

## Yorkshire Funders

### The Benefits of 'Open and Trusting' Grantmaking with IVAR

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 10-11.30am, Online workshop

## Session delivered by

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## Session overview

This session will cover the eight commitments of 'Open and Trusting' grantmaking, as defined by IVAR. We will explore what this looks like in practice and the mutual benefits of Open and Trusting for funders and charities and hear from a YF member about their journey towards signing up to the Open and Trusting commitments.

## Session Summary

IVAR has 170 members, worth over £1 billion in funding. Most of the IVAR team are researchers, working beside communities to help solve specific questions.

Open and Trusting was born during the pandemic to address the unique challenges at that time.

The eight commitments aren't intended to be prescriptive, but funders who join Open and Trusting are aiming towards this – everyone's journey and approach is unique.

Funders shouldn't be held back by thinking "we aren't perfect, we can't join" – it is a journey and IVAR's role is to walk alongside you to help you go further with every commitment, regardless of where you start.

The benefits of Open and Trusting are mutual – both funders and grantees save time, build stronger relationships and improve impact.

IVAR has a lot of research and case studies available that can be used to support promoting Open and Trusting with your own organisation, for example to your trustees.

We are strong at don't waste time and ask relevant questions – this corresponds with efficient administration.

Struggle with quality feedback due to volume of applications – AI is only going to make this worse. IVAR have had a lot of feedback to this extent.

Being flexible and accepting risk are difficult – it's hard to address committee members'/trustees' concerns

Risk is a hot topic (local authority funder) – we don't have a grants policy so we are having a lot of conversations about risk, especially reputational and relational. Urgency is also something we struggle with as we have lots of steps to our process, so the urgency sits with us and doesn't get passed up. The challenges around risk are different when public funds are involved

– IVAR has a team focused on helping local authorities work on the commitments in a way that is relevant and practical to them.

The length of our process is an issue regarding acting with urgency.

Reflecting on our processes makes me realise the need to streamline our processes

Conversation with Emma Goldthorpe, Eric Wright Charitable Trust

Eric Wright Charitable Trust are YF members who have recently signed up to Open and Trusting

Eric Wright Charitable Trust was established by a local businessman who understood the relationship between good business, supporting people and the community. He wanted charitable values to run through his businesses. Last year we donated £3.2m across around 130 grants. Size of grants varies. We are a general funder, but focus is often people related.

Our approach was – we get annual funding, so we'll give annual funding. We were also very lean as a trust – we were focused on what we could deliver.

What prompted the change?

As part of our process, our trustees are heavily involved. We would go out and see our charities and build a rapport with them – often we were awarding to the same organisations year after year. Over time, the charities we were supporting became more confident in saying how things really were. Multi-year funding was the first request, and unrestricted if possible as they needed money to keep the lights on.

Also, our funding increased. Our trustees made a deliberate decision to improve the trust infrastructure – this gave us more resources to understand what our grantees were saying and time to learn what other funders were doing.

Our trustees are cautious so we needed to move slowly – we decided to run a pilot of multi-year funding. It proved we could do something different and showed to us this was very much needed. The pilot helped prove principle to the board.

We chose our larger size grants for the pilot – around 18 in total.

How did this land with the board and how did you bring people along with you?

We got some of the trustees onboard – they had met the charities so had heard firsthand what is needed and why. This bridged the gap to other trustees.

What feedback have you had?

We've seen organisations increase resilience and save time – they've been able to achieve more with the funding, retaining staff and skills. Giving unrestricted funding makes a huge difference – giving time to breath and plan.

Is there anything about being a funder in this part of the world that shapes your approach / any specific challenges?

We're people focused – it's about community and understanding local needs and building relationships – this really impacts on the way we can deliver work.

Challenges – because it's centred around a locality, it's different for every locality. Looking at similarities and being able to link organisations can provide further opportunities.

Why did you decide to join O&T and why now?

We'd wanted to join for a while – what you were saying made sense. You offered an approach of support, and you don't have to be perfect to join. It's about a journey. The literature you provide helps us as a funder to understand things better. We want to deliver the best programme we can – yes it holds us to account a bit but being part of a learning community gives support.

What's next for this approach?

New strategy in January. We are overhauling our charitable giving - moving to majority multiyear, moving from project-specific to a default of unrestricted. We are reducing the sectors we are in to understand impact better and create an even stronger relationship with grantees.

Does this feel like a big change?

It is a huge change for us, but we've been working towards this for the last three years. We've gathered all our ideas together and it's come together in one place.

Any words of advice?

Start small. We needed to work slowly and take the board along with us. Talk to the charities you are supporting – they will give you valuable insight.

#### Q&A / Comments from others

Something as simple as removing the word “project” from all our literature is a step along the way.

We use feedback – it goes into our newsletter, so the effort providing it is not wasted.

Adopting O&T has helped us to review where we are regularly – it holds us to account and gives us focus.

You can't do it without trustees being on board however – you need to take them on the journey with you.

Q: We are also interested around legal structures of organisations (we don't require organisations to be registered charities – we will also give to individuals doing community work). Has IVAR been doing any thinking on this outside of registered charities?

Most of our work has been focused on constituted charities, but the ethos and culture extends to elsewhere. We are hoping to work more with Local Trust to do more in this area.

Q: There is one of the eight commitments that we are never going to be able to do from a constitutional basis. But can we still join?

Yes, Open and Trusting isn't a purity test – it's a journey and each commitment is down to your organisation's interpretation.

## Useful Resources

See slide within main presentation

## 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@yorkshirerunders.org.uk](mailto:Alex@yorkshirerunders.org.uk)