LIA Report

Empowering the Youth: Bali Children Foundation

Adam El Haj

1.0 Introduction

During June and July 2026, I completed my LIA project, Empowering Youth: Bali Children Foundation. I worked as a Fundraising Intern, focusing primarily on stakeholder management, data analysis and improvements to the organisation's customer relationship management (CRM) system. I joined the organisation alongside my friend and fellow Laidlaw Scholar, Harold, who worked in a separate department specialising in educational technology.

The decision to work with Bali Children Foundation was a collaborative one between Harold and me. The organisation's mission and the roles available were central to our decision, as we both wanted to undertake work that would create a meaningful and lasting impact. We were also looking for positions in which we could apply our combined experience in technology, business management and hospitality. Bali Children Foundation met these criteria. During our initial meeting with the internship supervisor, we discussed our respective skills and found that they aligned closely with the organisation's needs.

We were particularly attracted to the opportunity to contribute to an established nonprofit organisation with more than 15 full-time employees. Rather than simply introducing basic systems, we would be able to apply our creativity, knowledge and understanding of emerging technologies to improve existing processes and strengthen the organisation's impact.

After arriving at the organisation and completing my induction, I established two main objectives that I intended to achieve before the end of my placement:

1. Develop a structured stakeholder communication and management system.
2. Resolve major issues within the CRM and analyse fundraising data to identify trends that could support long-term fundraising growth.

This report examines my progress towards these objectives, the additional work I completed, the impact of my contributions and my overall reflections on the LIA experience.

2.0 The Organisation

Bali Children Foundation (BCF) is a nonprofit organisation that supports disadvantaged children and communities in North Bali. It delivers this support through several programmes, including individual child sponsorships, school construction projects such as the Angela Wheeler Initiative, and educational technology initiatives. A significant proportion of BCF's funding comes from donors in Australia, the United States and Indonesia through fundraising campaigns that collectively generate hundreds of thousands of dollars.

BCF depends heavily on these donations to deliver its programmes and services. In return, the organisation maintains relationships with donors through regular communication, donor events and opportunities to connect donors with the beneficiaries they support, with BCF acting as the intermediary. The organisation also maintains significant corporate partnerships with companies such as Marriott and Hyatt, which provide substantial financial support for its charitable activities.

At the time of my placement, much of the responsibility for managing relationships with high-value stakeholders rested personally with BCF's founder, Margaret Barry. However, as the number of donors and contributions increased, maintaining direct and personalised communication became increasingly difficult and unsustainable. Logistical limitations meant that some donors did not receive consistent direct communication. This challenge, combined with the organisation's limited use of emerging technologies for stakeholder engagement, coincided with a decline in donations over the previous three years.

Although BCF had introduced modern digital systems, several important functions had been outsourced to external service providers. Consequently, some systems were not operating at their full capacity, while reported problems did not always receive timely or effective responses from the responsible contractors. This limited BCF's control over its own systems and reduced its ability to resolve operational issues efficiently.

3.0 Stakeholder Management Problem

My first major task focused on addressing BCF's stakeholder-management problem. The organisation did not have a centralised system through which donor information could be organised or communication responsibilities delegated. This was particularly important because strong donor relationships are one of BCF's main avenues for securing significant contributions. Transparency, emotional connection and purposeful communication can strengthen donor loyalty, encourage repeat contributions and support long-term relationships. However, as BCF had grown, managing these relationships had become increasingly difficult. This affected the organisation's ability to prioritise donors, cultivate recurring donation channels and use historical information to personalise its communications.

As the existing team's capacity was already divided across numerous responsibilities, this project presented an opportunity for me to make a meaningful contribution. I began by analysing more than AUD 3 million in donation data covering the previous three years. I examined several key variables, including contribution value, donation source, donation amount, funding destination and stakeholder history. I then consolidated the transactions into individual donor profiles, matching different names, organisations and email addresses that belonged to the same donor or entity.

This process resulted in the creation of a centralised dataset called the 'Donor Master'. It provided a complete donor-by-donor view of historical contributions and enabled me to evaluate the overall impact of each stakeholder. It also helped me identify giving patterns and successful fundraising channels that BCF could potentially replicate to generate further donations.

After creating the 'Donor Master', I grouped stakeholders into appropriate tiers based on the value and frequency of their donations, as well as the number of years for which they had supported BCF. I then assigned labels indicating the most appropriate communication approach for each donor category. Individual donor profiles were incorporated into the database, while BCF's founder reviewed the information relating to VIP stakeholders. Her involvement was particularly valuable because she had established direct personal relationships with many of these donors and could therefore verify the accuracy of their profiles.

The final platform provided BCF with a central location for recording and managing donor relationships. It could be updated manually to document the type of communication sent to each donor, the date of the most recent interaction and notes concerning any specific communication requests or preferences. This gave the organisation a clearer overview of its stakeholder relationships and created a foundation for more consistent and personalised engagement.

Alongside the platform, I produced a supporting implementation document that explained the database, defined its key terms and proposed a timeline for introducing systematic improvements to BCF's stakeholder communications. The report considered estimated costs, required staff resources, recommended engagement approaches for different stakeholder groups and the prioritisation of tailored reporting for corporate sponsors and high-value donors.

Overall, this project helped me understand the complexity of introducing a new system within an established organisation. Developing the platform required more than simply organising data; it also required consideration of existing relationships, staff capacity and the practical processes necessary to maintain the system. The stakeholder-management platform provides BCF with a structured foundation for sustaining relationships with stakeholders of all sizes. If maintained and implemented effectively, it has the potential to improve donor engagement, encourage recurring contributions and support BCF's long-term fundraising activities.

4.0 CRM Project

The customer relationship management (CRM) project was my second major undertaking at BCF. A CRM is a platform used by an organisation to store important information, track interactions such as donations, automate administrative tasks and identify patterns that can support business analysis and decision-making. However, BCF's CRM was recording only approximately 30% of the donations received by the organisation. The combined cost of the CRM and its outsourced management was therefore difficult to justify, as the incomplete data could not produce sufficiently credible or representative analytics.

Relying on this information could have resulted in poorly informed fundraising decisions. For example, the available CRM data suggested that BCF had a low donor-retention rate following an initial contribution. However, because only 30% of donations were recorded, it was unclear whether this reflected actual donor behaviour or a failure within the organisation's systems.

I took responsibility for investigating the root cause of the problem and presenting evidence to the external provider responsible for managing the CRM. The provider had not previously acknowledged the full extent of the issue, so it was necessary to demonstrate precisely how and where donation information was being lost. I began by mapping and reviewing every stage of the automated workflow:

Funraisin → Stripe → Zapier → HubSpot

Funraisin was the platform through which donations were collected, while Stripe processed the payments. Zapier connected the different platforms and automated the transfer of donation information, and HubSpot served as the CRM in which the transactions and donor interactions were recorded.

To identify where the automated process had failed, I downloaded all transaction data from the previous 365 days and compared it against the corresponding records in HubSpot. By combining detailed spreadsheet analysis with manual checks, I created an evidence file that flagged every donation that had not been recorded in the CRM. This enabled me to identify where information was being lost and understand the reason for the missing records.

My analysis showed that the central problem was within the Zapier workflows. The existing Zaps functioned correctly when a donor made a new contribution because submitting a new donation form activated the relevant trigger. However, the workflow did not consistently capture recurring payments. For example, when an existing donor's monthly contribution was processed automatically, the donor did not complete a new donation form and therefore did not activate the original Zapier trigger. As a result, many recurring donations were successfully processed through Stripe but were not transferred to HubSpot. This explained both the low donation-capture rate and the misleading appearance of poor donor retention.

As I did not have permission to edit the workflows directly, I prepared a detailed report and supporting evidence file for the external provider. The report documented the system failure, demonstrated its effect on the organisation's data and specified the workflows that needed to be re-engineered.

Following the implementation of these changes, the proportion of donations captured by the CRM increased from approximately 30% to 96%. This significantly improved the reliability of BCF's fundraising analytics and enabled the organisation to examine donor behaviour and donation patterns more accurately. The improved information subsequently supported stronger stakeholder-management decisions and informed changes to the website intended to make the donation process as seamless as possible.

5.0 Reflections

Overall, I found my LIA experience extremely valuable, both as a significant step in my career and as part of my personal development as a future leader. I encountered several unfamiliar challenges that strengthened my skills and prepared me for future professional endeavours. Whether I was dealing with incomplete records, inconsistent data formats or complex technical problems, each day presented a new learning opportunity. I was motivated not only to complete the administrative responsibilities assigned to me but also to develop improvements that could create lasting value for the organisation.

I also learned considerably from my colleagues and BCF's founder. The placement gave me a deeper understanding of the complexities of operating a nonprofit organisation, including the competition for funding, the internal structures through which its activities are delivered and the importance of balancing social objectives with operational sustainability. I also gained insight into the sensitivity required when acting as an intermediary between donors and beneficiaries. BCF must communicate its impact transparently and maintain donors' trust while protecting the dignity, privacy and interests of the individuals and communities it supports.

For future Laidlaw Scholars interested in working in the nonprofit sector, I would recommend approaching the experience with initiative and curiosity. Scholars should not limit themselves to completing only the work initially assigned to them; they should actively identify areas in which their skills could provide additional value. Nonprofit managers may not immediately know the full extent of a scholar's abilities. It is therefore important to communicate those abilities, seek appropriate supervision and take responsibility for creating or improving systems that can continue benefiting the organisation after the placement ends.

I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to complete my LIA at Bali Children Foundation and for everything I was able to achieve within a relatively short period. My work on stakeholder management and CRM improvements enabled me to make a measurable contribution to the organisation while significantly developing my analytical, technical and leadership capabilities. Most importantly, the experience expanded my understanding of the nonprofit sector and showed me how I can apply the skills and leadership principles developed through the Laidlaw programme to create meaningful change in the future.