

Community Foundation Strategy 2023-26



The *elle*
Community
Foundation

Ambition for Change

Three years into our previous strategy coronavirus hit, and like many funders and organisations we pivoted our plans to respond. Our sector has since been dealing with a cost of living crisis, the effects of Brexit and the ongoing political instability in NI. Taking stock of where we are now, and our role as a large independent funder in NI, we consulted widely with our communities, people and partners, to revise and develop our plans for the next three years.

Our Trustees have been entrusted with both endowment and annual philanthropic funds for the benefit of our community, and we are acutely aware of the need to use these transparently, efficiently and effectively, in response to the needs in our society. We take this responsibility seriously; we've listened to our communities and our partners and based on what we've heard, over the next three years we will commit to invest in:

- **Supporting Communities;**
- **Driving Equity, Diversity and Inclusion;**
- **Improving Well-being; and**
- **Transformational funding**

We're proud to launch our strategy 2023 – 2026. The Foundation has a vital role to play in the social and economic fabric of NI.

Our plans focus on how we aim to support and effect positive change, and drive transformation by doing things differently, through trust, fair challenge and leadership.



Vision and Mission

Our vision is a fair and equitable society for everyone

The Community Foundation want to see a place where generosity and fairness changes lives, communities flourish, and everyone feels they belong.

The community and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland is a diverse sector at the heart of society, delivering vital services, that support communities, especially for the most vulnerable. Working across sectors, thousands of grassroots community groups, charities, and social enterprises, large and small, are working on issues, from health and social care, education and the arts, to community development. Our sector employs 37,500 people, has the support of over 92,300 volunteers, and a total revenue of £2.4bn (4.3% GDP)

The people are driven by purpose and passion, a deep sense of pride and hope for the future. They are innovative and resilient amidst many challenges. As we reach the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, we find many people and communities are being left behind. Funding cuts are having a detrimental effect on services, widening gaps and deepening divisions in our society. Constraints are further challenging trust and leadership and reinforcing our call to action;

Working across sectors, thousands of grassroots community groups, charities, and social enterprises, large and small, are working on issues, from health and social care, education and the arts, to community development, young people, and older people.

Our Mission: to work hand in hand with communities to build a better future

Working collaboratively to influence policy, advocating for communities, and using impact and knowledge to inform practice and policy, will be the Key Drivers, making the changes we want to see.

More and better independent funding in NI, will help the voluntary and community sector address need, sustain services, be innovative and take risks where others can't. Philanthropic funding has enabled many innovations in NI such as Techies in Residence, covid responses. Working collaboratively and across sectors we will challenge the long-term issues we all face. We commit to encouraging and supporting:

- More open, trust based and agile grant making
- Long term, sustainable and diverse funding
- More investment in philanthropy and supports for giving
- Connecting donors to important causes
- A resilient community sector
- Communities advocating for change
- Challenge of unfair systems and processes
- Respect and inclusion
- Enhanced mental, physical, economic, social and environmental well-being

Our objectives for the next three years:

- Strengthen and supporting community and promoting the communities voice
- Advance diversity, equity and inclusion for our sector
- Improve well-being
- Encourage and secure diverse funding streams, particularly independent and transformational funding into the VCSE Sector

Grant Making

Developing trust-based relationships that are strong, connected, listened to and served, we will embed openness and transparency, enable flexible grant making, in line with sector needs, and share funding insights.

Our funding, our programmes and additional supports will be applicable and open to small, medium and large community groups and our partners can expect the following from us:

- Only asking relevant questions
- Accepting our share of risk
- Encouraging funders to provide unrestrictive funding
- Providing longer term funding where we can
- Acting with urgency and transparency in our decision making
- Responding flexibly to changing priorities and needs
- Regular consultation with communities and donors
- A relational approach to grant making
- Light touch reporting

Our programmes will continue to be externally focused, delivering development and support, working hand in hand with communities and stakeholders. This will ensure that the Foundation continues to be recognised for providing quality and impactful programmes that inspire funders to invest, helping us address need where-ever it may exist. Over the course of this strategy we will focus on human rights, social justice, leadership, peacebuilding and inclusion.

Using our Learning and Data for Impact and Informing policy

Critical to all of our work as a transformational funder, is ensuring that our learning shapes and formulates our investment strategies. This is underpinned by the collation of relevant, ethical and detailed data from our grant partners, donors and communities and will be further supported by the commissioning of research, as demonstrated in our latest Wired-Up report.

As an innovative funder, we will advocate for the sector. It is our responsibility to share our extensive learning that will influence not only our practice to policy work, but that of others.

Our connection with funders across these islands and beyond is critical, and we will use these platforms to influence policy. As a trusted partner, we will offer social value that helps investment in real impact and transformational change. Key to this will not only be our sharing our knowledge and expertise, but also the ability to convene key partners for open and trusted discussion.



We support a wide range of causes, and, where we can, we will aim to co-ordinate our funding around Priority Initiatives

Poverty	We will: Invest in projects, campaigns and organisations addressing short and long term poverty
Climate Sustainability	We will: Create opportunities to educate and learn, decarbonise our operations, commit resources and manage our investments through a climate justice lens
Community Transformation	We will: Build and develop opportunities in support of a stronger, more resilient and inclusive community and voluntary sector
Digital Inclusion	We will: Commit resources and advocate for a digital strategy for NI, a new approach to digital infrastructure and improve digital support and workforce development
Social Justice	We will: Broaden our Human Rights support and continue to advocate for and give greater voice to those most marginalised in our community
Health	We will: Develop funding, policy and programmes that address enhanced mental, physical, economic, social and environmental well-being





Our Investment and Commitment

We plan to invest over £26m in the next three years, and grow the Foundation endowment for the longer term. We're committed to ensuring that our endowment funds are ethically invested. Our aim is to be a responsible investor, whilst ensuring that we generate good financial returns from our investments to support local communities, through our grant-making.

But we can't do this alone. We will continue to support philanthropic donors with their giving, grow funding into the sector, diversify our income streams, and work in partnership with other funders, collaborating across sectors to deliver on our plans.

We will review and evaluate our work, in partnership with our communities, people and partners, to lead in a changing environment underpinned in our values; acting with integrity, passionate and ambitious about what we do.

Our Vision is a fair and equitable society for everyone

Mission

Working hand in hand with communities to build a better future

Strategic Priorities

Engaging & Supporting Communities

- We will listen and respond to the changing needs of communities
- We will help people to develop skills to build a resilient community sector
- We will support communities to advocate for change on issues important to them



Driving Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

- We will challenge unfair systems and processes
- We will advocate for respect and inclusion across everything we do
- We will be courageous in speaking out on issues of social injustice



Improving Well-being

We will commit to initiatives that enhance:

- ✓ Mental well being
- ✓ Physical well being
- ✓ Economic well being
- ✓ Social well being
- ✓ Environmental well-being

Our Funding Practice

We will continue to build our financial sustainability via diverse income streams and ethical investments

We will develop open, trust based, innovative and agile grant making processes

We will support philanthropic donors and funders to develop their plans for giving

Key Drivers

Working collaboratively to influence policy

Advocating for communities

Using Impact & Knowledge for informing practice & policy

Priority Initiatives

Poverty

Climate Sustainability

Community Transformation

Digital Inclusion

Social Justice

Health

Values

We are passionate and ambitious about what we do

We act with integrity always

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Community
Foundation
Northern Ireland



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FOUNDATIONS
GIVING FOR LOCAL GOOD

Registered charity Number: NIC105105