GRANT MAKE STRATEGY 2023 – 26

The QQ Community Foundation

Northern Ireland



Our Grant Making Vision and Values



Our Vision

Our vision is to develop trustbased relationships that are strong, connected, listened to, and served.



Our Grant Values

The Community Foundation's values that encompass our grant giving proceses are:

- Flexibility
- AgilityRelational

- Risk-taking
- Inclusion
- Influencing



Our Grant Making Strategy

"The Community Foundation is committed to making grants in a way that reflects the realities facing charities now and for the foreseeable future."







Framework & Direction

This Stategy provides a framework and clear direction for our grantmaking over the next three years.

Transparency

& Process

This Strategy provides applicants with transparency and clear information about how we will operate and how we make funding decisions.

Accountabilty & Building Trust

This Strategy builds trust and accountability for our key stakeholders, including our local communities and donors.

Strategic Priority Areas

Under the Community Foundation's new Strategic Plan we have identified four proiority areas. These areas have been arrived at through wide ranging consultation with the sector, funders and grantees. They are:

Engaging and supporting communities



 Driving Equity, Diversity and Inclusion



Transformational funding



Improving well-being







Our Grant Making Commitments

- We will only ask relevant questions in our application forms to help us make decisions
- We will accept our share of risk by only asking for relevant supporting documentation that we require to enable us to make decisions.
- We will encourage donors to provide funding that is as unrestricted as possible in terms of the costs the funding can pay for, and we will actively seek for longer term funding for the sector with both new and existing partners.
- We will act with urgency and issue decisions within 30 days of application, for those funds where dates are set by us and not others. Once panels have made decisions, applicants will be informed of those decisions within 48 hours.
- We will be transparent about our decisions and provide feedback to support future applications.



Our Grant Making Commitments

- We will enable the community and our grantees and donors to respond flexibly to changing priorities and needs, by reprofiling existing grants, through consultation with those with lived experience, and through our development of new funds to meet emerging needs, where possible.
- · We will ensure our organisational strategy and implementation plans are based on, and responding to, the needs of communities, and the knowledge and expertise of key stakeholders, through regular consultation and communication.
- We will be clear about our relationship with our grantees from the start and consult regularly with our grantees through our grantee network on how we can be better at developing a relational approach to grant making.
- · We will commit to light touch reporting and ensure reporting is commensurate with the size of grant offered. We will offer different ways for grantees to communicate their impact. We will only financially verify grants of £20,000 or more.



Who & What We Will Fund

The Community Foundation funding generally supports organisations with charitable purposes. However, for some of our funds we will support individuals to provide bursaries, eg: The Thomas Devlin Fund, Kingsbridge Foundation and the Women's Fund.

We do not always require registration with the Charity Commission for NI, however, some of our funds are only open to eligible registered charities.

We are committed to supporting community activity and will be as flexible as we can with our eligibility criteria. Guidance will be available to outline eligibility criteria for all funds, and published online.

We currently hold a wide portfolio of funds many of which have different fund priorities, grant sizes and eligibility requirements. We recognise the need to be as agile a funder as possible and so we have developed thematic fund areas as part of our new organisational strategy, that are based on the issues communities are telling us are important to them at this time. We will encourage donations to these thematic funds, that enable us to open for applications and develop fund criteria, supporting our grantees to spend as they see fit in order to achieve impact.

Our Thematic Fund Areas



The Community Foundation is committed to making grants in a way that reflects the realities facing charities now and for the foreseeable future.

We want to provide an opportunity for a strong and robust voice from our applicants and grantees. We are committed to listening and having conversations that lead to visible and meaningful change.

We will act, as much as possible, like a partner - shifting power. Giving our grantees greater control over their spending and reporting. We will introduce thematic funding streams under the above priorites.

Commitment and Process

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We will only ask relevant questions

- We will support applicants that have provided supporting documentation within the last twelve months for other funds, to enable them not to have to resubmit the same documentation again.
- Where possible, we will review public documentation such as the Charity Commission website, and our own salesforce database, to seek further information if required.
- We will continue to adapt our application forms, and ensure we only ask relevant questions, and supporting documentation to the fund criteria to enable us to make final decisions.
- We will only collect information that we must have to make funding decisions; we will test our application forms rigorously to make sure our questions are using clear understandable language.
- We will offer additional options to apply for funding to ensure our funding is accessible for all, in line with our plans for EDI.

We will accept our share of risk

- We will be realistic about how much assurance applicants can reasonably give us; we will clearly explain how we assess risk when we make our funding decisions.
- Where possible, and in particular with our own unrestricted funding, we will not limit applications from organisations, with high income levels, or low income levels, or high or low levels of reserves.
- We will release grant payments up front to facilitate cashflow for grantees.
- We will work with donors and funders to support longer term unrestricted funding, including core costs.
- Our assessment strategy will be based on the value of trust, and flexibility and the level of complexity of assessment will be commensurate with the level of funding the applicant is applying for.
- We will offer funding of £2k and below to any charitable activities that may be delivered by un-constituted groups, if appropriate.
- For awards of £1500 or below, we will not request full policies and procedures and will seek as much information online as possible to prevent undue pressure on applicants.
- We will pay 100% of funding in advance for any grants of £20k or below. Any grants above £20k will be paid on an 80/20% basis, unless part of a larger fund offering high levels of funding and where quarterly installments are more appropriate.
- Spot checks will take place with a small percentage of grants under £20k. Grantees will be advised to keep all documentation for potential review in their terms and conditions.

We will act with urgency

- We will seek to work at a pace that meets the needs of applicants; we will publish and stick to our timetables; we will make our decisions as quickly as possible.
- We will make decisions no later than within 30 days of receipt of application, for those funds where dates are set by us and not others.
- We will liaise with our donors and funders to ensure that we can review and issue decisions within a reasonable timeframe.
- We will make use of online decision making panels, and approval systems to have regular decisions made and issued for applicants.
- We will use external assessment support, and set up ad hoc panels to enable fast turnaround of applications, particularly those that are providing small grants.
- We will avail of in-house staff panels where possible, to enable prompt responses.
- We will involve those with lived experience of the issues we are trying to address in our decision making.
- Decisions will be issued within 48 hours of final decisions being agreed.

We will be transparent about our decisions

- We will give feedback; we will analyse and publish success rates and reasons for rejection; we will share our data.
- We will ensure that a clear reason for rejection is added to the email of rejection.
- We will provide advice and FAQs on our website to raise awareness of common mistakes in applications.
- We will offer telephone calls following rejections, if required, to ensure the applicant is clear as to why they have been rejected.
- We will publish our complaints process on our website, with clear details around our decision making process.

We will enable the community and our grantees and donors to respond flexibly to changing priorities and needs

- We will give unrestricted funding; if we can't, we will make our funding as flexible as possible.
- We will encourage our donors and fundholders, both new and existing, to support operational, as well as project costs, and to develop fund criteria that supports flexibility.
- We will regularly survey and listen to the VCSE organisations we fund and we ask them to contribute to strategic decisions.
- Where possible, we will source funding to develop funds that support emerging needs. We will liaise with other key stakeholders around the best approaches to respond to changing demands and priorities, including other funders.

We will ensure our organisational strategy and implementation plans are based on, and responding to the needs of communities and the knowledge and expertise of key stakeholders

Our aim will be to develop unrestricted funds for each organisational strategic priority area
where we offer a mixture of flexible small grants and larger longer term grants, with additional
capacity building, and focus of practice to policy and learning.

We will be clear about our relationship with our grantees from the start

- We will be realistic about time commitments; we will ensure that our contact is positive and purposeful.
- We will commit to working in partnership with all our grantees, and to support and trust them to manage the funding as easily as possible.
- Our terms and conditions will be clear, and the grantee will sign up to these conditions prior to payment of awards.
- The conditions will be as fair and flexible as possible, and will have limited restrictions around spend, and monitoring, where appropriate.
- We will not develop fund criteria and terms where grantees are required to meet unrealistic time challenges around spend.
- We will encourage our donors and fundholders to enable us to administer their funds with the same minimal restrictions.
- Any restrictions for funds that we do not have flexibility with will be clear and concise prior to application, and prior to acceptance of any awards.
- We will encourage grantees to raise any challenges as quickly as possible with us and ensure
 that we are as supportive as we can be, to support them in any challenges. We will develop
 fund Officers for all our funds, to enable grantees and applicants to have a main point of
 contact, and to address any issues they may have. We will update our website accordingly.
- We will hold quarterly meetings with our grantees, and consult, listen, learn and adapt based on what our grantees are telling us we can do better.
- We will offer support around financial capacity etc from CFNI staff eg: Finance.

We will commit to light touch reporting

- We will ensure that our formal reporting requirements are well understood, proportionate and meaningful.
- We will commit to asking projects to only complete one end of grant report for all of our own funds over a certain level of funding, and for any that we have the flexibility with on behalf of other donors and fundholders.
- For any projects awarded under £2,000 we will simply ask them to provide a short update on their project and the impact of this support. We will be flexible about how this information is collated - telephone call, audio message, video message, annual report, email - to suit the grantee's needs and abilities.
- Where appropriate, we will be flexible with dates for completion of end of grant reports.
- We will not take into account any previous issues with monitoring and reporting of awards, without giving the grantee the opportunity to rectify within a reasonable timeframe.
- Financial verifications will only take place for grants over £20k, unless there is a record of poor financial management and we deem it necessary to add additional restrictions and verification conditions to a particular grantee.
- We will also provide opportunities for regular learning and impact events around thematic areas/funds. Encourage to send photos, stories, voice notes, upload to grantee hub.





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