

# A Sense of Place

A Manifesto to Empower Communities  
through Public and Private Giving

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# Introduction

Community Foundation Ireland is on a mission to deliver equality for all in thriving communities. Powering this mission are philanthropists who give for greater good, often to the place they call home or where they have a personal or professional connection. This sense of community lies at the very heart of Irish Philanthropy.

The Foundation welcomes the recognition of the power of placed based giving in the first National Policy on Philanthropy published by Government in December 2023.

As a philanthropic hub which has made over €130M in grants available to a network of 5,000 voluntary, community and charitable organisations since the year 2000 we welcome the commitment to initiate pilot projects focusing on this form of giving (Action 16 of National Policy).

Drawing on our experience, research and knowledge, dating back to the formation of a pioneering County Fund in Monaghan two decades ago, this manifesto contains firm proposals to deliver benefits for communities in the medium term.

In summary we are calling on policy makers at local and national level to support:

- A programme of five pilot placed based giving initiatives can commence in the first year of the policy (2024).
- A fund of €10M raised equally between Government and local Private Donors can develop the pilots.
- Each will have a particular focus on long-term endowment allowing over 50% of funding to drive long term benefits for communities.
- We believe the potential is there to deliver within 5-years, pilot perpetual funds approaching €6.5M in value, €4M delivered in grants to communities across the five pilot areas plus establishment of administrative and leadership structures

Our approach is evidence based, supported by research as well as our track record of direct experience. We have identified projects which are ready to scale and primed to engage with national and local Government.

This manifesto adds further detail to our proposals and highlights case studies where community supports and engagement are already underway – delivering for local people.

We are committed as a Foundation to develop as a centre of excellence for Ireland in this area and to work with policymakers to deliver for the benefit of all the communities involved, and rollout across the country upon the successful completion of the pilots.

Denise Charlton,  
Chief Executive  
Community Foundation Ireland

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## **National Policy on Philanthropy Action 16**

**“Advance government and philanthropy collaboration by undertaking a programme of pilot projects, e.g., thematic and place based initiatives, funding on key issue projects, further develop cross-border and diaspora giving”**



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# Community Foundation Ireland and Placed Based Giving

Community Foundation Ireland supports equality for all in thriving communities. Strategic local investment through placed based giving boosts local pride and empowers communities.

This sense of place is at the heart of the community foundation model and the 1,800 such foundations worldwide.

Place resonates strongly with many donors but also importantly, we believe could be the key connector for new donors.

Aligning closely with Irish values and culture it is an approach to unlock increased giving and impactful grant-making.

Our identification of donor trends and interest in giving with a sense of place is supported by current research we have undertaken as a philanthropic hub. These include [Irish Philanthropy: An Entrepreneurs View](#), our considered response to the National Policy [Irish Philanthropy Comes of Age](#) and our experience as outlined by our Development Team in [An Irish Form Of Giving](#).

There are many examples of placed based giving. It is the cornerstone for many of our donors. We set out examples in this manifesto which are primed for scaling and with the support of local and national policy makers could be replicated across every local authority.

# Placed Based Giving In Action

What is being proposed in this manifesto is not new or unexplored. Placed based giving, county and local funds are operating now. What has been lacking is engagement by Government both national and local which has hampered an ability to scale. The Foundation is highlighting three funds to give a sense of the activity which is happening across the country, and the benefits being delivered for people of all ages.

## The Monaghan County Fund

Community Foundation Ireland, our donors and grantees have more than 20-year's experience place based giving. In 2004 together with a group of local donors we launched the pioneering Monaghan Fund. A countywide focus with an endowment fund at its heart.

The monies generated provided a range of services to Monaghan people of all ages. An initial focus of improving access to education with a partnership with DCU has grown to support vital social services across the county. Two decades later we can look back at more than 200,000 Euro in grant-making as well as a perpetual fund.

There is great potential to scale long-standing existing funds like Monaghan to benefit more people.

## Changing Lives, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Community Fund

Established in 2022 to create connected communities and promote local social justice this Fund's initial priorities are to rollout a parenting initiative, after-school clubs and a progressing aging well in place project.

The fund, which exists as a Donor Advised Fund at Community Foundation Ireland, offers an opportunity to individuals and businesses to contribute to making the local authority area a beacon for sustainable and caring living.

The impact of this place based giving initiative and its potential to grow to further promote equality for all is captured in a [Specially Commissioned Video which Promotes Place Based Giving](#).

## Sustainability Fund for Mayo

Responding to the twin emergencies of climate and biodiversity Sunflower Charitable Foundation and Community Foundation Ireland commissioned the UCD School of Geography to undertake a scoping study to investigate how philanthropic place based giving could add value to existing sustainability projects or actions in Mayo.

The research team mapped out local sustainability and climate action projects, assessed the potential role of a Sustainability Fund in the county, and explored the potential role that private philanthropy could play in supporting existing or new initiatives.

The report concludes that Philanthropy has an important role in supporting climate action in a place based giving model, from group activation and capacity building, to visioning and supporting staff to apply for funding within communities. The need for strong collaboration between the State, philanthropy and communities is strongly highlighted in order to establish a Mayo Sustainability Fund.

[Download the full Mayo Sustainability Scoping Study 2023.](#)



# The role of Local and National Government

Both local and national government has a role to play in the encouragement and endorsement of place based giving including county funds and this is acknowledged and developed further in the National Philanthropy Policy.

Community Foundation Ireland believes Government, both locally and nationally can play direct roles by providing match funding to encourage the development of long term endowed or perpetual funds. We base this both on our own experience and that in the UK.

In the context of the Growing Place Based Giving programme, The Charities Aid Foundation in the UK set out the following findings and recommendations for government and funders:

- Ensure that any roll out of the model does not rely on ‘one size fits all’ approaches and takes into account the local context.
- Support models that facilitate civic engagement, thus enhancing people’s sense of empowerment and social cohesion.
- Champion of a narrative of community philanthropy while actively supporting local generosity movements and using place based schemes as a way to distribute funds according to local priorities.
- Look at ways to incentivise mobilising local business and large businesses with a local footprint to engage with place based giving.
- Assume the role of an important early stage funder that can help get schemes off the ground and lead the way in funding schemes’ core costs and championing the importance of this approach.
- Provide long term funding, recognising the significant time needed for assessing the landscape, relationship building, community engagement and fundraising locally.



# Critical Success Factors

Community Foundation Ireland has identified a number of success factors for the establishment of a new county fund including:

- **Leadership:** The importance of local leadership to agree the vision and ambition for the Fund.
- **Fundraising:** Having a capacity and commitment to fundraise and to connect effectively with key stakeholders and agencies. A grant making ambition is not sufficient.
- **Resources:** Identifying and securing the requisite resources – money and investment of time plus administration capacity.
- **Governance:** It is essential that funds are stewarded to meet the highest standards of governance and that grants are distributed in a fair and transparent way.
- **Meeting local needs:** The Fund needs to be framed in line with local needs and interests so that it is relevant and appealing to donors.
- **Patience and perseverance:** in order to transform the vision for a county fund into an up and running philanthropic fund – it is best envisioned as a long term resource for the community rather than a short term project.

These findings align closely with work undertaken by The Charities Aid Foundation in the UK in the context of the Growing Place Based Giving programme.

# Recommendations

Drawing on our experience as a philanthropic hub on an equality mission, our research in the area, as well as our communication and feedback from donors together we are pleased to make recommendations to realise key goals of the first ever National Policy on Philanthropy.

- **A programme of pilot place based giving initiatives to commence in 2024** allowing private donors with a local connection to work together with National and Local Government to deliver real social change through Placed Based Giving Initiatives.
- **€10M in funding for five pilot based giving initiatives:** comprising €5m from the state in a challenge grant and €5M through philanthropic match funding.
- **Building long term endowment funds with use of 55% of total public and private support (€5.5M).** Endowment funds have a significant role to play in providing sustainable sources of funding as well as much needed investment in local communities.
- **Local authority support towards the administration of the Funds** and contribution to initial grants of the Fund.

## Deliverables (after year 5)

- Pilot perpetual funds in situ approaching €6.5m in value which will provide a permanent and sustainable source of funding to communities and causes in the five areas.
- €4m will have been distributed to local communities in the pilot areas via our unparalleled network of charities and partners (€800k in each place).
- Investment in capacity and administration to support the funds in the medium to long term.

# Conclusion

A pivotal moment has been reached to further grow and promote Irish philanthropy in order to encourage and provide greater private giving for greater good. As a philanthropic hub which has grown €1M in Government seed funding in the year 2000 into €130M in grant-making, Community Foundation Ireland is ready to continue its partnership approach.

This manifesto not only allow for key goals in the first ever National Policy on Philanthropy to become reality, but will also if implemented provide a pathway which could deliver benefits to every county.

The Foundation remains ready to engage with Local and National Government to discuss our recommendations further and to move implementation.

For its part, Community Foundation Ireland is committed to becoming a centre of excellence for place based giving for Ireland and to providing leadership, facilitating collaboration and providing resources to assist in the rollout of place based initiatives which will benefit communities across the country.



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