Yorkshire Funders

Using Giving is Great for Smarter Funding Decisions

Tuesday 19th August 2025 online

Session delivered by:

- John Spiers, Founder of the [Giving is Great](#) website

## Training overview

Understand how the platform can support your **due diligence process**, giving you a deeper understanding of the charities you support or plan to support.

You'll also learn how to identify **high-impact charities** working in your areas of interest, including those that may not yet be on your radar.

## Session Summary

Background

John wanted to become more involved in philanthropy but found it hard to identify who to support as the information just isn't out there in one place to analyse. In the investment world, if you lack time or expertise, you see what the professional are doing and copy that – John therefore realised that with the advent of 360giving, it might be possible to do something similar in the charity world.

With this in mind, the system was developed linked up to 360Giving, to show every charity in England and Wales. They then incorporated other factors to improve the algorithm – to give a head start to where the good charities are, saving time. The tool is intended to help develop a shortlist of charities you want to support, eliminate some and throw up immediate questions, giving a conversation starter. It's intended to be a supporting part of your process.

Developed over time, it now has every UK registered charity, also adding Companies House data and information from the fundraising regulator.

How to Use the Platform

How you can search:
1) Simple search via charity search tab – name or charity number if known
2) If starting from scratch, could use a keyword (geography- or cause-related)

Each organisation has a factsheet, pulling in all the information sourced and analysing to produce a summary of positive indicators and consideration and a score. Information used includes 360Giving data (who a charity have has grants from), income and spending, information on volunteers and governance, financial records and trends.

3) To search in more detail, there is an advanced search facility – what you want the charity to do, who you want the charity to help, how/where it operates, maximum index of multiple deprivation, how much spending, how fast growing (search results can be saved, annotated and downloaded.)
4) Search by causes – featuring extra information and research plus list of charities falling into that category

Comments & Questions so far
One member uses it to find out more when receiving expressions of interest in funding

Q:Numbers of applications from CICs are increasing – could you expand with data from Companies House?
This is something that John is actively looking into but it will be hard unless the regulator tightens up what information is required to be submitted by CICs.

Q: Who allocated the scores and writes the commentary
It's part of an algorithm that John designed – you can view this on the site and he is happy to receive comments on that as weightings are subjective. It reflects what he finds helpful to drive his giving.

Q: Themes seem quite a narrow set – are there any plans to broaden?
It's not completely comprehensive. We are broadening the causes a bit more to cover the most popular causes that other people are interested in.

Site demonstration continued
Click the Grant Makers tab to search for sources of funding – sourced from 360Giving with some additions.
Covers grants to registered charities – size of charity, amount by charity size – can filter list down using keyword (e.g. cause, charity size). Can get more information on their grant-making criteria.

Additional resources on the site – there are some directories, links to news and videos.

Q: Could I search by the highest-scoring charities?
Any search result will show in decreasing score order (can change sort filter to be alphabetical or by size of charity.) A lot of weighting is attached to having been funded by a major funder. How recent the funding was given is also important.

Q: Is there extra weight given to charities funded by community foundations, as they tend to know their local area well?
Currently not as standards vary but open to the suggestion.

One member has started telling applicants to look at themselves on Giving is Great so they are more aware of how a funder may see them. This has led to them taking action to try to improve their score. Having more on CICs would make it even more valuable.

A funder commented that they had a couple of potentially fraudulent applications in the past couple of weeks – one thing they have been digging into is social media and website links. Having links to social media and trustee names is really useful.

Q: Do you pick up investigations by the Charity Commission that are ongoing?
Yes – it's in the regulatory information.

Q: How often is data updated?
Charity Commission data is updated every week so the score is dynamic. 360Giving data is updated less frequently as most funders only update their own records around once per year.

<u>How Funders can Use Giving is Great</u>
Often, I use it when an expression of interest comes in as we operate a 2-step process.  It saved time vs looking up full accounts etc as a first look.

For me, I see things that are flagged up and use that as the basis to go out and find out more – as a starter for research.

It's especially good if you don't have time to visit a charity.

We still aren't considering CICs for funding and we won't as there's a never-ending number and they can set up in a couple of weeks. We need the CIC regulator to tighten up and get more information in order for us to feel comfortable funding them.

There are around 38,000 CICs as things stand. John will consider whether these can be added, but the quality of information may be limited unless the regulator tightens up.

<u>Q: Do you use if you feel you aren't getting applications from a particular geography/type of charity?</u>
We don't – if we have shortages in an area, I tend to reach out to the community foundation, but this would work absolutely.

<u>Q: Do any other members on the call have any thoughts or insights?</u>

A member who hasn't used before thinks it would be helpful and also for organisations to see how they are presented. They really liked the information on policies in force (a lot of organisations aren't aware).

<u>Q: Does it check that policies actually exist, or just that they've ticked a box to say it exists?</u>
Currently it only reflects that they have to tick a box. This is an area of weakness with the regulator that they really need to tighten up.
Companies House are making changes and people are having to verify themselves now – it's hoped this will be the start of tighter regulation. [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/companies-house-confirms-identity-verification-rollout-from-18-november-2025](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/companies-house-confirms-identity-verification-rollout-from-18-november-2025)

Another member uses the site for due diligence to help provoke first questions. But they are also first or early funders to a lot of organisations so this doesn't necessarily help.

We might have a different way to look at it – we often reach out to groups in North Yorkshire for events – could help for this as well (and tell us where our gaps are.)

A couple of members work with a lot of small local-based community organisations who don't typically approach the big charities so don't score highly here – but this is still another useful tool.

<u>Q: How can people provide information if they disagree with information showing?</u>
They can register to edit /add something (e.g. to explain why a board is all female). They can't amend any charity commission data. As the data is scraped from elsewhere, this often means they haven't kept other data up to date.

Signingposting applicants to Giving is Great to help them make more successful applications is something I've seen today that I hadn't thought about before.

CICs were created to be light touch. The more information you ask from them, the more they become like a charity so we can't have the best of both worlds.

I don't agree. CIC are designed to be light touch, they are designed to be registered businesses that also have social aims baked in, giving them ability to raise funds like grants. Therefore, they should be held to the same accountability and standards as a charity, as well as being functional as a business.

Q: We are a charity so we are on the site – but our organisation looks bad because we don't have any income, just an endowment. Could it work out that we're a grant-giving trust and that our income comes from our investments?
It is limited by the amount of information it can pull from the charity commission.

## Feedback to Yorkshire Funders

If you have got any questions, feedback, top tips, links etc on any of this please get in touch as Yorkshire Funders knows our members are sources of incredible insights and knowledge that is valuable to others.

Get in touch via Alex, Alex@yorkshirefunders.or.g.uk