

# lift for survival

According to recent research conducted by Brap - the Birmingham Race Action Partnership - a significant number of BME third sector organisations are at risk unless they develop the skills needed to become more enterprising, compete for tenders, and form working partnerships with others. Joy Warmington, Chief Executive of Brap, says: "Given the role that BME third sector organisations have in delivering services to some of the most disadvantaged groups in the UK, the loss of such organisations would be catastrophic. This is why one of Brap's main areas of work is to address the needs of the sector, and help it achieve sustainability."

Brap is involved in numerous initiatives that provide culturally-appropriate support to BME third sector organisations, one of the most recent being the LIFT project.



Henri Christophe of Great Lakes CIC

the impact of what they do; and we also provide leadership mentoring and development."

The final strand provides support tailored to the particular needs of an organisation. A typical package might include help improving internal administrative procedures or developing better staff supervision processes.

One of the organisations to benefit from this strand is Great Lakes CIC. Run by Rwandan-born Henri Christophe, Great Lakes aims to provide a one-stop source of information for the ever-growing African population in the Midlands. Great Lakes - named after the Great Lakes region that comprises Rwanda, Congo, Burundi, Uganda and Tanzania - also organises cultural events such as dances and plays.

Still in its first year, it quickly emerged that one of the main challenges facing Great Lakes was to secure funding so it could stabilise itself. In response, LIFT is offering a number of areas of support. Not only is it helping to develop the organisation's business plan so it has direction and focus over the next few years of operation, but it's also helping Great Lakes plan for bids more effectively. This includes practical guidance on where to look for funding options and advice on fund raising.

However, navigating the funding minefield is only part of the challenge for Great Lakes. "It's difficult for everyone setting up" Henri says, "but the challenges are different for new African communities. If you want to set up a charity or social enterprise, there's so much you need to know. So while you're trying to adapt to a new country, and worrying about sending money back home, you're also trying to set things up - it doesn't always work too well!"

Responding to this challenge requires both flexibility and determination.

"The situation Great Lakes find themselves in is not so different to that of many third sector organisations," Emma explains. "It's important for us to build our support around the issues that affect them. More than anything, though, it's important to show that you're passionate about the organisations succeeding."

## the loss of BME third sector organisations would be catastrophic

LIFT is a £500,000 programme funded by the Big Lottery and managed by Brap. It offers support specifically tailored to the needs of the BME third sector in the West Midlands, such as impact measurement and leadership training.

Just entering the second of its four-year period, LIFT has already helped over 25 organisations across the West Midlands and will help a minimum of 120 over the whole project timescale.

"LIFT works by promoting four 'strands'," explains LIFT co-ordinator Emma Wright. "The kind of support we offer depends on the strand. So, for example, one of the strands is all about giving a voice to the challenges faced by the BME third sector in the region, so we've set up a network to promote partnerships between BME organisations. The second strand helps organisations measure and market

### About Brap

**Brap is Birmingham's leading equality and human rights charity which works locally, regionally and nationally with individuals, communities and the organisations that service them to address and mitigate widespread inequality.**

**Founded in 1998, it aims to tackle racial discrimination, disadvantage and social exclusion, and seeks to make a sustainable difference by working with others to better understand how practice might be improved in ways that reduce inequality.**

**Through its work, it helps others promote a learning culture where equalities can be openly discussed, develop a more informed and confident approach to equality implementation, and ensure that equality practices are fair. It also enables people to connect with equality, and help make a fairer society.**

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