

Evaluation Project Brief: Foundation Practice Rating (FPR)

1. Background

The Foundation Practice Rating (FPR) was established to improve practice across UK charitable foundations by assessing transparency, accountability, and diversity. As the initiative matures, there is a need to understand its effectiveness, contribution to sector change, and opportunities for refinement.

We wish to commission an evaluation of the FPR.

This brief outlines the purpose, scope, questions, and methodological approach for assessing the impact / effect(s) and value of the FPR to date.

Assessing the effects of FPR is bounded by two important factors:

- Lack of counterfactual.
- Many other factors are also at play which (might) influence foundation practices.

Therefore, the evaluation needs to be mindful of contribution vs. attribution; try to make reasonable inferences about FPR's effect (because the counterfactual cannot be observed); and avoid overclaiming (any observed changes in foundations' practices may be wholly due to FPR, partly due to FPR, or despite FPR).

2. Purpose of the Evaluation

The evaluation will identify:

- Whether and how the FPR is influencing behaviours and practices among foundations in the UK.
- The extent to which the FPR is addressing the problems it was designed to address.
- The degree of change that can reasonably be attributed to the FPR (mindful of the many other factors which influence foundations, i.e. – re contribution / attribution – FPR may be one of many contributory factors.
- How FPR is perceived by its various audiences, including other sector bodies (Association of Charitable Foundations, Beacon, Funders Together, etc) as well as those less closely aligned or positively disposed.
- What improvements could strengthen future iterations of the FPR.

The evaluation should also support strategic communications: identifying the “headline message” that could be used in press, sector commentary, or funder engagement.

3. Key Evaluation Questions

Impact

- To what extent has the FPR influenced changes in foundation behaviour or practice?
- To what extent can quantitative measures reflected in the FPR or other sources provide insights on the impact of the FPR on the target population?
- What evidence exists of movement in foundation practices across the FPR three domains (diversity, accountability, transparency)? (Obviously we have analysis of the FPR data about movement on the scores. We are here interested in other indicators of change.)
- How do foundations describe the role of the FPR in shaping their decisions or reforms?
- As far as can reasonably be determined, given the lack of counterfactual, what contribution does the FPR appear to have made, relative to other sector drivers (e.g., 360Giving, peer influence, regulatory expectations, political changes, socio-economic / geopolitical changes)?
- Some consideration of the system impacts of any above changes: the relative scale of the changes (did the FPR change the behaviours of many small foundations but have little effect on large funders in the cohort)?
- What the perceptions of the FPR by other sector stakeholders such as the Charity Commission, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, the Association of Charitable Foundations, Funders Together; and other foundations who have not been including in a cohort.
- To what degree does the operational of the FPR adhere and support its own Theory of Change?

Process

- How effective are the core mechanisms of the FPR (e.g., non-voluntary inclusion, assessment “threat”, webinars, consultation, publications (notably the annual reports of results)?
- How do foundations experience the FPR process and interactions with the FPR team?

What aspects of the initiative could be improved in future iterations?

Perception and Value

- How is the FPR perceived by:
 - Foundations within the cohort
 - Foundations outside the cohort
 - Wider sector stakeholders and potential funders
- What narratives or stories best illustrate the FPR’s influence?

4. Target Audiences for the Evaluation

The evaluation should generate insights relevant to:

1. **Wider trusts and foundations**, including those sceptical or less warm to the FPR.
2. **Regulators**, in UK jurisdictions
3. **Potential funders** considering supporting the initiative.
4. **Sector stakeholders and observers** who may wish to emulate or build on the FPR model.
5. **Academics**

5. Evaluation Approach

The note from the meeting of FPR Funders particularly interested in its evaluation (November 2023) indicated strong consensus that:

- An **RCT is inappropriate** (not least because that would probably involve gathering data about a control group, and the data-gathering is part of the intervention here).
- **Quantitative analysis could build on the FPR data series** alongside other information.
- **Narratives and human stories** are needed together with quantitative data.
- A **structured approach** combining process and impact evaluation is preferred. This should integrate qualitative and quantitative elements.

Possible Method (We are open to other approaches)

i. Analysis of FPR Ratings – using the FPR’s database of ratings and scores.

- Use rating movements as indicative (not definitive) signals of change within the target set of foundations.

Use of data /analysis from FPR’s dataset of foundation grades and scores.

ii. Impact Case Studies

A comparative set of up to 20 case studies across three groups:

	Group Description	Sample Size
A	Foundations which have been assessed in an FPR cohort	10–15
B	Foundations which have never been assessed in FPR cohort but in scope in UK Grantmaking	5–10

Group Description	Sample Size
C Foundations not in scope	Up to 8

Case studies should explore:

- Behavioural changes in FPR’s three domains
- Perceptions of the FPR as an intervention and how it is done
- External influences (where do they get their ideas of practice from? What historically has influenced their practices)
- Applicant - perspectives – drawn from funders, consultation contributors or other sources.

There may well be a segmentation of effects and attitudes amongst foundations (e.g., perhaps FPR typically makes newer foundations think/do X whereas it makes older ones think/do Y). The analysis should draw that out.

Interviews (5) with key sector stakeholder contacts such as regulators and other infrastructure bodies.

iii. Process Evaluation

- Structured sample survey of foundations to gather feedback on:
 - Experience of the FPR process
 - Perceived fairness, clarity, and usefulness
 - Suggestions for improvement
- Review of FPR mechanisms and their effectiveness.

iv. Use of Anecdotal Evidence

- Incorporate existing anecdotal impact stories as qualitative data points.

6. Inputs for the Evaluation

The evaluator will be provided with:

- **Theory of Change (v1)** and background notes, with the expectation that:
 - The rationale for the three dimensions will be further elaborated.
 - The applicant’s perspective will be more explicitly centred.
 - Mechanisms and risks will be more fully articulated.

- **Anecdotes of impact.**

7. Deliverables

1. Evaluation Framework

Including refined questions, methodology, sampling, and data collection tools.

2. Interim Findings Report

Highlighting emerging themes, early insights, and any required course corrections.

3. Final Evaluation Report

- Clear narrative of impact and contribution, which integrates:
 1. Quant data
 2. Case studies
 3. Process evaluation findings
- Recommendations for future FPR iterations
- Headline messages suitable for external communication

4. Presentation to stakeholders

Tailored to trustees, funders, and sector audiences.

8. Timeline

To be developed with the evaluator, but likely spanning **4–5 months**, allowing for recruitment, interviews, surveys, analysis, and reporting.

Proposed:

Interim outputs: October 2026

Final outputs: December 2026

9. Budget, Data Access and Contracting

Budget: The available budget for this evaluation is £40,000 inclusive of VAT.

Data access: The contractor will be provided with access to FPR data for the past 5 years from Giving Evidence (the commissioned research consultancy and co-developer). They will also be provided with other supporting documents as required and access to contacts in the funding organisations.

Contracting: The contracting body for this evaluation will be Friends Provident Foundation; the evaluation is funded by Friends Provident Foundation, John Ellerman Trust, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, and Indigo Trust.

10. Success Criteria

The evaluation will be considered successful if it:

- Provides credible, balanced, and evidence-informed insights.
- Captures both narrative and structural impacts.
- Helps refine the FPR for future cohorts.
- Supports strategic communication and funder engagement.
- Reflects the applicant's perspective of foundations.