



Environmental Funders Network

STRATEGY 2020

EFN's mission and values

The EFN's mission is to grow and nurture ambitious and effective environmental philanthropy that unlocks and increases the levels of financial and non-financial giving to environmental causes.

EFN aspires to uphold its values in all that it does: inclusiveness, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability, and social and environmental responsibility.

Our vision for 2040

Our planet and all who share it are thriving and in balance. As individuals, communities and nations, we have worked together not only to survive and cope with the environmental damage and losses we wrought in previous generations, but to use that challenge to transform our ways of being for the benefit of all. A commitment to justice, equity, health, (bio)diversity, creativity and life underpin our economic, social and governance systems. Funders have helped usher in this era as quickly and justly as possible through their strategic, catalytic and collaborative grantmaking, convening, investing and advocacy.

Background

EFN was established in 2003 to better connect UK-based environmental funders, on the principle that a more informed, connected funding sector with a better sense of the context of its work would be more effective in its giving and ultimately in accomplishing environmental goals.

At the first EFN lunch, the founders gathered 12 people around the table, representing six trusts - roughly the extent of their contacts in the sector at the time. Last year, staff and trustees from 159 different trusts and foundations participated in the network's events, along with around 100 high-level individual donors to environmental causes. The network continues to grow apace, with more new funders joining in 2019 than ever before.

EFN is known as the go-to place and first port-of-call for environmental philanthropists in the UK. Ours is a supportive network where funders with a variety of ideas and approaches to tackling the challenges of our time can connect and find strength.

Members have provided feedback on the network that we think highlights our success in manifesting our values of inclusiveness, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability, and social and environmental responsibility – such as:

'The thematic meetings that EFN organise are invaluable in highlighting issues that we could get involved in as a funder, and are also great for opening up potential areas of collaboration with other funders. There is a wealth of knowledge and insights at EFN, and it's proved extremely useful to me.'

'EFN is so useful – just incredibly useful for meeting other funders, finding proposals from different organisations, etc.'

'In my opinion EFN is likely to be the most effective charitable umbrella group in the U.K.'

'It's good to see a network that really works and whose events really do change my thinking and behaviour.'

'I have been busy speaking & meeting with most of the people you suggested, which has been incredibly helpful, thank you. We are now working quite closely with [the foundation you suggested we connect with] and are planning to align our giving where our strategies overlap – so this is a really significant step forwards for our strategy, thank you again for connecting us.'

'Joining EFN last year was one of the best things I did... Climate breakdown and biodiversity loss are the two key threats to all life on this planet...I think people are waking up to this in no small part thanks to EFN.'

Until April 2015, EFN relied on grants from foundations that participated in the network. In April 2015, we began to ask members for an annual contribution towards our running cost; that call for contributions now brings in around £100,000 a year.

EFN's strategic priorities, objectives and activities

EFN occupies a unique niche within the environment sector; we are the only UK organisation convening and networking environmental funders, and consequently we have a bird's-eye view of the sector overall. As one fundraiser put it:

'EFN are uniquely placed to deliver this kind of support. You are representative of funders and insightful about their thinking, but you are not funders. This enables us fundraisers to feel confident in speaking honestly and openly, and without feeling in competition with each other.'

Given this perspective we hold, and our ambitious vision and mission going forward, our three areas of focus are:

PRIORITY ONE

We will transform the effectiveness of environmental philanthropy

PRIORITY TWO

We will grow and nurture impactful environmental philanthropy

PRIORITY THREE

We will champion the work of the environment sector, supporting it to meet the challenges and opportunities it faces

PRIORITY ONE

We will transform the effectiveness of environmental philanthropy

Our research indicates remarkably low levels of funding for environmental causes from UK-based charitable trusts and foundations; with total amounts hovering between £105-115 million per year for the ten years for which we have been collecting data (up to 2016). Given such low levels of funding, we feel that every pound must be spent as effectively as possible. We do this by: keeping funders up-to-date on key issues and approaches; fostering relationships between funders to increase the possibility of useful collaborations; introducing them to effective actors (NGOs and otherwise); and producing informative publications, including research that provides funders with otherwise inaccessible insights into the funding landscape.

We will achieve this by:

Educating funders - exposing them to issues, approaches, grantees.

This means:

- Organising and convening opportunities in person and digitally for funders to learn about issues and approaches on a periodic and ad hoc basis that can inform their strategies and grantmaking.
- Introducing funders to potential organisations they could fund and support.
- Researching key issues experienced in the sector and sharing these through blogs, publications and guides.

Supporting and fostering collaboration.

This means:

- Fostering stronger relationships between funders through regular convening events.
- Creating an active enough network that empowers philanthropists, trusts and foundations to step forward and take on leadership responsibilities for particular issues.
- Providing examples of the value of collaboration and good grant craft
- Engaging with different parts of the philanthropic community to encourage intersectional approaches to key environmental challenges.

Providing research into the grantmaking landscape.

This means:

- Developing and sharing in a transparent and accessible way, i.e. through an online database, a stronger understanding of how the environmental grants market functions by: 1) revealing trends and patterns in environmental giving and highlighting gaps, and 2) revealing resource allocation within the environmental sector and highlighting gaps.
- Fostering a stronger understanding of how the environmental movement functions, in terms of its priorities, strategies and skills.

PRIORITY TWO

We will grow and nurture impactful environmental philanthropy

Given the low levels of funding for environmental causes, we work hard to attract and cultivate new donors for environmental causes, aiming to increase total giving levels from £105 million per year (in 2016, the latest year for which we have data) to £1 billion per year by 2025. (We set this target according to what we feel the scale of the need is; we think it is a necessary level of ambition and will strive hard to get the sector there.) Our work 'growing the pie' is aimed at very wealthy individual donors and trusts and foundations that do not currently support environmental causes but, we think, could, because of their overall means and/or because of the overlap between environmental issues and their mission. Our work in this area includes: designing events and publications that inspire and encourage environmental philanthropy; joining the dots between environmental causes and other issues of concern; and encouraging peer-to-peer knowledge exchange. We also partner with and support intermediaries, such as philanthropy and wealth advisers.

We will achieve this by:

Celebrating and promoting environmental philanthropy.

This means:

- Raising the profile of and need for environmental philanthropy across different forms of media.
- Encouraging new donors to support environmental causes at scale, in particular: major trusts and foundations, families on the Rich List, 'Next Generation' wealth holders, and family offices, through summits, events, networks and seminars.
- Supporting existing funders to feel confident in increasing the amounts of funding they give to environmental causes.
- Supporting environmental fundraisers to be more collaborative and effective, through initiatives such as the Green Fundraisers Forum.
- Celebrating and promoting best practice environmental philanthropy across our networks.

PRIORITY THREE

We will champion the work of the environment sector, supporting it to meet the challenges and opportunities it faces

This, our third and most recent strand of work, began with two research studies surveying the chief executives of UK environmental organisations. Those studies - *Passionate Collaboration?* and *What the Green Groups Said* - took the pulse of the UK's environment sector while painting a picture of its resources. The findings produced new insights into the environment sector, such as its needs around collaboration and communications. To respond to these findings, we have been coordinating funders and the sector to address issues such as: fostering more collaboration in the sector (including a retreat for sector leaders funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation); strengthening the sector's communications and framing skills through workshops and webinars; and creating a Rapid Response Fund that provides quickly accessible funds through which the sector can respond to unexpected crises and opportunities.

We will achieve this by:

Strengthening and supporting the environment sector.

This means:

- Providing digital and face-to-face programming based on the sector's needs.
- Improving framing and communications of challenges and opportunities experienced by the sector.
- Fostering greater levels of collaboration and joined up thinking, particularly among fundraisers.
- Supporting the improved agility and responsiveness of the sector.
- Encouraging efforts to improve the sector's levels of equity, diversity and inclusion.

What does success look like?

In order to deliver this strategy successfully, EFN must ensure that it manages its own internal operational processes effectively. Therefore, in the coming year we will prioritise:

- Raising at least £100,000 in membership contributions (one-third of overall income); whilst also maintaining our funding relationships with the following Trusts and Foundations: Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, John Ellerman Foundation, Arcadia Fund, Mark Leonard Trust, Waterloo Foundation and William Grant Foundation.
- Hiring a part-time EFN Scotland coordinator and a full- (or nearly full-) time programme coordinator.
- Working to ensure that EFN's governance and staff culture is as inclusive as possible to a broad diversity of people.
- Working to ensure EFN's staff have the skills and support necessary to accomplish our goals
- Ensuring we have an effective governance structure, and a dynamic and representative Trustee board with the necessary skills and experience to achieve this.
- Ensuring full statutory compliance, with the Charity Commission, tax authorities, and others, including through the preparation and timely submission of an annual report.
- Purchasing and establishing a new database for tracking our members, donors, partners and NGO programme participants

Ultimately, our goal is to be completely transparent and accountable in the delivery of this strategy. As an organisation we are committed to tracking quantitative data relating to our membership numbers and the number of events, publications, seminars, programme etc. that we deliver and how many people connect with these. However, alongside the numbers, we are keen to share with you the difference we are making through written feedback from our members and case studies that outline in more detail the work that we are doing.

Growing the environmental funding pot from £105 million in 2016 to £1 billion by 2025 is necessarily ambitious given the extent of the environmental challenges that exist right now. We look forward to working with you to achieve our vision of a sustainable and thriving planet in 2040, where through networks like EFN, individuals, communities and nations can come together to find the solutions we so urgently need.