

Knowledge & Insights Report

April 1st 2020
- March 31st 2021

INTRODUCTION

ACOSVO is a membership organisation for Scotland's voluntary sector leaders and is underpinned by the ethos of **peer support, good practice sharing and leadership development.**

As the COVID-19 crisis unfolded, we quickly adapted to a new way of providing this support. As with everything during these times, it was, and is, a matter of learning and adapting to members needs and the way we address them on a daily basis.

"FACILITATORS WENT ABOVE AND BEYOND THEIR REMIT TO SUPPORT ME, THANK YOU!"

As the extent of the crisis became clear, we realised the need for a more complete and up-to-date picture of our membership, and their needs, than we had used before.

This report marks 12 months since that decision, and summarises the data gathered in this project.

Please note that while every effort has been made to ensure that the data recorded here is as accurate as possible, we were very much in a position of "designing the plane while flying".

As such, there are some discrepancies regarding how much data has been collected at different times, and how the data has been categorised.

The report shows the occurrences of keywords that

emerged across our member engagements. Each keyword has been assigned a "theme", and each theme assigned a "family" (full info available on request.)

Due to the number of potential keywords, we have chosen to analyse the discussions at the **Thematic** and **Family** level only. However, the option remains to explore into individual keywords should the need arise.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most Commonly Discussed Themes - (Apr 1st 2020 - Mar 31st 2021)

1. Future Planning
2. Health & Wellbeing of Staff
3. Managing Staff
4. CEO Support
5. Board Leadership & Engagement

Most Commonly Discussed Themes - (2021 Q1)

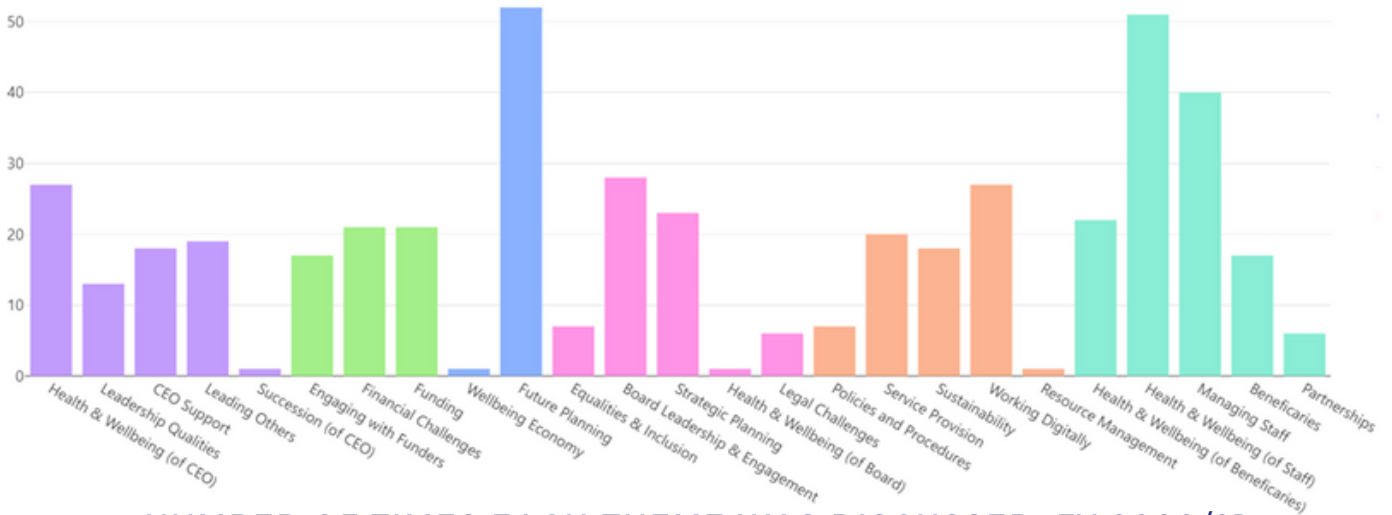
1. Health & Wellbeing of CEO
2. Board Leadership & Engagement
3. Health & Wellbeing of Staff
4. Leadership Qualities
5. Working Digitally

Biggest Increase in Discussions - (2020 Q4 vs 2021 Q1)

1. Health & Wellbeing of CEO
2. Financial Challenges
3. Working Digitally
4. Succession (of CEO)
5. Health & Wellbeing of Board

Biggest Decrease in Discussions - (2020 Q4 vs 2021 Q1)

1. Managing Staff
2. Leading Others
3. Strategic Planning
4. Future Planning
5. Sustainability



NUMBER OF TIMES EACH THEME WAS DISCUSSED, FY 2020/21

2180

attendees across all engagements

176

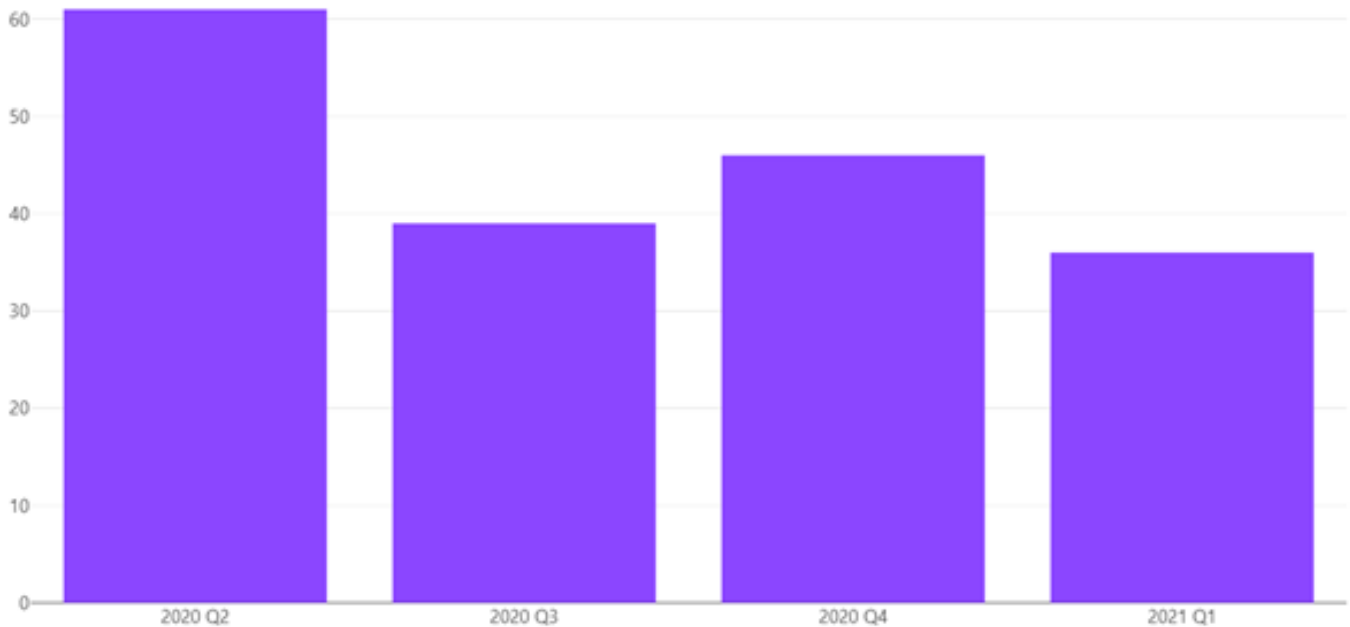
Member engagements
Apr 1 2020 - Mar 31 2021

46

One-to-one calls

"Engagements" include all interactions with groups of ACOSVO members and/or Voluntary Sector Leaders, arranged by ACOSVO.

MEMBER ENGAGEMENTS



NUMBER OF ENGAGEMENTS, PER QUARTER, FY 2020/21

The graph above shows the number of engagements per quarter, since April 2020. This is a **385% increase** in number of events, and a **206% increase** in attendees from 2019 (where we held 45 engagements for 1063 participants).

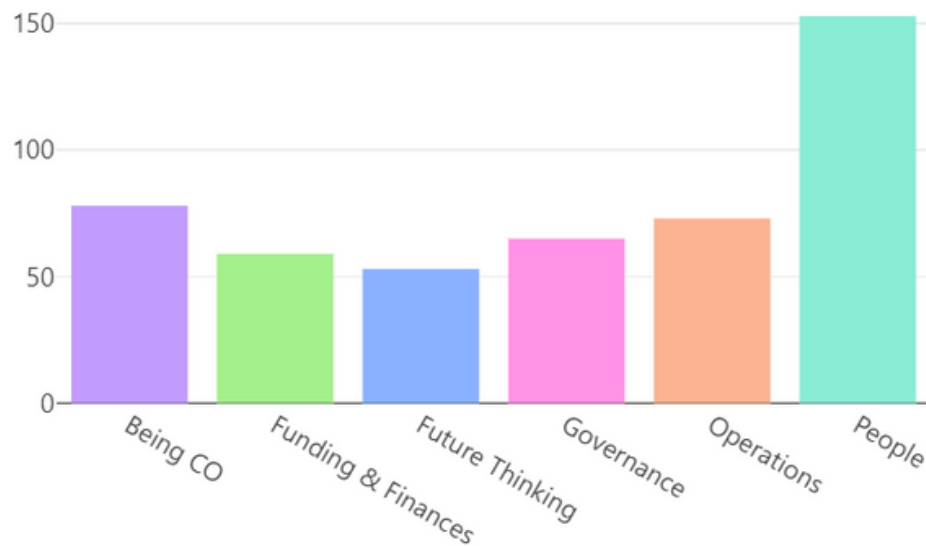
This increase was due to our weekly “check-in” events, which we launched to support our the sector's leaders at the start of the COVID-19 crisis.

It should also be noted and celebrated that this increase was achieved at a time when we, along with the rest of the world, were migrating to a primarily digital way of working. Prior to March 2020, ACOSVO’s experience with holding digital events was limited to one webinar.

Throughout the year, we also continued to offer our core services, including:

- 31 members matched with mentors
- 78 new Leadership Exchanges
- 23 mentoring relationships and 74 Leadership Exchanges from 2019 maintained
- 12 organisations supported via our Interim Executive service
- 7 members supported via our Leader Support Service
- A wide range of webinars and resources sign-posted via social media and our website.

THEMES & THEMATIC FAMILIES



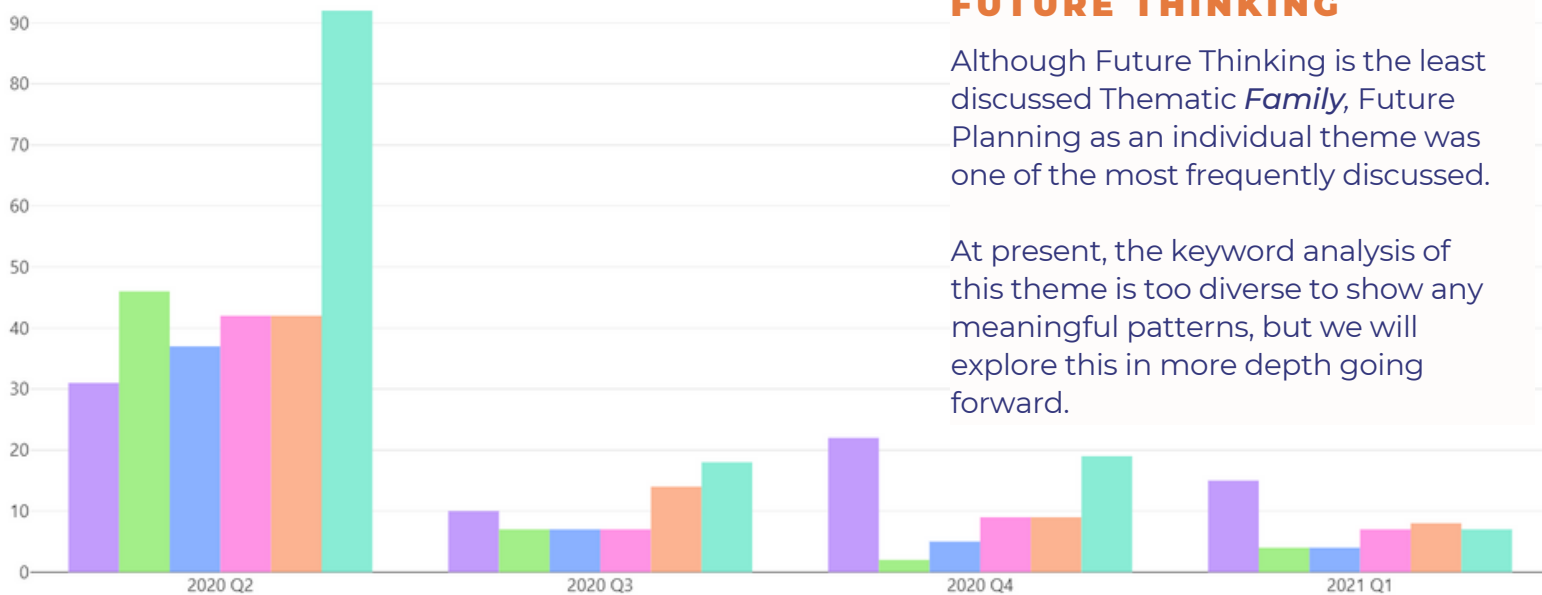
NUMBER OF TIMES A THEMATIC FAMILY WAS DISCUSSED, FY 2020/21

INITIAL SPIKE

There are two main reasons for the higher numbers in 2020 Q2:

1: We held more events in this time as the crisis was emerging and our members needed more immediate support.

2: We were also fortunate enough at this time to have Joette Thomas of Animate Consulting providing us with detailed notes of the discussions. As time progressed we adjusted how much detail we captured per event.



NUMBER OF TIMES A THEMATIC FAMILY WAS DISCUSSED, PER QUARTER

FUTURE THINKING

Although Future Thinking is the least discussed Thematic *Family*, Future Planning as an individual theme was one of the most frequently discussed.

At present, the keyword analysis of this theme is too diverse to show any meaningful patterns, but we will explore this in more depth going forward.

90%

of member engagements involved discussion of Staff and/or Beneficiaries

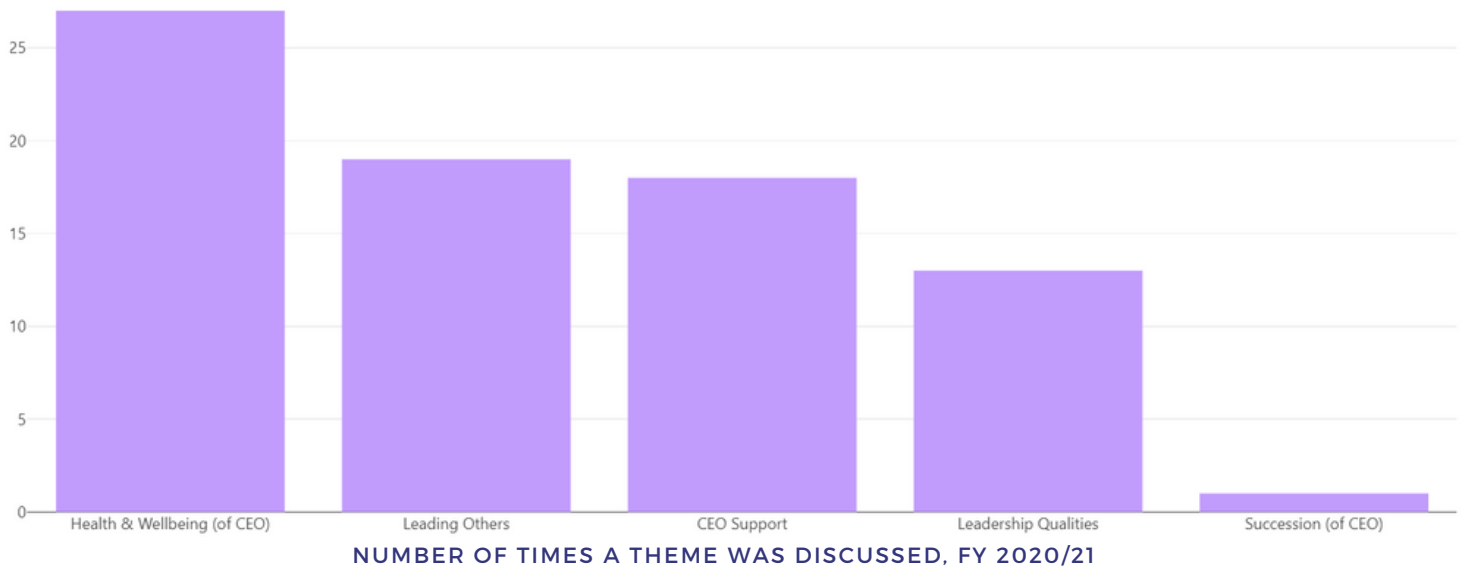
45%

of member engagements involved discussion of CEO roles and responsibilities

30%

of member engagements involved discussions of Future Planning

Being CEO



CEO SUPPORT

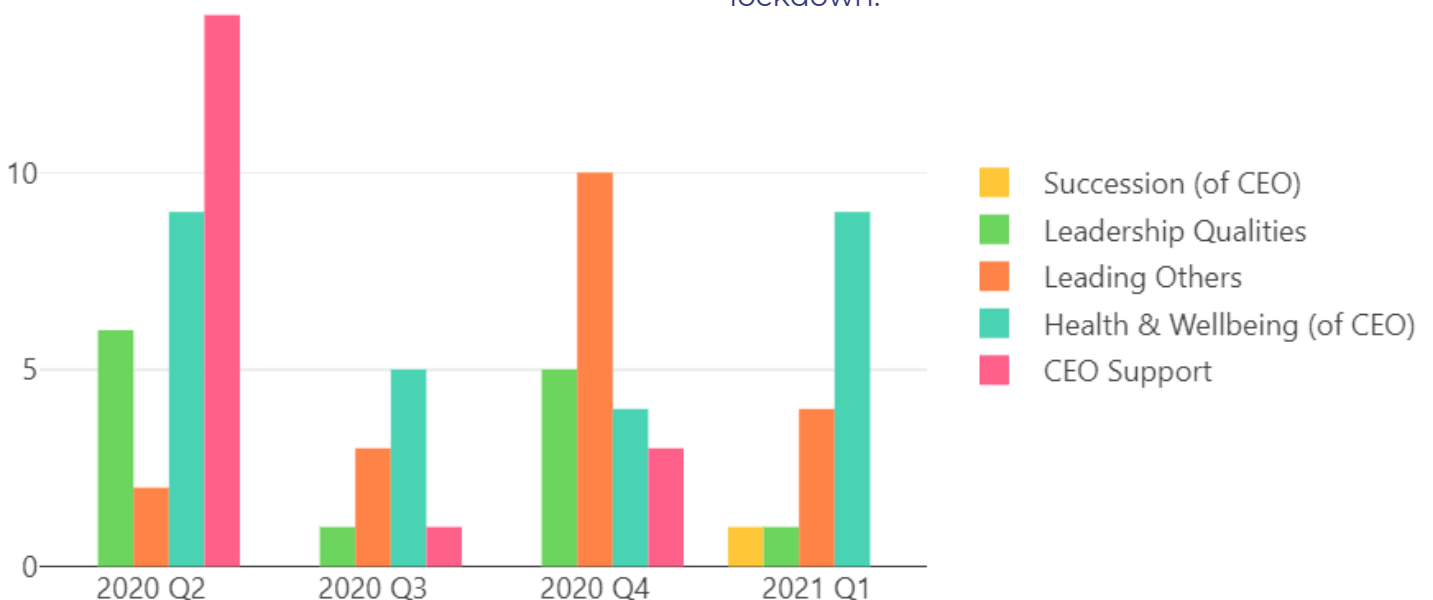
As the crisis began, there was a high degree of interest into the services and support that ACOSVO and our partners could offer.

This suggests a good general awareness of the support ACOSVO provides, and that our members were looking for more detailed information.

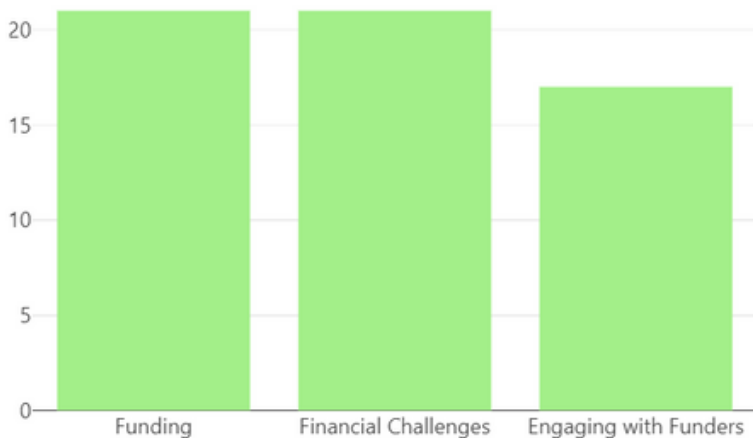
CEO SUCCESSION

In 2017, ACOSVO found that the majority of Chief Officers were planning on stepping down from their post at some point in the next few years.

With so much having changed since then, we aim to refresh this research as we prepare for a possible increase in demand for CEO succession as we move out of lockdown.



Funding & Finances



NUMBER OF TIMES A THEME WAS DISCUSSED, FY 2020/21

INITIAL NEED

The majority of the discussions regarding Funding & Finances were had in the first quarter, when the crisis was emerging.

This is partially due to the fact that we held more events in this time period, but it is also reflective of the conversations had in this period: so much was changing so quickly, and our members needed support engaging with their funders.

A TALE OF TWO HALVES

Based on a more detailed keyword analysis of the Funding and Finances theme, we can see that there was a split very early on in our membership.

Some organisations struggled with funding, both in public donations declining (e.g. when the London Marathon was cancelled) and from the closure of premises and trading activities.

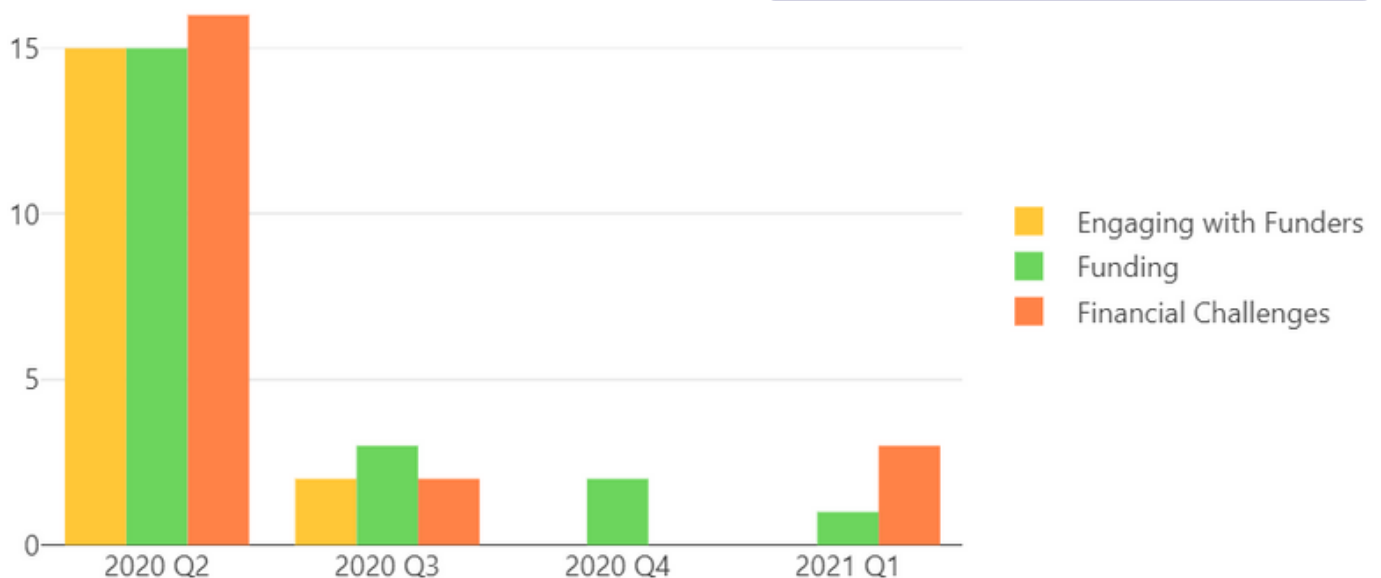
Other organisations brought in additional funding, but had to adapt at pace to address the increased demands for their services and capacity.



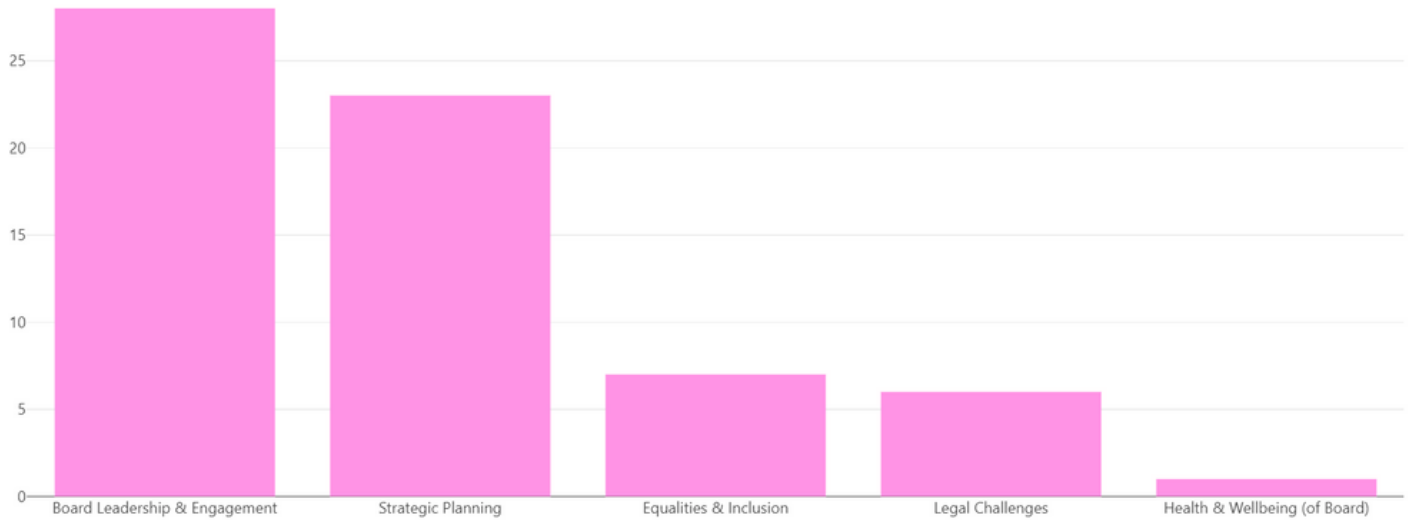
34% of all engagements involved some discussion of Funding and Finance



66% of those discussions happened in the first quarter of the Financial Year



Governance



NUMBER OF TIMES A THEME WAS DISCUSSED, FY 2020/21

STRIKING A BALANCE

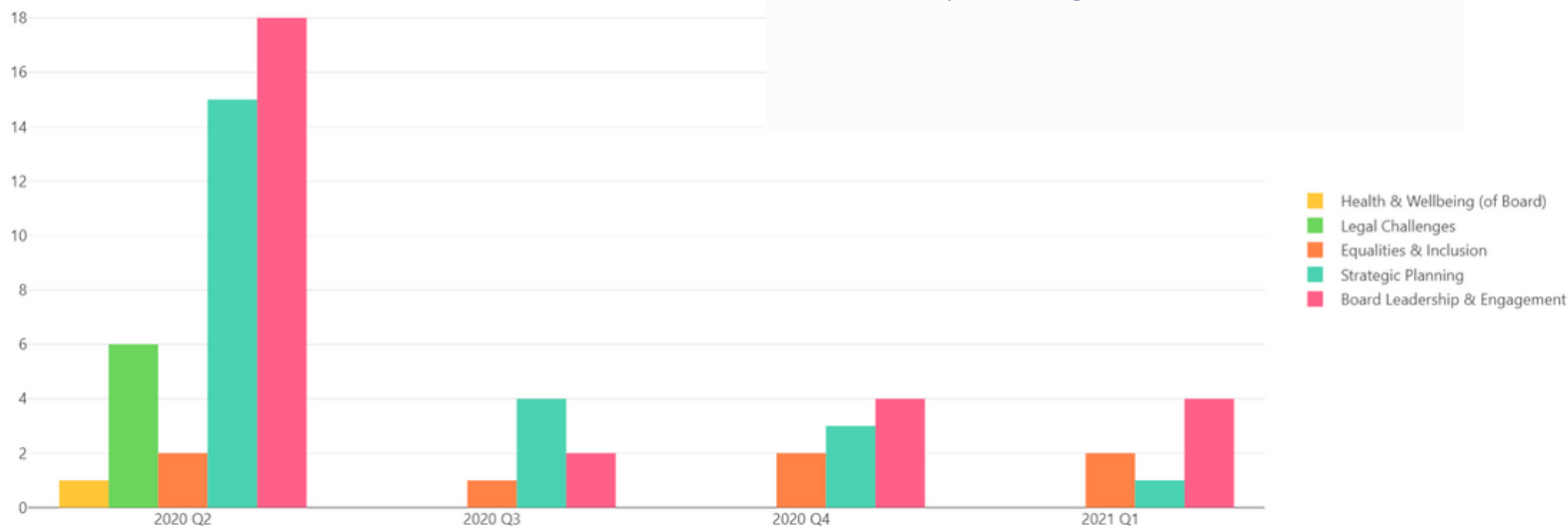
Board Engagement was a highly discussed topic in the first quarter of the crisis.

However, there was another split in the membership, with some members reporting *low* board engagement (with trustees often absent due to dealing with the crisis in their own lives and day-jobs), and some complaining of *overly-high* board engagement (with trustees checking in “too often” and “too much”).

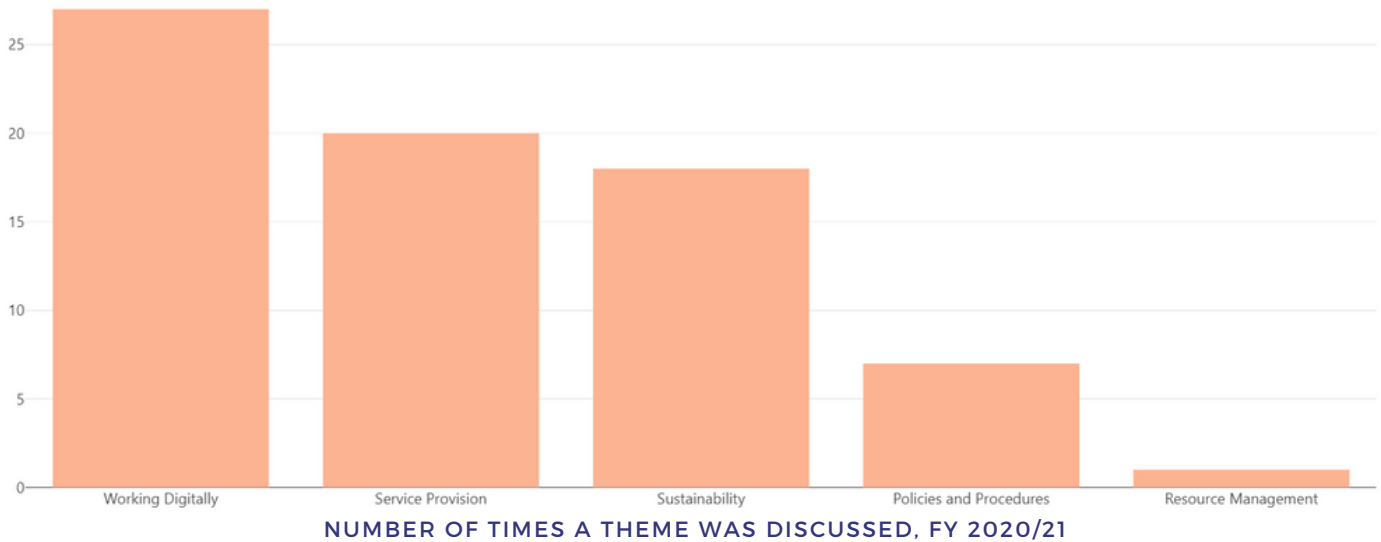
EQUALITIES & INCLUSION

Based on keyword analysis, the conversations regarding Equalities and Inclusion took place at a number of levels.

Most discussions were about how to ensure Boards themselves were inclusive. However there were also conversations about how to ensure that any changes to service provision was carried out in ways that were inclusive of both the beneficiaries they are designed for, and the staff providing the service.



Operations



WORKING DIGITALLY

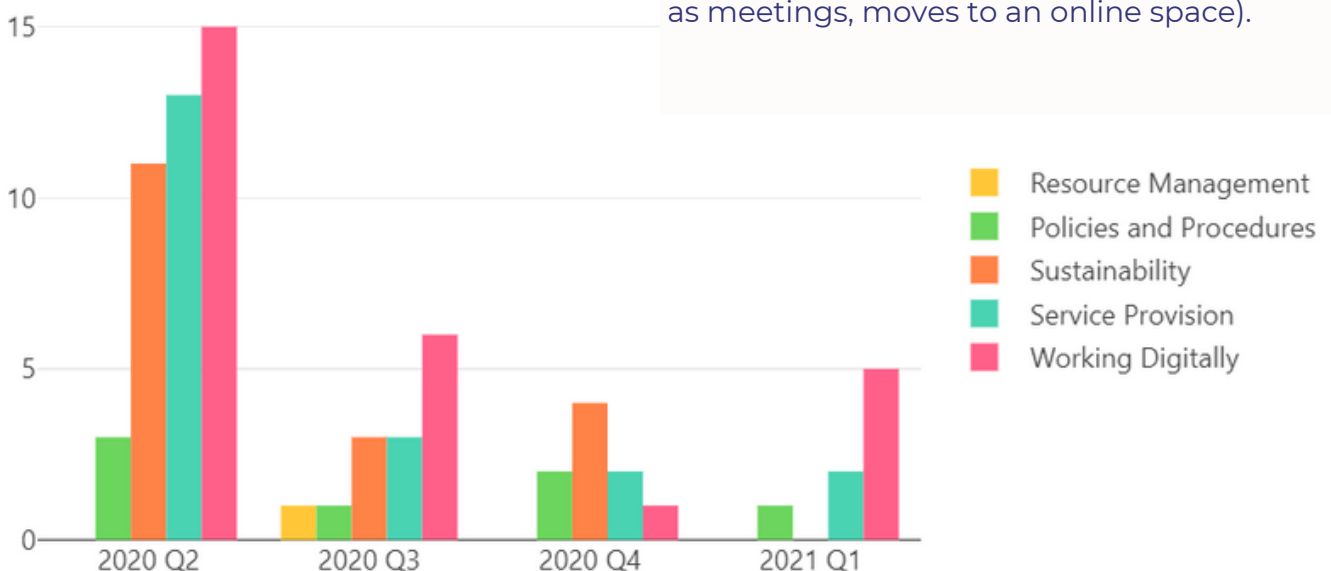
One might have expected a decline in "Working Digitally" conversations after the sharp peak at the beginning of the crisis.

However, 2021 Q1 saw a rise which indicates these issues could be a continuing issue for members going forward as we all develop and adapt to new ways of working.

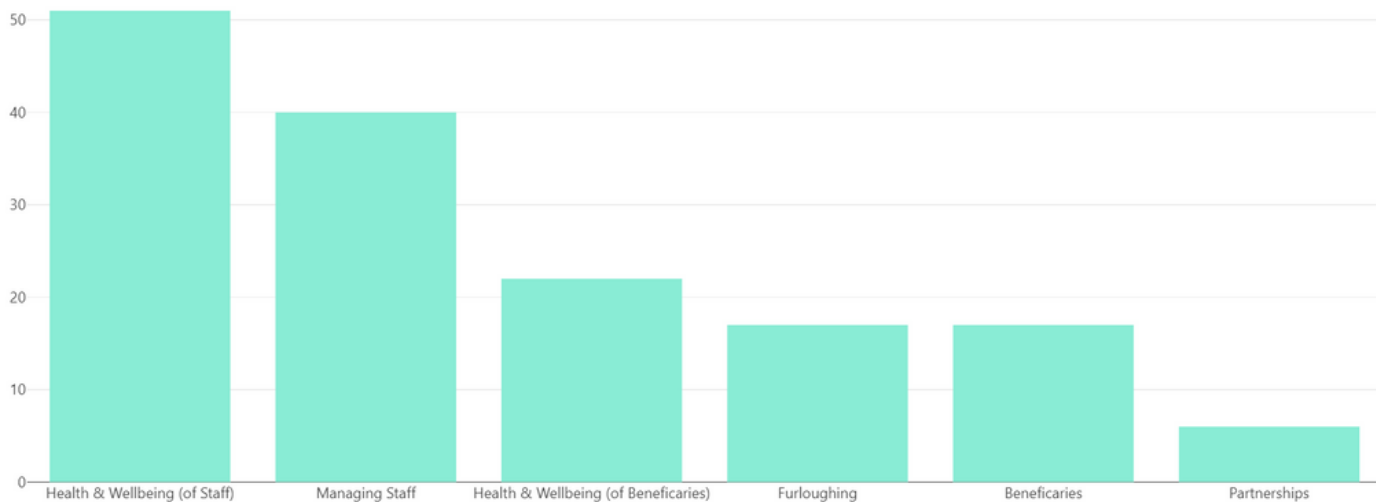
FLEXIBLE WORKING

More and more organisations are adapting to a flexible working model, utilising the benefits of Digital Working.

This has led to a number of positive outcomes (e.g. staff are able to adjust their work schedule to the needs of their home-life) but also a number of challenges (e.g. rising levels of isolation as more people work from home, and "screen-fatigue" as work that was previously done offline, such as meetings, moves to an online space).



People



NUMBER OF TIMES A THEME WAS DISCUSSED, FY 2020/21

BENEFICIARIES

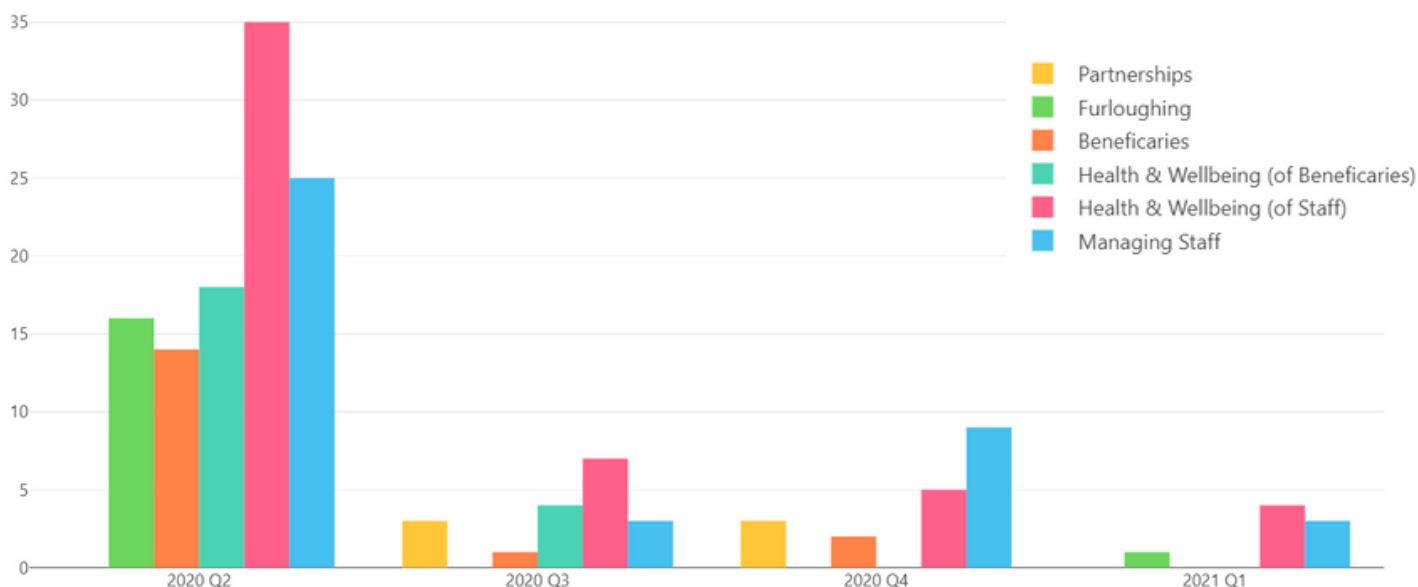
After an initial spike of discussions regarding the Health and Wellbeing of Beneficiaries, and ensuring that they are still able to access services, these themes saw quite a drastic drop-off.

This reflects the journey of Service Provision (see Operations): our members immediate concern as the crisis began was how to *adapt* to support their beneficiaries.

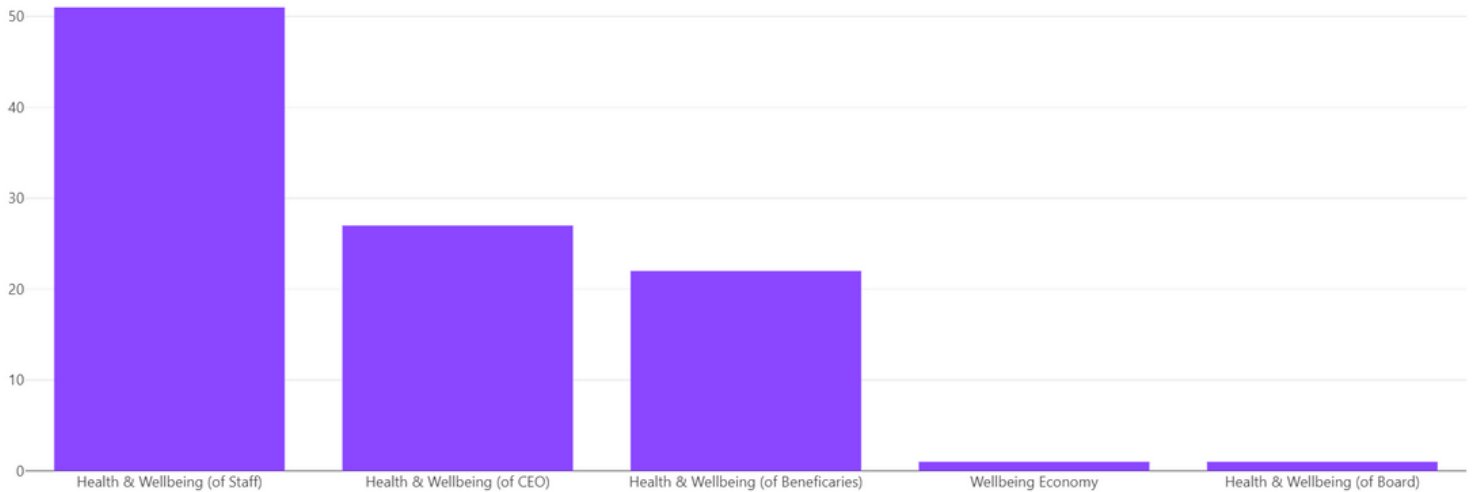
FURLOUGHING

“Furloughing” does not appear on the executive summary. This is because we recognised it would be discussed a lot at first (while there was a lot of uncertainty) but then less as people began to understand it more.

This is reflected in the data, however we will continue to keep a watch on the keyword analysis.



Health & Wellbeing



NUMBER OF TIMES A THEME WAS DISCUSSED, FY 2020/21

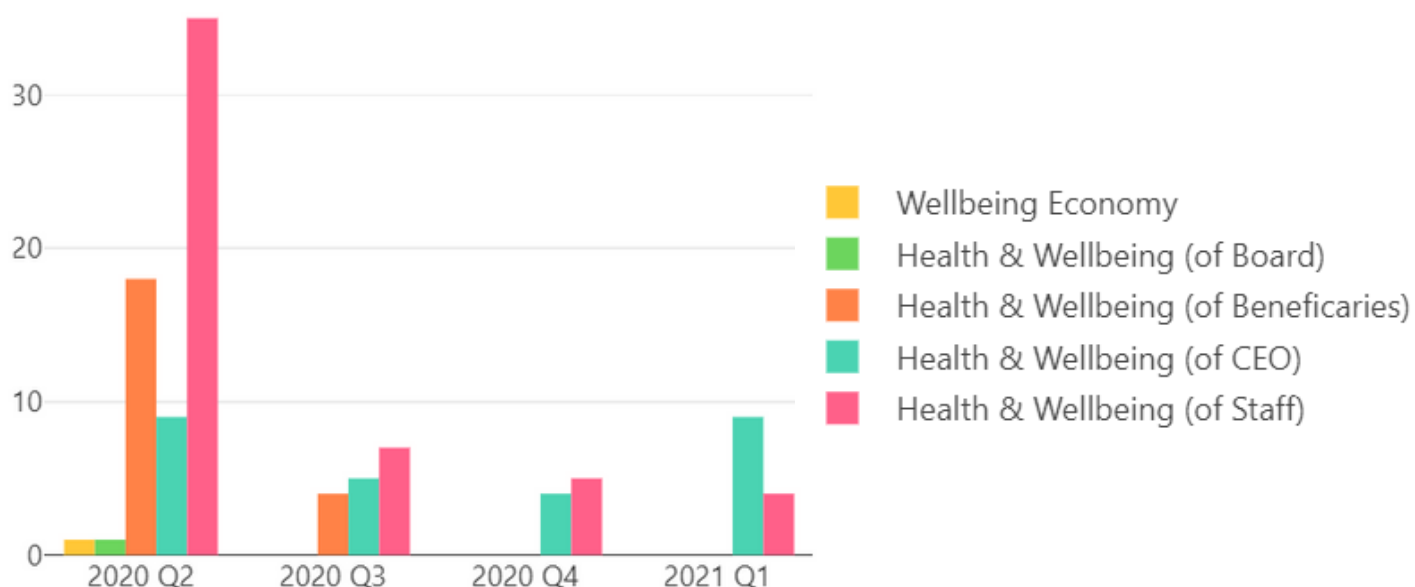
AN "ARTIFICIAL" FAMILY

Each of these themes appears elsewhere in the report (for example, Health and Wellbeing of the Board also appears under the Governance family), however, we thought it useful to pull the information together here to ease comparison.

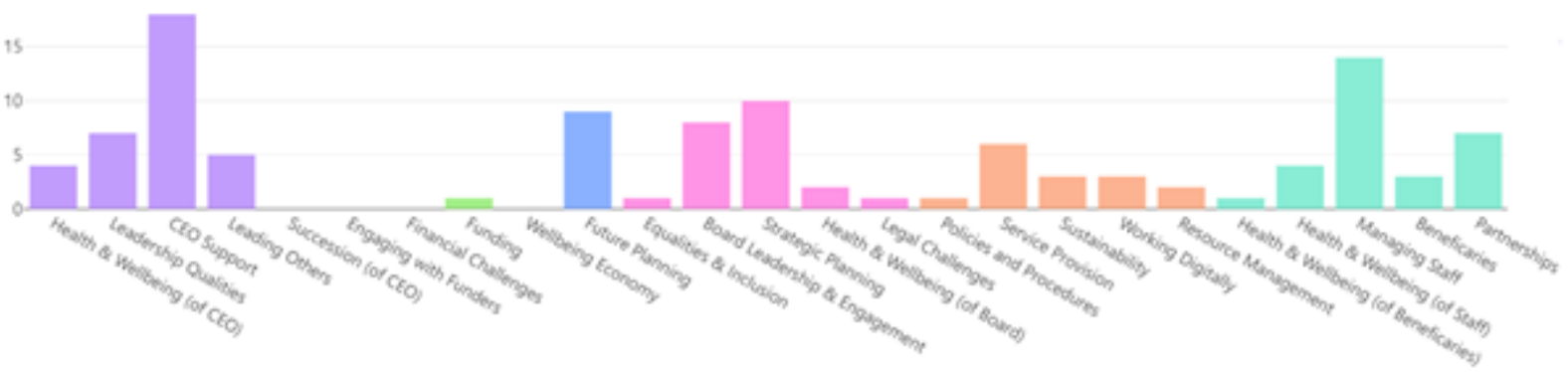
TRUSTEE WELLBEING

There is a significant gap regarding discussions of Health and Wellbeing at a Board level, especially compared to other levels where it was discussed so frequently (Wellbeing of Staff was the 2nd most frequently discussed theme across *all* themes).

A keyword analysis shows that two of the three discussions revolved around the Chair-Chief Officer relationship.



One-to-One Support



NUMBER OF TIMES A THEME WAS DISCUSSED DURING A ONE-TO-ONE, FY 2020/21

Most Commonly Discussed Themes - (April 1st 2020 - Mar 31st 2021)

- 1.CEO Support
- 2.Managing Staff
- 3.Strategic Planning

Most Commonly Discussed Themes - (2021 Q1)

- 1.Leadership Qualities
- 2.CEO Support
- 3.Partnerships

Biggest Difference (Positive) - 1-1s vs All Engagements

- 1.Health & Wellbeing of Board (+100%)
- 2.Resource Management (+100%)
- 3.Partnerships (+17%)

Biggest Differences (Negative) - 1-1s vs All Engagements *

- 1.Succession of CEO (-100%)
- 2.Wellbeing Economy (-100%)
- 3.Financial Challenges (-100%)
- 4.Engaging with Funders (-100%)

Biggest Differences (Upward Trend) - 2020 Q4 vs 2020 Q1

- 1.Managing Staff
- 2.Strategic Planning
- 3.Future Planning

Biggest Differences (Downward Trend) - 2020 Q4 vs 2020 Q1

- 1.Health & Wellbeing of Beneficiaries
- 2.Funding
- 3.Equalities and Inclusion

*None of these themes were brought up during one-to-one calls, hence the -100% decrease

NEXT STEPS

Based on these findings, it has been decided that future analysis will also include:

- Other sources of feedback (e.g. event and service evaluations, external reports, etc) so as to provide more detailed coverage of our engagements.
- An analysis of the different Special Interests Groups and other networks within ACOSVO (e.g. Women's Network, Young Leaders) as well as different strands of work such as our Leadership Exchange and Mentoring programmes.
- A weighting of how many participants were involved in each engagement so as to better understand the conversations
- A mapping of what themes we expected to arise in each engagement (based on agenda, attendees, etc) and what actually emerged, with a comparison of the two to ensure we are not encoding ourselves into a "self-fulfilling prophecy", and to visually demonstrate how our engagements offer "more than the sum of their parts".

Based on the Insights provided in this report, we aim to:

- Improve our methodology for capturing keywords and themes, to ensure more consistency in analyses going forward.
- Reflect further on the Future Planning theme, to ensure that we can capture data here more effectively going forward.
- Refresh the Succession Planning survey that we conducted in late 2017, so as to gain an up-to-date understanding of the possible increase in demand for CEO succession as we move out of lockdown.
- Increase focus on Equalities and Inclusion, in particular reference to our Special Interest Groups, so we can better understand the barriers and issues leaders face from a lived experience perspective.

(continued)

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- Increase our focus on Sustainability, both internally and with our members, with particular focus on:
 - Financial Sustainability
 - Social Sustainability
 - Environmental Sustainability
 - Explore what it will mean to manage staff and volunteers in the near future, as workplaces change to adapt to an online/blended model of working.
 - Continue Health and Wellbeing as a theme for leadership support and development.
 - Continue to facilitate Funding and Finance conversations, a key area for our members, particularly as part of a broader sustainability challenge for organisations. There will be an increased need for funding to recover and adapt. Funders demonstrated flexibility and responsiveness to the crisis, we will work with them to see this continued as much as possible.
 - Continue to support good governance in the sector, particularly by building and supporting Chairs Network Scotland. We will also look more closely at the links and relationships between Chairs Network and the core ACOSVO membership, to promote cohesion between the roles of Chair and Chief Officer.
 - Share this report with Scotland's Third Sector Governance Forum, particularly in regard to the high levels of discussion regarding Board Engagement, and the low levels of discussion regarding Health and Wellbeing at the Board Level.

For more details about ACOSVO, please visit www.acosvo.org.uk or email us at office@acosvo.org.uk