

## **Collaborating for a Cause**

**How cause-related networks can lead to more and better philanthropic giving**

---

Michelle Man, Katie Boswell, Kathryn Dingle, Giulia Todres  
March 2020

# Contents

- Introduction .....3
- What is a cause-related network?.....5
- How can cause-related networks support more and better giving? .....11
- How can you build an effective cause-related network? .....13
  - 1. Connect.....14
  - 2. Align .....19
  - 3. Enable .....22
  - 4. Learn .....28
- Conclusions.....33
- Recommendations .....34
- Appendix 1: Organisations interviewed.....36
- Appendix 2: Sample of funder networks .....37
- Appendix 3: Collecting data .....38



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND**

This report was prepared by NPC for the Beacon Collaborative, supported by City Bridge Trust, the funding arm of The City of London Corporation’s charity, Bridge House Estates (1035628) and Arts Council England (1036733). We would also like to acknowledge the support of Pears Foundation, Reekimlane Foundation and Hazelhurst Trust whose funding supports the work of the Beacon Collaborative. This research is part of a suite of reports, prepared by NPC, UK Community Foundations, Charities Aid Foundation, Association of Charitable Foundations, Big Society Capital, Philanthropy Impact, The Philanthropy Workshop, Barclays Private Bank and EY as partners of the Beacon Collaborative.



# Introduction

The United Kingdom has a rich heritage of philanthropy, which has transformed lives via supporting causes from the arts to education, from health to the environment. As we enter a new decade, the need for impactful charitable giving is as urgent as ever. Yet many would-be philanthropists report barriers to donating, whilst those who do give find it difficult to achieve a meaningful impact with their funding.

Many philanthropists strive to be more strategic and effective in how they address social problems. Cause-related networks for philanthropists offer a way forward, by bringing people together around a shared understanding of a cause and enabling them to share knowledge and resources through the power of inclusive networks.

Cause-related networks can motivate people to give more and better, strengthen people's capability to give, and create and facilitate opportunities to give. Their unique benefits stem from their focus on a cause, the independence of philanthropy, and the advantages of a trusted network embedded in the issue they seek to solve.

In this report, we explore how to build effective cause-related networks that support more philanthropic giving in the United Kingdom and support people to give in ways that create more impact. We examine what elements of good practice can be applied to cause-related networks, to enable them to achieve scale and impact faster. We also provide practical advice, drawing on lessons from existing networks and the wider philanthropy ecosystem.

Cause-related networks can look very different, depending on the cause and the members of a network. What determines effectiveness is how a network is developed and run. Effective networks are grounded in robust data and evidence, they take a system-wide approach, informed by lived experiences and diverse perspectives. They draw on up to date information about the cause and about philanthropy, developing a strong understanding of potential and existing members.

We've conducted this research primarily for people who are interested in running cause-related networks and those who lead cause-related networks, but we believe current and potential members of networks, different types of funders, new and potential philanthropists, wealth advisors and others should all find this work useful as well.

**Katie Boswell, Associate Director (Strategy & Leadership), New Philanthropy Capital**

## Methodology

This report summarises findings from research funded by [City Bridge Trust](#) and [Arts Council England](#), commissioned by the [Beacon Collaborative](#), and conducted by [New Philanthropy Capital](#) (NPC).

The findings are based on desk research and qualitative interviews conducted on a confidential basis with 14 cause-related network leaders, five cause-related network members, two philanthropists who are not associated with a cause-related network and two wealth advisors.

As there are currently few examples of cause-related networks, we have focused primarily on networks of philanthropists in the UK. We've also drawn lessons from international examples, as well as other types of funder network—for example, those that include trusts and foundations and others that focus on impact investing. We recognise that philanthropists are increasingly thinking about ways to use all their assets to achieve impact and

the boundaries of different types of networks may become increasingly blurred. We have also drawn insights from networks focusing on specific geographical locations and types of philanthropist, such as women's philanthropy networks.

This research was largely limited to organisations known to NPC and those who responded to our invitations to participate in the research. Our research identified issues and themes that we recommend exploring in more detail. These include the perspectives and experiences of younger philanthropists, people who are not high net worth individuals (HNWIs) but are equally keen to give, and those who give in non-financial ways. Further research into impact investing-themed funds, place-based networks and identity-based funder networks may also generate useful insights that are applicable to cause-related networks.

## Definitions

Throughout this report, we've used the following definitions for key terms:

- A **cause-related network** provides a platform for philanthropists to share knowledge around specific themes. It can also play more active roles—facilitating collaboration, identifying priorities or gaps, and working towards broader and deeper coordination of resources. In some instances, cause-related networks will become 'cause funds' where philanthropists pool their funding to achieve lasting social change in a targeted sector.<sup>1</sup>
- A **philanthropist** is any individual who gives financially to a charitable cause. We recognise that some philanthropists may not identify as such because of the amount they give, and some may give through their foundation.
- A **funder** is any individual or organisation who gives financially to a charitable cause. This could include individual philanthropists, trusts and foundations, and statutory sources of funding.
- A **cause** is a subject area, social aim, or broad movement to which people are committed and prepared to support through financial or non-financial means.

## Acknowledgements

We'd like to thank all the people and organisations who participated in our research and gave their time and expertise. For a list of organisations who took part, see Appendix 1.

We are also grateful for the contributions of the working group for this project, who helped shape the research and reviewed drafts of the report. The working group consisted of: [Arts Council England](#); [Association of Charitable Foundations](#); [Environmental Funders Network](#); and [New Philanthropy for the Arts and Culture](#).

---

<sup>1</sup> Cause funds can be based around grants, social investment or a mixture of the two. For more information, see [Invest in Young Lives](#)

# What is a cause-related network?

A cause-related network provides a platform for philanthropists to share knowledge around specific themes. It can also play more active roles—facilitating collaboration, identifying priorities or gaps, and working towards broader and deeper coordination of resources. In some instances, cause-related networks will become 'cause funds' where philanthropists pool their funding to achieve lasting social change in a targeted sector.

## Case studies

Cause-related networks are relatively nascent in philanthropy. Of those that have emerged, differing missions and cause areas have given rise to networks that look very different from one another. The three case studies below illustrate some of the different ways that cause-related networks can support philanthropy around a cause.

**Case study:** [Environmental Funders Network](#) (EFN): UK

**Breadth of cause:** Funding for environmental causes worldwide.

**Scope of purpose:** The network aims to increase financial support for environmental causes worldwide and improve environmental philanthropy's overall effectiveness. The network focuses on relationship building between members and effective environmental organisations, and on sharing intelligence, research, and analysis on the funding landscape. It proactively encourages and supports new donors to contribute to environmental causes through events, publications, and work with philanthropy advisors and organisations.

**Diversity of membership:** The network is made up of trusts, foundations, family offices and high-level individual donors.

**Leadership and decision-making:** EFN is led by a director, who relates to members on a personal level and has a thorough knowledge of the environmental sector, both from the NGO and funder perspective. Decision-making is centralised, drawing on the expertise of the board and an advisory group.

**Case study:** [Science Philanthropy Alliance](#)

**Breadth of cause:** Funding for basic scientific research in the US.

**Scope of purpose:** The network focuses on information and guidance on funding basic science. It provides advice to members, hosts learning events and workshops, and connects members with other members, as well as scientists and researchers.

**Diversity of membership:** The network is made up of two groups. The first group consists of funders who are mostly US-based individuals and foundations focused on advancing scientific research, whilst the second group is made up of scientists, academic consultants and research partners.

**Leadership and decision-making:** The network is driven by strong, vocal leadership and centred on a clear mission. The network is centralised with a main group and two sub-groups, which were formed in response to demand from members.

**Case study:** [Impact 100 London](#)

**Breadth of cause:** Funding charitable organisations that support women and girls in Greater London.

**Scope of purpose:** Impact 100 London is a new collective philanthropy initiative based on a model developed in the US. Each member contributes £1,000 and donations are pooled to provide transformative grants of approximately £100,000. Charities are invited to submit grant proposals and finalists present at an annual meeting and members vote on the distribution of the grant fund. Impact 100 London seeks to build the capacity of members to give in financial and non-financial ways, and develop a cohort of philanthropists who are engaged with the cause.

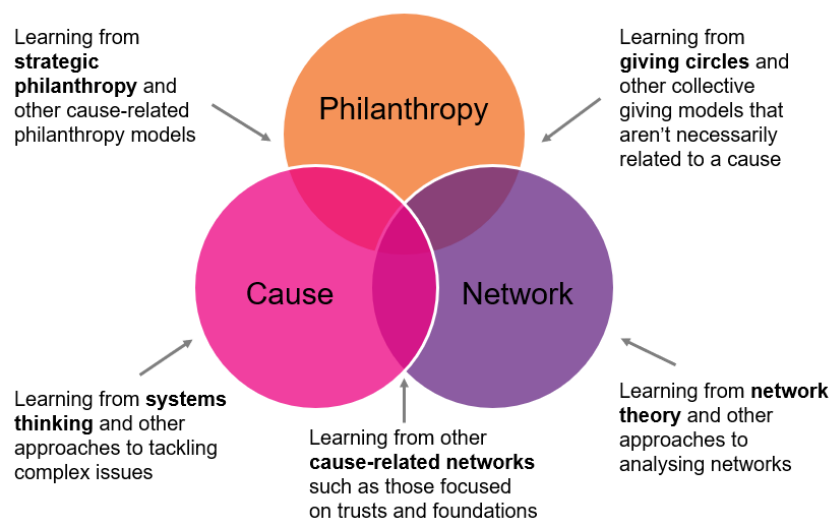
**Diversity of membership:** Impact 100 London requires an annual contribution of £1,000 from its members. This level of contribution is intended to be accessible and not prohibitive for those who want to contribute. The aim is to 'democratise' philanthropy by engaging a more diverse range of funders who are educated on the challenges facing women and girls, and can contribute in both financial and non-financial ways.

**Leadership and decision-making:** Impact 100 London is run by an executive team. Members hold one vote each on the distribution of the grant fund. Members can choose to sit on grant review committees to help with running the network.

### Three benefits of effective cause-related networks

Cause-related networks combine three key features: a focus on a cause; the independence of philanthropic funding; and the advantages of a network. This unique combination allows cause-related networks to draw from a variety of related approaches such as strategic philanthropy, systems thinking, funder networks, place-based approaches, collective giving initiatives and network theory.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, many networks combine elements of related approaches with a cause-related network. For example, there are cause-related networks that focus on impact investing as well as philanthropy, and some cause-related networks may incorporate an element of collective giving in a similar way to giving circles. Recognising the close relationships and sometimes blurred boundaries between different approaches, we have drawn lessons from all of these in our research.

**Figure 1: Cause-related networks combine knowledge of a cause with the independence of philanthropy and the power of networks**



<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.thinknpc.org/themes/discover-ideas-and-approaches/systems-change/>



## 1. A focus on a cause

Many people give to charities because they feel passionate about a cause. However, they may feel overwhelmed when faced with a choice about which organisation to give to and not know where their money will have the most impact. On the charity side, competition for funding can lead to siloed working, duplication and unproductive competition between organisations working on the same cause.<sup>3</sup>

By focusing on a cause, cause-related networks can develop a long-term and [system-wide perspective](#), considering the 'root causes' of a problem and the various actors working on the issue. Cause-related networks can support members, and potentially other stakeholders, to understand their role within the system. They can identify gaps between organisations and join up work across a cause. This can motivate philanthropists and enable them to give more strategically and efficiently, by presenting a clearer picture of what change is needed and how change occurs.

*'Most giving remains relatively small and fragmented, and not aligned with what's required for large-scale and enduring impact ... Giving isn't strategic and is largely given based on the personal passions of the philanthropist.'*

Cause-related network leader

## 2. The distinct strengths of philanthropy

Compared to other types of funding, the independence of philanthropy offers unique opportunities to support innovation and drive systems change by funding areas that are less popular or seen as risky. Cause-related networks have an opportunity to grow the capacity of members to give more effectively, by identifying and sharing good practice, facilitating knowledge sharing between members, and sharing learning with others. Networks can help members to understand and overcome the distinct challenges related to philanthropy, such as a lack of diversity or democratic accountability, thereby driving improvements across the funder community.

*'... things are hard to measure, the timelines are too long. That's exactly the things that philanthropy should do. Government capital won't do that and private capital is too risky ... [networks should] focus on the areas where philanthropic giving is the only suitable option.'*

Wealth advisor

## 3. The benefits of a network

Networks enable people to connect and engage in new ways and in different configurations. In relation to causes, networks can have particular characteristics that enable more effective support. For example:

**Increasing collective impact:** A network can contribute to an aggregate impact that is more than the sum of its parts. Not only can members benefit from the knowledge and learning shared, but networks with high density may be more able to drive innovation and action by reducing duplication, directing philanthropists to funding gaps, and supporting funders to engage with complex issues that may feel too large to tackle individually.<sup>4</sup> They can also facilitate coordinated action and collaboration.

**Rapid diffusion of ideas and learning:** Networks that are highly interconnected can enable knowledge and ideas to spread quickly. As a network grows and connections deepen, access to new ideas and learning

---

<sup>3</sup> Barclays, ['Barriers to Giving'](#)

<sup>4</sup> Network density is a measure of the proportion of possible ties which are actualised among the members

improves. Networks can also grow if the perceived benefits of membership encourage members to seek out more connections.

**Resilience and adaptive capacity:** Cause-related networks need to be able to adapt to changes in a cause as well as the funding environment. Networks with the right skills, infrastructure and information will be more able to operate flexibly in a continually evolving landscape. Many networks described the value of keeping operational costs as low as possible and being more 'member-led' and decentralised, ensuring that decisions taken by the network are driven by the knowledge, skills and experiences of its members.

*'There was a lot of reinventing the wheel because funders didn't know each other. Funders making mistakes because they didn't know others had made those mistakes already.'*

Cause-related network leader

## What do cause-related networks look like?

Every cause is unique, as are the needs, preferences and capabilities of members. Moreover, the environment in which cause-related networks operate is everchanging, so networks must adapt over time. To illustrate the range of networks that exist, we have mapped out some of the ways in which networks differ. We hope this encourages new networks to reflect on the best approach.

**Breadth of the cause:** Causes can be broad and/or international. For example, the [Environmental Funders Network](#) is UK-based but works on a global scale. This enables them to understand trends and developments across the cause and their role within that. Other networks have a narrower scope. For example, [Science Philanthropy Alliance](#) supports the funding of basic scientific research, while the [Somerset Philanthropy Network](#) focuses on a specific geographical area. This helps them to target and tailor their support. Some networks also described how a narrower scope can help a network to stay at the forefront of developments in the cause.

*'We are first to hear about the research on issues in our community that we are working on.'*

Cause-related network leader

**Scope of purpose:** Networks support and enable members in different ways. [Ariadne](#)—a European network of funders and philanthropists who support social change and human rights—focuses on capacity building to make it easier for funders to give more effectively. [Co-Impact](#) offers platforms for co-funding and collaboration between members, in support of specific systems change initiatives in the areas of health, education, and economic opportunity. Other networks focus on their convening role, creating opportunities for members to connect and share learning.

*'[Our network] enables participants to achieve more together than they can individually, by providing access to a number of community created tools and a supportive network of colleagues.'*

Cause-related network leader

**Diversity and size of membership:** Some networks focus on engaging with specific types of individuals. For example, [Rachel's Network](#) seeks to connect women who are interested in the environment. Others have a more diverse membership base, with some networks including non-funders. Some networks focus on a relatively small membership base; one place-based network we found has just 20. Others are much larger; [Ariadne](#) has more



than 550 members. Some find it useful to introduce a maximum cap to ensure they are focusing on the most engaged individuals, while others let their membership grow or shrink organically.

*‘There is value in that diversity of thinking. It encourages sharing learning, failures and successes.’*

Cause-related network leader

**Leadership and decision-making:** Networks vary from having more directive leadership to being more member-led. The former can help a network to focus on its core purpose. However, the latter enables a network to reflect the needs of its members, support innovation, and increase and sustain engagement with members. Some networks are more centralised, offering structured opportunities to collaborate. For example, [Rachel’s Network](#) provides opportunities for members to co-fund initiatives. Networks like [The Philanthropy Club](#) play more of a convening role, facilitating member-led groups and initiatives.

*‘We ask members to be on a journey with us, we want to hear what they want to fund and how it connects to their values. Members engage with the network for this, they feel part of a community in which they can continue to evolve their giving over time.’*

Cause-related network leader

## How cause-related networks are distributed across the sector

We reviewed the activities of 62 funder networks worldwide, including 34 based in the UK. These networks are listed in Appendix 2. The majority of the networks involve other types of funders in addition to philanthropists, such as trusts and foundations. Based on publicly available information, almost half of the networks appeared to be cause-driven, with some focusing on multiple causes.

The most commonly addressed single cause area was ‘law, human rights and advocacy.’ A member of a network in this area suggested that this is a more challenging cause to grasp, so there is a need for greater support for potential funders. Medical research was another key focus area, which supports the claim by a network leader that funding medical and scientific research is complex; people don’t know where to start.

The arts; children and young people and education; and conservation, environment, and heritage were the focus of one or two funder networks each. This may be because charities working on these causes are more likely to focus on specific local projects, which are easier for philanthropists to support directly. There is therefore less demand for a network in these areas compared to in complex areas like medical research for example.

We cross referenced these networks with the segmentation of causes used by the [Charities Aid Foundation](#)<sup>5</sup> and found no cause-related networks for animal welfare, disabled people, education, elderly people, hospitals and hospices, or sport and recreation. These causes may be included by networks that work on multiple causes or captured within another cause area. For example, hospitals and hospices could fall under medical and scientific research. It is also feasible that there is less philanthropic funding for causes that are seen to be the ‘role of the state’, such as education or social care.

---

<sup>5</sup> The cause-areas identified in the [CAF Giving Report](#) are: Animal welfare; Arts; Children or young people; Conservation, environment and heritage; Disabled people; Education; Elderly people; Homeless people, housing and refuge shelters; Hospitals and hospices; Medical research; Overseas aid and disaster relief; Physical and mental health care; Religious organisations; Sport and recreation; Other

## Using data to understand where cause-related networks could achieve impact

The charity sector currently lacks the consistent and comprehensive data needed for robust analysis of funding by cause. Fortunately, more and more funders are making their data publicly available through platforms like [360Giving](#), while organisations like the Charities Aid Foundation and NCVO collate and publish data on giving behaviour and levels of funding. Comparing different sources of data on funding with data on charities offers insights into where there may be potential for cause-related networks to have impact.

We reviewed [NCVO Almanac data](#) to better understand the distribution of charities across a sample of cause areas. Looking exclusively at the number of charities in a cause area, culture and recreation, children or young people (including parent-teacher associations, and scout groups and youth clubs), education (including playgroups and nurseries), religious organisations, and social care have over 10,000 charitable organisations in the UK dedicated to each of them. In contrast, employment and training, housing, law and advocacy, and research have fewer than 5,000 organisations each.

Analysing this data can generate useful insights for understanding where cause-related networks could add value. For example, cause areas with many voluntary organisations may find poor coordination and competition for funding to be major challenges. Networks could play a crucial role in connecting organisations and funders across these causes.

However, looking at the number of charities alone does not present the full picture. There may be reasons why social need is higher or lower than the number of charities would suggest, such as unpopularity of certain causes like [criminal justice](#) for example. Similarly, looking at the number of charities alone fails to capture the scale of their work or their level of funding. It is likely that a local arts charity would have a lower income and a narrower geographical scope than a charity working on medical research, for example. Causes also intersect with others, such as information about children and young people being counted under education and social care.

We also used NCVO data to look at the sources and levels of funding for different cause areas. The data highlights how employment, health, housing, social care, and law and advocacy are largely dependent on government funding, with voluntary organisations delivering many services in partnership with local authorities. These causes are therefore more vulnerable to political change, so would likely benefit from higher levels of sustainable and independent philanthropic funding.

Our analysis of NCVO's data reveals rich opportunities for cause-related networks to draw on data and evidence of need and activity within a cause, to make better funding decisions. Existing networks can use data to understand where to focus their attention within a cause, and how their cause intersects with other causes and issues. This kind of data can help individuals to determine where cause-related networks are needed and where they may be most impactful.

Useful datasets and analysis include [360Giving](#) data on grant funding, the [Charities Aid Foundation's World Giving Index](#), [NCVO data](#), data published by the [UK Government](#) and [ONS](#), and the [Charity Commission](#).

# How can cause-related networks support more and better giving?

Research into the barriers to charitable giving often focuses on the experiences, perceptions and behaviours of existing and potential donors, to understand how they are influenced, encouraged or discouraged in their giving.<sup>6</sup> In this section we explore how cause-related networks can use a behaviour change model to influence donors and support more and better giving. Our model has three components: motivation, capability, and opportunity.

## 1. Motivating people to give more and better

Existing research identifies motivational barriers to giving, such as individuals feeling a lack of connection with a cause; a belief that it's the state's role to provide for needs; or the perception that philanthropy is complicated, unpleasant, unrewarding, or fails to have meaningful impact.<sup>7</sup>

Motivations for giving vary substantially and are often driven by personal experiences.<sup>8</sup> For example, two of the philanthropists we spoke to identified very different motivations for giving. One stemmed from lived experiences of marginalisation while the other described feeling self-conscious that others didn't have what they had. Both described specific triggers for starting to give, such as their children leaving home or attending specific events about a cause or philanthropy more generally.

Given the social nature of cause-related networks, they can draw in new philanthropists and motivate members to give by offering specific triggers. For example, members and potential members may feel inspired by hearing from others who are passionate about a cause, by the knowledge and information shared by the network, or by opportunities to connect with charities. For [Women Moving Millions](#), a network focused on impact investing, inspiring people is an explicit objective. They seek to use 'the power of their voice to inspire others to invest with a gender lens.' There is a peer effect of being around other philanthropists who are approaching a cause thoughtfully and aiming to give effectively—people may feel part of something bigger than themselves and can gain confidence from working alongside others.

For people new to giving, cause-related networks can address some of the negative perceptions and false beliefs around philanthropy. [The Philanthropy Club](#) runs events designed in consultation with members and partners to celebrate giving, promote growth areas and fundraise for causes. For people who have given previously, cause-related networks can help improve the giving experience and reinforce the connection with a cause.

## 2. Strengthening people's capability to give more and better

Barriers relating to capability may include individuals feeling they cannot afford to give to charity. They may not have the knowledge or skills to give effectively or may struggle to find good advice or appropriate opportunities.

---

<sup>6</sup> NPC, [Giving More and Better: How can the philanthropy sector improve?](#)

<sup>7</sup> Barclays, ['Barriers to Giving'](#)

<sup>8</sup> Charities Aid Foundation, [Why do people give?](#)

*'It's difficult to find support that's just right. It's also a steep learning curve—and it's difficult to know what you don't know.'*

Individual philanthropist

Cause-related networks can help people understand what they can afford to give and that they can make a difference alongside others' contributions. They may also help a donor to give more efficiently, by enabling them to pool resources and knowledge. [Ariadne](#) seeks to help philanthropists achieve more together than they can alone, by linking them to other funders and providing practical tools and support.

Cause-related networks can help improve the ability of members to give well by offering practical support and information, and by creating space for members to share knowledge and test ideas. [Science Philanthropy Alliance](#) provides advice on how to support basic science research effectively. The [Environmental Funders Network](#) aggregates the collective intelligence of members to share learning from across the cause, by bringing members together to share information around a specific topic, for example their climate change funders group.

*'Thanks to [the network's] amazing input, we managed to short-cut the pain of the early stage [of being a funder] and leap to [the] consolidating [stage] quickly. Suggestions, research sharing and contacts through [the network] are invaluable.'*

Cause-related network member

### 3. Creating and facilitating opportunities to give more and better

Barriers relating to opportunity can relate to both the funding environment and opportunities to give, as well as the social environment around giving. These barriers include inertia, stemming from a lack of cultural expectations or social norms around philanthropy, which may mean potential donors simply don't think about giving. Social and familial obligations may mean some donors feel compelled to give to specific causes rather than causes that resonate with them personally. Donors may face personal and family dynamics that influence their giving. There may also be a lack of opportunities to learn about a cause and give to effective charities.

Cause-related networks won't overcome every barrier, such as family dynamics, but they can play a crucial role in signposting opportunities and improving the tools and infrastructure around giving. The [Environmental Funders Network](#) analyses the funding landscape and offers members bespoke support to give more effectively. [Co-Impact](#) identifies and supports a portfolio of systems change opportunities, and leverages both financial and non-financial resources to enhance the impact of systems change initiatives.

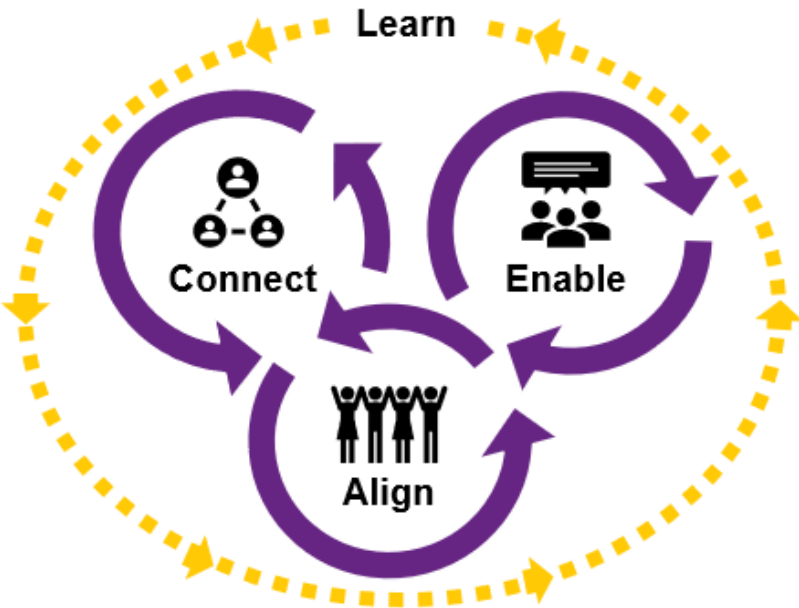
Networks can help create a culture of effective philanthropy by normalising giving practices and making it easier for philanthropists to understand and engage with issues. [Somerset Philanthropy Network](#) harnesses the expertise of members to pioneer new and more effective funding models that respond to local need. There may also be a role for cause-related networks to play in developing the sector, such as supporting charities to prepare for large donations, helping them offer a rewarding funding experience.

*'We felt there was a need to build a culture of philanthropy ... We want to help people understand the issues in the local area and to inspire people to give.'*

Cause-related network leader

# How can you build an effective cause-related network?

In this chapter we outline the four stages for a typical cause-related network, offering practical advice and case studies at each stage, based on the experiences of existing networks.<sup>9</sup>



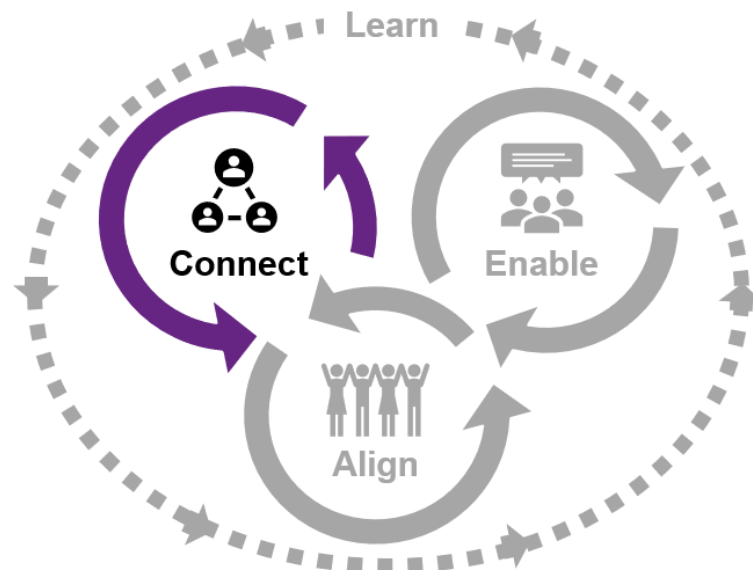
1. **Connect:** This relates to connecting with individuals to form a network. This includes reflecting on leadership, membership, and reaching a network’s intended membership.
2. **Align:** This stage is where individuals are aligned with a network’s core purpose and values, and a shared understanding of the cause.
3. **Enable:** This is about enabling members to achieve the objectives of the network. It includes resources and infrastructure, and the activities that can enable a network to share information and learning, facilitate connections, build the capacity of members to give effectively, support innovation, and advocate for change.
4. **Learn:** This is how a network learns and improves to ensure it remains relevant and valuable to members and maximises impact on a cause. It includes creating a culture that encourages learning, supports reflection, and identifies learnings from existing networks in terms of ways of working and risks to look out for.

<sup>9</sup> We have adapted our framework from [Net Gains](#) by Madeleine Taylor and Peter Plastrik, which identifies three characteristics; connectivity refers to connecting with people to allow flow of and access to information and transactions; alignment refers developing and spreading an identity and collective value proposition; and production refers to fostering joint action for specialised outcomes by aligned people.



Movement between these stages is non-linear and the boundaries between each stage are blurred. Development in one often reinforces others. Networks typically work on stages simultaneously, going through a continuous cycle of adapting as new members join and the operating environment evolves.

## 1. Connect



The connect stage involves people coming together around a cause. This stage is highly social, personal and driven by individual personalities. It is typically spearheaded by an individual (usually a philanthropist) or a group of people, but sometimes by an organisation. The network's early priorities are strongly influenced by the knowledge, connections and aspirations of the founding members. They start connecting with a wider group of people who are willing to buy into an idea and become founding members.

Two key actors of the connect stage are:

- **Leaders:** Who will establish early priorities, define who the network wants to connect with, and reach out to potential members.
- **Members:** Who feel motivated by the concept and ultimately connect with the network.

### Leaders and founding members

Leaders and/or founding members are crucial for motivating potential members, bringing new members in and driving the strategic direction of the network.

Many networks emphasise how the founding members played a crucial role in approaching individuals and building momentum. Some highlighted how initial members can **set the tone** for subsequent network development, and how it can be difficult to change the membership profile once that initial tone has been set. A network should consider its intended membership from the start. For example, if a network seeks to engage younger members, it may be helpful to reflect this in the initial pool of members.

We identified different styles of leadership, from directive leadership (which shapes the approach of the network) to more behind-the-scenes leadership, or leadership shared between several individuals. A network's approach to

leadership should be dictated by the needs of the network, bearing in mind that this can **evolve over time**. Many of the networks we spoke to were initially driven by a high-profile leader, but the leadership style sometimes changed as the network became more established.

One factor to consider is how to establish the right **balance** between being member-led and maintaining clear focus on the core purpose of your network. One member we spoke to expressed dissatisfaction with their inability to influence the direction of their network. They felt the leadership did not welcome constructive criticism. Networks that seem to maintain a good balance, emphasise the importance of listening to members through formal mechanisms, such as surveys and consultations, as well as informal conversations.

Operationally, networks highlighted the risks of leadership transition and the importance of **succession planning**. One network described implementing a two year exit strategy for their CEO after two years in charge. This can help ensure fresh perspectives are brought into the network as it evolves.

Another approach could be **co-leadership**, where you develop a group of individuals who can take shared ownership and offer different skills. A leader with a high profile may help motivate people to engage, while an experienced network developer can ensure the network offers the right support to members.

*‘Co-leaders are so important. We have a business development Chief Operations Officer and content was crucial ... That construct has added an enormous difference to the content legitimacy for our organisation.’*

Cause-related network leader

## Members

It's vital you understand who you want to engage with and why, so you can connect with the right people. There are several factors to consider:

- **Number of members:** Some networks described having around 20 members, which enabled them to facilitate deeper connections between members and be more targeted with their work. Others had more than 550 members and emphasised that the breadth of skills, knowledge and expertise was an asset. Some chose to limit the size of their networks while others grew and shrank organically.
- **Diversity of perspective:** Several networks highlighted the value of diversity of perspective in terms of strengthening the quality of their work and supporting innovation. They emphasised that the range of people supported by their work should be reflected in their membership and that, to make the right decisions, networks need to incorporate the lived realities of ultimate beneficiaries. There are different ways to approach this, but it is worth considering if bringing network members into direct contact with ultimate beneficiaries is the best approach (see p.31 for risks to address).

Lack of diversity increases the risk of groupthink, biases and blind spots. However, some networks highlighted difficulties promoting diversity while trying to align members with shared objectives. A network could balance the two by encouraging diversity within its membership while carving out targeted opportunities to bring together individuals with shared interests. When bringing together diverse audiences, it can be helpful to set out clear purpose and parameters, to manage the expectations of those participating.

*‘If we aren't diverse then we are perpetuating the inequalities that exist.’*

Cause-related network member



- **Member roles:** Some networks focus exclusively on individual philanthropists, while others include other types of funders. Some even bring in non-funders. Other networks described focusing on either established funders or new funders, but many found that there was much to be gained from bringing both together. Some networks find it helpful to target specific roles within an organisation, such as foundation staff and / or directors. This influenced approaches to 'Align' and 'Enable'. For example, one network felt it was less important to align foundation staff around values but more important to focus activities on practical and targeted support.

*'We are made up of both new and established foundations. [Established funders] want to do more and better and they are in a position to attract partners. They are able to make it easy for a new funder to fund alongside them.'*

#### Cause-related network leader

- **Types of membership:** Some networks provide one single membership offer while others carve out different types or levels of membership, such as advisory members and non-funder affiliate members. It may be appropriate to offer different types of membership depending on the level of membership contribution or differing types of engagement with the network and cause.
- **Access to membership:** Some networks will want a formal application and selection process based on agreed criteria; for example, [Rachel's Network](#) asks women to apply through an online form and members are required to give an annual gift. Other networks make membership more open. If the latter, networks can still shape membership through profiling typical network members; for example, [Resource Generation](#) constructs a typical user persona 'Adam' and describes the impact that joining the network had on his philanthropy.

## Reaching your intended membership

To reach target members, cause-related networks need a **clear value proposition**. How should the network add value to the experiences of members? How will it create positive impact on the cause? Why is it better for a donor to engage with the network rather than give to the cause directly?

Your value proposition will be driven by the network's core purpose (explored on p.19) and includes how a network markets itself. For example, having a relevant **name** which is easy to understand will make the network easier to find for potential members and partners. There also needs to be a clear **definition of the cause**. What is included and how does it intersect with other issues? For example, it may not be immediately obvious to potential members that a human rights network also includes migration, or that an arts network is interested in wellbeing.

To reach intended members and enable them to participate, it is important to understand their motivations and experiences, as well as barriers to participation. Two philanthropists we spoke to identified very different support needs from each other. One wanted to speak with people facing similar challenges, while another sought diversity of experience. One treated philanthropy as a side project, while the other saw it as a continuation of their professional career. There are tools that can help with this:

- **User personas:** When exploring motivations for engaging with a cause and with philanthropy, it may be useful to segment the types of individuals you want to connect with. User personas are fictional individuals that represent different types of members. They cover basic information such as the individual's personality, their goals, their needs and the challenges they face. To develop and apply user personas, it may be useful to explore the donor types identified in [Money for Good](#). This research found that cause motivates different people to varying degrees, and different people are motivated by different causes as well as factors such as



giving privately and giving publicly. The research offers insights into who gives the most and how networks can target them better. One finding is that individuals who donate their time are also willing to give higher amounts of money. This may be useful for networks that are currently focusing on financial donations.

- **User journeys:** Developing user journeys can help identify what draws target audiences in, what the key entry points are, and what keeps them with you. They can help cause-related networks understand how people should interact with the network, what actions members would ideally take, and how support can be designed to meet those goals. They can also help understand the barriers to engagement, such as being affiliated with another organisation, the level of membership contributions required, or the time commitment. The goal is to unpick the experiences of individuals at every stage, from understanding how people first encounter your network through to why people leave the network.<sup>10</sup>

## Reaching those who don't currently give

Engaging those who don't currently give is a very different challenge to involving existing donors. Many of the cause-related networks we spoke to described how they connected with people primarily through personal networks and how they focused on existing philanthropists rather than those who don't currently give. Networks that do work to bring in new philanthropists often have a separate programme of activities to encourage this, which focuses on the distinct motivations, capabilities and opportunities of those individuals.

**Motivating people to start giving:** Motivations to give are usually individual and driven by personal experiences. In addition to understanding the motivational factors for different types of philanthropists, our research highlighted specific ways in which activities need to be experienced by potential philanthropists. For example, the philanthropists we spoke to described how networks need to feel inclusive and supportive, so people who are thinking about giving can explore ideas without the expectation or pressure of having to contribute. One philanthropist described the process of starting to give as 'isolating,' emphasising the need for opportunities to connect with peers in person. Networks could explore if member ambassadors would help potential donors understand whether philanthropy was suitable for them. [Women Moving Millions](#) shares profiles of members on its website to help bring to life the benefits of membership and the impact that has.

**Strengthening capabilities to start giving:** Philanthropists often describe the process of starting to give as complex and difficult to navigate. Networks could appeal to potential philanthropists by offering clear, accessible, practical, credible and neutral advice. Cause-related networks would need to position themselves as credible sources of expertise and find ways to identify and reach potential donors beyond normal marketing channels. Cause-related networks should take advantage of opportunities to market their activities through wider forums and via partners such as wealth advisors, who can help identify individuals who have reached a stage where they are ready and able to start giving large donations.

**Providing opportunities to start giving:** Two philanthropists described how they were only able to start giving when they were at the right life stage, even if they had already been motivated when they were younger. As mentioned, cause-related networks should reflect on how they reach individuals when they are starting to consider charitable giving. Once connected with the individual, cause-related networks need to be ready to offer support that is tailored to the needs and preferences of the individual. For example, the philanthropists we spoke to highlighted geographical proximity as an important factor: they sought insights from people close to them. One welcomed the opportunity to be connected directly with charities, while the other felt more cautious about this.

*'A lot [of the support] is also very London-centric, which is fine as we can get up to London quite easily. But it all takes time and adds more barriers.'*

---

<sup>10</sup> For more information on user research, see [User mapping techniques: A guide for the social sector](#)

**Case study:** [Resource Generation](#)

Resource Generation supports young people in the US to become transformative leaders, working towards the equitable distribution of wealth, land and power. Through events and webinars, they focus on community organising, social justice philanthropy, and supporting local chapters.

One cause-related network member described how Resource Generation was the main reason why they started to give. Having attended an event with compelling speakers and practical exercises, they identified the core value as having access to 'real community'. They felt that Resource Generation offered genuine connections, meaningful conversations about the realities of philanthropy, and space to reflect on their personal situation.

*'Real community and actual connection that I miss in the other networks. Other networks are very heavy on strategy ... They focus on social justice and funders giving up a lot of power. The other networks don't talk about power.'*

**Case study:** [Environmental Funders Network](#)

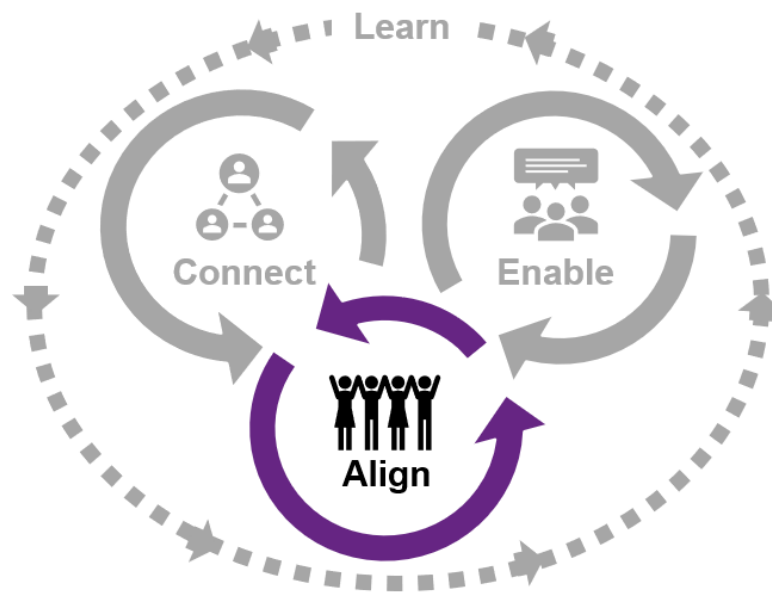
The Environmental Funders Network (EFN) in the UK aims to increase the amount of financial support for environmental causes and improve environmental philanthropy's overall effectiveness. EFN hosts events, produces publications and encourages peer-to-peer knowledge exchange. They hold meetings for intermediaries, such as philanthropy and wealth advisers, to help inform their knowledge of effective environmental philanthropy, and work collaboratively with other organisations and networks.

After three years of running an 'expanding environmental philanthropy' programme, EFN have a range of examples of individuals and foundations that they have inspired and helped to start giving to environmental causes, or to give more. Given these reports, the number of new people getting involved in EFN, and many established EFN members increasing their funding levels substantially, EFN are confident that the amount of funding going to environmental causes is going to rise significantly in the coming years. This is partly due to the increase in public concern about climate change and biodiversity loss. EFN is able to help foundations and individuals quickly turn this concern into action by providing inspiration, support, advice, research, networks and collaboration.

A health charity based in India describes how it joined the Environmental Funders Network as a first step towards working on environmental issues.

*'We joined EFN and attended our first retreat which opened the doors to a world of information, resources and relationships that have informed our donations over the last 18 months ... [we] have already started to channel more funds toward environmental programs, while gently and gradually extracting ourselves from other commitments.'*

## 2. Align



Cause-related networks align people around a shared **purpose for the network** and an **understanding of the cause**. They do this to varying degrees depending on their objectives, but some degree of alignment is necessary for working towards shared objectives and providing a clear offer to members and partners. Maintaining focus on a clear sense of purpose can also increase the capability of members to give more and to give more effectively.

Members do not need to align on everything. It may not be necessary for example for members to align on their reasons for giving, and members may only need to align with some core values. One network even highlighted that some members joined to learn about networks and funding systems change, rather than to support the cause. Networks need to decide on the extent to which alignment is needed and in which areas.

Establishing areas of alignment and flexibility can help shape the activities and ways of working within the network. As with the other 'stages' of this framework, alignment is a continuous activity that should adapt as the purpose, membership, values and operating environment evolve. Key decisions to make here include:

- What are the purpose and values for your network?
- What is the shared understanding of the cause?
- How flexible is the network? To what extent and in which areas (e.g. focus areas, values, motivations)?
- When do members need to align? Is there scope for taking members on a journey or should alignment be part of the criteria for assessing new members?

### Aligning around a shared purpose

The direction and activities of a network are ever-changing, but a cause-related network should have a clear understanding of why it exists, what it is trying to tackle and how it creates change.

*'We have been absolutely focused on a single mission ... We have a list of four things we don't do. I think it is really important to be clear about what you don't do.'*

Cause-related network leader

Developing a clear **purpose**, with a strategy for how a network will achieve its purpose, is a prerequisite for identifying the right individuals and encouraging them to engage. It will also support better decision-making and implementation. It's important to frame the cause. For example, the scope of human rights may be clear to existing network members, but a potential member may not see their interest in migration as part of this cause. Networks need to demonstrate that their cause is relevant to potential members and explain how it intersects with other issues.

The **values** that underpin a network's work, its attitudes, beliefs or principles, may form a core component of a network's purpose. Values can be explicit or embedded in how a network describes itself. Unlike vision and mission, networks can develop their values at different stages and use them for differing purposes. Some have grown organically and found it appropriate to develop their values once they were more established. Others created values at inception and have used them to shape their activities and membership.

*'Especially as the network grows and changes, if you don't have anchor values, then it may change into something that your members aren't comfortable with.'*

Cause-related network leader

In addition to the unique objectives, defined by the change a network is trying to create, there are likely to be wider objectives for all networks that relate to increasing and improving philanthropic giving to a cause. For example:

- Enabling members to increase the effectiveness of their giving.
- Enabling stronger and deeper relationships across the cause.
- Enabling greater impact on the cause, for example by testing ideas and scaling effective ways of working.

## Aligning around a shared understanding of the cause

The purpose of a network needs to be grounded in an understanding of the unique role of the network within the wider system. What does your network aim to do that is not already satisfied by other actors in the system? You should consider the impact of the network on others, both positive and negative. Setting up a cause-related network can fundamentally change the dynamics within a cause and, if not explicitly considered, there is the risk of distorting relationships, increasing power imbalances, and doing harm within a cause.

*'[We conduct] research to help [our] members to understand the funding landscape and where the gaps are. We need to be able to think more systemically. As foundations, we are bad at thinking in a structural way. Most of the time we don't think about how organisations fit in the system.'*

Cause-related network leader

Aligning around a shared understanding of the landscape, and the role of the network within that, might include analysing the priorities for the cause, others operating in the space, funding gaps, and what effective philanthropy looks like. Some networks have conducted research in collaboration with an independent expert, while others draw on skills and expertise within their membership.

*'We do a yearly forecast of what is coming from philanthropy. This involves interviews and roundtables ... We use this as a bit a roadmap for where we should focus and give our time.'*

Cause-related network leader



Activities that can help network members to align around a shared understanding of the cause include:

- **Developing a map of the system**, unpicking the root causes of an issue and identifying obstacles to change as well as opportunities for influence and leverage.<sup>11</sup> This will help you understand what role the network plays in creating change, where it is best placed to work and which stakeholders are crucial for creating change.
- **Power mapping** can help you understand which groups a network needs to work with and who will oppose its work. NEON has developed a [matrix](#) for mapping power by influence and alignment to your goals.
- **Considering how a cause interacts with other issues**. For example, environmental issues are known to interact with poverty and inequality. Some networks are starting to address this by collaborating with others to avoid duplication, carve out distinct roles, and identify gaps. An example of this is the [Memorandum of Understanding between Ariadne and EDGE Funders Alliance](#), which sets out how the networks will share experience and expertise to help fulfil their respective missions, as well as developing joint activities to make better use of resources for systemic and social change.
- **Testing thinking** with members and stakeholders outside of the network, as well as charities and their beneficiaries. One cause-related network described how site visits to charities could be motivating for members and helpful for learning about how charities are tackling issues. However, this does create risks in relation to power balances and over-burdening charities. For more on this, see p.31.

**Case studies:** Networks are working in collaboration with others to produce maps of funding within their cause or location.

[Ariadne](#) has helped develop two tools to map resources for human rights funders:

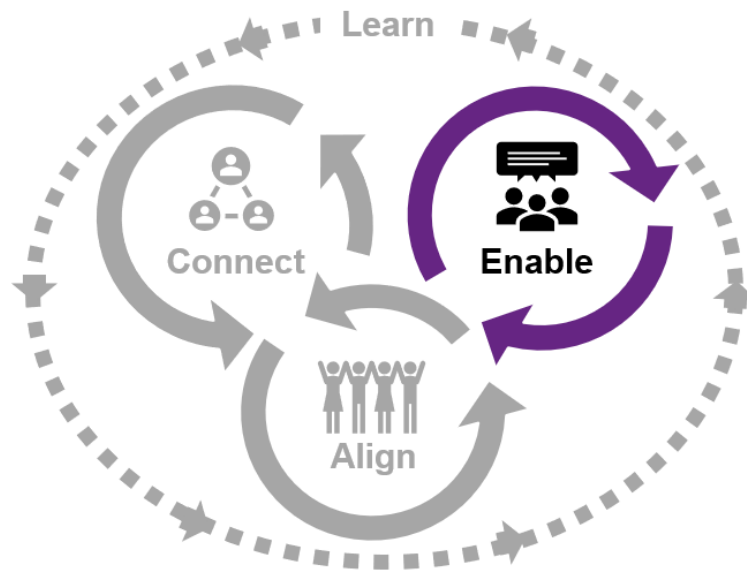
- [The State of Global Foundation Grantmaking for Social Change and Human Rights Funders](#): is a publicly available map of human rights funding data.
- [Scoping and Mapping Resource for Social Change and Human Rights Funders](#): Developed in collaboration with the Human Rights Funders Network, Prospera – the International Network of Women’s Funds, and the Foundation Center, this is a members-only map for funders of social change and human rights.

[360Giving](#) is a platform that allows organisations to publish their grant data in an open and standardised way. The data—available on [GrantNav](#)—can be broken down by target beneficiaries, location and funder.

<sup>11</sup> For an example of this, see [Tackling the homelessness crisis: Why and how you should fund systemically](#)



## 3. Enable



Cause-related networks enable action at multiple levels, often through different activities. In this section we explore some of the resources, infrastructure and activities that networks require to support their members.

### Resources and infrastructure

The resources and infrastructure required to support a cause-related network will be influenced by the size and maturity of the network, as well as its purpose and strategy. All networks need to think hard about people and skills, governance, and financial sustainability.

#### 1. People and skills

Most of the networks we spoke to had few paid staff, if any. Many emphasised the flexibility benefits of having a 'lean' structure. Others however, felt their team was over-stretched, emphasising the value of time. It's important for networks to reflect on the **skills required** to deliver their objectives and mitigate key risks, rather than focusing on the number of staff they should have (see p.31 for risks to address). For example:

- How will you ensure the **quality of the experience** for members? Does the network require expertise in network building or membership engagement? How will the network monitor and assess experiences for members? (see p.25 for how networks can learn about what they're achieving).
- Where might the network obtain the **content expertise** needed to establish credibility across the sector? Should this come from certain staff members? Having a board, steering group or advisory panel can invite expertise into the network, as well as help share responsibility for the network operationally.
- Who is the network seeking to engage with? Networks seeking to connect with **new or potential philanthropists** described the importance of business development and marketing skills within the team.
- How important is **advocacy and policy influencing**? If a network is seeking systems change, then influencing and advocacy functions are likely to be important, such as meeting with policymakers and responding to consultations.
- What **funding expertise** is required to advise members on effective philanthropy? How will the network mitigate key risks and unintended negative consequences? How will the network fundraise for its own costs? (see p.31)

- What skills are required to **support the activities** delivered? Many networks described hosting events and emphasised the importance of having an events manager.
- What operational **back office functions** are needed? This could include technical experts, such as legal and impact investing roles, and support staff—bookkeepers, data officers and administrators.

*‘One of the biggest mistakes is not having the capacity to deliver the experience for your supporters ... you have to have the capacity ready and a supporter journey.’*

Cause-related network leader

**Case study:** [Rachel's Network](#)

Rachel's Network is a community of around 100 female environmental leaders based primarily in the US. Its mission is to 'promote women as impassioned leaders and agents of change dedicated to the stewardship of the earth.' The network provides information and support to members, platforms for co-funding, and advice and exposure to causes, on a budget of around \$1m per year. Alongside six staff members and 14 directors, the network has 14 'environmental leadership liaisons'—who are all women leaders in the field—and 20 'circle advisors' who are also all women. Both groups provide the network with expertise to shape strategy and keep the network connected to organisations who share their goals.

**Case study:** [Environmental Funders Network](#)

The Environmental Funders Network has 2.5 full time equivalent employees, six board members and an 'Expanding Environmental Philanthropy Advisory Group' consisting of seven people. Key roles for paid staff include a director, an 'expanding philanthropy coordinator', an administrator and a new Scotland coordinator. The network also employs contractors on an ad hoc basis, for example to help with research. Since its inception in 2003, the network has supported over 250 different trusts, foundations and individual donors who contribute to environmental work.

## 2. Organisational structure and governance

Many networks began as part of another organisation and operated within its legal, financial and organisational structure. For example, the [Environmental Funders Network](#) was previously hosted by the [Ecology Trust](#) and [Ariadne](#) is hosted by [Global Dialogue](#). Some networks continue to be hosted by an organisation, describing the primary benefits as saved time, effort and expenditure on overheads. Others grow into an independent entity, securing more independence in relation to their purpose, activities and membership, and flexibility to change approach. Here, some networks emphasised the importance of being recognised as neutral and independent.

*‘In the [host organisation], non-members had to pay a higher fee to attend which would discourage some foundations from joining. The barrier to entry was significant.’*

Cause-related network leader

## 3. Financial model

Financial sustainability is a big challenge for cause-related networks. At the heart of a network's financial model is balancing income with expenditure and making the case for investment in philanthropy infrastructure. Networks shared with us their experiences of managing their operating costs and generating income.

*'It is never static, and you always have to look five to ten years ahead to keep the organisation sustainable.'*

Cause-related network leader

**Case study:** One network has six paid employees and 100 members. They spend \$919,800 per year: roughly half on programmes and services, \$168,400 on grants, \$100,400 on fundraising, and \$140,700 on administration costs. The network makes \$936,100 in member contributions and \$127,900 from events.

### Understanding and streamlining costs

- **Operational costs** can include office space, operational reserves, paid staff members, events, communications, and other activities delivered for members.
- For **new networks**, there may be one-off start-up costs, such as recruiting staff and membership, registering the organisation, or legal fees.
- To improve **sustainability**, one network leader described efforts to reduce their membership and prioritise resources to delivering more targeted activities for a smaller, more engaged membership base. Another described how they were able to leverage their networks to reduce the costs of activities, such as enjoying free or low-cost spaces for events.

### Generating income

- **Membership contributions:** Many networks request regular contributions from members to support the costs of the network. Some networks are entirely funded by membership contributions. Things to consider here include:
  - **Offering value for money:** One network set their annual contribution at \$5,000 per year in exchange for face-to-face meetings and events. They believed this was a comfortable amount that enabled members to return over the years. Another network charges £1,000 per year for events with additional fees for advisory services. Be careful about setting contributions too high. One network described having to halve their budget after setting contributions at \$25,000 initially but then reducing this down to \$10,000, and then further to \$5,000.
  - **A tiered approach:** One network described setting the level of membership contribution as a percentage of the member's overall philanthropic giving. For example, for members who give £50,000 per year, the suggested minimum contribution to the network would be £500. For those who give more than £5 million per year, the suggested minimum contribution would be £10,000.
  - **No contributions:** Some networks described how they didn't request contributions from members but emphasised how this creates challenges around sustainability. One network found it needed to transition from a free to a paid service. They advised that this transition could be assisted with voluntary donations based on what members can afford to give, and a commitment to give a certain amount to the cause.
- **Charging for services and activities:** Many networks charge an annual membership contribution for events and advisory services, although some charge for this separately. While this is seen as important for sustainability, others highlight that this also helps involve the most engaged members.
- **Other sources of funding:** Many networks were able to supplement membership contributions with other sources of income, primarily grant funding. However, not all networks are set up as charities, so those that aren't are not eligible for grant funding. Other options included co-funding with another organisation, and pooling funds or co-investing with 'core partners' who also contribute to decision-making about funding.





A common underlying theme throughout these approaches is the need to **demonstrate the impact and value** of a network to members. This was identified as a key challenge across all the networks we spoke to. We explore approaches to monitoring, understanding and demonstrating impact on p.25.

*'It is really hard to fund a network. It is harder to show the immediate value of it.'*

Cause-related network leader

**Case Study:** [Resource Generation](#) makes the case for investing in philanthropy infrastructure on its website. The following text is a direct quote from their website:

***'Why again should you, a rich person, fund and organization of young rich people?'***

*Supporting Resource Generation by becoming a member increases funding to social justice. As a result of having community, unpacking class privilege, and building authentic relationships with frontline activists, our members on average increase their giving to social justice by sixteen-times. A lot of our members have increased their giving way more than that, too.*

*Take Adam, for example. Before joining RG, Adam, who has access to over \$1M in assets, was giving away less than \$200 year. After the first year of joining Resource Generation as a member, he increased that to \$13,000 a year, with corresponding increases to his membership dues. Last year in 2016, he moved \$51,000 to economic and racial justice organizations—a 300% increase in giving since he joined RG. For Adam, "Being a member of RG has helped support and challenge me to learn by doing, leaning into risk, and imperfection. I would have never moved into action without RG."*

*We're the only organization doing this kind of work in the US, to help young people confront and unpack class privilege and organize them around the equitable distribution of wealth, land, and power, not charity.*

*It's our responsibility as people with privilege to organize other folks with privilege—ensuring that this organization is sustainable through membership dues helps do that and allows our work to be funded by you, not from big grant money that grassroots orgs are applying for.'*

## Activities

Cause-related networks deliver activities to motivate members, strengthen their capabilities, and open opportunities for them. To achieve this, many networks focus on connecting individuals, facilitating peer-to-peer support, improving knowledge and awareness, and driving innovation and impact. In this section we highlight insights and learnings from cause-related networks in relation to the activities they deliver.

### 1. Sharing information and learning

- **Showcasing best practice:** Identifying exemplar organisations and case studies that have had a significant impact can be highly motivating and can generate ideas for how members can approach their own funding.
- **Connecting members with cause expertise and information on innovative approaches:** This can be achieved through events, disseminating research, and connecting organisations and individuals directly.
- **Playing back the impact of funding:** Some networks see value in connecting funders with grantees, as a way of demonstrating the impact of funding. Others expressed interest in providing resources and support to enable members to understand the impact of their funds more effectively.



*'Members have the opportunity to hear new insights and perspectives, deepen connection amongst their local community, and spark collaboration and partnership.'*

Cause-related network leader

## 2. Facilitating deeper connections within a network

- **Digital platforms:** Some networks described using digital tools, such as online forums and a members-only section of the website. This can be useful for connecting geographically dispersed members, although it is unlikely to be an effective substitute for face-to-face events which were felt to be better for networking. Online platforms offer a degree of anonymity, which may be appealing for new members. Leaders felt there was space to use digital tools more effectively by updating them more regularly, hosting online events and webinars, and developing online communities.
- **Mentoring and advisory partnerships:** Some networks have found it helpful to connect members with each other based on shared interests, challenges and skills. It may be beneficial to connect a less experienced philanthropist with a more established one. Other networks draw on individual expertise in an advisory capacity.
- **Direct engagement of leaders with members:** One network leader described maintaining close personal relationships with their members but added that, due to the time this takes, this approach required a way of segmenting and prioritising individual members.
- **Events:** Policy briefings, conferences, excursions, webinars, and retreats can bring together members, experts and other organisations.

*'There is a trend of community building approach, where you as the networks are encouraging communication amongst the community and interaction way beyond the network events. Periodic emails with key issues, opportunities and facilitating relationships with others really works.'*

Cause-related network member

How cause-related networks could run more effective events:

- **Having a predictable programme of activities:** People can anticipate and plan around them.
- **Using seating plans:** Connect people with shared interests or encourage people to connect with new people. This can also take the pressure of new members who may feel less confident about networking.
- **Targeting events:** Larger events are ideal for members wanting to engage with more individuals and content, who may feel this format to be more approachable as it preserves a sense of anonymity. Meanwhile, target smaller events at members looking for something more practical and in-depth. Smaller events are helpful for building a sense of community.
- **Building trust between members:** People are more likely to share ideas when they feel comfortable. Creating opportunities for members to engage informally can help build trust between members.
- **Creating the right atmosphere:** Members and leaders described how events needed to feel friendly, welcoming and inclusive, with visible flexibility and no pressure to contribute.
- **Sustaining engagement:** Follow up after an event with support, opportunities for networking, working groups, and online tools and platforms.
- **Member-led:** One network creates planning committees for events, allowing them to draw on the skills of members, ensure events are grounded in the needs of members, and to build a sense of community.

### 3. Connecting with others in the sector

- **Opening up activities to wider audiences:** Many networks have restricted membership but open events to others in the field, such as charities, academics, policy experts and others. This encourages debate and knowledge sharing. Others host joint events with other philanthropy networks.
- **Connecting with content expertise through governance:** Some networks incorporate different perspectives into their governance structures. An advisory group is one way to bring expertise into the network. You can also use wider partnerships and collaborative projects to connect with others. [Science Philanthropy Alliance](#) appoints 'senior science advisors' in addition to connecting with scientists through its membership.
- **Connecting with partners who can refer appropriate people as members:** One network described hosting events for non-members to ensure that both partners and potential members understood the purpose and value of the network. This is also crucial for attracting those who don't currently give.

### 4. Building the capacity of members to give more effectively

- **Advisory services:** There may be scope to offer advisory or support services to members. One network charges a low membership contribution for events but additional fees for advisory services—£1,000 per month for 12 months. Over the course of a year, members are supported by a staff member who helps them articulate their vision and mission and connects them with consultants depending on their needs.
- **Policy and advocacy support:** There may be scope for networks to leverage their credibility or status within the sector and enhance the policy and advocacy work of its members.
- **Resources and support to improve giving practices:** One network member described how a network offered advice and resources to improve philanthropic practices. For example, on mitigating biases, minimising unhealthy power dynamics, and ensuring work is informed by lived experience.

*'They give you handouts about how you can check your gender bias and systemic alternatives.'*

Cause-related network member

### 5. Supporting innovation

- **Bringing in new ideas and fresh perspectives:** Networks can create a welcoming environment for new ideas. They can draw on and enhance the work of innovative members. Networks can also bring in new research and fresh perspectives, either through their membership or via external research and speakers.
- **Developing leaders:** Some networks described how they supported members to develop into leaders, either in philanthropy or in relation to the cause. One network runs a programme to support members to become leaders in service of a movement.
- **Supporting experimentation:** Several networks described a desire to 'do things better.' There was appreciation for the value of testing and innovating. One network established a fiscal sponsorship programme, to enable members who have the money but not the legal entity to experiment and innovate.

*'They should have more controversial conversations. [Our network] does a very good job of not being safe, but others need to do more.'*

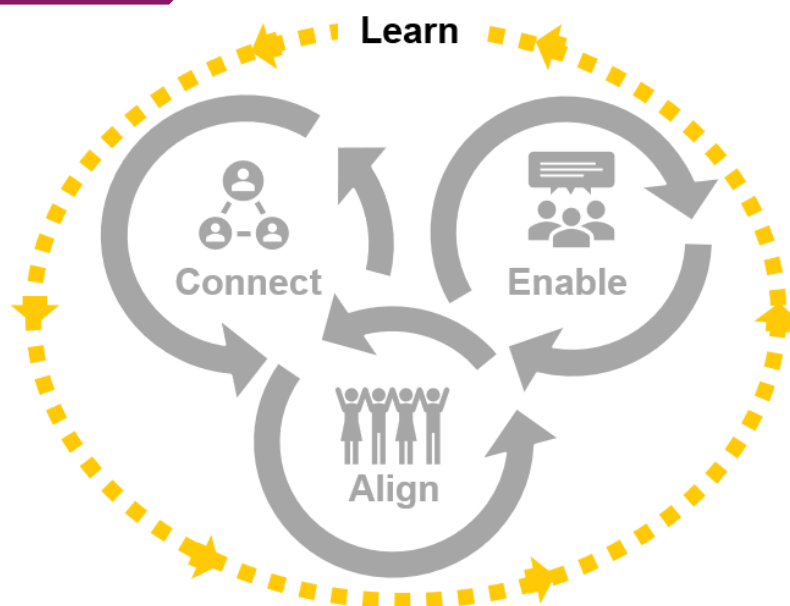
Cause-related network member



## 6. Advocating for change

- **Representing a cause and advocating for change:** Many cause-related networks seek to change systems. Networks can achieve this through their members, but they can also use their own brand to represent a cause and advocate for change. One network described how they regularly met with ministers and senior officials and submitted responses to consultations. It's important though to bear in mind the risk of disproportionately influencing thinking about a cause. Networks should reflect on who should set the policy direction for a cause, and whether this is led by robust evidence and lived experience. This is explored in more detail on p.30.

## 4. Learn



To remain relevant to the cause and valuable to members, it is essential that cause-related networks understand their impact on members, on philanthropy, and on the cause—across all stages of their work, so they can continuously improve. Demonstrating impact can help with sustainability by engaging new members, ensuring current members continue to participate, and securing more funding. There are also likely to be learnings about the cause itself, and effective approaches to philanthropy, that others benefit from.

Understanding and demonstrating impact on a cause is challenging given the long timescales involved and the multiple actors contributing to a cause. However, there are **unique opportunities** for cause-related networks to engage in honest learning and reflection. Members are the key stakeholders of cause-related networks, meaning that networks usually have the independence and license to take risks and even fail. Networks may have better access to resources for learning—skills, expertise, time and money—compared with others in the charity sector. There are likely to be fewer challenges relating to gathering information, as networks can draw on the skills, knowledge and networks of members, as well as obtain insights directly from members.

Causes are complex and often unpredictable, and behaviour can be influenced by multiple factors over time. Networks will therefore need to take an agile approach to learning, and they need to be prepared to adapt in response to what the evidence is telling them. An important component of this is creating a **culture that encourages learning**. This can involve being explicit about the value of learning, creating a supportive environment for learning, sharing knowledge, and avoiding over-emphasis on taking credit for changes which may not be directly attributable to your work. Playing back learning from activities at all levels can help cultivate this

environment. It is also important to manage expectations about how quickly and reliable long-term impact can be demonstrated.

You can find out more about measurement, evaluation and creating a learning culture in our guide to [understanding impact](#).

**Case study:** [Co-Impact](#)

[Co-Impact's handbook](#) reflects the values, thinking, approaches and commitments of their network.

Co-Impact recognises the need to constantly test and refine their approaches, so that they can respond and adapt to change. Their approach is centred on building a robust culture of learning and adaptation. They describe how they foster this culture through candid conversation with staff and programme partners. They exercise 'healthy scepticism' and seek to bring rigour and focus to their learning. They accept that failure is a key element of learning. They work to connect practitioners and academics and convene strategic meetings with programme partners to stretch thinking. They pledge to be 'active and open learners.'

*'We accept that failure is a key element of learning. To this end, we strive to cultivate a safe space among Co-Impact and program partners to discuss failure and learning openly.'*

## Creating opportunities to learn and reflect

Cause-related networks need to build in opportunities to reflect on experiences and learn from them. The core purpose of a network and its distinct role within the cause forms a natural starting point. To develop these, a network must identify how it will achieve its intended impact, and what the most useful things to learn about are. To develop this further, it can be helpful to think about what a network needs to understand at each stage of its work.<sup>12</sup> Networks should reflect on these questions on an on-going basis, and they should evolve as the priorities of the network change over time.

### 1. Connect

- What is the value proposition of the network? How should the network add value to the experiences of members, to the cause, and to philanthropy?
- Who are the members? What are their interests, characteristics, motivations for giving? Is the network connecting with the right members? Who is it not reaching?
- How do members connect with the network? What (or who) brings them in?
- How do members engage? To what extent? With which activities?
- Are the right connections being made with wider stakeholders in the field? Who is influential?

### 2. Align

- What is the core purpose of the network? Is this still relevant? What are the values driven by?
- What is happening in the wider landscape? What is the role of the network in the system? Has anything changed in the cause or funding environment? Could the network be having any negative impacts?

---

<sup>12</sup> The Network Health Scorecard offers examples of questions to reflect on:  
[http://www.networkimpact.org/downloads/NH\\_Scorecard.pdf](http://www.networkimpact.org/downloads/NH_Scorecard.pdf)

- How closely do members align with the core purpose and shared understanding of the cause? What are the reasons for divergence?

### 3. Enable

- Which activities work well for which members and why?
- How do these activities help to achieve the network's intended impact?
- Are the activities achieving their intended outcomes? Are there unintended outcomes, positive or negative?
- To what extent can we attribute outcomes and impact to the work of the network?
- Are there any gaps in terms of the activities delivered?

For guidance on the different types of data to collect and the tools for gathering information, see Appendix 3.

*'We have had measurement workshops; we share case studies and are sharing stories of organisations that think they are doing well.'*

Cause-related network leader

## Building on insights from existing networks

From our conversations with cause-related network leaders and members, we identified insights on what works and risks to look out for.

### 1. Ways of working

- **Focus on providing value to members:** In addition to their core purpose, cause-related networks need to maintain unwavering focus on providing value to members, so that they can achieve greater impact with their funding. Activities should be developed and adapted based on an up to date understanding of their needs: What support is needed? What does good quality look like? Many networks described an aspiration to use digital platforms more effectively but there was less clarity on what this should look like. Networks that were using digital tools often felt they weren't using these as effectively as they should be. The design and implementation of any activity needs to be driven by the needs of its users, rather than taking the activity as a starting point.
- **Flexible:** The operating environment for a cause-related network is never static. Networks need to respond to the needs of members and adapt to the changing environment. To ensure a network remains relevant and fit for purpose, it can be useful to draw on the skills and expertise of members. For example, setting up working groups, holding consultations, facilitating discussions, and enabling members to plan events and activities. While flexibility is key, networks also need to be grounded in robust policies, structures and processes, to ensure sustainability and manage expectations.
- **Built on trust and respect:** Both leaders and members described the importance of trust. This was seen as critical for encouraging members to be open and honest with themselves, which in turn facilitates genuine knowledge exchange, learning and innovation.

*'If you go into it with the goal of learning but without the trust of your peers, then you don't get the substance of learning ... it is about the value of being with peers.'*

Cause-related network leader

- **Inclusive and accessible:** Networks emphasised the importance of creating a welcoming space for all members. This resonated with the philanthropists we spoke with, especially those who were new to philanthropy or felt less confident in their ideas.

*‘The reason for the success of the network is that its tone has always been very welcoming and non-judgemental, we tried to welcome everybody.’*

#### Cause-related network leader

- **Embedded in the cause:** Influencing systemic change requires networks to maintain an accurate and up to date understanding of the cause. This means learning from and working with those outside the network, even if there is expertise within the membership. This is also important for ensuring potential members and partners respect the network and see it as credible. This is also where diversity of perspective and connection with the cause come into play. Networks need to pro-actively avoid creating an ‘echo chamber’ that is far removed from the reality of the cause.
- **Transparent and accountable:** This is crucial for ensuring a cause-related network continues to deliver its objectives. Some individuals identified tensions between this and creating space for peer learning and honest reflection. The key point to consider is how a network can communicate in an open and transparent way with its members, and how it can remain accountable to members and the wider cause. This is also relevant in relation to external individuals. Networks need to demonstrate their impact and value to be able to connect with members and partners.

## 2. Risks to address

- **Disproportionately influencing funding decisions relating to a cause:** Setting up a cause-related network can fundamentally change the power dynamics in a cause. In conventional funding relationships, power tends to be concentrated with the funders, as they set the terms of engagement.

Power imbalances can distort the activities of grantees and undermine impact. Bringing funders together might increase the power imbalance, with the risk that cause-related networks could become gatekeepers to funding. Many donors are heavily influenced by their peers<sup>13</sup> and without careful consideration of the risks, explicit steps to avoid groupthink and promote diversity of thought, and a clear focus on what charities and their beneficiaries are saying, the concentration of capital can lead to biases and blind spots.

From the perspective of members, one philanthropist expressed concerns that working on a cause as part of a network might reduce the diversity of approaches towards a cause. They also anticipated that it may affect a charity’s willingness to engage in honest and open dialogue with a funder.

*‘I’d worry about that affecting how open charities are. I normally find it better to either go through an intermediary ... or slowly build the relationship on a personal and individual level.’*

#### Private philanthropist

- **Disproportionately influencing thinking about a cause:** Networks should reflect on who should set the direction or influence thinking about a cause. At present, this tends to be driven by charities who have expertise through their work with beneficiaries. Developing networks of philanthropists may create pressure for grantees to align their objectives, strategies and values with that of a network, even if they do not believe

<sup>13</sup> [Money for Good](#) identified that a large proportion of donors, in particular high income donors, donate because they are asked to by a friend / family member / colleague (47%) or as a result of receiving information through a friend / family member / colleague (37%)

this will serve their beneficiaries well. These risks emphasise the importance of protecting user voice, connecting with other actors across a cause, and meaningful learning and evaluation.

*'[Funders need to] listen to what the grantees need. Networks aren't doing this. They don't ask about how grantees are doing their job enough.'*

#### Cause-related network member

- **Negative impact on charities and beneficiaries:** Networks should bear in mind their impact on charities and their beneficiaries. A Stanford Social Innovation Review (SSIR) [article on philanthropic collaborations](#) found that working with networks can increase costs for charities, in terms of managing relationships and the risks of heightened funder power dynamics. Cause-related networks should ground their work in a robust understanding of the cause and a clear focus on the people and communities they intend to help. However, when seeking to engage directly with beneficiaries, networks must be careful to avoid undermining the charities that hold those relationships or placing unnecessary burdens on the beneficiaries themselves.
- **Reinforcing siloed working:** There is often competition between actors working on a cause or in a field. Interviewees identified competition between activities aimed at philanthropists, as there is only so much time individuals are willing to invest in activities. By focusing on a cause, there is also the risk that cause-related networks ignore the intersectionality of issues. Some cause-related networks are starting to address this by collaborating with others to avoid duplication, carve out distinct roles, and identify gaps.

*'Some networks further silo already siloed foundations. They can pigeonhole people into different organisations and further silo their work ... networks should think about how they can help organisations.'*

#### Cause-related network leader





# Conclusions

Cause-related networks offer unique opportunities to increase and improve philanthropic giving for different causes. The combination of a focus on a cause with the independence of philanthropic funding and the benefits of a network can be powerful in motivating people to give, strengthening their capabilities to give, enabling them to give more effectively, and creating crucial opportunities for giving.

However, while cause-related networks present valuable opportunities, there are also risks associated with this organising approach. Cause-related networks should reflect carefully on the power dynamics within a cause and the unintended negative impact this could have on charities, beneficiaries and other stakeholders within the cause, as well as those outside of the cause in cases where social issues intersect.

Every cause is unique, as are the needs, preferences and capabilities of members, meaning that cause-related networks are necessarily diverse. Networks must maintain an unwavering focus on their core purpose and on the needs of members.

Each cause-related network needs to be able to identify and articulate its key value proposition:

- What value does the network add to the cause, and what benefits can it bring for members?
- What is the unique role for the network within the cause?
- How can it influence behaviour change?

This value proposition should guide the network's approach to all activities, including connecting with people, aligning members around a core purpose and shared understanding of the cause, delivering activities to enable and support members, and learning about what is being achieved.

Effectiveness is largely determined by *how* a cause-related network is developed and run. For example:

- Networks that are grounded in robust and comprehensive data and evidence about the cause, informed by lived experiences and diverse perspectives from across the sector, can make better decisions and avoid unintended negative consequences.
- Networks that draw on up to date and accurate information about a cause, as well as developments in philanthropy, will be better able to adapt and ensure activities are fit for purpose.
- Networks are inherently social and those that develop a strong understanding of potential and existing members can develop better activities to support members, as well as attract new members to join.
- Networks that are focused on providing value to members, flexible, built on trust and respect, inclusive and accessible, embedded in the cause, and transparent and accountable, are more likely to achieve positive impact for their members, the funding community, and the cause which they seek to serve.

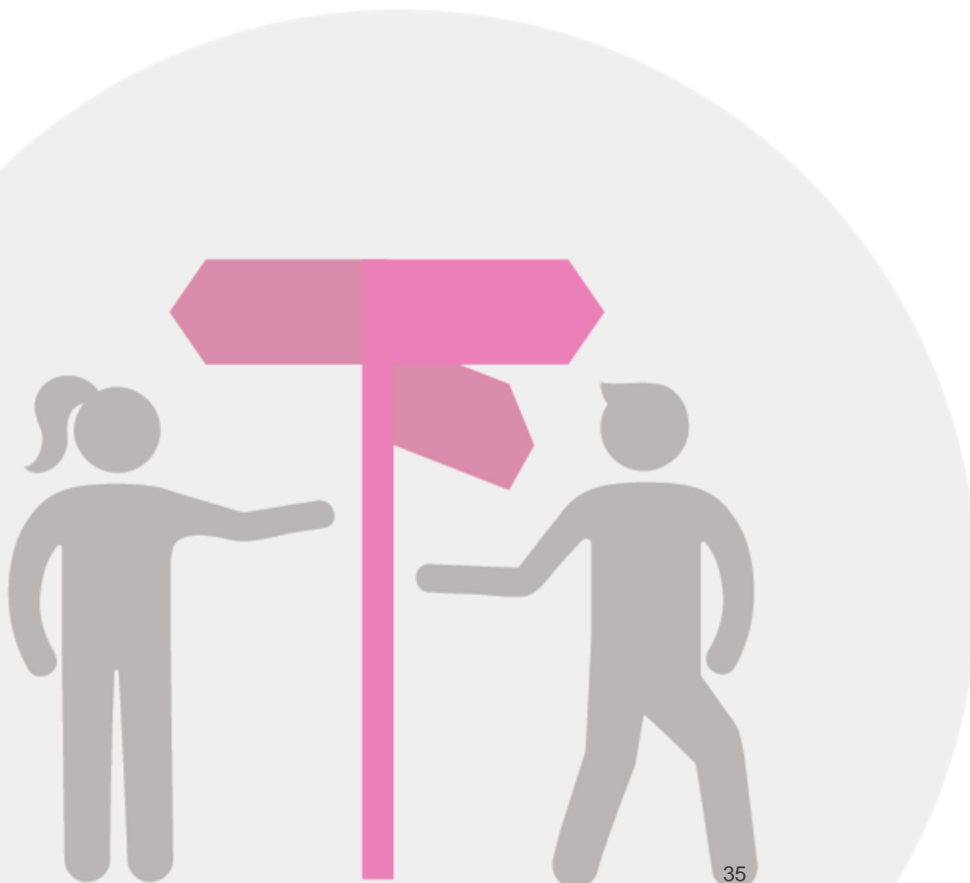
# Recommendations

## Recommendations for cause-related networks

- **Articulate a clear value proposition.** Cause-related networks are an expensive resource with the potential to draw funding away from the delivery of frontline services. Cause-related networks need to be clear and transparent about how they provide value to members and to the cause overall.
- **Focus on providing value to new or would-be philanthropists as well as experienced philanthropists.** Recognise the challenges of becoming a funder for the first time, and the sense of isolation and uncertainty that many new funders feel, cause-related networks could provide a valuable entry-point into philanthropy by offering a welcoming programme, grounded in learning and evidence.
- **Proactively manage key risks.** To achieve positive impact on a cause, cause-related networks must explicitly develop and embed strategies for managing power dynamics and any distortions these dynamics may create. A good strategy for learning and development can help networks to identify and monitor risks, and ensure they remain relevant over time.
- **Collaborate with others on intersectional issues and challenges.** Recognising that the boundaries of a cause are often blurred, and that issues often intersect with multiple causes, cause-related networks should collaborate with other individuals, organisations and networks. For example, cause-related networks could collaborate with those working on place, to bring a depth of expertise that is national or international in scope, to local problems and issues. Equally, the intersection of other issues, such as arts and culture and wellbeing, could provide the basis for innovative strategies for social benefit.
- **Focus on the network's unique role within a cause,** reflecting on:
  - **Focus on a cause:** How can the network take a long-term, system-wide perspective that considers the root causes of a problem, various actors working on the issue, and barriers and opportunities for change?
  - **Philanthropy:** How does the network's identity as a philanthropic funder influence its role within the system? What can the network offer that others can't?
  - **Network:** How can the network support and increase collective impact? How can it better support the diffusion of ideas and learning, and increase its resilience and adaptive capacity?
- **Use the connect, align, enable and learn framework** to test and refine approaches and activities on an on-going basis, recognising that this framework is non-linear and that progress in one stage will likely drive improvement in others. Key questions to consider here are:
  - **Who** do we need to connect with and how will we do this? Who should lead the network?
  - What is our **core purpose**? How can we align members around this? Where can we be flexible?
  - Which **activities** can enable us to share information and learning, facilitate connections, build the capacity of members, support innovation, and advocate for change? What **resources** and **infrastructure** are needed to support this?
  - How can we **understand our impact** and improve our activities? How can we ensure we remain relevant to a cause and valuable to members?
- **Promote your work widely across the philanthropy sector,** taking advantage of opportunities for partnerships with wealth advisors, other networks, the media and others.

## Recommendations for the philanthropy sector

- **Share this research and draw attention to cause-related networks:** Organisations in the philanthropy sector—and specifically the Beacon Collaborative—can help increase knowledge of cause-related networks, which is a relatively new concept in the UK context, by sharing this research and producing blogs or podcasts that feature cause-related networks.
- **Support the important role of cause-related networks and direct people to existing networks:** The Beacon Collaborative could include cause-related networks in its directory of resources. Wealth advisors and other referral partners could work with networks to determine the best approaches for signposting and referring clients.
- **Support people to set up new cause-related networks:** Philanthropy infrastructure bodies can think about how to support their members to set up cause-related networks. For example, ACF could support staff at trusts and foundations to incubate new cause-related networks, as well as hold joint events with non-ACF members who are philanthropists.
- **Support cause-related networks to increase their effectiveness:** This report highlights the danger of cause-related networks doing harm if they are not run well. Organisations like NPC can support networks to take a systemic view of the causes they support and use data and evidence to make better decisions. They could develop resources to help with the techniques mentioned in this report, such as user personas and systems mapping. There may be opportunities to conduct further research into high-impact areas and different roles within the system.
- **Invest in technology and digital:** Organisations like the Beacon Collaborative could research the scope of opportunities for cause-related networks to use digital tools and platforms more effectively. There may be opportunities for organisations to pool their expertise and resources. For example, rather than each network developing tools individually, networks could develop shared platforms or extend existing ones.



# Appendix 1: Organisations interviewed

[Association of Charitable Funders](#)

[Ariadne](#)

[Co-Impact](#)

[Impact 100 London](#)

[Lloyds Bank PLC](#)

[MASECO Private Wealth](#)

[New Philanthropy for the Arts and Culture](#)

[Rachel's Network](#)

[Rosetrees Trust](#)

[Science Philanthropy Alliance](#)

[Somerset Philanthropy Network](#)

[The Environmental Funders Network](#)

[The Philanthropy Club](#)

[Women Moving Millions](#)



## Appendix 2: Sample of funder networks

Network	Cause area(s)	Primary location
ACF network: Asylum, refugee and migration	Law, human rights and advocacy	UK
ACF network: Children and young people	Children or young people (CYP)	UK
ACF network: Corporate foundations	All sectors	UK
ACF network: Criminal justice	Law, human rights and advocacy	UK
ACF network: Housing and homelessness	Homeless people, housing, refuge shelters	UK
ACF network: International funders	All sectors	UK
ACF network: Mental health	Physical and mental health care	UK
ACF network: Monitoring and evaluation	All sectors	UK
ACF network: Northern Ireland	All sectors	UK
ACF network: Operational support	All sectors	UK
ACF network: Place based learning	All sectors	UK
ACF network: School funders	Education	UK
ACF network: Smaller funders	All sectors	UK
ACF network: Tackling poverty	Other - Poverty	UK
ACF network: Violence against women and girls	Other - Women and girls	UK
Acumen	Other - Poverty	International
Ariadne	Law, human rights and advocacy	Europe
Association of Charitable Foundations	Multiple sectors	UK
BeMORE	Multiple sectors	UK
Bridgespan non-profit networks	Multiple sectors	America
Cause4	Multiple sectors	UK
Charities Aid Foundation Global Alliance	Multiple sectors	International
Child Sexual Exploitation Funders' Alliance	CYP	UK
Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition	CYP, Physical & mental health care	UK
City Funding Network	Multiple sectors	International
Co-Impact	Multiple sectors	International
Community Foundation Northern Ireland	All sectors	Northern Ireland
Community Foundation Tyne & Wear, The Giving Network	All sectors	UK
The Conduit	Multiple sectors	UK
Corston Independent Funders' Coalition	Law, human rights and advocacy	UK
Coutts Connect	Multiple sectors	International
Donors and Foundations Networks in Europe	Multiple sectors	Europe
Early Action Funders Alliance—Global Dialogue	Other	Europe
Environmental Funders Network	Conservation, environment and heritage	UK
European Foundation Centre's networks	Multiple sectors	Europe
Founders Pledge	Multiple sectors	International
Funders Together to End Homelessness	Homelessness, housing, law and advocacy	US
Global Dialogue	Law, human rights and advocacy	International
Health Research Alliance	Medical research	US
Impact 100 London	Other - Women and girls	London, UK
International Alliance of Mental Health Research Funders	Medical research	International
Leap Ambassadors' Community	Multiple sectors	Unknown
London Funders	Multiple sectors	UK
Migration Exchange	Law, human rights and advocacy	International
Network of European Foundations	All sectors	Europe
New London Architecture	Homeless people, housing, refuge shelters	UK
New Philanthropy for the Arts and Culture	Arts	UK
Nexus	Multiple sectors	International
Philanthropy Australia	Multiple sectors	Australia
Philanthropy Club	Multiple sectors	London, UK
Philanthropy Impact	Multiple sectors	UK
Prism the gift fund	Multiple sectors	UK
Rachel's Network	Conservation, environment & women's leadership	US
Rosetrees Trust	Medical research	UK
Science Philanthropy Alliance	Other - Basic science	US
Social Innovation Exchange	Multiple sectors	International
Somerset Philanthropy Network	Multiple sectors	Somerset, UK
The Giving Pledge	Multiple sectors	International
United Philanthropy Forum	Multiple sectors	US
Women for Change Breakfast Club	Multiple sectors	UK
Women Moving Millions	Other - Women and girls, human rights	US
Worldwide initiative for grant-making support	Multiple sectors	International

## Appendix 3: Collecting data

The table below outlines some of the different types of data and tools for gathering information that can help a network learn.<sup>14</sup> Much of this data can be collected and organised routinely.

Type of data	Examples
<b>Context data</b> The environment in which your work takes place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary or secondary research on the cause / funding landscape</li> <li>• Interviews with experts, policymakers, those with lived experience, members</li> </ul>
<b>User data</b> The characteristics of members and others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registration information for members: this could include skills and experience, demographic information, how and why they joined the network, whether they are newly established or experienced, information on interests and support needs. This data should be captured on a CRM database, such as Salesforce, which will enable you to organise and analyse the information.</li> <li>• Annual surveys of your membership base</li> <li>• Information on partner organisations and other stakeholders. It may be useful to develop a <a href="#">network map</a> to track connections and design strategies to develop new connections.</li> </ul>
<b>Engagement data</b> The extent to which members and others engage with your network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analytics from online tools and platforms</li> <li>• Attendance data from events and activities, ideally connected with user data so you can see who is engaging and how</li> <li>• Consultations and surveys of membership</li> </ul>
<b>Feedback</b> What the network should be like for members and others?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal methods such as surveys, simple satisfaction rating systems, focus groups</li> <li>• Informal methods like social media, one-to-one conversations, suggestions boxes</li> <li>• Feedback data should be collected from anyone involved with the network, to gather a well-rounded view of the network</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes data</b> Short-term changes or benefits that members and others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative surveys can offer a sense of the extent and depth of change.</li> <li>• Qualitative methods—such as interviews and case studies—can help you understand <i>how</i> and <i>why</i> change occurs for individuals. For more in-depth qualitative methods, it can be helpful to conduct your research with a representative <a href="#">sample</a> of members.</li> </ul>
<b>Impact data</b> The long-term change that you want to achieve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact for networks is ultimately at the sector, field or system-level. Networks should monitor the state of the cause and health of the system, even if they are unable to attribute change to their activities.</li> <li>• This is the most difficult data to collect so should be done through high quality evaluations, when enough time has passed, and ideally using comparison groups.</li> </ul>

<sup>14</sup> For information on the five types of data identified here, see <https://www.thinknpc.org/blog/5-types-of-data-for-assessing-your-work-an-explainer/>

