

Why Community Foundations?

Promoting volunteering and active citizenship

Volunteers and active citizens are the heart and soul of strong communities. They are also an essential and valued part of every community foundation.

How do we work with volunteers?

Volunteers play a wide range of crucial roles in every community foundation.

- ◆ Some help to make decisions about who should receive funding, like the 120 people in Birmingham who are members of their grant-making panels.
- ◆ Some help in the office, like the university students in Leeds who gather information on grant applicants and write press releases.
- ◆ Some provide free professional advice to community groups, like the 60 plus accountants and IT professionals involved with Cumbria Community Foundation.

Local volunteers are at the core of grant-making

Community foundations make extensive use of advice from volunteers who sit on local grant panels. The membership of these panels includes local residents, local business people, local public sector workers, local charity staff and local experts on the topic being discussed by a particular panel. All 55 community foundations have these grant panels and some, like Manchester, involve over 200 people. In total there are 2,452 volunteers undertaking this important work¹.

Community foundations reach volunteers from all parts of the community

Research shows that 80 per cent of people would like to volunteer but don't know where to start or worry about finding an opportunity where they will feel welcome and valued. Community foundations are experienced in supporting volunteers from all parts of the community and make great efforts to ensure that grant panels recruit a diverse cross-section of local people to accurately represent and reflect the priorities of their community.

How does our commitment to volunteers benefit donors?

Community foundations tend to support small, local community groups that are led by volunteers

CASE STUDY

Community Foundation for Greater Manchester

Some of the volunteers at the Community Foundation for Greater Manchester are called Associate Advisors because they are seen as part of the extended staff team.

Associate Advisors are local people from any of the ten boroughs of Greater Manchester, who are happy to use their own knowledge of their local communities to enhance and improve the services on offer. Associate Advisors come from all walks of life but what they all have in common is a passion for their local communities and the desire to provide support where it is needed.

Associate Advisors fulfill a variety of roles, ranging from contributing their local knowledge on decision making panels, to making visits to grant recipients as well as helping promote funds and supporting fundraising efforts.

rather than by paid staff. For example, Community Foundation for Calderdale mapped their local voluntary sector and found that volunteers outnumbered paid staff by 3 to 1². So, as well as the thousands of people that volunteer within community foundations, there are tens of thousands of people that volunteer within organisations that are funded by community foundations. This means that donations to community foundations work twice as hard – they fund worthwhile projects and they make it possible for other people to contribute their time voluntarily.

Research into the value of volunteering supported by community foundations found that for every £1 that is made as a grant, £1.30 worth of volunteer time is provided in the recipient organisation³.

Why is volunteering important?

Research conducted by the Institute for Volunteering Research⁴ identified a wide range of benefits for both the volunteer and their community:

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£1
Grant

£1.30
Volunteer time

- ◆ Volunteering empowers people and gives them the confidence and the skills to change their environment and themselves.
- ◆ Volunteers gain vocational skills that are useful for finding and keeping a job as well as social skills that help them get on better with other people.
- ◆ Volunteering creates stronger communities by providing services to socially excluded groups, by challenging stereotypes, and by bringing people from different backgrounds together.

CASE STUDY
Chase Neighbourhood Centre

Over 300 active citizens attend the Chase Neighbourhood Centre, which is funded by Nottinghamshire Community Foundation. It offers a coffee shop, advice centre and educational support for people who want to learn new skills and gain qualifications. The centre's ethos is to accept and help everyone who comes through the door. As the manager explains, "So many people struggle with isolation, whether they are a young mum, an older person living on their own or a refugee who has been placed here – this place really joins people together."

CASE STUDY
The Community Foundation for Shropshire and Telford

A grant of £1,300 from The Community Foundation for Shropshire and Telford funded a twelve week programme of football and life skills training for young people at risk to themselves and the local community. Former participants are now volunteering themselves as football coaches and drug educators to help other local young people.

Why do community foundations and active citizens need each other?

Community foundations encourage the involvement of local people to ensure that local concerns, needs and opportunities are reflected in every aspect of foundations' work.

Active citizens are keen to work with their local community foundation because it is usually the largest independent grant maker in their area and is their best chance of finding accessible and flexible funding for the projects they want to make happen.



Community
Foundation
Network

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1 Based on a survey of 39 community foundations in December 2006
2 Calderdale's Community & Voluntary Sector mapping exercise
3 Survey undertaken by the Community Foundation for Greater Manchester
4 The full findings of this research are available at www.ivr.org.uk/socialexclusion/fullreport.pdf