 - Income sources by organisational type

Larger organisations had much larger average income from grants, contracts, trade and service income, compared to smaller organisations who were more reliant on donations, fees and events. Large MCOs which were charities had a much greater percentage of income from grants and contracts, while large MCOs which were not registered charities had a higher proportion of trade and service income.

Thus, while finances are important to organisations for mission, the source of income varied by type of organisation, as determined by size and whether they were a registered charity.

Another measure of financial fitness is what is known as a financial diversification index¹⁷⁰. This is a measure of how reliant an organisation is on a single form of income – the closer the figure is to 1, the more reliant that organisation is to being dependant and vulnerable¹⁷¹. The core idea is that if organisations are dependent on just one income source, they are more vulnerable to loss if that income source suddenly stops. The graph below shows how concentrated the income sources. So, a 1 indicates 100% reliance on a single source, while 0.4 indicates 40% reliance on a single source, so more diversified income. In theory a more diversified income stream is less risky.

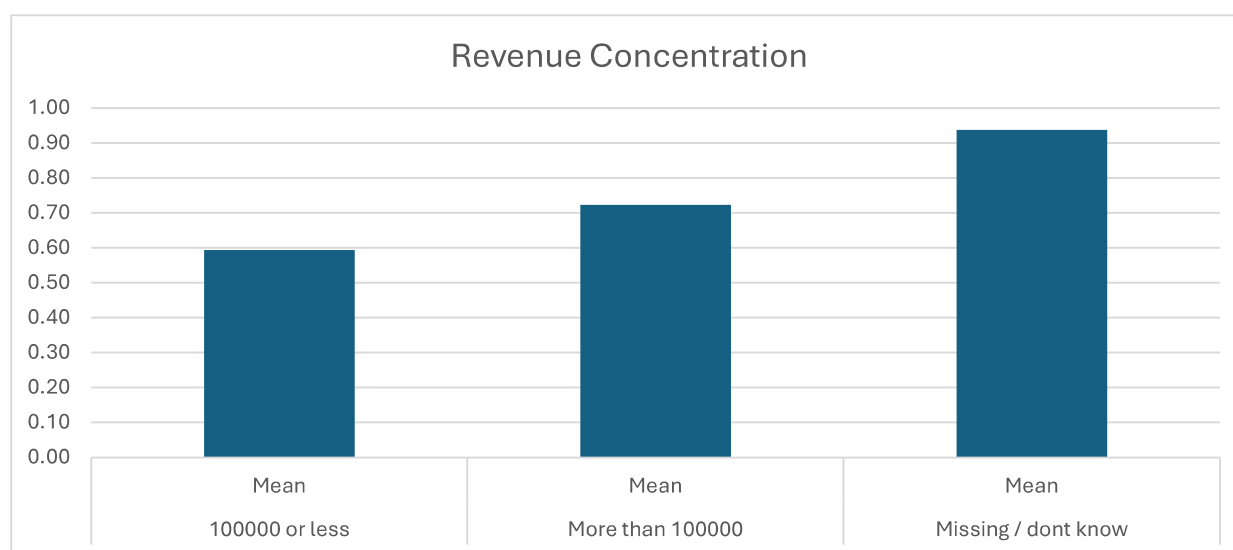


Figure 16 – Average revenue concentration by organisational size¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Resource diversification is a somewhat contentious measure as there is mixed support for its relationship to overall financial sustainability. However, as it is widely used, this is included in the report.

¹⁷¹ We follow (Qu 200) and use the Herfindahl–Hirschman Index (HHI) to calculate resource diversification. This is constructed by summing the squared shares of the organization's revenue sources. The result is then subtracted

$$DI = \left(\frac{r_1}{R}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{r_2}{R}\right)^2 + \dots + \left(\frac{r_n}{R}\right)^2 = \sum_{i=1}^N \left(\frac{r_i}{R}\right)^2,$$

from one to create an overall measure of diversification.

¹⁷² The plot is a box and whiskers plot which shows the range of scores broken into quartiles. The middle thick line is the average (around 0.6 for small organisations). The blue box about that is 25% above the medium (so from 50% to 75%) and the line above that is the top 25% (so from 75% to 100%).

Interestingly, smaller organisations had on average less concentrated (more diverse income streams) than large organisations.

Some organisations clearly and strategically set out to diversify their income.

FG2P2: Yeah. So, all of us would know about government grants and tenders, and that that we apply for. There's obviously also philanthropic support out there and there's fundraising, and there's social enterprises, and that as well, and fee for service. That can be there ... In my view there's a mix of how you do a bit of all of that.

Numerous challenges were also raised in relation to funding, which will be addressed in the challenges section below.

Human Capital

As noted above, people are central to organisations. Participants were asked about the importance of people to their organisations, with the average response either extremely important or important across all organisations.

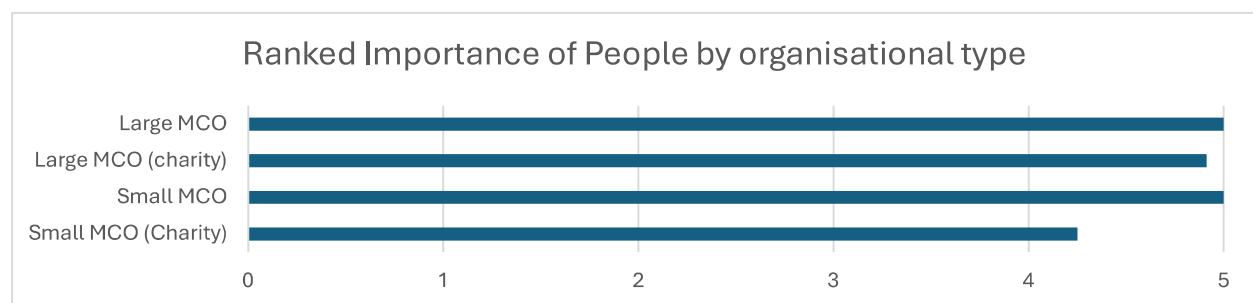


Figure 17 - Ranked importance of people to operations

There were differences in the number of staff, based on the size of organisations. Smaller organisations tended to have fewer staff but both small and large organisations had many volunteers.

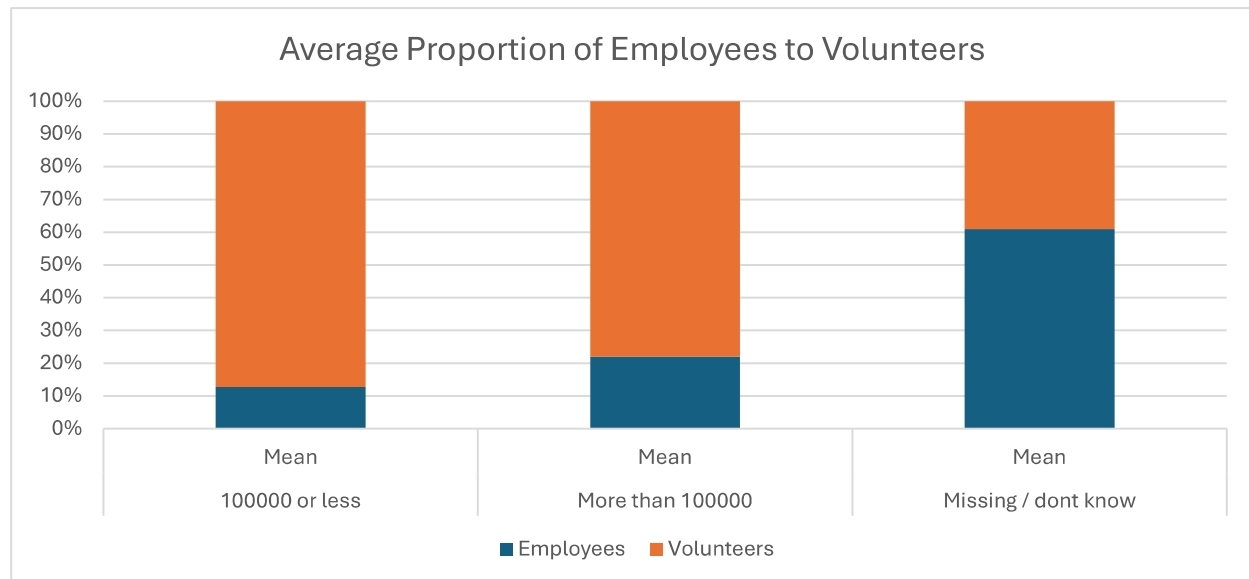


Figure 18 - Comparison of staff and volunteers by organisational size

What is interesting about this is that the trend line levels off even as the number of staff increases (see Figure 33 - Scatterplot of staff to volunteers in Appendix). In other words, there seems to be a limit to the number of volunteers that an organisation can handle, underscoring the point that volunteers are not actually ‘free’ and need resources to support and manage. Focus group data supports the idea that people (human capital) are important to organisations. Key themes in the data emerged around staff (particularly job security, burnout, and professional development), volunteers, including retention and future generations, board members, and succession planning.

It was noted in the sustainability section that people were central to other resources. This is backed up with the focus group observation, that:

FG9P2: Yeah, having that resources is really important and you know, because the human capital or the human resource come from that financial capital.

FG5P6: I think one of the greatest assets of an organisation is volunteers.

While people are the focus, this can create challenges for workers, as the work involves personal passion.

FG9P2: We don't have the resources. We kinda just putting a lot of our time that we're not compensated for because of our compassion to do what needs to be done.

FG9P3: That's so true.

In the literature review we noted that there was a rise in episodic or short-term volunteering by young people. This was supported by some interviewees.

FG5P7: So, we are finding that we're trying to bring in young people to volunteer if they interested, but there's a short period that they come in and then they'll go because they need to build themselves up personally and work.

Another matter in relation to young people is that for some organisations, the younger generation don't share the same passion of their parents.

FG3P8: Yeah, we experienced that that a lot in our communities, young people seem to really not very much interested in, in older people and because there is also shifts that take place, cultural shock between young people and older people in a new country. When they transition, for young people to continue our organisations, that is an issue. And you need to have a strategy to see how we can get that.

Knowledge Capital

Respondents to the survey were asked about the importance of knowledge in relation to their sustainability. The average response was important and above for most organisations, however for small MCO charities, less so on average.

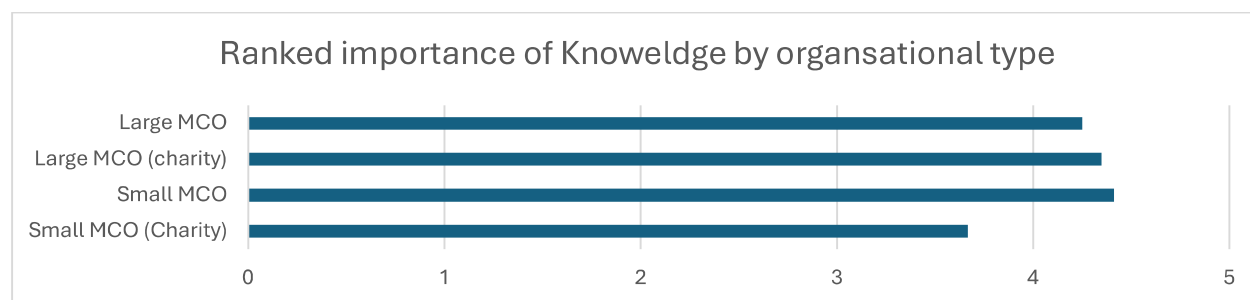


Figure 19 - Ranked importance of knowledge to organisational operations

This is supported in the focus groups, which drew the interesting distinction between knowledge as being in the form of intellectual property, or explicit knowledge, and know how, or tacit knowledge.

FG9P6: And I think that the part to knowledge is the know-how on how to deal with those funding applications and do that work, but there could be some work that you are doing really, really well, which is unique to you, and how do you protect and sustain that work if that [indistinct] to do that. So, it's really around that IP. Yeah.

While knowledge was important in the survey, it was not mentioned as often as financial capital, human capital, or cultural capital.

Social capital

Respondents to the survey were asked about the importance of social capital.

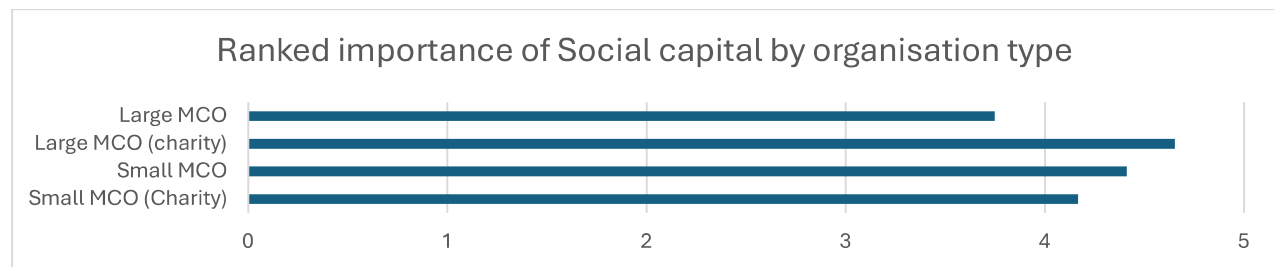


Figure 20 - Ranked importance of social capital by organisational type

For most organisations, social capital (networks) was important or extremely important. Large MCOs rated this item lower, presumably as their income tended to come from trade.

Social capital is important as organisations can access different types of resources via these networks. Take for example knowledge. As one focus group participant put it:

FG2P2: when you don't have the in the skill or expertise internally. Or if you want to make bigger impact, it's your relationships with peer organizations and individuals, who've got that knowledge that you can leverage as well.

Networks can thus lead to resource sharing of knowledge, but also other forms of resources.

FG7P9: Yeah. So, I guess in, for example, in that context, when it comes to social networks, it's important also to be able to find the right people ... trying to get in contact with the right department or the right individual can often be a challenge. However, if you do find that individual, and you are able to speak to them that can enable the ability to have further resources for your organisation, whether that's funding, support or information.

Reputational Capital

Reputation was one of the core resources highlighted at the start of this section.

Survey respondents were asked how important reputation was to their ongoing operations. On average, respondents indicated important to very important.

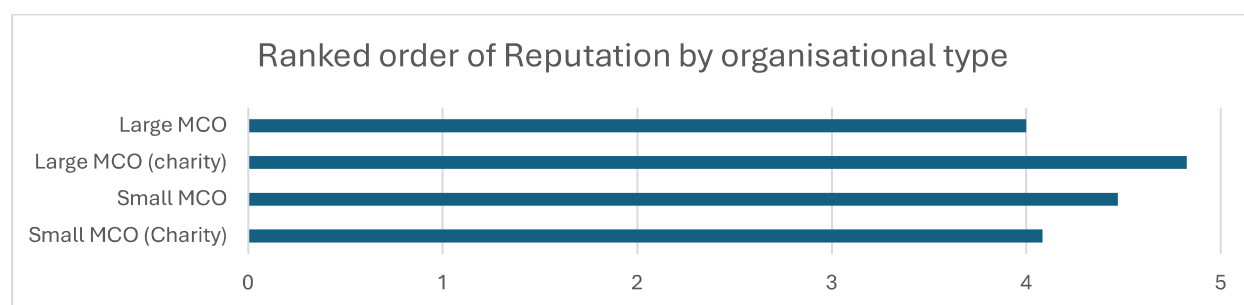


Figure 21 - Ranked order of reputation by organisational type

This was backed up by a small number of comments in focus groups.

FG7P4: the smaller the organisation, or the more niche we are, the more we rely on that reputational capital. So, I think that's very important, based on the work we do, or the feedback or evaluations, or how the community perceives us, whether it's the community that access our services, support programs, events, or the wider community... And I think it's very hard to then leverage other resources, or financial resources, or capabilities, or government funding, if you don't have that, or if that's at all in question.

Physical and Technological Capital

Manufactured capital can be discussed in terms of plant and equipment, technology, and buildings and land.

In terms of buildings and land, or plant and equipment, these were deemed less important, on average, compared to most other capitals by respondents to the survey. Most small organisations considered plant and equipment unimportant, as well as buildings.

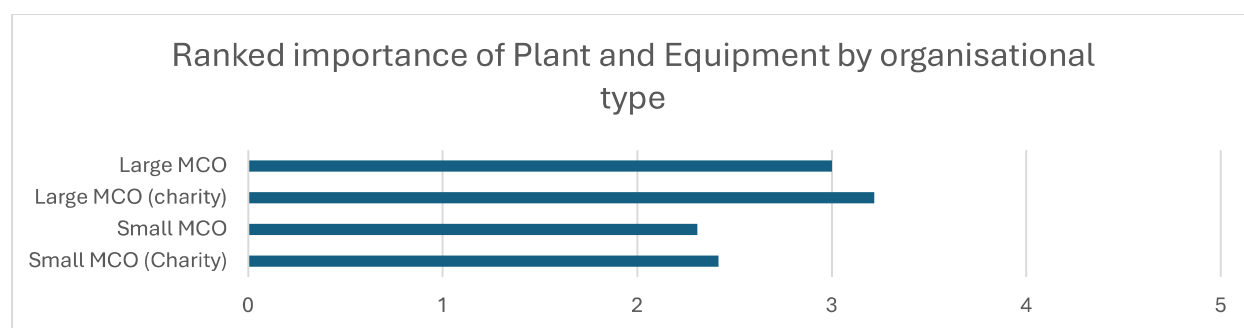


Figure 22 - Ranked importance of plant and equipment by organisational type

Participants in the focus groups disagreed however, arguing the importance of buildings.

FG3P8 I believe that if we want an organisation to be active, this organisation should have place, a permanent place or an office... We are like the homeless when you see them on the road. I'm an organisation, I can email but you don't have something solid to convince the people to come, to be a reference and even know when we go for a discussion... If

there is a place, the people will come for it, if they are starting with a small individual, when the trust is increased, the people will come and the sustainability will continue.

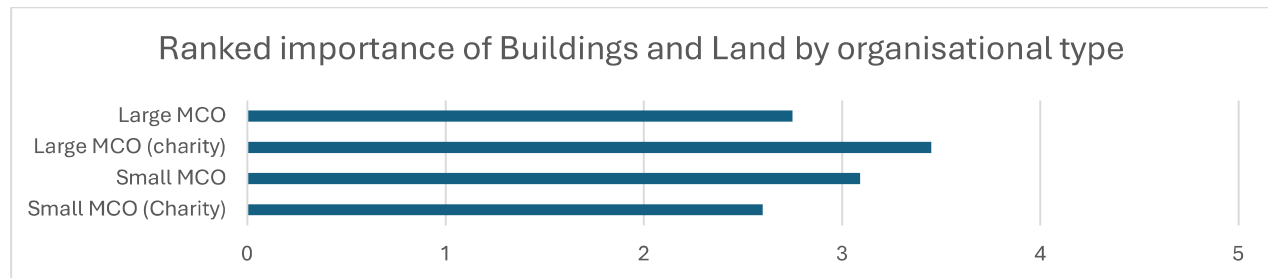


Figure 23 - Ranked importance of building and land by organisational type

A number of smaller organisations called for the establishment of shared venues, such as hubs where they could use the space collectively.

FG3P8 [42:37]: Yeah ... I did want to talk about capital investment because lots of people have talked about spaces and hubs and centres. That is the hardest funding, it's rarely available, but I'll tell you what...it's very, very challenging to get that capital,

Technology was another matter however, with larger organisations seeing technology as vitally important, compared to smaller organisations.

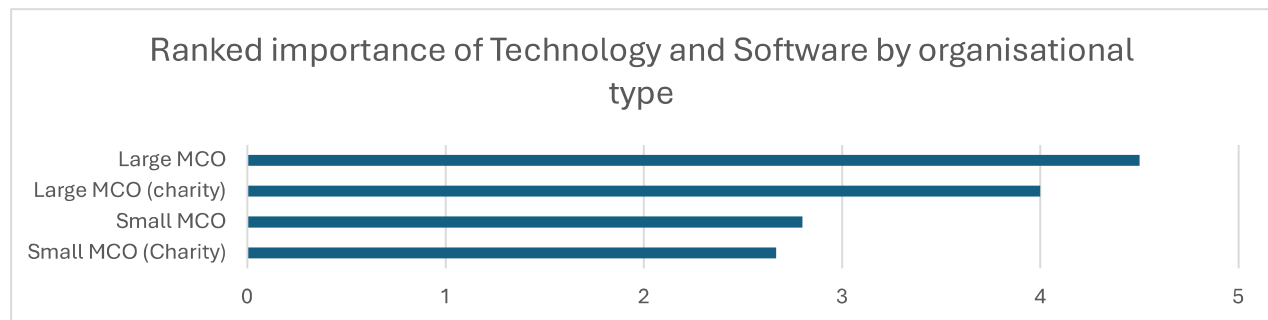


Figure 24 - Ranked order of technology and software by organisational type

This is supported in the focus groups.

FG7P5: Sometimes technology is something that organisations rely heavily on. I know, for the organisation that I run, it's a social enterprise. So, a lot of the resources that we use depend on certain technologies and software, and sometimes not everyone in the organisation is technologically literate.

AI is a relatively new technology, and conversations are also emerging about this.

FG7P2: So, I'm starting the conversation about AI in our organisation and with our board members. So, I can see how AI can be used to help us gain efficiencies within our processes.

Cultural Capital

Respondents to the survey were asked to rank the importance of cultural capital. Unsurprisingly this was rated, on average, as either important or extremely important.

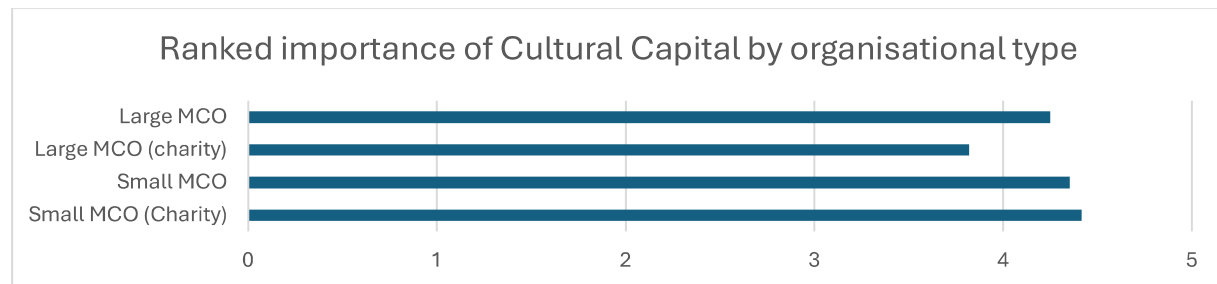


Figure 25 - Raked importance of cultural capital by organisational type

This was supported in the focus group interviews. Several main themes emerged, which included culture as critical to organisational identity, maintaining culture and that MCOs sometimes do, and sometimes don't have multiple sub-cultures.

Some participants noted the importance of culture in terms of their identity:

FG3P8: And came to Australia and we have that pride in us, the culture. So, when we're proud of our culture, we feel dignified. We feel like we have a sense of purpose and when we have a sense of purpose, we show it to the world, we're better contributors.

Others reflected cultural capital in terms of a 'glue' which enabled them to communicate:

FG7P1: Yeah, for us, we're a very small community organisation so having the people and the cultural, you know, capital is really important for us to connect with the communities to engage in the activities that we are doing.

An interesting comment was also made about intergenerational perspectives of culture:

FG9P4: I think because of the first generation transitioning to that second generation where the first generation has the pure culture of the country where they came from, but the second generation who was born here, raised in Australia and their culture is different.

Natural Capital

Natural capital was ranked the least important overall by all organisations in terms of their sustainability.

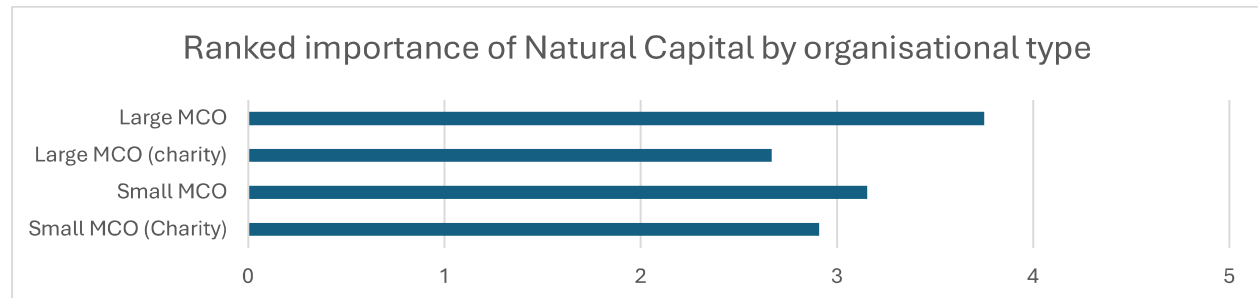


Figure 26 - Ranked importance of Natural Capital by organisational type

Some organisations however do address this form of capital ensuring that they do not impact the planet.

FG7P2: You know, reducing handbooks that we used to produce, looking at ways of sharing a workplace, so we co co-share our office with another organisation and putting in place those practices that are useful and helpful for the environment. So, I think those 2 key sustainability aspects are core to our organisation, anyway.

Having examined the different types of resources and how these can impact organisational sustainability, it is important to note that accessing these resources can come with challenges.

RQ1c: What are the barriers and enablers of accessing resources?

The survey asked what where the main challenges facing MCOs and main responses were around the conditions attached to grants, limited availability of funds, competition for funds, and organisations being unwilling to share.

A few questions were asked in relation to the respondent's views of the future. These included, in terms of how likely the respondent felt that their organisation would be able to:

- Grow annual income
- Maintaining annual income
- Merging with another organisation
- Temporarily ceasing
- Permanently ceasing.

A factor analysis was undertaken to see if there were any clear clusters of responses¹⁷³. Two components were identified which clustered the grow or maintain income, as opposed to merging, ceasing temporarily or permanently.

This was analysed in terms of correlation with organisational type. While not statistically significant, there were apparent differences based on organisational type.



Figure 27 - Comparison of optimistic and pessimistic views of the organisation's prospects

Ranked from extremely unlikely (1) to extremely likely (5).

On average smaller charities considered the possibility of ceasing operations as somewhat unlikely, but this was higher than larger charities, who ranked these possibilities as unlikely. Large charities considered the possibility of maintaining or growing income, likely on average, while smaller charities ranked these options as close to 50/50 probability.

In terms of overall current and future resource needs, maintaining or increasing nearly every type of resources was desired by respondents for future operations.

¹⁷³ A principal component analysis was undertaken with Equimax rotation and Kaiser normalisation. This achieved 100% variance after 6 rounds. Variables were created which were orthogonal and uncorrelated.

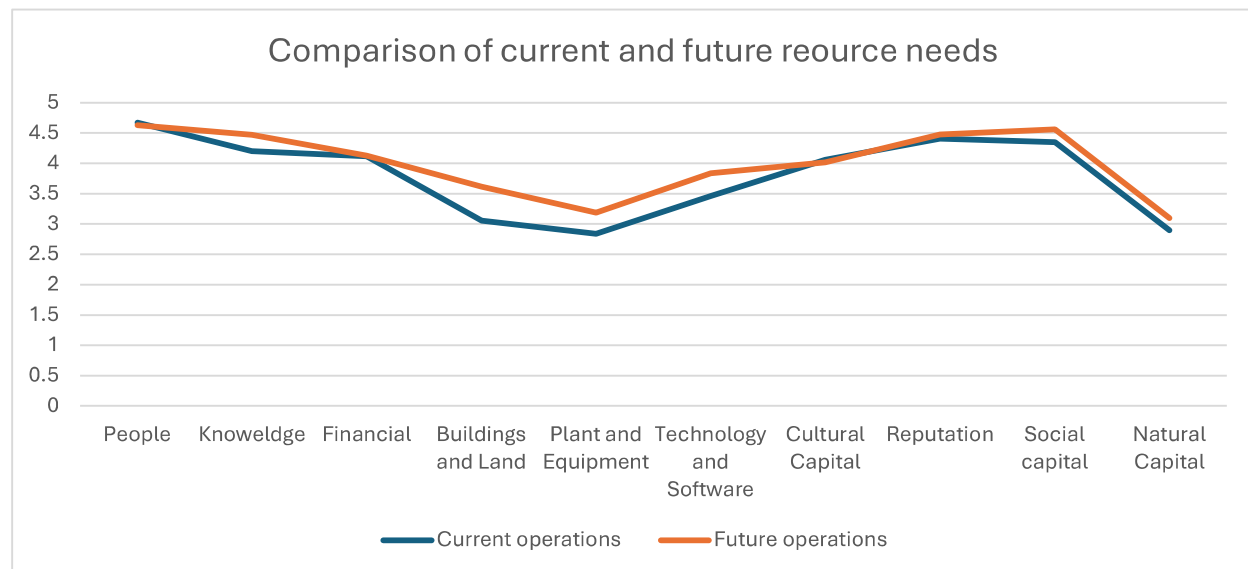


Figure 28 - Comparison of current and future needs of different resources

In terms of grants, the conditions of the grants, the limited availability, and competition for grants were all highlighted. Some respondents also indicated that an unwillingness to share resources from grants was problematic.

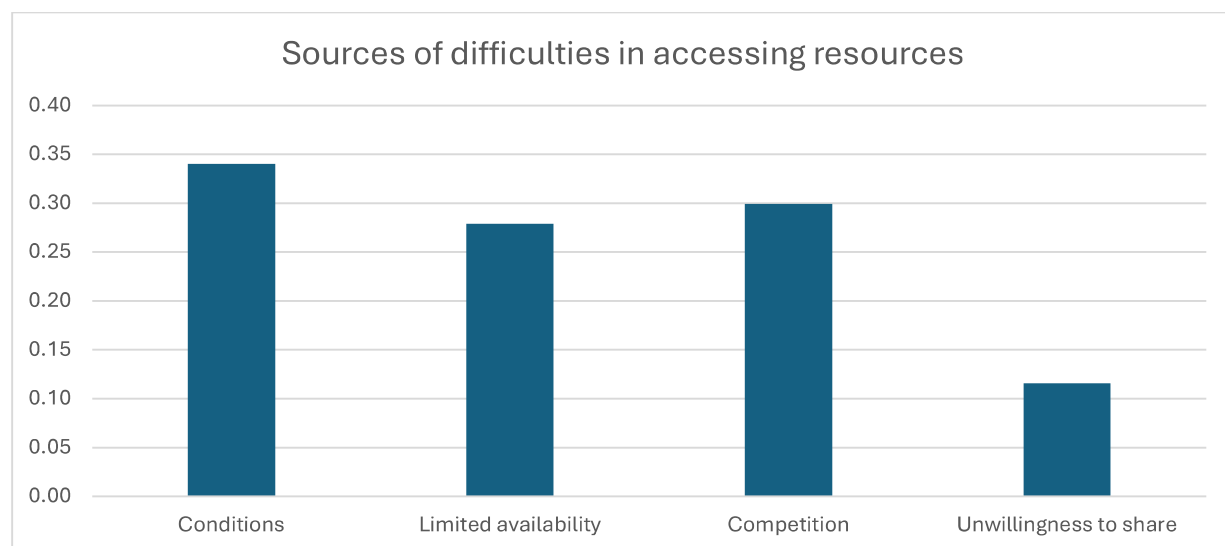


Figure 29 - Sources of difficulties in accessing resources

Additionally, there is a structural issue in relation to accessing grants, particularly due to charitable status being needed as a pre-requisite.

As one respondent in the survey noted:

We applied for a cultural arts grant from the federal government and were rejected for the reason of not being registered as a charitable organisation, despite being a social enterprise.

This was also noted in the focus groups.

FG7P1: But we had to change ...apply for charity status and DGR [deductable gift recipient] status, and for a small organisation like for ourselves, it takes time, and we have to research how we can do that to achieve those goals. We have to change the dynamics of our service and say, 'Okay, will this align with this to be able to gain the DGR? Will this align for us to change our status from not-for-profit to charitable in our status, so that we can access some of these donations, or funding from private businesses to help us stay in the community?'

The focus groups identified several other issues which were barriers relating to funding: particularly that it was often insufficient, inflexible and short-term, often not meeting client needs. Additionally, the competition and red tape involved in applying for and reporting on funds was described as onerous.

Financial sustainability

Many participants expressed frustration with the short-term nature of much funding:

FG9P2: So, if that funding, let's say, only last for a year, we can't really sustain, just having that uncertain future doesn't really help in term of going out there, trying to do what we need to do. So, sustainability would be...if we can get funding 5-10 years ahead of time, then we can feel sustainable to deliver what we need to deliver.

Some went further and point out the impact of the non-continuance of funding

FG8P7 we got three years of funding from the Government and that launched right and then we created a platform, created all of these things. The funding ran out, so those women were now built up to here, now they're back down flat and you lose trust and credibility with the community because they don't understand how government works, right? And they think you're lying to them you know ... you create an expectation, you build up and then there's change of government and that's it and then you're back down again ... the way these organisations are funded, it's not sustainable and even corporate sponsorship as you rightly said, that's not a sustainable form of funding either. So, I think really looking at different business models that can actually build businesses up to be there for the long term

A second issue was the sheer effort involved in applying for grants:

FG5P5: We are a smaller organisation. For us we actually have not been able to access as much funding or resources at all. I think partly...one it's really hard for us to navigate where we can get those resources. Secondly, the criteria for accessing those are really high, you know, to be able to write those grants and to meet, as you said, to meet their goal as well and so oftentimes, we feel like if we do write these grants, you know, get these quotes and all these things, there's a possibility that you still may not get it, and so...I think that's a barrier for us in approaching governments and in applying for them.

FG5P1: For a \$5000 grant for an event, you have to write out a plan, have to have the quotes, tell them what criteria you meet and so that could take weeks, and then you might not get it. Like that's for \$5000 you know.

A third matter was the inflexibility of funding arrangements:

FG3P8: Definitely. And another issue I think you know, is the narrow criteria of some of the funded programs, which doesn't really provide enough flexibility to support somebody in a particular, if they don't fit into a box and I find a lot of grants they really want people to fit into a box to be able to access the service and I really have issue with that because a human's a human, doesn't matter if they're on a tourist visa and they're here and they're vulnerable and they need support.

FG8P7 Then if I put my hat on to the cohort that I'm a part of, which is the cohort of skilled migrants that is trying to build sustainable businesses, the challenge that you have there is multicultural businesses are so diverse ... And you're putting us all in one basket and asking us the question of, you know, there's only this the level of funding, there's only these agencies that can deal with you, and yet our needs so, so different, right? They couldn't be more different than night and one day.

A fourth matter was the lack of fit between what is being funded and what clients need:

FG9P3: The government might say oh this is what you need to focus on, but in reality, that's what not the people need and then you identified what their needs is, but because of the funding and strict on that, it just kind of sit there and not actually covering what they actually need.

Another respondent talked about the preference of government to want to fund low hanging fruit in funding, but that this just creates longer term issues:

FG2P2: I've been ranting about this for years. We seem to concentrate on the low hanging fruit ... we are all about ticking boxes and achieving those very quick outcomes ... So, then you end up with these people sitting on the fringe, where they can easily be turned into a more complex case and that costs more money ... they need to be doing that early intervention and prevention. But that's not sexy for government ...

A fifth matter is competitive funding:

FG3P8: The other part is that I think by the very nature of the way our government puts out funding, they've created a competitive environment, and the emphasis is on providers to work together in a competitive environment. It's very challenging. We do our absolute best because actually for the people that need the supports and services, they shouldn't know any of that, that there's competitive. They should know that there's all these providers. You can go to whoever, they have that, they have that, it shouldn't matter, but by very nature, so the emphasis on providers to work together to meet the need, but without funding to do it, there's no contractual arrangements around partnerships or integrating services, the emphasis is just to do it.

FG2P2: People aren't genuinely collaborating as much as they could or should be able to do, because the way that government grants are pitched is that we're all competing against one another rather than again putting the client at the centre and then going 'What are you good at?' 'What are you good at?'

A sixth matter is in relationship to the grant criteria and its suitability to current social and economic conditions

FG6P16: I mean, how many times and how often ... that grant criteria get reviewed to make it compatible to the increasingly diverse community that is emerging in Queensland. The criteria that I looked look at ten years ago is still the same criteria ... So, I would say that is a hinderance to the progress of these organisations and the sustainability of these organisations. You are trying to make the organisers of multicultural organisations to fit in 100 and 50 years old system.

A seventh matter was the cost of reporting, and the lack of harmonisation across government departments

FG3P8 ... if you're a cultural organisation or a service provider organisation, there are barriers to doing your work. And some are reasonable and justifiable in terms of being a bona fide organisation and making sure people are safe. But at the same time, I think that could be simplified. There could be a harmonisation of some of the standards rather than having to go through a compliance for NDIS, for aged care for CS or whatever it happens to be.

A final matter seems to be around the expectation that MCOs volunteer, rather than be paid.

FG8P7: a huge government agency approached me to do some work in that community. They didn't want to pay me for my time, but that same government organisation would happily pay somebody [else] to do exactly the same work that they were asking me to do. And they felt that I should be honoured to be asked because I was representing my community. So that kind of mentality goes against the sustainability message that government is trying to put out there ... and so you've got fatigue from those that have the skills and their leadership quality to actually be able to make those differences because they don't get paid and they don't get paid properly and so it ends up being, well ... I don't do my program anymore because it's not sustainable. You get burnt out.

Additional Matters

While some of the findings around funding resonate with existing research into non-profit organisations, there were a number of additional factors affecting sustainability for MCOs which were not anticipated. A critical aspect of these was that of insurance.

Insurance

FG3P8: Operational costs are soaring, insurances and rent and often you get funded for just that program and there's no funding for anything else, so organisations, small organisations like us are having to scramble from here to there, trying to stay afloat in this kind of environment.

FG2P2: within our organisation, and we pay an awful lot of insurances, and some migrant organisations can't afford insurances and things. So how do we share those resources in a way that it's more affordable? How do we get ... you know, group insurance, you know. So, you get a better rate?

PG5P8: the cost of insurance ... It's poisonous, you know.

Another matter was cost shifting where chronic underfunding is leading to a broken model:

FG8P7: the volunteer model doesn't work ... Maslow hierarchy of needs, right for me to be able to volunteer, all my needs need to be met, but if I'm using my bread-and-butter income to pay for things that I should be volunteering, it means my kids are having to do without something. That's not a sustainable model, but that's the model that's on the ground at the moment.

FG8P13: So as a fundamental principle, government never pays full price ever... here's a massive cost shift and there's an expectation that the volunteer sector will pick up the slack, right? And that expectation means that people are undercutting their hourly rate in order to contribute to things that are changing the dial on humanity ... and that's probably one of the most frustrating pain points for any community services organisation.

Many participants also expressed concern about burnout and that the system might break down due to a lack of resources and that there seems to be no one listening to the concerns of MCOs.

FG8P7 People get tired. People move on. People are like "oh yeah". Do you know how many of my friends laughed at me that I was coming in here today, and you're going on a Saturday like ... it's not like anything you say is going to make a difference. How many times have we said the same thing? And these are highly astute, very intelligent people who've got so much to contribute, but who've been burned so many times because they participate.

This section highlighted some of the barriers to accessing resources. The focus centred around how funding is currently structured. Key themes that emerged from the focus groups were that funding is insufficient, too strict, doesn't meet the needs of recipients, and is short term in nature. Competition was also not seen to be healthy.

A couple of respondents noted that often consultation with the community focusses on only one part of the migrant community:

FG8P7 So, for example, skilled migrants will hardly attend anything that ... any government organisation does because as far as they're concerned, they're not the target audience. The target audience is the humanitarian community ... So, then you don't get to hear from those business leaders what it is that they need because they just don't see themselves as represented and what they want from government isn't the grant, what they want from government is access to procurement, right?

RQ1d: How might other organisations support the sustainability of multicultural associations?

A number of ideas were put forward about how other organisations might support the sustainability of MCOs. While further exploration will be carried out, the following are helpful suggestions to consider.

The first is around collaboration and resource sharing:

Collaboration and resource sharing

Survey respondents were asked to identify the source of help in accessing resources.

Over 50% respondents indicated having a strong community, awareness of the opportunity, and credibility were the main elements. About a third of respondents indicated that information and calls from peak associations and other MCOs was important, and just over 20% indicated that customers helped access resources.

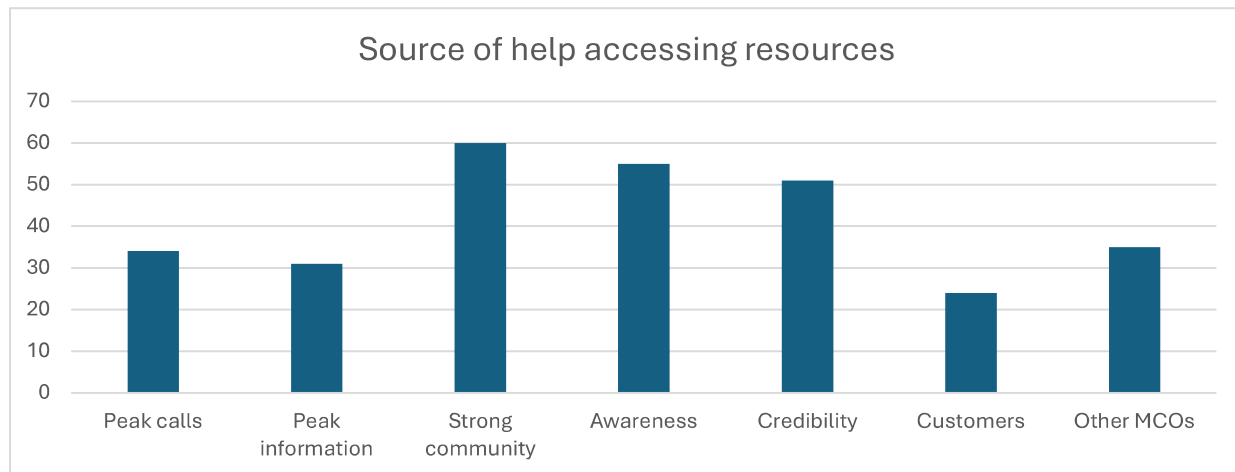


Figure 30 - Source of assistance in accessing resources

Positive experiences of resource sharing

Survey respondents were asked to comment on their experiences in accessing resources.

Positive comments particularly around resource sharing included:

- Resource sharing constitutes a large percentage of our organisation's agenda in bringing community together. This results in positive relationships and gain for both our organisation and with our community.
- Experience has been very positive overall and takes a while to build trust between parties. Once the trust is established it becomes much easier to broaden the relationship overall. It helps very much when KPIs for each organisation are understood and not competing.
- Resource sharing has generally had a positive impact on our sustainability by allowing us to maximise the use of available assets, reduce costs, and foster partnerships with other

organisations. For example, sharing venues, equipment, and expertise has enabled us to deliver programs more effectively without incurring additional expenses. Additionally, it strengthens our community connections and builds goodwill.

Not every experience was positive however, and the following presents a number of comments summarised from survey respondents.

Negative experiences of resource sharing

- At times the sharing of resources can be challenging if not of equal investment from both organisations.
- Funded organisations sending clients to us when it's too difficult for them to handle and we are voluntary and unfunded.
- It has also been a disadvantage for our organisation in terms of enabling other organisations to meet their target or KPI, without any financial gain.
- Scheduling conflicts can arise when resources are shared, leading to delays or adjustments in program delivery. Additionally, relying on shared resources can sometimes limit our flexibility to respond quickly to emerging needs. Despite these challenges, we believe resource sharing is a valuable approach that supports long-term sustainability when managed collaboratively and with clear communication.
- Sharing resources requires lots of relationship building and communication. This is rewarding but often time consuming and dependent on people moving on from roles.
- Sometimes it delays our operation as we need to go through various formalities, permission, and negotiation.

Some organisations auspice the activities of other organisations as they do not have the legal status or insurances in place to enable them to access resources:

FG5S7: You know the notion of having bigger organisation ... we certainly auspice our smaller emerging groups. So, whenever they needing to apply for funding, we auspice on their behalf so that they don't have to deal with [insurance and acquittals].

Network diagram of collaboration

In the survey, respondents were asked with which organisations do you collaborate with. This set of relationships can be graphed¹⁷⁴. This and a map created of the current state of collaboration as reported in the survey. As illustrated, there are a number of organisations at the right-hand side of the graph all working with each other (they are connected with lines). Red organisations are those who responded to the survey and blue organisations are those which

¹⁷⁴ 2 mode data was normalised using Euclidean method and graphed using graph theoretical method

they indicated they worked with. Based on the number of common connections to the blue organisations, it is evident that there is a degree of collaboration happening across respondents.

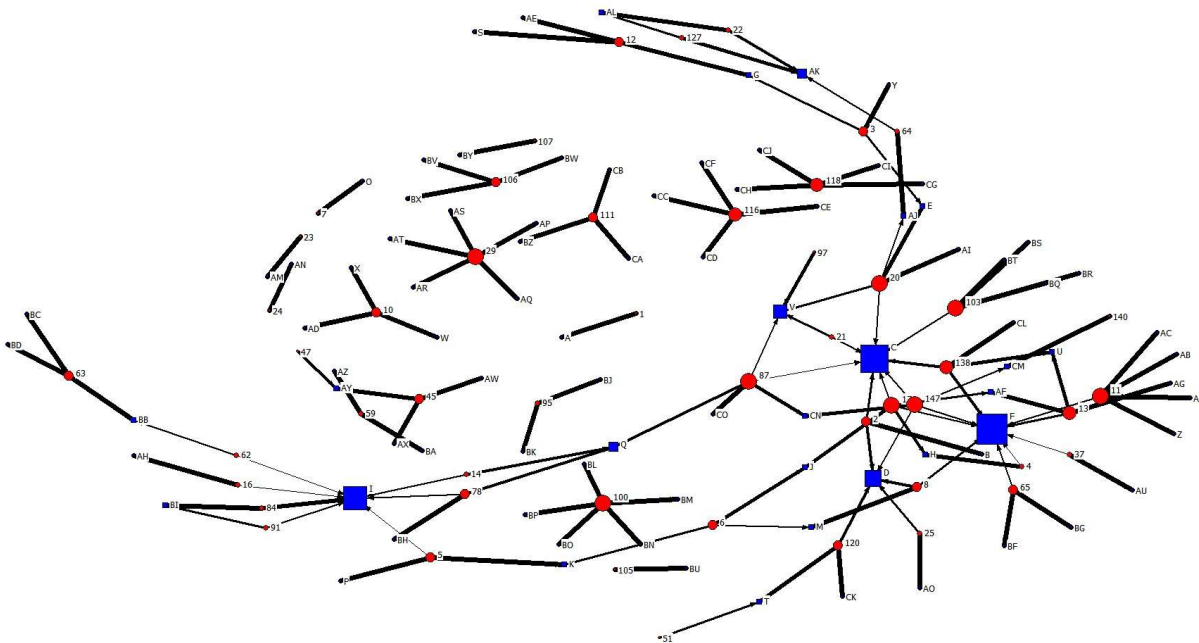


Figure 31 - Network map of organisational collaboration¹⁷⁵

There are also several organisations which only work with a small set of other organisations (primarily in the middle of the graph. Partly this is due to the relatively small sample size. Based on the graph though, the thick lines (which indicates the strength of the tie), demonstrate there is risk that some organisations could be too embedded in a small number of repeated contacts. Most respondents are interwoven in a complex mix of weak and strong ties which is arguably healthier for the organisation in the longer term. If an organisation is too strongly tied, it can miss out on new information or resources.

Focus group participants also stated:

FG5P7: You know the notion of having bigger organisation to auspice...from our experience, some of the bigger organisations take a lot of fee from these smaller groups and so that's why we're needing to rethink how do we help, we certainly auspice our smaller emerging groups.

FG7P4: Sharing resources and collaboration is the only way that small organisations and small social enterprises can survive. But there's a cautionary tale here around sharing resources and governments and large organisations cost shifting to small organisations.

¹⁷⁵ This is a 2-mode network diagram with organisations in red being responding organisations and those in blue being those which organisations worked with.

FG7P3: People don't necessarily want to share the resource of their time if they don't necessarily see how this can benefit their small or big enterprise, right? Because again, their time and resources is limited and if you just share too much without actual collaboration like FG7P4 was saying, it becomes frustrating, right? It becomes something that you just keep giving without seeing a practical impact on the things you care about.

Another element of collaboration is the importance of promoting awareness of information:

FG9P4: and information sessions for people in the community where to access certain channels to get support. The people who are assigned to, will take responsibility because one of my experience where I was looking for a housing for my client is that I've been led to different channels already and all of them are saying that "oh we're just information to guide you", but there's no one to take care of that certain client.

Some respondents noted that collaboration is not without risk though:

FG9P7: There's always that sensitivity of what's going to happen in the future, thinking about the risk, but I do believe everything has a risk and that way, conflict of interest come in and there's no genuine partnership anymore because we all after the same thing, forgetting that we all started at first to give services to the people, but because of the fear of the funding, it bridge that gap is like, am I gonna lose funding because some of them are afraid if you partnership with these people.

Government in particular was identified as a source of additional assistance.

Firstly, there was a general sense of frustration with 'consultation' being a mere tick-a-box exercise rather than genuine consultation. As a result, participation rates drop significantly.

FG2P8: A lot of government officials will come here, will talk to us ... It's all about ticking the box saying that we have met with the community which when we need to do something ... I even talked to one of the ministers. And I told him like, if you come in here to talk to us [they] have a very high expectation, hopefully that something would happen. But when you come to them and you're not gonna fulfill even 20% of what you said is not gonna happen again. And that's why a lot of meetings nowadays. You're gonna see 2 or 1 person attended because they give up.

What is frustrating for participants is a lack of consultation with people who are affected, particularly when they have grassroots knowledge of the issues facing their communities and may have solutions to many issues in their midst.

FG8P7: ... to answer your question where yes, we are meat in the sandwich. There are huge instances where there's no sandwich, right? Because those people are not even

part of the dynamic that's being discussed, they're almost a neglected, forgotten group. And yet if it can be harnessed, a lot of the challenges that government is trying to solve can actually be solved by the community themselves.

What is needed (summary from free text field in survey)

In the survey, participants were asked what was needed. These answers are provided as a paraphrased and summarised in the table below. Repeated requests are bolded.

Table 5 - Summary of actions to support MCOs from the survey

Financial capital ¹⁷⁶	• Increased financial resources / support • Specific requests regarding grants ○ Long-term funding grants (not short-term) ○ Funding for overheads and administration costs and salaries ○ Longer lead time for grant applications ○ Enhanced feedback on grant applications ○ Reduced red tape / reporting on grants ○ Increased appetite for risk • Seed funding appropriate for grass roots organisations • Income generating projects to fund projects that do not receive government funding • More support for migrants escaping conflict zones • Increased corporate donations
Human Capital	• Access to grant writer / grant writing training • General training and team wellbeing allocation in grants • Additional support for volunteer led organisations
Social Capital	• Joint partnerships and campaign resource sharing with peak bodies
Information capital	• Government outreach and information sharing • List of available grants and funds • Policy and procedures, ethical guidelines and cultural advice • Support for registration as a charity
Technical / Physical	• Many small organisations need access to buildings • Some are unable to access existing buildings due to insurance requirements • Advanced digital tools, including upgraded software and hardware would improve efficiency in program management, virtual service delivery, and community engagement • IT support and advice
Cultural	• Develop the spirit of community which are in creativity, arts and cultural heritage • Cultural competence in grant makers - decisions often from a Euro-centric lens

¹⁷⁶ Some comments which were political in nature have not been shown

Future work

This study has focussed on the current state of resources for MCOs in Queensland. It provides a base line of the current challenges to sustainability and provides some initial considerations of what might be done.

The results largely reflect the notions of Barney et al. who argued in their review of RBV, that while research into the effects of resources on outcomes has continued surprisingly little has been undertaken in terms of how resources are developed¹⁷⁷. It also reflects the RDT view in that often the conditions attached to funding carry costs for the organisations¹⁷⁸. As outlined at the start of the document, there is a limit to what can be achieved in any project. This project focussed on identifying what sustainability means, the resources which are needed to achieve this, and any barriers or enablers to accessing these resources.

Future work is needed in consultation with MCOs on how to address the challenges they are currently facing. As Duchek¹⁷⁹ explains, “organizational resilience is an organization's ability to anticipate potential threats, to cope effectively with adverse events, and to adapt to changing conditions”. This ability to change in response to internal and external environments is anticipated as being central to any attempts to address concerns raised in this report.

Additional areas noted which are worthy of consideration in future work, but were beyond the scope of this report, included:

Sustainability

- The age and stage of the organisation in relation to sustainability. Organisations go through various life cycles, and this has implications for the sustainability¹⁸⁰ of MCOs.
- While income diversification is a goal to reduce risk, this also requires a higher range of skills in an organisation, as fundraising is quite different from grant writing or commercial activities. The inter relationship of different types of resources could be explored further. Additionally, how different financial sources might affect other sources could also be explored.
- Difference between short term sustainability (keeping the doors open) and long-term sustainability (thriving as an organisation, remains opaque
- Transitioning pathways – how do MCOs move from ‘start ups’ (cottage) or grass roots organisations to having long term viability (corporate)
- Cases of how different types of organisations where able to achieve sustainability are needed.

Finance

- A cost benefit analysis of the impact of suddenly stopping government income for organisations. While there may be initial efficiencies, the cost may be borne by MCOs initially (cost shifting) but also by government in the longer term.
- Consideration of full financials (profit and loss, balance sheet, cash flow) in relation to sustainability.

¹⁷⁷ (Barney, Wright and Ketchen Jr)

¹⁷⁸ (Viens)

¹⁷⁹ (Duchek 220)

¹⁸⁰ (Su, Baird and Munir)

Volunteering

- Second and third generational migrants and their engagement with MCOs may prove a significant challenge in the future, as will the changing nature of how volunteering occurs
- The term volunteering may mean things in different cultures and so future research could explore alternative meanings of volunteering in different cultural contexts – for example the difference between an ‘active citizen’ and a volunteer.

Culture

- Intra-organisational culture and governance as this affects sustainability
- Relationship between organisational culture, ethnic culture(s) and national culture
- Future research should consider not just over-arching cultures, but also sub-cultures in migrant communities
- The intersection of locality specific resources and culture specific resources
- Cultural and religious safety when accessing public spaces.

Collaboration

- How large and smaller community organisations might work better together
- Funding of co design activities.

Policy

- Wider acknowledgement across government of the significant shift migration has brought in society. Many policies seem designed for 10 – 15 years ago, and not suitable for current society
- Intersectionality of MCOs and other sectors (e.g., aged care, housing, community services) in funding, reporting and consulting
- Future consultations should be government wide, e.g., arts, housing and public works, health, aged care. community services due to this intersectionality
- Ensuring there is a category for cultural organisation for registration as a DGR
- Review of access and equity policies of local councils in terms of resource access and distribution.

Other

- Impact of repeated disasters on MCO resources
- Exploration of ‘political capital’ as an aspect of, or different from, other types of capital
- The cost of accessing professional services
- How to address the souring costs of insurance.

It is recommended that any future work consider a more nuanced examination of the challenges for different types of organisations. For example, creating a social enterprise income requires a different set of competencies to fundraising or grant writing. Recently established MCOs also face challenges that are unique compared to their more established counterparts. Additionally, some of these responses are not possible for MCOs on their own to address and there needs to be structural changes in institutional arrangements which recognise MCO diversity. Taking suggestions from a couple of sources, the following focus on future studies would be helpful. Additional suggestions from this research are included in [blue](#).

Table 6 - Summary of actions to enhance organisational sustainability¹⁸¹

Area	Action
Revenue enhancing	Consider diversifying income through: - Social enterprises - Fees for services - Corporate sponsorship - Contracting with government - Membership dues Changing to funding arrangements for longer term, better targeted, more flexible, less onerous grants Information of available grants more readily available
Donation enhancing	Foundations Relationship and identity-based fundraising Grants Marketing Access to list of grants / foundations
Cost reduction	Increase volunteering In-kind donations Creating cost efficiencies Strategic alliances / collaborations Support for volunteering management Support to build networks and alliances Support for genuine collaborations
Access to buildings	Shared access to buildings / hubs Addressing insurance costs for building access
Insurance	Alternative insurance arrangements for smaller organisations
Capability development	Build capability in grant writing Leadership, management and governance training Training provided in plain English at times when people are able to attend
IT development	Support for funding IT Support for IT implementation
Mission based sustainability	Redefine mission Branding Service efficacy Networking Strategic renewal Mergers / Acquisitions / Divestments Awareness raising Public relations Education Cross promotion
Government engagement	Genuine engagement with communities, not 'box ticking'

¹⁸¹ Adapted from (McDonald et al.) and (Seo and Bryson)

This is an incomplete list however as it does not consider changes needed in the external environment, for example changes to the way contracts are framed, the level of funding provided, and how to lessen the impact of competition on collaboration. These require actions beyond the remit of any single organisation and require systemic change. It is recommended that these items form a basis for future research projects.

Conclusion

Migration is at an all-time high in Australia with the highest levels of overseas born residents since colonial days, and the highest in the world. MCOs are at the front line of supporting migrants settle in this country. MCOs are passionate about supporting their communities, and are committed to sustainability, and yet struggle with a lack of resources.

This report sought to examine the core issue of how the sustainability of MCOs might be maintained or enhanced. Data from both interviews and surveys indicated that sustainability is a complex multi-dimensional phenomenon which involves access to a variety of resources.

Resources of all types were critical to enabling sustainability, with a higher importance placed on people, finances, social capital, knowledge and reputation of MCOs. Other types of resources were perceived as more or less important depending on the type of organisation (small / large, registered charity or not). Additionally, even within each resource type, such as finance, there were differences between different type of organisations. Resources often place constraints on organisations (in terms of what can and cannot be spent), and restraints prevent organisations from accessing resources.

There were several challenges however, particularly in terms of barriers to accessing some resources. Barriers include short-term grants, the effort required to apply and report on grants, insufficient funding and cost-shifting, inflexibility of grants, inadequate funding overall to meet the needs of community, and a competitive funding environment. Additional barriers were insurance and the challenges in resource sharing.

Many organisations, particularly small organisations were pessimistic about the future, although larger organisations were more optimistic. All organisations indicated a need for future resources of all types to increase.

Several key areas have been identified in this research for examination in any future studies. This is particularly important if the intent is to collaboratively work with MCOs to develop strategies to address the issues raised in this report.

Appendix A – Correlation analysis of resource importance

Bivariate correlation of resource importance for current operations

	People	Knowledge	Financial	Buildings and Land	Plant and Equipment	Technology and Software	Cultural Capital	Social capital	Reputation	Natural Capital
People	--									
Knowledge	.572**	--								
Financial	.533**	.631**	--							
Buildings and Land	.206	.254	.362**	--						
Plant and Equipment	.200	.440**	.486**	.595**	--					
Technology and Software	.365**	.554**	.617**	.338*	.583**	--				
Cultural Capital	.376**	.544**	.123	.179	.240	.252*	--			
Social capital	.632**	.573**	.463**	.192	.225	.324*	.540**	--		
Reputation	.594**	.644**	.536**	.172	.326*	.431**	.523**	.845**	--	
Natural Capital	.070	.185	.000	.210	.302*	.238	.438**	.221	.101	--

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Further analysis of the correlation analysis can be undertaken¹⁸². The correlation analysis is provided below¹⁸³ using nonmetric multidimensional scaling of geodesic distances¹⁸⁴.

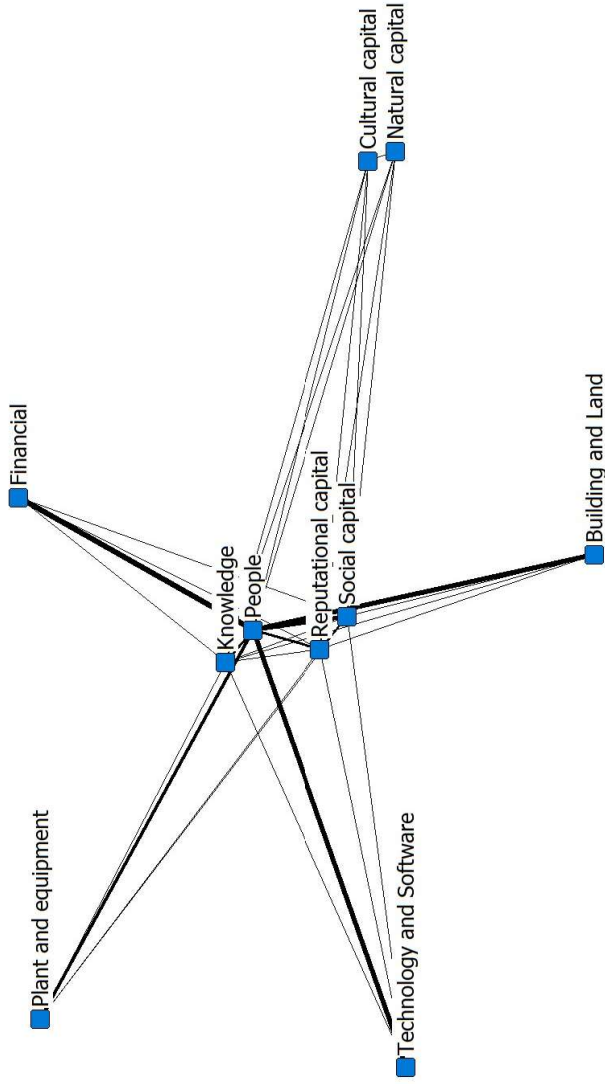


Figure 32 - Relative importance of organisational operations

different types of capital for

While the previous table provided correlation of resources individually with each other, this graph shows each resource in relation to all other resources. Knowledge and people are closely related and central. Social capital and reputational capital are also central and closely related. People rated the importance of each of these very closely across the sample.

¹⁸² A bivariate correlation is also available in Appendix A.

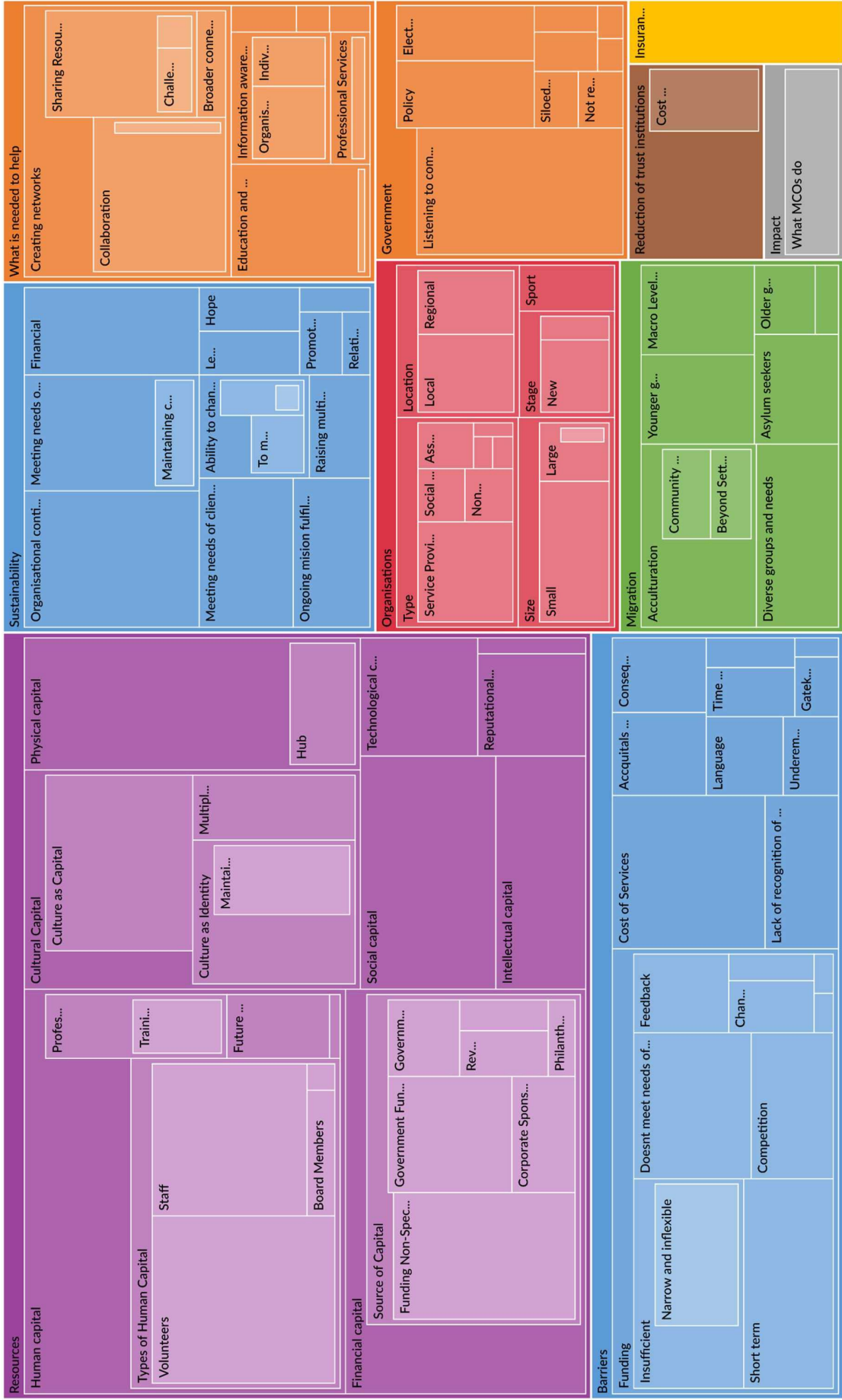
¹⁸³ The process was as follows. Data was exported from the survey into UCINET, which is used to analyse matrix data. The importance of each resource for each respondent was converted from 2 mode data to 1 mode data following a sum of cross products normalized by minimum sum of each vector. The matrix data was normalised using z scores of the matrix with the diagonal excluded. This was analysed in NetDraw using multidimensional scaling graph theoretic modelling which shows the most central resources at the centre of the graph.

¹⁸⁴ Nonmetric MDS is preferable over Metric MDS even with data normalised in most situations (Everton)

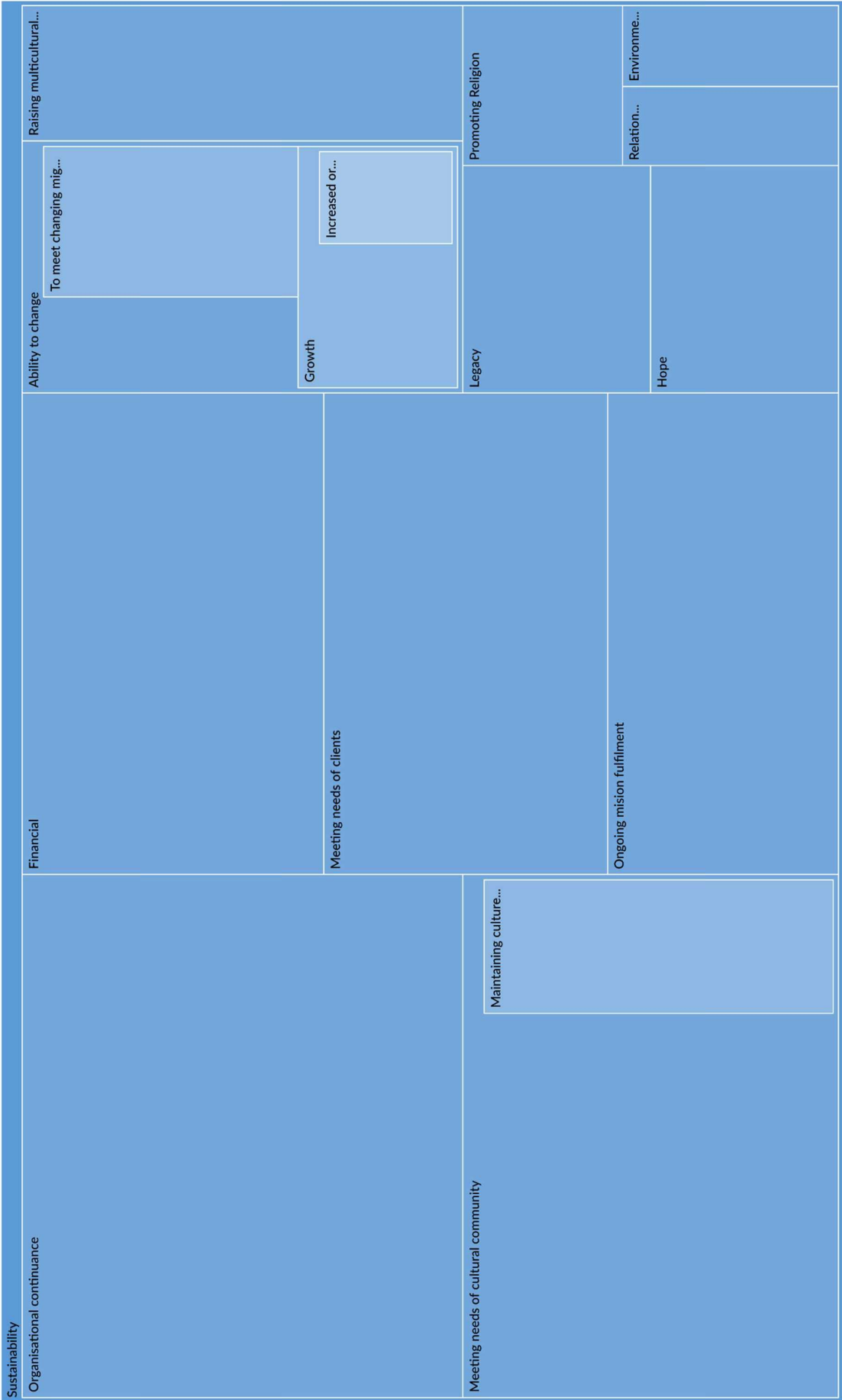
Appendix 2 – Coding Frequency for Each Research Question

In addition to the survey, focus groups data was coded in NVIVO. A comparison of the relative importance of each theme is included in the following pages where the relative size of the square below indicates the importance of the theme, in relation to other themes related to sustainability. Each main theme is colour coded for clarity.

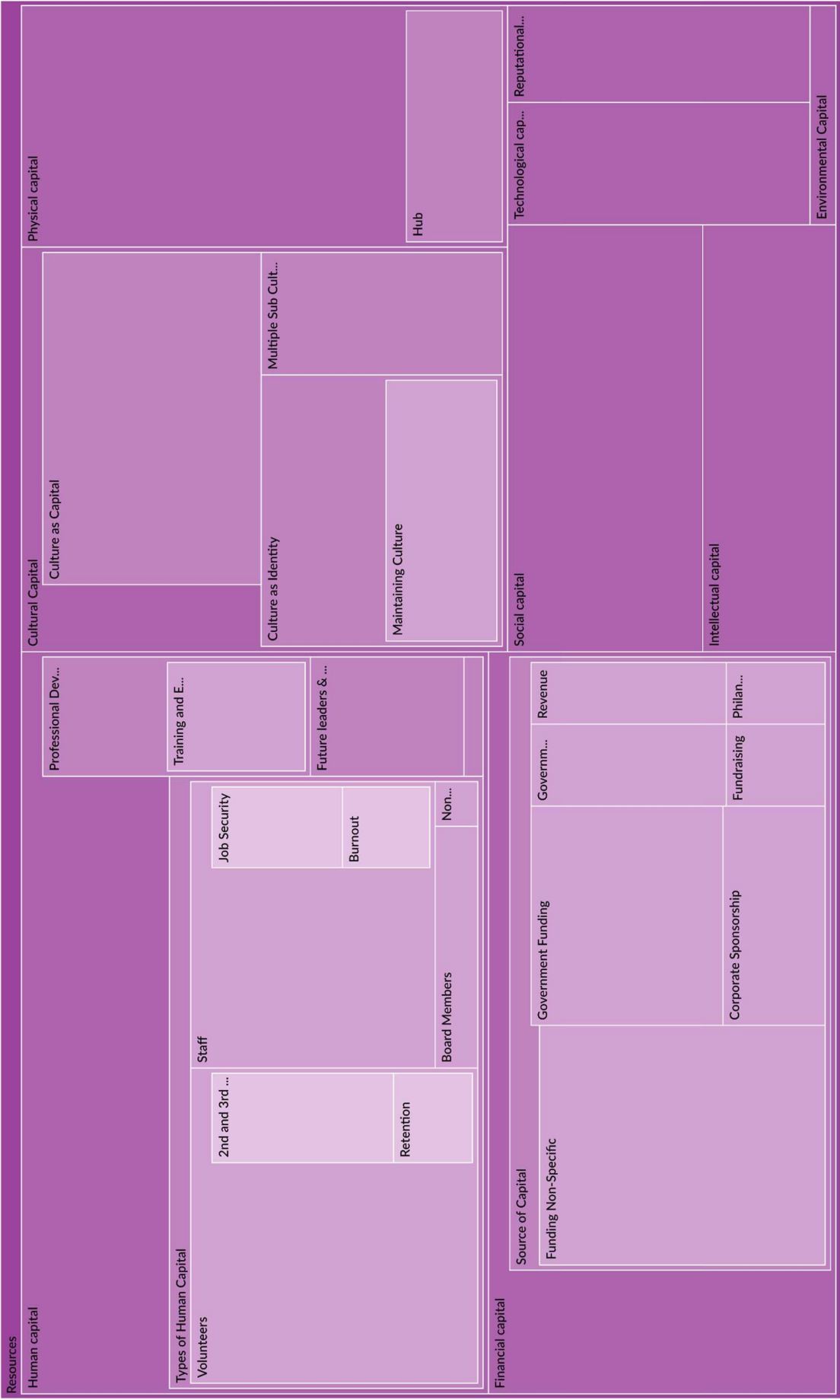
Overview of the Coding of focus groups included in this report.

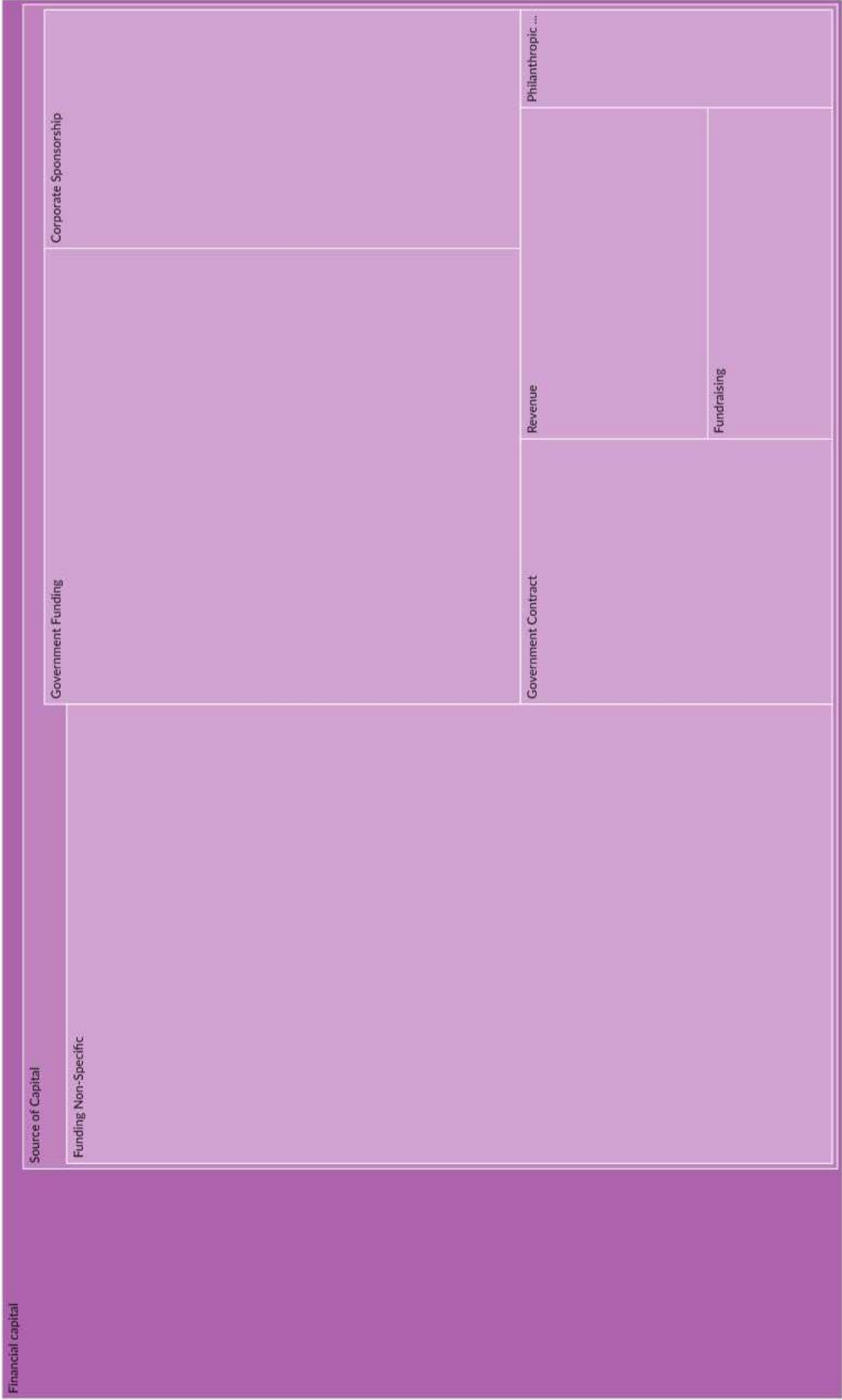


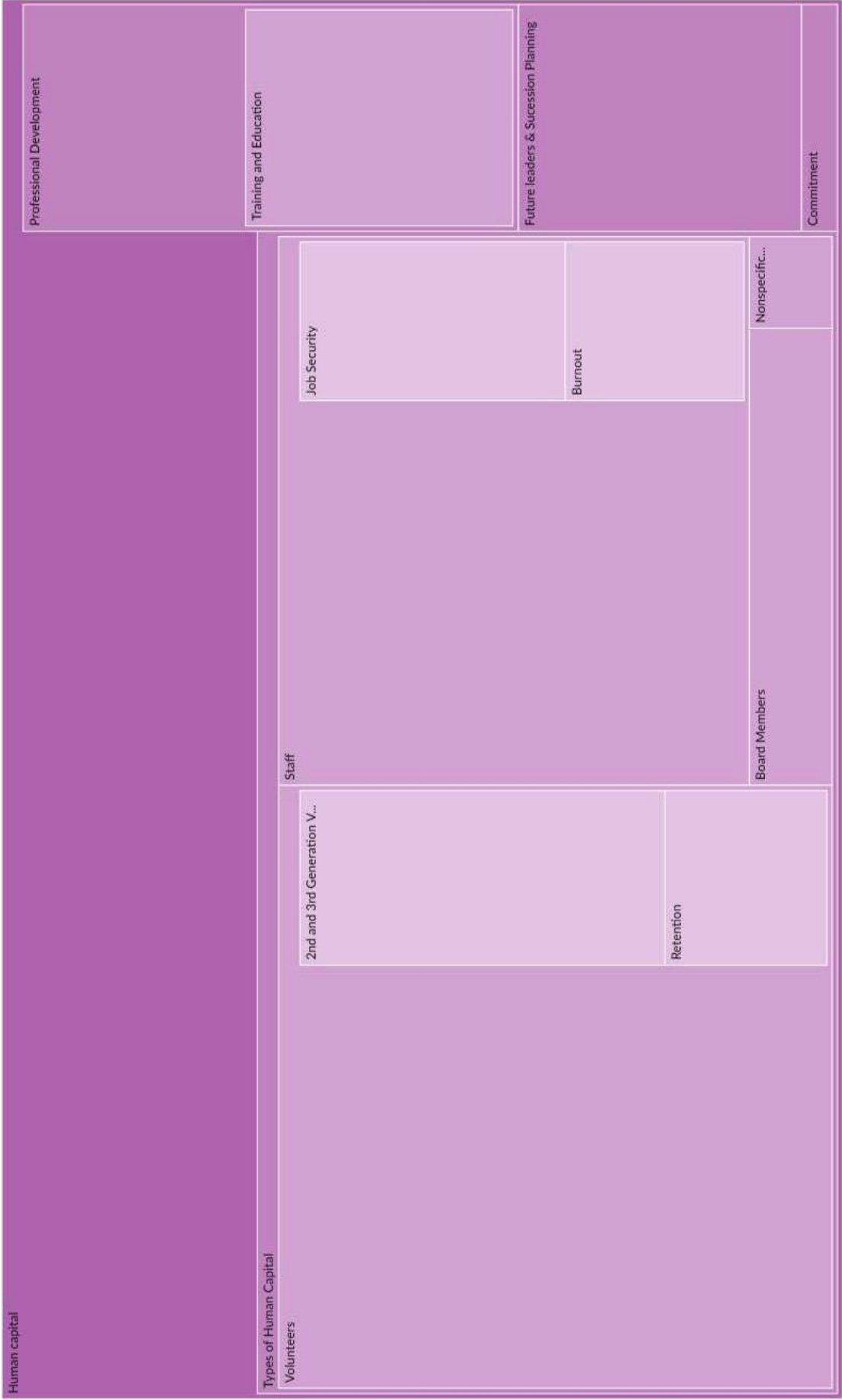
➤ RQ1a: What is sustainability?



➤ RQ1b: How do resources support sustainability?







In order to compare the ratio of staff to volunteers, a scatterplot was undertaken¹⁸⁵.

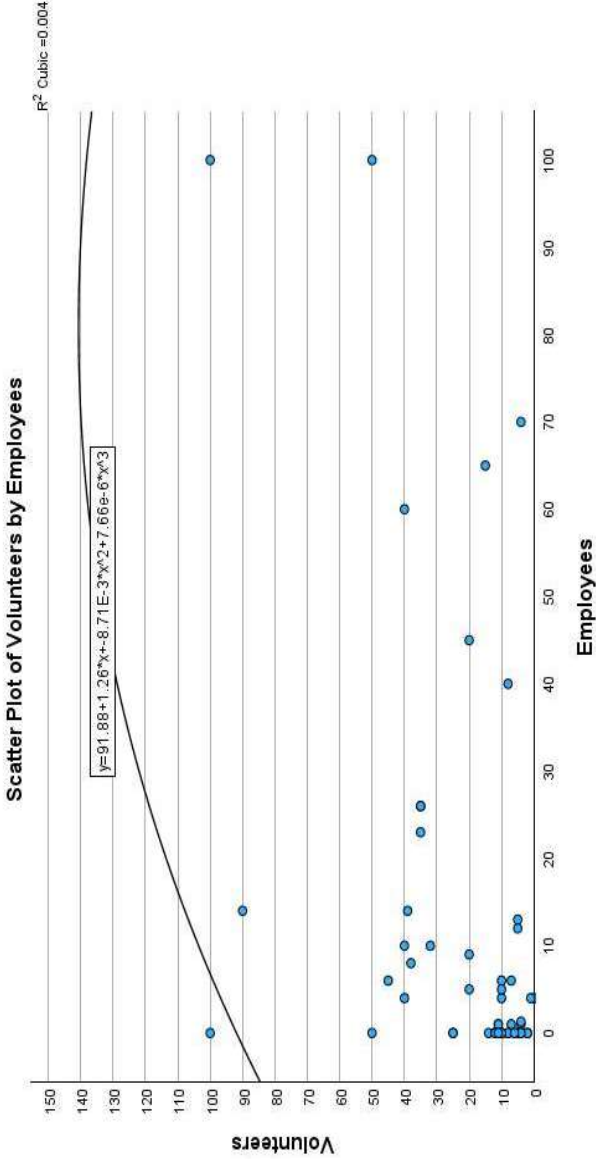
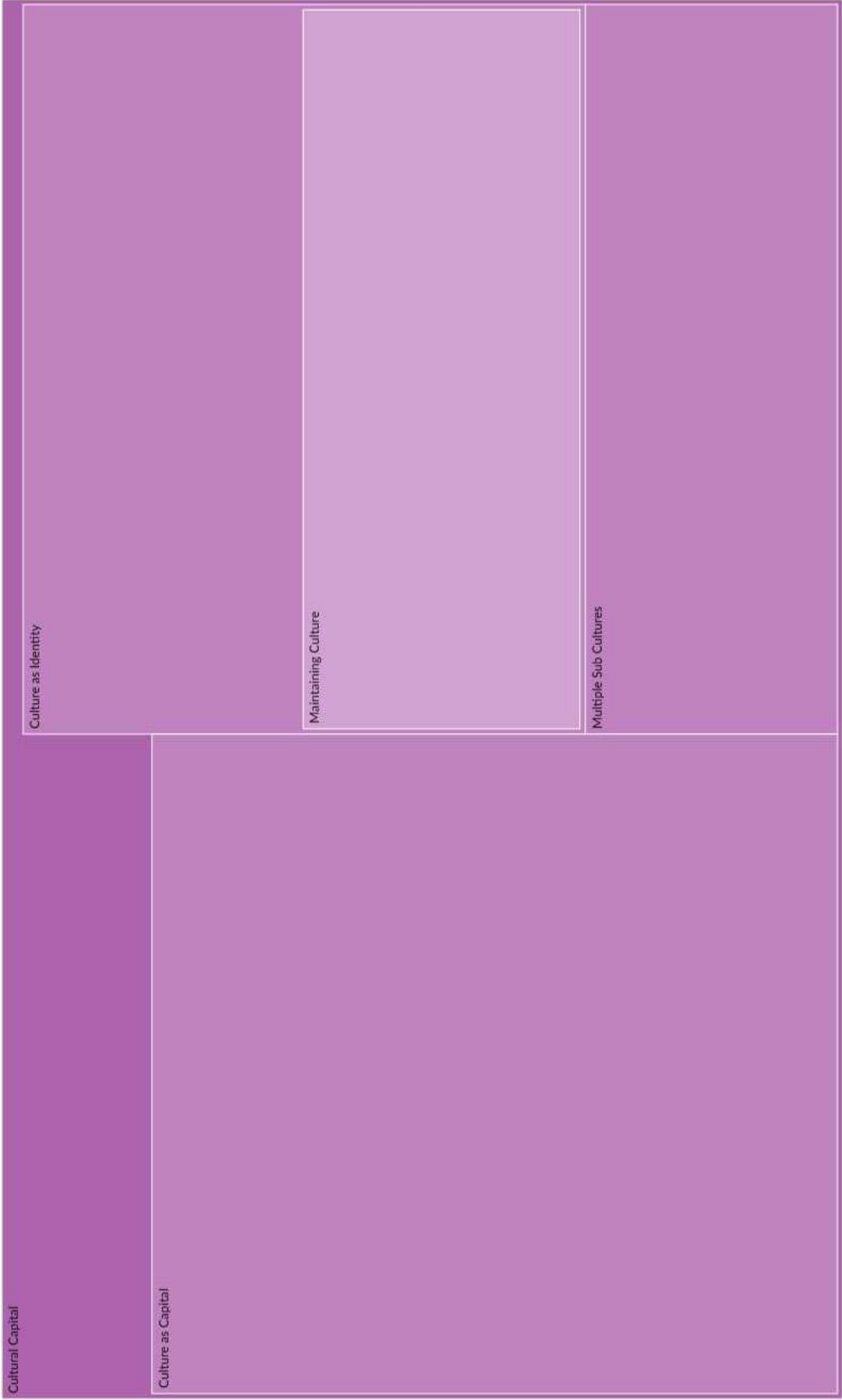


Figure 33 - Scatterplot of staff to volunteers

This graph indicates that the number of volunteers levels off, even as staff numbers continue to increase. That suggests there may be a ceiling to the number of volunteers in an organisation as volunteers require training, management and care, so are not actually free.

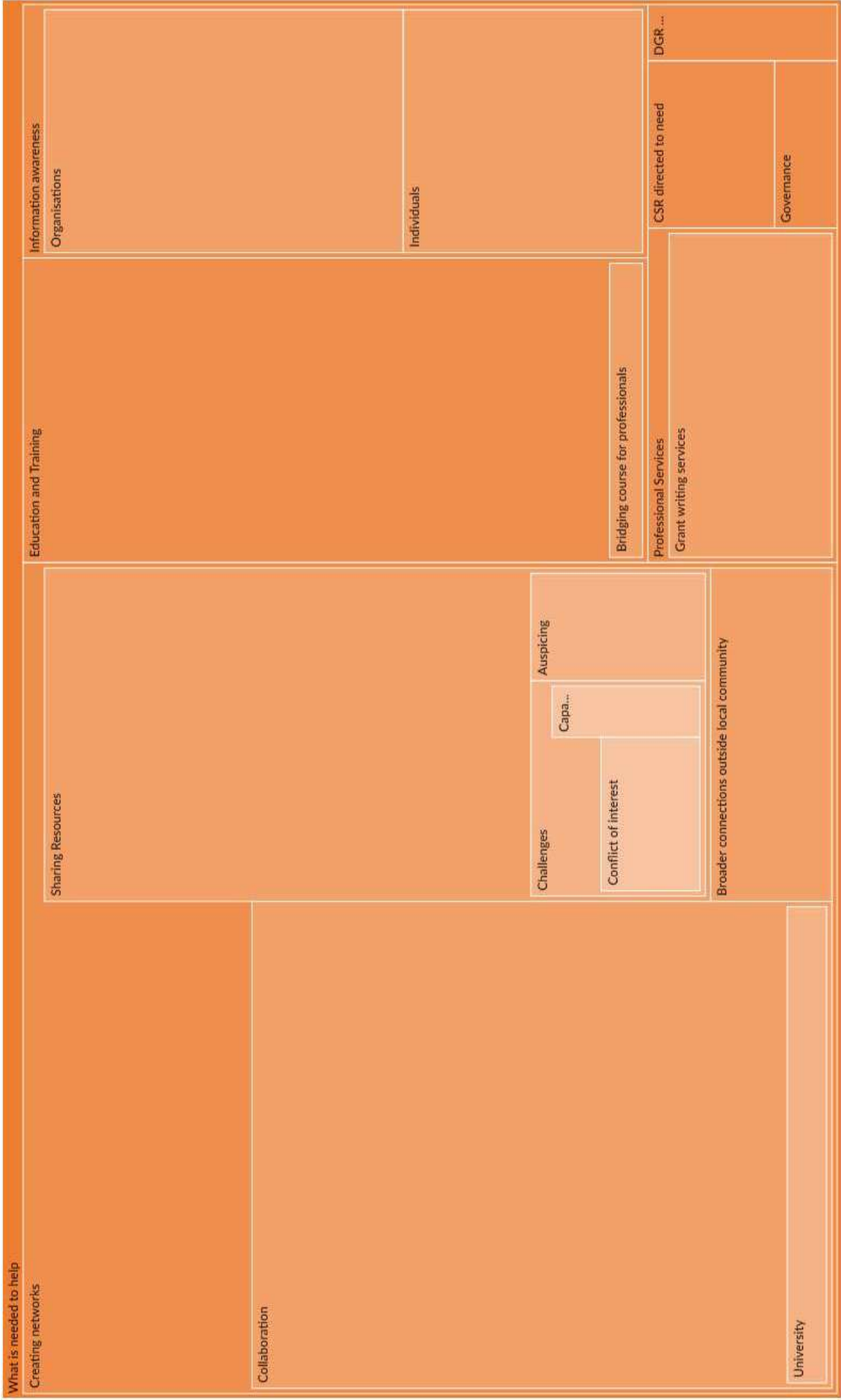
¹⁸⁵ This graphic has been adjusted to remove outliers in both staff and volunteers.

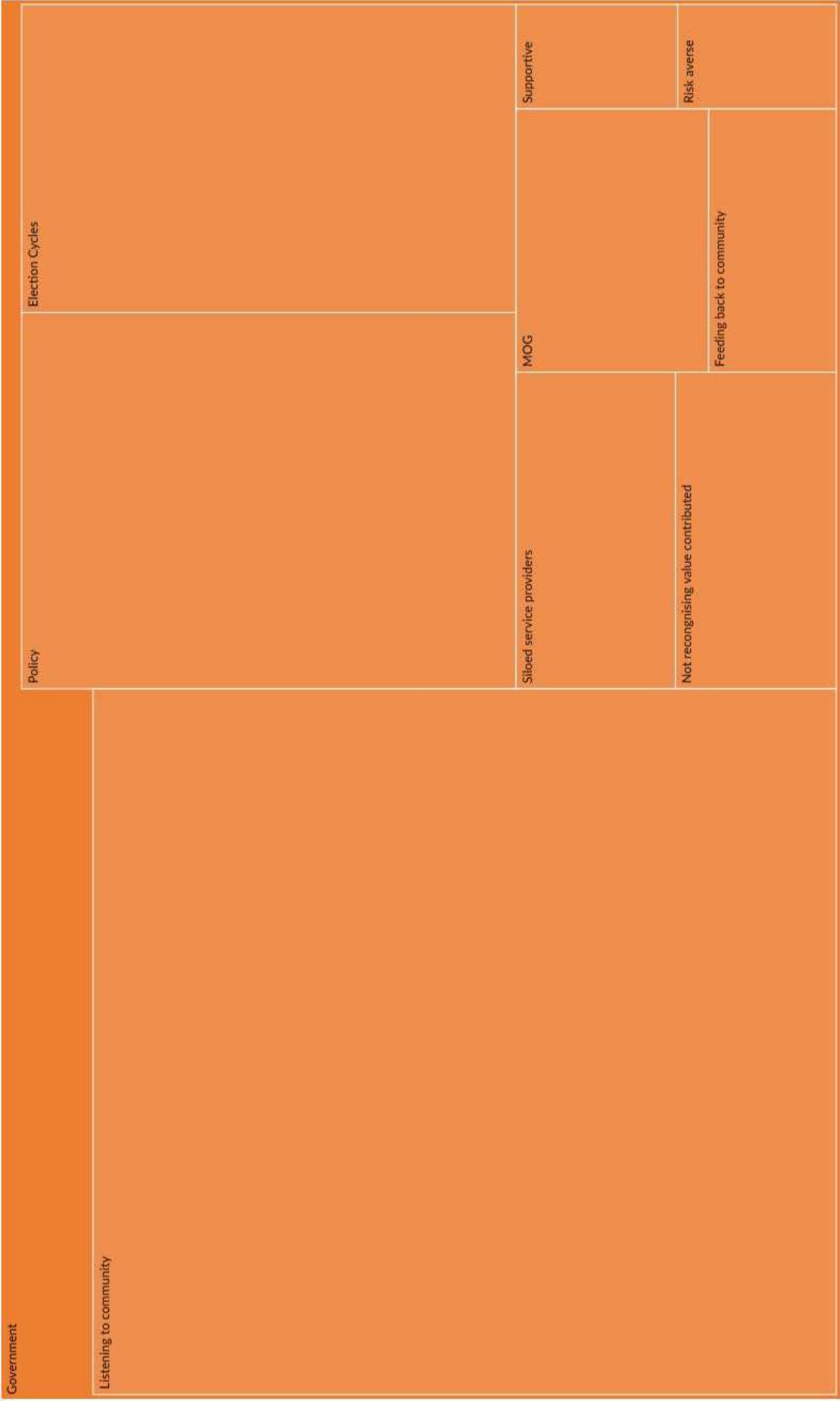


➤ RQ1c What are the enablers and barriers to accessing resources?

Barriers			
Funding	Cost of Services		
Insufficient	Competition	Lack of recognition of skills	
Short term	Narrow and inflexible	Accutuals and Compliance	Underemployment
Doesnt meet needs of clients		Language	Gatekeepers
		Time Poor	
		Consequence of lack of resources	Underrepresented in business
			Trauma

➤ RQ1c How might other organisations support the sustainability of multicultural associations?





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