

Foundation

Practice

Rating

Foundation Practice Rating

Evaluation briefing session – June 2026

Foundation

Practice

Rating

Purpose



To improve UK grant-making foundations' diversity, accountability & transparency.

Our method is to incentivise improvement on those three areas, by creating and publishing annually an independent assessment of foundations' practices in those three domains. We also show-case good practice.

Giving Evidence

Enabling **giving** based on sound **evidence**

Who supports the FPR

FPR is enabled by a group of UK grant-making foundations. The project is convened and funded by Friends Provident Foundation, led by Danielle Walker-Palmour, Director. Other funders are:

- Barrow Cadbury Trust
- The Robertson Trust
- John Ellerman Foundation
- Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation
- Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
- Indigo Trust
- City Bridge Foundation

The research is done by Giving Evidence.

Foundation

Practice

Rating

Who we are

The evaluation will be funded by a sub-set of the funders:

- Paul Hamlyn Foundation – Andy Curtis
- Friends Provident Foundation – Danielle Walker Palmour
- And: Indigo Trust and John Ellerman Foundation

How FPR works

- We rate UK grant-making fdns on their practices on: diversity (which includes accessibility), accountability & transparency
- The ratings have four 'bands': ABCD. A = top.
- Each foundation gets a rating on each of those three domains, plus an overall rating.
 - So they might be B (ABC)
- This is a rating, not a ranking. Everybody can be top; everybody can be bottom.
- We do this annually – each year with a fresh sample of foundations.
- Throughout, we are as objective and as neutral as possible: e.g., using other people's definitions wherever possible
- Foundations have no control over whether they are included (unless they opt-in), the sampling, research or rating
- Foundations can opt-in for a small fee if they want to be assessed but aren't otherwise included.

The design and the criteria

- We consulted with various experts, both inside & outside the voluntary sector, e.g., commercial bond ratings, the Times Higher Educational university ranking.
- Our criteria were developed from external good practice standards, to minimise subjectivity. We ran a public consultation about our proposed criteria – both before we started (2021/22), and before each subsequent year. Hence we are confident that we assess what the sector wants fdns to do.
- We defined and published our criteria, in the three domains (transparency, diversity, accountability). There are ~90 questions, of which ~50 are criteria.
 - Criteria score but questions don't score - but are useful (e.g., what is the website?)
- Many criteria one can argue into a different domain, or even into all three domains
- We also publish guidance on 'how to score well' and various helpful resources.

The data-gathering

- Our sample is 100 foundations each year:
 1. All foundations which fund the project
 2. The UK's largest five grant-making foundations by giving budget
 3. A stratified, random sample of foundations which give >£1m annually (based on UK Grantmaking's set of active 'grant-makers'. That includes community foundations). That random sample is re-drawn each year – to spread the incentive and be representative of current practice.
- We emulate a grant-seeker: so we use only public data: fdns' websites (incl. reports on there) and annual reports from the regulator
- Each foundation is researched by two researchers independently. Data are compared by a third person and discrepancies resolved.
- We gather data about each foundation on each question & each criterion. Where a criterion is not applicable to some fdn, the fdn is exempted from that criterion, e.g., publishing pay gap data.
- Each included foundation has three weeks to check the accuracy of its data
- Once we have a solid data set, we turn the data into ratings: one for each domain and one overall rating.

Foundation

Practice

Rating

Timings

- We announced the project in May 2021.
- Each year, we publish the criteria before we start the research. The research normally happens in August / September. Foundations are sent the data about themselves to review in Oct /Nov. We publish the findings the following March.

Some (pretty representative) fdn reactions to Year Three

We recognise there's so much we're doing that we haven't made visible – but this is an action for us to take away.

FPR is proving useful when we are thinking about transparency. It is not just a case of “compliance” but it helps thinking about what we post and how we frame our output or our communication.

We are now exploring how this information can be provided to potential applicants in our funding guidelines and on our website

I completely understand your comment on diversity and am very grateful for highlighting this as an opportunity for improvement. We are in the process of developing a new website and your review is very helpful

Generally we think most of it is pretty fair and it gives us some easy pointers for improvement

Some fdns have used our criteria for self-assessment – which they can, though they were never envisaged as such.

Foundation

Practice

Rating

Evaluation: Purpose

- Is the FPR changing the behaviours of UK funders?
- Is it addressing the issues it was designed to tackle?
- Is there any attributable effects of the FPR?
- How is the FPR perceived amongst key stakeholders?
- What changes might improve the impact of the FPR based on the feedback collected?
- Funders want to improve our practice and the FPR – we are truly curious about how.

Foundation

Practice

Rating

Q & A

Foundation

Practice

Rating

More information

foundationpracticrating.org.uk

linkedin.com/showcase/foundation-practice-rating/

bsky.app/profile/fpracticrating.bsky.social

Giving Evidence

Enabling **giving** based on sound **evidence**