



Investing in Social Change Award

Name of organisation or individual nominated

The Funding Network (TFN)

1. What need were you trying to meet? (maximum 200 words)

How did you hear about the problem, and identify the particular need?

There is a genuine need for a forum such as The Funding Network, which brings people together to donate money. Giving publicly and as a group is not a very 'British' thing to do, but it is so rewarding and can generate such a lot more leverage than giving alone. The Funding Network addresses the needs of small to medium level donors who would like to give their money away in a more effective and fun way.

The Funding Network was set up by a group of four philanthropists, from different walks of life, who were all part of another funding collaborative. They identified the need for a more informal network and environment for those who were interested in being involved in philanthropy, but didn't have the money or time to play with the big hitters of the field. Eight years later, the remit is still largely the same. The need to promote philanthropy and create a space for donors and projects to meet is still every bit as strong today, if not more so as people need ever more persuading to part with their hard earned money.

The Funding Network also meets the needs of the projects it supports. Small social change projects can have real difficulty securing funding through traditional avenues, especially if they are just starting out, so don't have a track record or legal charity status. Without start up capital, many of these projects would not be able to embark on their innovative work.

2. Why was the need so important? (maximum 200 words)

Explain what it was that made you take action, why did you care so much?

There is no shortage of people wanting to give money for a charitable cause, and there is certainly no shortage of projects in need of funding. However, there is a genuine need of a forum for these two groups to meet in an informal environment. Many small innovative projects find it difficult to get funding and spend more time chasing grants than carrying out their main activities, so the simple application process and short lead time on TFN grants makes The Funding Network a very attractive prospect for small charities and donors. TFN ensures effective and efficient allocation of grants and direct flow of information between donors and social change projects.

Nurturing and encouraging a culture of giving is vital within our society. Many workplaces have provisions for getting involved in payroll giving and volunteering,

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but it can be hard for individuals to find the space to do this. There is a need for an organisation to harness the generosity of ordinary people and show them that their contribution can make a real difference to organisations and to people's lives. Many problems can seem too big to tackle and many people feel that their donations can just be a drop in the ocean, but it is important to show them that there are ways obtain real leverage from fairly small amounts of money. As we often tell people at events, if you think you are too small to make a difference, think about spending a night in a room with a mosquito!

3. How did you meet the need? (maximum 200 words)

Explain what you actually did - resources used, people worked with etc.

The Funding Network endeavours to create social change through collective giving by bringing together like-minded people interested in social change and carefully selected small, innovative charities at special events. These projects are often start ups or unusual ideas which may find it difficult to get funding from elsewhere. The atmosphere of the events is warm and exciting. Anyone can become a member of TFN or simply attend an event to support the charities selected by TFN members. Since TFN started in 2002, TFN members and supporters have raised more than £2 million for over 250 local, national and international projects.

We are constantly trying to increase the reach and effectiveness of the organisation. We have almost doubled the number of events held annually and rolled out the concept of collective giving in this way in different areas. Our fantastic funding events are our product! We do everything we can to make sure as many people as possible know about them and feel welcome to come. Membership is only £75 per year and come with practical benefits such as getting £10 off attendance fees to events. This makes involvement in The Funding Network very accessible to all.

4. What change did you achieve? (maximum 200 words)

What happened as a result of your work, and what impact has this had?

The impact of TFN can be measured in two distinct ways: Firstly, the effects of grants on the beneficiaries of the projects funded and secondly, the impact on TFN members and supporters.

The projects supported by the members of TFN over the years are incredibly diverse, the only criteria are that they have charitable aims and are working towards some aspect of social change. The projects also tend to be fairly small scale, with turnovers below £1m, where the £5,000 average grant from TFN makes real tangible difference to the scope and reach of the organisation.

The support received by the projects is much more than just the sum of the grant. The non-financial impacts on a project that result from them pitching at an event are incredibly valuable. Many members and attendees who first come across an amazing project at a TFN event end up supporting them long after the chairs have been packed away. The project *Vision Housing* got a great new Trustee out of presenting at our event in January 2009 and after a suggestion by one of the attendees at our June event, the salary of one of the members of staff at *Reprieve* is now covered by a law firm!

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