



November 2023

Corporate Funding Partnerships Roundtable

Insights, Ideas and Outcomes

Mount
Street
Club
Trust

Introduction

On the 29th of June 2023, the Trustees of the Mount Street Club Trust hosted a roundtable event on the subject of corporate funding partnerships at the RDS in Dublin. The event brought the Trustees together with the CEOs of the recipient organisations of Hope & Ambition (the Trust's current funding and development initiative) and guests with expertise and

interest in the field of corporate funding partnerships. The event was prompted by the Trustees' interest in exploring the potential of collaboration with funding partners to sustain and widen the impact of Hope & Ambition. A similar event examining partnership with philanthropic organisations had been held in November 2022.

Four questions formed the starting point for the corporate funding partnership event:

1

Can trust-based philanthropy deepen the reciprocal impact of corporate funding partnerships?

2

Where do the tensions and opportunities lie in relationships between funders and recipients?

3

How can funding partnerships allow corporate organisations to better understand and influence the lived experience of exclusion in Ireland?

4

Could corporate funding partnerships be a good fit for the Mount Street Club Trust?

Key Insights and Ideas

Through various rounds of facilitated conversation the participants engaged with each other and fed back to the wider group the lines of thinking that emerged in each of their discussions. There were many moments of synergy, support and keen consideration. The following points capture the insights and ideas that stood out over the course of the session, some supported by consensus and others provoking the need for further exploration:

Conventional funding structures can hamper long-term impact

Long-term commitment is of huge value to charities who largely rely on annual funding cycles. Whose interests are served by funding arrangements that are typically short-term in nature?

Funders' reluctance to fund salaries poses a deep challenge to charities. Funding projects but not the people who deliver them heightens the precarious position of charities seeking to realise long-term impact.

Without stable core funding it is hard for organisations to sustain creativity and dynamism. Juggling short-term funding to address long-term complex problems leaves charities and their people prey to frustration, stress and burnout.

There are rich opportunities for corporate funders open to collaboration

Working collaboratively with charities supporting and advocating for socially excluded and marginalised communities can bring a deeper understanding of the realities and consequences of inequality into an organisation's culture.

Engaging with charities over a longer period of time and with a collaborative approach can unlock more profound engagement and reciprocal learning on both sides.

An innovative consortium approach to philanthropy could help to support 'difficult to fund' areas of need or interest and create a new model for corporate engagement in Ireland.

Tensions can arise due to differing perspectives, expectations and motivations

A trust-based, relational approach may pose a challenge for funders who rely on quantitative metrics in ESG reporting. How can trust be forged so that work in complex and sometimes unpredictable contexts can be supported?

Trust-based philanthropy may require a funder to give up more power than they are used to: at its core it champions a resetting of power balances.

Many funders are interested in how a charitable initiative can be scaled up to gain wider impact, but bigger isn't always best. Sometimes more can be achieved by strengthening and sharing a successful model so that it can be replicated and adapted elsewhere.

Grassroots work addressing social exclusion and marginalisation is inherently complex with no simple answers. Do most corporate funders have the capacity to engage with this complexity? Familiar business and efficiency processes are not always feasible in justice-informed development work addressing complex needs.

Corporate funders need to be clear about their own appetite or comfort zone for supporting organisations that advocate publicly on social justice issues, particularly in the context of government-level decisions.

Volunteering opportunities and staff days are largely unfeasible for charities working in sensitive contexts with limited resources. Requests for such are often met with frustration on the part of charities who would otherwise welcome more meaningful engagement with corporate partners.

Outcomes

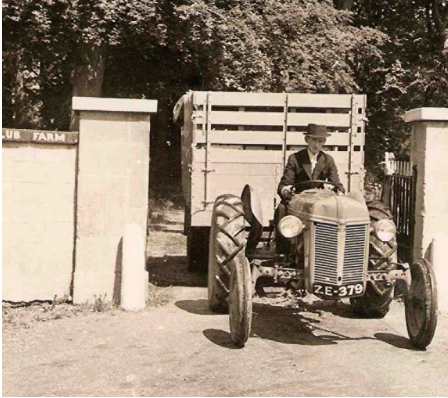
Inspired and emboldened by the insights shared and the advice that they received, the Trustees renewed their commitment to securing a longer future for Hope & Ambition. The ideal would be to attract funding partners with the capacity to engage with the initiative and embrace the ethos of trust, shared learning and flexible, adaptable support. These partners would not only bring financial support but would help shape and develop the initiative, broadening the ripples of reciprocal influence. What is key is that these should be the right partners.

In the meantime, the Trustees resolved to guarantee a new iteration of Hope & Ambition that will provide funding and development support to the recipient organisations for a further four years to the end of 2027. The implications of this decision are significant for the Trust: if funding partners are not secured, the Trust will be required to wind up in 2028, having depleted its capital.

Hope & Ambition is a relatively small initiative, both in terms of the financial commitment and the number of organisations involved. However, the Trustees believe that it has potential for a much wider impact beyond these boundaries. It presents a model for how the funder-grantee relationship can be reimagined when we consciously question the nature of power and control in favour of sustaining trust and empathy - and as a result, the charities working tirelessly at the coalface can be better supported and empowered to do the work that they know needs to be done.

Integral to the new phase of Hope & Ambition is funding for a collaborative project between the recipient organisations that will contribute to the discourse around marginalisation and social exclusion in Ireland today. In addition, the Trust will be seeking opportunities to advocate for learning and development in philanthropic practice using Hope & Ambition as a case study for a trust-based model of philanthropic engagement. Within this context, the Trustees are hoping to use the insights outlined above as departure points for further conversations and engagement on funding dynamics and opportunities between charities and funders.

About



Mount Street Club Farm 1941

Mount Street Club Trust

The Mount Street Club Trust is a private charitable trust, originally founded in Dublin in 1934 as the Mount Street Club. The main object of the Trust is the relief of the effects of disadvantage and poverty. Initially conceived as simply a place where unemployed men 'could go in out of the rain, sit down and have a read of the daily paper', the Mount Street Club developed into a far more elaborate concept advocating self-help co-operative principles. The Mount Street Club Trust of today builds on decades of knowledge and is inspired by the legacy of the founding members.



Irish Refugee Council Youth Work Programme, 2022

Hope & Ambition

Hope & Ambition is the Mount Street Club Trust's current funding and development initiative. Enlightened by the principles of trust-based philanthropy, Hope & Ambition empowers organisations to sustain innovative thinking and practice and evolve a critically-informed analysis in their work with marginalised and disadvantaged communities in the greater Dublin area.

Not just a funding programme, Hope & Ambition also provides development support to the participant organisations and their people, focusing in particular on organisational development, leadership, practice, wellbeing and cross-sectoral interaction. The initiative is structured around two key elements: a grant to recipient organisations and their commitment to participate in the CEOs and Practitioners Clubs in a spirit of critical inquiry, collaboration and shared learning.

The current participants are: Glencree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation (Intercultural and Refugee Programme), Intercultural Language Service, Irish Refugee Council (Youth Work Programme) and Rua Red (Traveller Engagement Initiative). The Trust also remains committed to supporting the work started by former participant Blossom Ireland before it was required to wind down in 2022.

www.mountstreetclubtrust.ie/hope-ambition

