

The Future of Community Foundations: The Mismatch

How can the increasing number of donor advised funds of Community Foundations be aligned with the priorities of their communities to achieve the overall Community Foundation purpose?

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How can the increasing number of donor advised funds of Community Foundations be aligned with the priorities of their communities to achieve the overall Community Foundation purpose?

1. Introduction

This paper assesses the strategic and operational challenges faced by Community Foundations (CFs) in the UK in distributing their funds, using Community Foundations for Lancashire and Merseyside (CFLM) as a case study.

Dorothy Reynolds of CS Mott Foundation defines a Community Foundation's purpose in her essential 'The Balancing Act' publication of 2008/09: "Simply put, a community foundation has three functions. It is a grantmaker. It is a vehicle for the philanthropy of individuals, corporations and organizations that have concern for a specific geographic area. It provides leadership in the community it serves as an effective, independent arena for addressing difficult issues and/or advocating for needed programs, services or policies." As Community Foundations develop and further establish themselves in the UK that definition has developed further. Cindy Lindsay of Community Foundations for Canada (CFC) states that as CFs develop they need to not only fulfil their purpose of being facilitators of philanthropy, distributors of community grants and community leaders, but also ensure that their work is under-pinned by good "community knowledge", such as Vital Signs.

However, as Community Foundations have developed in the last eight years, especially during the recession of 2008/09 and subsequent public funding cuts, particularly in the UK, their role is becoming confused. "The reality is that CFs in the UK are following different pathways - and we are walking somewhat blindfolded into an uncertain future which may very well separate rather than unite CFs across the UK." (IVAR UKCF Member Survey, July 2015)

In terms of the current purpose of Community Foundations in the UK Dr Peter Grant argues that Community Foundations should work with donors and set up donor advised funds under the social aims of its geography, and that the private sector organisations, many of which are competitors to CFs, should provide donor advised funds to facilitate giving for social themes and geographies of any kind, including international giving. With Community Foundations moving into social finance in the South East of England and international giving via NGOs registered in the UK and also being dominated by donor advised funds (DAFs) and therefore the donors' interests and not necessarily the communities' due to a need to bring in private income as public income ends, are Community Foundations drifting from their purpose? And, who has created the problem? What is appropriate at our current Community Foundation life stage in the UK?

UK Community Foundations (UKCF) states that "Local charitable giving is experiencing resurgence as people become more aware of the need in their own communities." How will Community Foundations in the UK act upon this "resurgence" without losing their purpose? (UKCF's website, July 2015)

This paper aims to begin a debate on this topic, taking CFLM as a case study, sharing some recommendations for CFs and UKCF to consider, supporting the 2015 UK Conference session on the topic in September this year.

Please share your thoughts with me on the topic at cathy.elliott@cflm.email to further the debate.

Cathy Elliott
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Executive Summary

At our current Community Foundation life stages in the UK as we come out of the primarily dealing with public funds to building endowment and dealing with majority private funds we need to establish what is appropriate as private donations and the Donor Advised Funds (DAFs) that come with them arrive with their specific interests.

The developing community knowledge CF work in the UK overall supports the strategic aim that the world-leader in CFs, Emmet Carson, states which is that CFs “will become the ‘go to’ resource for knowledge about community needs and strategic philanthropy.” (Redefining Community Foundations, Stanford Business View, Winter 2013) This community knowledge work will aim to decrease the instances of DAFs entirely defining community investment and grant-making as is the case currently; as Bill Sommerville puts it “the tail is now wagging the dog: Donor-advised funds have no local allegiance...”

CFs in the UK need to undertake a blended strategic approach to overcome the mismatch in donor interests and community priorities, establishing themselves as community knowledge hubs with a clear social agenda for their geography, alongside an established and professional community philanthropy or giving offer to attract and satisfy donors to achieve their overall mission in this era for Community Foundations.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are shared to support CF business planning processes from 2016 and to support UKCF as it develops its new strategy for its CF members, following a member survey in summer this year.

For CFs:

- A CF’s theory of change and strategic approach must address the mismatch between potential donor interests and community priorities in order to achieve its mission;
- DAFs should only be set up under the CF’s community priorities to fulfil its Mission, Vision, Governing document and Public Benefit requirements and to avoid Mission-drift or a DAF being created not for community priorities;
- Community knowledge developed, used and disseminated by CFs must be verified by knowledge experts, and then shared proactively with donors who hold DAFs;
- A CF’s community knowledge must be disseminated effectively and interactively with donors who hold DAFs to improve the donor’s community knowledge, aiming to align donor interests and community priorities;
- CFs should test and pilot establishing a social change agenda and fundraising opportunities, based on the U.S CF experience to secure unrestricted funds for community priorities;
- Donors who have held a DAF with a CF for more than five years should ideally be on a pathway of greater sophistication in their giving, also ideally articulating a Theory of Change, and being open to experts on their DAF funding panel to improve decision-making on funding distribution;
- The role of the assessor should be strengthened to tackle donor-led only decisions that do not match community priorities or views of experts who have verified community information or are part of a panel.

For UKCF:

- Support the development of best practice via forums and training for the alignment of donor interests and community priorities;
- Support the exploration of fundraising against a social change agenda to secure unrestricted funds to support community priorities not supported by CF DAFs;
- Explore via global partners the opportunities to facilitate community philanthropy across countries and CF to CF, supporting a potential donor wish and CF interest whilst remaining within the specialism of communities;
- Support the development of quality community philanthropy capabilities in CFs to facilitate community philanthropy and attract new donors.

2. Background to Community Foundations

The Community Foundation movement began with the Cleveland Foundation in 1914 in the United States (U.S) which was conceived by banker, attorney and philanthropist Frederick H. Goff “for the purpose of pooling the charitable gifts of Clevelanders from all walks of life into a single, great, permanent trust to be administered for the betterment of their city”. (Community Foundation Atlas, August 2015). The movement internationally now stands at between 1,838 to 2,500 Community Foundations, primarily in Canada (191), the U.S (around 750 with 500 officially earning the ‘seal of accreditation’), the UK (48 accredited) and Germany (around 450 of all sizes). (Community Foundation Atlas and Council on Foundations, August 2015). CFs in the UK have existed since 1975 with a national umbrella body being created in 1991. (UKCF, July 2015). CFs accept philanthropy in the form of donated funds which can be unrestricted for general CF work and more commonly unrestricted as DAFs, working in collaboration with the donor on giving to their interests in the community of the CF’s geography.

3. Establishing Funding Objectives

3.1. The Donor versus the Community Challenge

In terms of immediate symptoms there is an in-balance between the role of DAF grants panels versus the role of the assessor with the panel dominating currently as they are the private funder, alongside the symptom of a mismatch between the criteria of DAFs and community priorities with the donor interest leading as the funder. This has been evident at CFLM since 2012/13 as the CFs moved into majority private funds to distribute. These symptoms and their root causes are creating challenges for CFLM as it prepares for a new Business Plan period from April 2016, ultimately planning for its role as CFs in a new era of working with predominately private funding.

CFLM is a typical CF in the UK within the 32% that holds a £9 million to £15 million endowment fund; currently at £11 million with 23% of CFs holding the smallest endowments at less than £4 million and 20% of CFs holding above £15 million. CFLM is of the 30% taking part in Vital Signs, a community knowledge initiative, and is in the top 12 in the network of 48 CFs in terms of grant-making and growth. (UKCF Bench-Marking Report, 2014/15 and IVAR UKCF Member Survey, July 2015). CFLM has operated and distributed predominately private funds since 2012/13 as European and Government programmes ended, moving the organisation towards philanthropy facilitation of nearly 50 DAF to date against the donor interests as companies, individuals, families and trusts. This is a common approach as evidenced in a 2015 IVAR evaluation for UKCF seeking views on the future for CFs in the UK with a respondent stating “while we will gladly deliver central and local government programmes if they are aligned to our aims and we are appropriately compensated, we don’t really see this as our core role as community foundation.” (IVAR UKCF Member Survey Report, July 2015).

A review by CFLM in early 2015 proved that the majority of donor advised funds had the primary funding criteria for children and young people’s issues based on their passions and interests. However, when the donor advised fund criteria of the 50 funds and foundations were mapped against community priorities via CFLM’s Vital Signs social research and community consultations since 2013 a mismatch was proven, especially in terms of health & wellbeing being the priority for Lancashire, particularly for older people.

3.2 Donor Motivations

In terms of the motivations of DAFs Bishop and Green stated in 2008 that “. . . it is fiendishly difficult to know what really makes a philanthropist tick . . .” However, there are common giving motivations that many philanthropy commentators and practitioners state which are personal values, a belief in a specific cause, faith and religion and/or personal experiences, such as a tragedy or encounter with someone in need. (Bishop.M & Green.M, 2008, *Philanthrocapitalism*, and Charities Aid Foundation (CAF), 2014, *Why Do People Give*).

In studying Dr Beth Breeze’s eight ways of contemporary giving CFs tend to deal with the following:

- ‘Kindred Spirits’ giving back to people like them who come from where they came from or have similar problems to what they had for which a CF has grassroots networks to find charities and groups working with such people;
- ‘Big Fish’ who wants to support activities in the area where they live and work for which a CF can provide local knowledge, networks and track record;
- And, ‘Secret Operators’ who wish to leave discreetly or anonymously for which a CF provides this cover to do so as a broker.

(Breeze.B. 2008. *Problem of Riches*. University of Kent).

In terms of the role of philanthropists Dr Eikenberry states that “Giving doesn’t go to the areas where it is most needed – philanthropists tend to give to areas they feel passionate about and not the ones with the greatest need. Philanthropy is voluntary and about making people feel human. Philanthropy might not get to the places where it’s most needed”. She shares that from Reagan and afterwards in the U.S there has been a roll back of the state and encouragement of more volunteering and philanthropy, “but it’s not happening after decades,” and giving has stayed the same, giving to certain areas over 30 years (eg. a third to religious organisations and less than 15% to help the poor). She states that “it’s not a realistic expectation that philanthropy can fill those gaps”. (Dr Angela Eikenberry, Nebraska University, CASS Lecture, 25 June 2015). To give a UK view, giving in general has remained at 54% to 58% of the population from 2004/05 to 2011/12 with the highest amounts being given to religious causes, hospitals and medical research and the largest number of donors giving to medical research, hospitals and children. (CAF UK Giving 2012 Summary). The amount given by individuals in the UK has remained between £10 billion and £13 billion from 2005 to 2014. (CAF UK Giving 2014 Summary).

Emmet Carson, the world-leader on CF strategy and practice from Silicon Valley CF, stated in 2013 that “Our donors also know that social issues cross geographic boundaries, and they hold different definitions of ‘community.’ Silicon Valley Community Foundation will meet donor partners where they are and support their personal definitions of building community—locally, nationally, and around the globe.” (*Redefining Community Foundations*, Stanford Business View, Winter 2013). This is very much what CFs are moving towards in the UK currently, though still remaining at this time within the remit of community philanthropy under charity law as is their specialism. (UKCF website, July 2015). There are issues in global giving that need to be overcome further before any potential effective and focused CF facilitated giving globally can be achieved, CF to CF, such as tax implications in giving across countries. However, the aim to facilitate global grant-making for international events and trends that affect local interests for a CF’s geography is something to be explored further whilst, as Bill Sommerville argues, ensuring a CF maintains its primary role “to serve the local community.” (*Keeping ‘Community’ in Community Foundations*, Stanford Business View, Winter 2013).

In taking CFLM’s situation has Dr Eikenberry’s point been proven that as CFs accept more private funding via DAFs our purpose in supporting communities will not be aligned with donor interests, being unable to support the greatest community priorities, and will there will be a continuing mismatch to deal with?

3.3 Strategically Aligning Interests

For many CFs in the UK their operational processes are consistent with the overall objectives or theory of change. CFLM's Theory of Change created in 2011/12 is "We seek and work with philanthropists to empower them to engage in targeted community investment to contribute to enriching local people's lives and supporting the creation of united, prosperous and thriving communities." (CFLM Annual Accounts 2014/15). This Theory of Change does not address the mismatch of donor and community interests. However, CFLM's strategic approach created in 2011/12 to "understand the needs of local communities and philanthropists and, by creating collaborations and involving philanthropists and communities, ensure that these needs are met" is a greater reflection of the true alignment that is aimed for by CFLM. (CFLM Annual Accounts 2014/15). As CFLM and other CFs revise and plan for the developing agenda of philanthropy facilitation from 2016 this alignment of interests must be a priority.

3.4 Setting Community Priorities

CFs in the UK are more commonly gathering community knowledge to inform their strategic approach to their work. This is increasingly taking the form of Vital Signs since 2013 by 30% of the UK network currently which is a social policy tool and giving guide by CF locality with a combination of statistics and the results of community consultations. (UKCF website, July 2015). A number of other CFs create similar versions to Vital Signs or local needs analyses of statistics. Adapted from the CFC model born in Toronto in 2001 CFs both in Canada and the UK are increasingly placing community knowledge at the backbone to their work and driver to their strategic planning and implementation. (CFC Vital Signs website, July 2015). "Knowledge experts" as described by Orosz are used to verify the community knowledge before publication of annual Vital Signs giving guides. (Orosz.JJ. 2007. *Effective Foundation Management* and UK Vital Signs *How to Guide* 2013). This work in the UK has been in development since 2009/10 when many CFs began publishing social needs analyses, such as Community Foundation for Merseyside's (CFM) in 2009, developing at a time of decreasing public funds and increasing private funds. (CFM's Local Needs Analysis. 2009). The use of such tools with donors to CFs via DAFs is the key to achieving the alignment sought.

As Silicon Valley CF in the U.S has pursued a social agenda for the common good, they have "enjoyed unprecedented fundraising success." Emmet Carson, their CEO, stated in 2013 that "during the second most challenging economic environment in history, we have been able to establish a social change agenda and achieve consistent fundraising success." (Redefining Community Foundations, Stanford Business View, Winter 2013). This experience is something for UK CFs to explore in this new era, especially to secure funds for community priorities not supported by DAFs.

4. Achieving Clear Overall Objectives

4.1 Setting the Criteria

This development of verified community knowledge for CFs in the UK is seeing grant-making practices, including at application and monitoring stage, align with the knowledge, such as Vital Signs themes. (UK Vital Signs Steering Group Minutes, 31 July 2015 and UK Vital Signs *How to Guide*. 2013). This is a key development for grant applicants who must align their needs and wishes which is part of what Dr Peter Grants suggests is prompting applicants "to express themselves clearly" and improving guidance to them, though against broad social themes of work or safety to avoid forcing applicants "outside their own aims and objectives." (Grant.P. 2008. *The Business of Giving*).

WINGS, the global organisation for philanthropy associations states that "Community philanthropy shows great promise in strengthening communities" (WINGS, Infrastructure in Focus. 2014). CFs in the UK are increasingly seeing this due to past endowment challenges with private donors in England which has significantly contributed to the network now holding £450 million in endowment funds; £150 million alone via the Government Community First endowment challenge from 2011/12 to 2014/15 which incentivised hundreds of private donors to set up endowment funds with CFs for local social impact. (UKCF website, July 2015). Beyond the match incentive it is likely based on CFLM's experience

that more is needed to be done to inform these new donors who have committed in perpetuity to develop their DAF beyond their personal interests because they choose to work with a CF for the long term.

CFLM is aiming to improve philanthropists' community knowledge via their Philanthropy Fellowship which was piloted from 2012 to 2014, funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, and is now self-funded locally by CFLM and its Fellowship partners. The Fellowship aims to bring like-minded people together to share best practice in giving and improve their community knowledge to increase their impact in communities. The Fellowship offers forums for debates, community visits and events based on the findings of CFLM's Vital Signs reports, bringing the reports to life as giving guides. As the Fellowship has grown to around 30 committed and active Fellows (of whom around 50% hold a DAF with CFLM), the impact of its work should be seen within a few years in a greater sophistication in giving, especially aligning with community priorities.

4.2 Funding Panels

Orosz suggest that the best advisors to foundations are "those who are most knowledgeable about the subject," and from this he asks whether it is best to rely on "expert-based knowledge" or "community based knowledge"? Most donors have a motivation to give, but are not necessarily the experts in the areas in which they wish to give whether as experts or being from the community. (Orosz.JJ. 2007. *Effective Foundation Management*) By allowing donors to dominate funding decisions via DAFs, are CFs taking advice from simply the wrong advisors?

Dr Peter Grant states that in the selection process assessors must be enabled to provide those making decisions on funding distribution with "information that enables them to judge the relevance of an individual application and the 'fitness' of the applicant organisation." (Grant.P. 2008. *The Business of Giving*). CFs have a long track record in terms of grant-making from the early days of Local Impact Fund administered by 35 CFs from 2004 to 2008 to 45 CFs administering Grassroots Grants from 2008 to 2011, building high standards in grant-making, backed by UKCF's Quality Accreditation tri-annual process with the Charity Commission since 2007. (UKCF website, July 2015) These large scale government programmes allowed CFs to appoint their own local panels of advisors which were a mix of knowledge experts and community experts, fulfilling Orosz's recommendation, such as for Big Lottery's Fair Share Trust. (UKCF website, July 2015).

Currently CF programmes tend to have local experts to recommend the distribution of funds for public programmes and the donors themselves to recommend for DAFs with the CF then ratifying the decision under charity law. From CFLM's experience of their 50 funds and foundations, the DAFs tend to have the sole donor for the high value funds, such as individuals, a panel of business people or staff for corporate ones and delegated authority or a local community panel for UK schemes or former charitable trust funds. There is only one CFLM private fund, the Liverpool ONE Foundation, which invites experts to sit alongside business people, bringing in knowledge and community expertise linked to their foundation's criteria and Theory of Change which was developed with and for them by CFLM in 2012/13; only around 20% of CFLM's funds and foundations have an established Theory of Change. A greater sophistication in giving by Liverpool ONE is perhaps due to the length of time they have worked with CFLM, including being involved in the Philanthropy Fellowship, and a reason why a better balance is achieved in advising and recommending funding for communities to CFLM.

5.Recommendations

The following recommendations are shared to support CFLM's business planning process from 2016 and to support UKCF as it develops its new strategy for its CF members, following a member survey in summer this year.

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 - Explore via international partners the opportunities to facilitate community philanthropy across countries and CF to CF, supporting a potential donor wish and CF interest whilst remaining within the specialism of community philanthropy;
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Cathy Elliott is the Chief Executive of Community Foundations for Lancashire & Merseyside in the UK, a Trustee-Director of the Power to Change Trust and a Trustee of UK Community Foundations. For the Power to Change Trust Cathy has been a member of the Board, Grants and Audit Committees since February 2015. Within her Community Foundation work in the UK she leads two key initiatives as Chair of the Philanthropy Advising Steering Group since 2013 which has led to the creation of the Philanthropy Advising Framework with CASS Business School and as Founding Chair from 2010 to 2013 and now Co-Chair of the UK Vital Signs Steering Group since 2014/15.

Cathy was trained as a philanthropy advisor in 2007 by Dr Sal La Spada and Fennella Rouse, then of the Institute of Philanthropy and formerly of the Rockefeller Foundation. She advises philanthropists on their giving, such as businessman Sir Terry Leahy and former footballer and Sky Sports presenter, Jamie Carragher. She also advises regional and national companies in the UK on their corporate citizenship, including Shop Direct, including Littlewoods and Very.co.uk, and Santander. Cathy is Chair of the Philanthropy Fellowship North West which is a philanthropy education programme for around 30 philanthropists in the North West of England.

Cathy is a 2013 UK Clore Social Leadership Fellow and a 2009 CUNY Senior International Fellow of the Philanthropy & Civil Society Faculty, revisiting CUNY as a Guest Speaker for Senior Fellows in 2015. She is also degree graduate of University of Manchester, specialising in Film and Politics and a post-graduate of CASS Business School in Grant-Making, Philanthropy and Social Finance. Cathy has won a number of local and regional senior leadership awards in the North West of England, including with the Institute of Directors. She has won a Director of Social Change award and was short-listed for a Sheila McKechnie Foundation Campaigner of the Year award for her work on Merseyside Young Transformers, a youth diversionary programme in 2008.

Cathy has worked within the UK Community Foundation movement since 2007, and before then worked for eight years in fundraising, marketing and campaigning for the disability movement, the arts and a hospice. She is a member of the Advisory Council for Tate Liverpool and the Manchester-based youth charity, RECLAIM, and a volunteer with a number of grassroots charities in the North West.

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