

Open and trusting grant making

We're part of a community of flexible funders committed to open and trusting grant making. We believe it matters how we provide funding, and we want to improve practice together. As part of this we make the following eight commitments:



Foundation

Don't waste time

For open funds, we will ensure that clear, plain English guidance is published and we will be available for questions and clarifications. We will use a two-stage application system so ineligible applicants do not spend undue wasted time applying. When working with strategic partners on solicited applications, we will keep open communication with our Trustees to ensure proposals are only progressed when they are likely to succeed.

Ask relevant questions

We will always keep our questions to the minimum needed to make a decision. We will act on feedback from current and former partners to ensure our application processes are straightforward and proportionate.

Accept risk

We will work with our Trustees to agree an approach to risk that ensures we fund a range of organisations, including smaller grassroots groups that may inherently carry more risk. We accept that, even when things don't go to plan, this represents a learning opportunity rather than 'failure'. In our investments, we will seek to make further equity investments and interest-free loans to community organisations, accepting a meaningful share of risk alongside our partners.

Act with urgency

We will seek to work at a pace that works for applicants. We will publish our timelines when announcing a fund and stick to them. We will build strong relationships with our funded partners, so we can respond with urgency to any issues they may face.

Be open

We will publish our approach to funding and be open about chances of success when we launch a fund. Funds will be as targeted as possible to reduce likelihood of high volumes. We will publish reasons for rejection and give more detailed feedback wherever possible. We will continue to share all our funding data via 360Giving.

Enable flexibility

We will work with partners, supporting them to respond as flexibly as required on funded projects. We will seek to keep funding as flexible as possible and offer unrestricted funding where we can. When working in partnership with other funders, we will be clear about how we fund, and seek to influence others to also fund in flexible and responsive ways. We will set out our expectations clearly at the beginning of partnerships and not be afraid to move away if we feel our approaches cannot align.

Communicate with purpose

We will continue to be a relational funder and will invest time in building strong partnerships. We will trust our partners to know how best to deliver positive change in their area of expertise. We will make it clear to partners at the start of a funding relationship what they can expect of us, and what we will expect of them.

Be proportionate

Our reporting will always be proportionate, and we will be clear with partners exactly what we hope to learn from each fund and what information we will need from them. We will always seek to make reporting light touch and accessible.

"The Co-op Foundation is a funder with a co-operative difference. We care deeply about how our funding can empower people and we trust our partners to do what matters most. By building relationships, by being honest and open, and by learning and accepting appropriate risk, we will support our partners to make an even greater impact tackling inequality and strengthening communities."

Jamie Ward-Smith, Chair of the Co-op Foundation