



## Welcome from Róisín

2024/25 was a challenging year. The rising cost of living continued to make raising funds difficult, yet we continue to be humbled by the unwavering generosity of our donors. We are equally grateful to our staff, grantees, Trustees, partners, and stakeholders, whose dedication and collaboration remain vital to building a better future.

Throughout the year, our strategy remained our guiding framework, helping us stay true to our values while adapting to rapidly changing community needs. Agility and adaptability have become essential, not just for our Foundation, but for philanthropy as a whole.

We have strengthened our commitment to supporting those who give, introducing AI tools to our grant-making process to enhance efficiency and ensure generosity reaches those who need it most. For our hundreds of grantees, we prioritised listening, flexibility, and responsiveness.

This year we completed research towards a Digital Hub.

We set out clear actions through our policy work to tackle poverty, address climate sustainability, support community transformation, advance digital inclusion, promote social justice, and strengthen health outcomes.

Through our Building Solidarity conference, we stood firmly against the troubling rise in racist and Islamophobic violence. In response, we launched the Equity in Action Fund to support communities most affected and to strengthen solidarity across society.

We will continue our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, advocate for the voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector, amplifying its voice, drive innovation in grant-making, and prioritise the well-being of our staff, recognising their dedication and fostering a healthy, resilient workplace.

As we look to the year ahead, the challenges before us are significant, but so too are the opportunities. We cannot achieve this alone. We invite our donors, partners, and communities to continue standing with us. Guided by our shared values of passion, ambition, and integrity, we can ensure that CFNI remains a force for resilience, solidarity, and lasting change.

Róisín Wood CEO

## Words from our Chair

As I reflect on the past year, I am struck by the progress we have made together as a Foundation and as a society.

When I first reported in the wake of Covid, I spoke of the challenges we collectively faced.

Today, while challenges remain, I am proud to say that the Community Foundation has responded with resilience, innovation, and commitment to those we serve.

This year we continued to strengthen our organisation, embracing new systems and technology that make us more efficient and dynamic.

Our ability to respond quickly is central to our mission—94% of applications were processed within six weeks, ensuring support reaches communities when it is needed most.

We have also deepened our work in areas of complex and evolving need.

Our Human Rights Fund opened to new grantees in 2024, and we are committed to expanding its reach.

The Nothing About Us Without Us Programme was recognised externally when our co-design group received the Allyship Award at the inaugural NI Hummingbird Awards.



In shaping our work, lived experience has been at the heart of decision-making. Over ten panels, involving voices from LGBTQIA+ communities, rural residents, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, refugees, asylum seekers, older people, and those with lived experience of homelessness and poverty, have informed our direction.

We also recognise the urgent challenges of a digital society. From Al disruption to digital access and equity, we know that communities and the voluntary sector need support to navigate these shifts. Our focus remains on ensuring inclusive futures where wellbeing and fairness are not left behind.

Finally, I want to thank our outgoing board members, trustees, staff, funders, partners and all who have continually supported our work.
Together, we continue to build a stronger, fairer, more connected society.

Adrian Fohnston
Adrian Johnston Chair

### Meet the team

The growth and success of the Community Foundation is due in

no small part to the knowledge and dedication of our staff and trustees, Their commitment and contribution is a key element in our journey enhancing our impact year on year.



**Roisín Wood** 



Orla Black



**Richard Rogers** 



**Ciara Lavery** 



**Lois Kilpatrick** 



Nikki Bell



**Sinead Brennan** 



**Johnny McShane** 



**Andrea Kerns** 



**Lisa Abell-Farrelly** 



**Dawn Shackels** 



**Danielle Dawson** 



**Marion Hegarty** 



Carolyn McLoone



Claire O'Kane



**Andrew McCormick** 



**Shauna Deery** 



Shauna Kelpie



**Rosie McCreanor** 



John O'Doherty



**David Kennedy** 



Louise Cahoon

### Meet the team



Fiona O'Toole



Mary Catherine McNama



Natalie Duncan



**Helen Craig** 



**Janice Boyd** 



Rachael Stevenson-Reynolds



Siobhán Smith

## **Meet our Trustees**



**Dr Adrian Johnston** 



Sarah Andrews



**Rhyannon Blythe** 



**Adele Brown** 



**Gerard Deane** 



John Gordon



**EJ Havlin** 



Justin Kouame



Sophie Long



**Mary McKee** 



Ciaran Moynagh



Stephen Rusk



**Caolan Ward** 



Dr Jane Wilde

In line with our current strategy we continue to work hand in hand with communities to build a better future through ambitious but achievable targets.

Our key strategic priorities for the three years of our current strategy are:

- engaging and support communities;
- driving equity, diversity and inclusion;
- improving wellbeing.

We will, with passion and integrity, continue to;

- Build our financial sustainability via diverse income streams and ethical investments;
- Develop open, trust-based, innovative and agile grant-making

 Support donors and funders to develop their plans for giving.

We have developed a grants strategy built on the principles of;

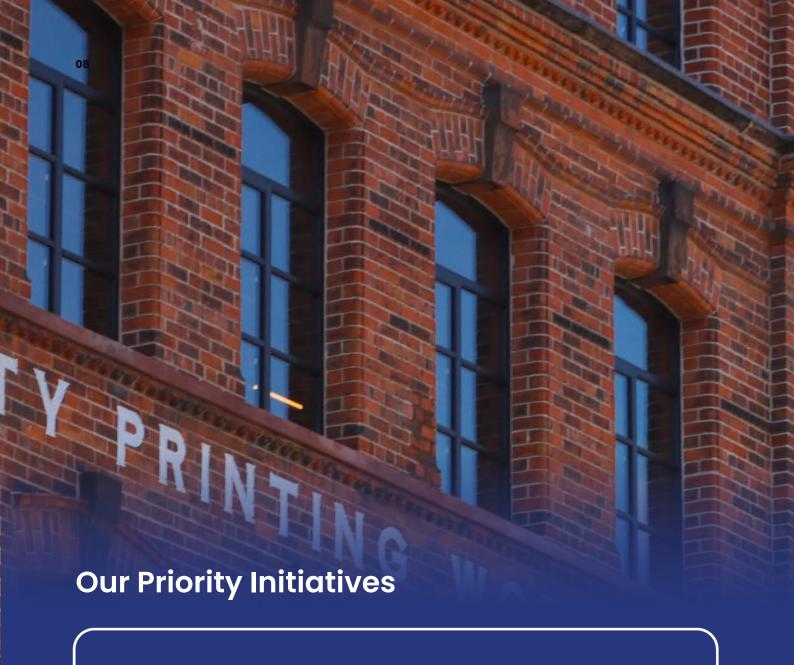
- Working collaboratively to influence policy;
- · Advocating for communities;
- Using impact and knowledge to inform policy and practice.

We have continued to work with existing donors including individuals, corporates, statutory bodies and other foundations/funding bodies.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our donors and partners for their continued support in 2024/25.



- 576 grants awarding £3,815,218.98 through 47 funds.
- Total number of beneficiaries reported was 496,356.
- The average award was £6,623.64
- 10 lived experience panels to inform our decision making with participants from the LGBTQIA+, those from rurally isolated areas, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, including refugees and asylum seekers, older people and those with experience of homelessness and/or housing stress and poverty.
- 15 Seeing Is Believing visits showcasing projects supported for Trustees, donors, ambassadors and friends.
- Our grant making had a 53% approval rate.
- 94% of our applications were responded to within 6 weeks of submission.
- 100% of our decisions were issued within 48 hours of our decisionmaking panels.
- We continue to support projects across the whole of Northern Ireland



Invest in projects, campaigns, and organisations addressing short-and long-term poverty. Supporting a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy.





#### **Digital Inclusion**

Commit resources and advocate for a digital strategy for NI, a new approach to digital infrastructure, and improved digital support and workforce development.

#### **Climate Sustainability**

Create opportunities for the CVSE sector to educate and learn, decarbonize, commit resources, and manage investments through a climate justice lens.





#### **Social Justice**

Broaden human rights support and continue to advocate for and give greater voice to those most marginalized in our communities.

#### **Community Transformation**

Build and develop opportunities to support a stronger, more resilient, and inclusive community and voluntary sector, supporting our communities.





#### Health

Develop funding, policy, and programs that address enhanced mental, physical, economic, social, and environmental well-being.

# Engaging and Supporting Communities

We awarded almost £1.3 million under the pillar of engaging and supporting communities.

This helped local charities and community organisations to achieve:

- 95,224 hours of community activity.
- 5,385 hours of education and training.
- 3,734 new members of a group/organisation
- 821 new volunteers
- 54,258 people attended activity sessions
- 19,878 people reported a sense of pride in their local area
- 6713 people reported an increase in their knowledge of their rights and the law
- 11,116 people reported an increase in skills and knowledge
- 6,948 people reported that community facilities were improved

#### **Nothing About Us Without Us**

The Nothing About Us Without Us women's programme, supported by Porticus, has continued to grow and go from strength to strength.

Working through a co-design group of committed, visionary and passionate organisations we have

developed a programme designed for and with women.

In March 2024 we launched a survey to better understand women's needs and priorities in our call to action for a women's health strategy, receiving 74 organisational responses and 1080 individual

In October we launched the findings, identifying several key areas which should be included in a women's health strategy for Northern Ireland.

We continue to work with Derry Well Women on both the priorities for a women's health action plan and training programmes for women.

Our Visible, Vocal, Valued programme for our core beneficiaries has been well received and complements our broader work.

Our co-design group was externally recognised receiving the 'Allyship' award at the inaugural NI Hummingbird Awards in March 2025.





#### **Housing & Homelessness**

Our Housing & Homelessness programme, supported by Oak Foundation, entered its final year.

The programme produced a wide range of benefits serving some of the most at-risk, marginalised populations.

We also concluded our work on the issue of homelessness as a result of violence against women and girls.

We commissioned Heriot-Watt University along with the University of Edinburgh to carry out research on the intersect between homelessness as a result of violence against women and girls by focusing on the lived experience of women.

The report contains potentially distressing content and highlights the stark reality faced by some women every week in NI.

It further highlighted how existing support systems not only fail to protect women but can actively worsen their plight.

Whilst the report, launched in March 2025 in Stormont, is a difficult read, the research does show that meaningful change is possible.

(Click here for report)

In addition to the research we supported 2 campaigns on this issue, one with Housing Rights and the other with Women's Research Development Agency (WRDA)- a legislative theatre production led by Housing Rights and a steps to Safety campaign by WRDA.

21 women were able to avail of the bursary support under the Housing and Homelessness programme supporting issues such as advocacy training, confidence building and mental health first aid.

#### **Peace Impact Programme**

We continued our work as Managing Agents under the Peace Impact Programme on behalf of the International Fund for Ireland.

The aim is to build sustainable peace and prosperity within communities of greatest economic and social deprivation, where there are low levels of engagement in peace building and limited benefits from the Peace Process.

#### **Strategic Objectives:**

- Engage with individuals and groups that have not previously, or only partially participated in community development and peace building activities
- Increase contact, dialogue, sharing and integration within and between communities to build cohesion and improve relationships
- Support creative and innovative approaches to dealing with contentious issues
- Promote greater understanding and acceptance of diversity between communities thereby reducing sectarianism

- Target the engagement and participation of disaffected young people
- Underpin the Peace Process and promote economic prosperity by increasing the skills base within communities
- Support the development of women in peace building
- Support projects that will lead to and result in greater collaboration and relationship building with local and regional government

Over the course of 2024/25 we supported 15 projects, making significant progress on difficult issues in hard-to-reach loyalist and republican areas.

#### **Highlights included:**

- 46192 people involved in capacity building events and training.
- 15 projects funded
- 1987 inter/intra cross border relationships established / maintained
- 1152 events and activities delivered
- 623 participating in peace or capacity building for first time in border counties in ROI
- 172 accreditations /qualifications achieved in total

## Driving Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

We awarded £900,000 in grants to help local charities and community organisations to drive equity, diversity and inclusion

#### Highlights included:

- 2,856 people reported an increase in the understanding of others
- 1,236 people reported a reduction in feeling that they have been discriminated against
- 4828 people reported improved social networks
- 2,794 people with lived experience were involved

#### Northern Ireland Human Rights Fund

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Fund has continued to core fund

four, independent human rights organisations and the Social Justice Fund.

Together they have protected gains from the peace agreements, challenged rights abuses and raised concerns regarding the consequences of government actions that fail to protect rights.

At the latter end of 2024 we opened the fund to new grantees.

We aim to grow the number of grantees we can support to tackle human rights issues related to legacy, gender, health, socio economic rights, tech and digital rights, racial justice, and climate, creating a vibrant, strong, cohesive, and connected network of organisations.

We completed our New Voices programmes, supported by Garfield Weston Foundation, which helped organisations to build their capacity.



The stories of change and the transformative impact of New Voices is highlighted in quotes below:

"The programme really helped us think about the type pf organisation we wanted to be, understand our identity and develop the constitution with our members." and;

"It has done me the world of good on a personal level as well as benefiting the group tremendously."

We have developed a Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan which outlines actions to improve DEI across all areas of our work.

We have provided training to Trustees and staff in the past year, around appropriate language and unconscious bias.

We have also invited grantees to present to our Trustees and staff to share their lived experiences with us.

We hold a bronze Diversity Mark and will continue to develop our work in this area.

In January 2025 we organised the 2-day Building Solidarity Conference. This followed scenes of racist violence in Belfast and across the UK and Ireland in the summer of 2024.

The conference brought together community leaders, policymakers, and experts to address the rise in racist and Islamophobic violence in Northern Ireland. (Full report here)



## Improving Wellbeing

We provided over £1.3 million in grants supporting the improvement of physical, mental and economic wellbeing.

#### Highlights included:

- 47,954 participated in sport, exercise and leisure activities
- 20,388 were supported by successful health treatments
- 1,248 hours of respite care were provided
- 7,246 people completed training
- 11,265 reported improved mental health
- 2,245 people reported improved physical health
- 6,232 people felt less lonely
- 2,430 reported an increase in their literacy and numeracy skills

#### The Acorn Farm / I Can Grow

The Acorn Farm continues to be a leading element of long-term wellbeing in partnership with the National Lottery Community Fund's Climate Action Fund, Derry City and Strabane District Council and the UK Levelling Up Fund.

The wider £6.2 million Acorn Farm capital build project is set to transform the former MOD site into a unique urban growing space.

Progress this year saw contractors appointed for the urban farm, and the gate lodge is now completed.

Work on geodesic domes and kitchen continues, with the remainder of the work to be completed in 2025.



The Acorn Farm community engagement programme is skilling up hundreds of local families, households and communities who are learning how to grow and cook food at home through the 'I Can Grow' and 'I Can Cook' programme.

#### Highlights included:

- 400 families have commenced their growing journey
- 1600 beneficiaries have reported increased knowledges of the growing cycle
- 17 beneficiaries reported a greater understanding of climate change.
- Derry City and Strabane Council is to establish a climate commission.

#### Staff Health and Wellbeing

We value the great team of staff that work with us, and we are fully

committed to helping them to have a good work-life balance and improve their health and wellbeing.

Our Staff Wellbeing Group have worked hard over the past year to support staff health and wellbeing through training, social activities and our reward and recognition programme.

#### **Highlights included:**

- Participation in the NI Chest Heart and Stroke Work Well Live Well Programme
- 3 staff trained as Health Champions
- Christmas Crafts and social activities
- Walking for Wellness Challenge
- 62 Reward and Recognition awards
- 2 Wellbeing Training events
- 2 staff trained as menopause champions



## Our Funding Practice

Our strategy committed to the following:

- To develop open, trust based, innovative and agile grant making processes
- To continue to build our financial sustainability via diverse income streams and ethical investments

Our vision for our grant making is to develop trust-based relationships that are strong, connected, listened to, and served.

Our grant making is underpinned by the following values:

- Flexibility
- Agility
- Relational
- Risk taking
- Inclusion
- Influencing

Our grant processes set out the decision-making authority for different funds and ensure that all grant applicants are treated fairly and equitably.

We endeavour to strike a balance between being supportive of grantees and holding them to account for delivery against their funded outcomes and outputs. "We highly valued the flexibility and support provided by CFNI staff. Their knowledge of the CVS, the speed in which we received responses to queries and the interest taken in our work was helpful, appropriate and supportive in assisting to make the project work"

Strategically we have advanced in advocating for the sector, influencing policy.

We continue to work with our donors to articulate the challenges that the sector faces, and encourage and influence how they, and others, give.

We have continued to build our financial sustainability via diverse income streams, including funding and donations from government, trusts and foundations, corporate organisations and individuals and families.

We encourage partnership working and have developed a number of collaborative funds.

We currently manage 60 funds, and 6 programmes.

In 2024/25 we raised £3.9m of revenue income and £0.6m of endowment income from both new and existing donors. This income helps us to provide more support to local communities in Northern Ireland.

With an ethical investment policy we ensure our endowment funds are invested responsibly and sustainably.

## Funders Commitment on Climate Change

As a signatory of the Association of Charitable Foundations' Funders Commitment on Climate Change, we have continued our work on climate action, as detailed below:

#### **Educate and learn**

Staff of the foundation used their volunteer days to support the Belfast Hills Partnership to plant trees.

The organisation's climate lead also attended FRESK training covering the fundamentals of climate change along with 2 training sessions with Impatient Earth looking at Climate in the Community, Responding to Climate Change as a Community Foundation.

#### Commit resources

Our strategy has climate sustainability as one of 6 strategic priorities.

We have a Climate Action Group rolling out our Climate Action Plan which has been approved by our Trustees.

We continue to develop and deliver the Acorn Farm Climate Action Programme, and the 'I Can Grow' programme supporting over 400 families to grow their own food. We continue to manage 15 community benefit funds from local windfarms and have developed a new fund with RiverRidge.

The funding helps to address a variety of local priorities but with a particular focus on helping to tackle climate change and encouraging sustainability and environmental projects.

In addition, a number of other funds have helped to address causes and impact of climate change.

#### Integrate

By including climate sustainability as one of six strategic priority initiatives in our new strategy, we are prioritising this across our work and operations.

We have prioritised our climate action programmes and grants while also making practical and cultural changes in our office space and day to day operations.

We seek to move away from corporate gifts, awards and merchandise that are unsustainable, or single use plastic, instead offering plants, recycled products and tree planting opportunities for example.

## Steward our investments for a post carbon future

We have continued to develop and implement an ethical investment policy, with negative screening against fossil fuels, in addition to other ethical restrictions, and positive screening to actively invest in green energy and sustainable investments.

#### **Decarbonise our operations**

We have significantly reduced our use of paper in the office, by moving most systems to cloud based electronic systems. This includes our grant-making, finance, HR and

CRM systems, where processes are all on-line.

We have ended the use of single use plastics in our materials and have instead moved to eco-friendly products such as bamboo pens. We have moved to eco-friendly cleaning products and endeavour to use local suppliers.

#### Report on progress

We report annually to ACF on our progress and attend the ACF Climate Action seminars to engage with and learn from other Foundations on their climate action.





## Digital

With support from Dormant Assets NI we have developed a scoping report and business plan to support the delivery of a digital hub to support the VCSE sector.

This programme has been led by cross sectoral partners including the Department of Finance, Department for

Communities, Microsoft, HP, Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) and Catalyst.

In addition, we have developed a new campaign, The Inspiring Growth Fund, which aims to provide support for the voluntary sector to access opportunities around digital promoting the advancement of digital platforms, and Artificial Intelligence.



# Our funds, funders and supporters

We would like to express our gratitude to the funders who supported our work in 2024/25:

Baring Foundation
Comic Relief
Department of Health NI
Garfield Weston Foundation

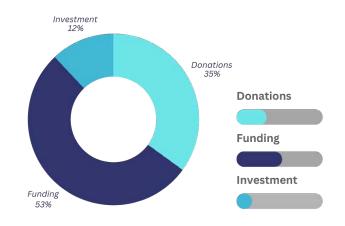
Henry Smith Foundation
International Fund for Ireland
National Lottery Community Fund
Oak Foundation
Porticus UK
RTÉ Toy Show Appeal
Sigrid Rausing Trust

We extend our gratitude to all of our donors - corporates, families and individual donors who supported us during 2024/25.

## **Our Finances**

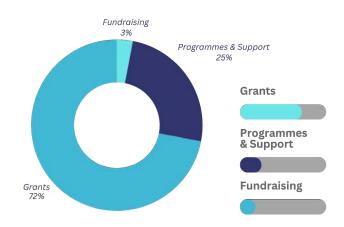
Income	£	%
Donations	£1,584,911	35%
Funding	£2,399,400	53%
Investment	£556,774	12%

Total Income £4,541,085



£	%
£6,055,891	<b>72</b> %
£2,057,384	25%
£252,079	3%
	£2,057,384

Total Expenditure £8,365,354



The deficit in 2024/25 was covered by funds brought forward from previous years which are not included in the income figures above.

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Tel: +44 (0) 28 7137 1547



**Charity Number: NIC105105** 





REGULATOR