

Open and trusting grant-making progress report



CORRA
FOUNDATION
voice • power • change

Our commitment to continually improving the way we work

Introduction

At Corra we're committed to being the best grant maker we can be. Supportive relationships, trust and accessibility are a key part of our 'Ways of Working'. Insights from the last two years demonstrate that funders can offer increased flexibility by placing more trust in the organisations they support. As well as this there has been increased transparency in funder governance and processes. We are fully committed to this and have been considering key principles and practices.¹

We hold ourselves accountable by:

- Annually asking our applicants and grantholders about their experience of Corra.
- Making public commitments, including the eight principles outlined in [IVAR UK - Open and Trusting Grant-Making](#) (see Appendix 1).

This report offers an update on progress made over the last year towards open and trusting grant-making. It highlights changes we have made, and future plans to help improve the experience for applicants and grantholders, to ensure we are supportive to the needs of people we seek to serve.

¹ Corra takes a steer on funding best practice from applicants and fellow funders. We have made commitments against the eight principles as part of [IVAR UK - Open and Trusting Grant-Making](#) and are making improvements based on the Association of Charitable Foundation's pillars of practice [Stronger Foundations \(acf.org.uk\)](#).

Improvements made last year

Based on findings from the 2020 customer experience survey we committed to the following:



Offering more one-to-one support for applicants.

554 one-to-one advice sessions delivered across 12 funding programmes (In 2019 delivered circa 283 funding advice sessions).



Providing copies of completed application forms.

Copies of completed forms are now automatically sent to all applicants.



Making grant payments more quickly.

76% of payments were made within 10 days of grant requirements being met.



Providing applicants with information on other funding opportunities.

Over 8,000 followers on social media. All open funding opportunities promoted regularly on our social media accounts.

Applying to Corra

In 2021, nearly 1,300 organisations made 2015 applications to 24 programmes delivered by Corra. We reached more community led groups. We committed to maintaining efforts to offer quick turnarounds on decisions, particularly for applicants seeking grants of less than £3,000. On average Corra took 39 days between receiving an application and a decision being made. For applicants accessing funds through our small grants programmes it was an average of 24 days.

As part of our commitment to open and trusting grant-making, all applications to Comic Relief #ShiftThePower, Scottish Government National Drugs Mission Funding Programme, Henry Duncan Project Grants, Partnership Drugs Initiative and The Promise Partnership are reviewed by panels who bring a breadth of knowledge and lived expertise to the decision-making process.

Our response to feedback on the application process

We received 201 responses to our customer experience survey. While the findings show that most people found the application process fairly easy, we also identified areas for improvement.

↑ 94% of respondents felt that Corra understood the context and priorities of their organisation. This was up from last year (78%).

↑ 96% of people who had accessed application support from Corra found it helpful. This was up from last year (81%).

↑ 63% of respondents felt that the application form was either very easy or easy to complete. This was up from last year (54%).

↓ 81% of people felt the application material was either extremely easy or very easy to understand. This is down from last year (87% in 2020).

It is important to us that we help every applicant make the best possible application they can. We understand accessing key information about a fund is important.

We are committed to updating our website to ensure information is accessible and easy to follow for everyone. This will include:

- A simple checker for each programme to see if the organisation is eligible for the fund.
- Information on how decisions are made for every programme.
- Advising applicants of what to expect if they receive a grant, including monitoring requirements.

Over the last year Corra has reached more, and a more diverse range of, community led organisations. Many of these organisations have never applied to funders before. Listening to community groups has highlighted the different barriers people may face when completing an application form.

We are working to ensure all our forms and guidance:

- Are written in plain English.
- Clearly explain what we are looking for and how we will use the information.
- Provide details of how to access alternative formats and assistance (e.g. telephone call with a Grants Advisor).

Receiving a decision from Corra

We understand that how we communicate decisions is important. It has to be clear and provide applicants with support whether successful or unsuccessful. At Corra we publish all the grants on our website and through [360Giving GrantNav](#).

Organisations applying to the Enabling Neighbourhoods and Communities Fund were most likely to be successful (81%), while other funds had a lower success rate. Henry Duncan Grants had the lowest success rate (35%). Where funding programmes offer multi-year, unrestricted funding we see greater demand. We tell applicants about the overall size of the fund, indication of grant size and where possible previous success rates.

A key element for Corra is to make it easy for people to speak to us if they have been unsuccessful. We want to make sure groups can discuss the decision with us and know that we offer additional advice for future applications. In 2021 in delivering Comic Relief #ShiftThePower programme we spoke with around 30 organisations, that were not funded, in order to offer additional feedback.



Our response to feedback on the decision-making process

From the 201 responses received to our customer experience survey, 84% of respondents had received a grant.

↑ 96% of respondents felt that the information in their grant offer letter was either extremely clear/very clear. This was up from last year (85%).

↓ 50% of people said they received feedback on their application. This is down from last year (52%).

↑ 94% of respondents who said they received feedback on their application said they would find it helpful for future applications. This was up from last year (82%).

We commit to providing feedback to all applicants and acknowledge that over the last two years we haven't always done this. We know how valuable feedback is and we want to ensure this feels proportionate and accessible.

We have a commitment to offer feedback to all applicants. We will work to ensure:

- We tell you why your application was successful or unsuccessful.
- We offer additional advice or guidance to help with future applications.
- Our contact details are visible in decision emails/letters so you can speak to us for additional feedback.

Receiving a grant

At Corra we're striving to offer flexible and long-term funding whenever we can. We know how important it is to offer grants that cover core costs and support organisations to plan for the future. In 2021 we:

- Distributed 45% of funding to cover core costs².
- Made 234 new multi-year grants.



Corra's Henry Duncan Grants follows the open and trusting grant-making principles.

- In 2021 18 organisations received multi-year, unrestricted funding.
- 16 organisations received funding through Corra's first open fund focused on addressing the impacts of racial inequity on mental health.

As part of our commitment to open and trusting grant-making all applicants to the Enabling Neighbourhood and Communities Fund, STV Community Grants were able to spend the money in ways that best suited their needs with no requirements for budgets or lengthy details on how grants would be monitored.



We're committed to making funding as flexible as possible enabling organisations to make the best use of their time and the grant. However, we are aware that this isn't always clear in our decision emails. This can feel overwhelming and place more bureaucracy on organisations rather than less. We are working hard to make our terms and conditions clear and concise, including what is expected in relation to reporting.

We will work to ensure we:

- Communicate about how grants can be spent and when they need to be spent by.
- Detail how and when we will make payments to grant holders.
- Explain terms such as 'unrestricted' or 'core costs'.
- Provide details on any monitoring requirements.

² The majority of core cost funding was distributed through the Scottish Government's Children, Young People and Families Early Intervention fund.

Reporting to Corra

In 2021, Corra reviewed 521 progress reports. The organisations shared insights from their work and described how they spent their grant.

- Groups supported ranged from intensive support to a few, to people connecting with hundreds of people through regular social connections or offering advice.
- Over half the organisations reported they were on track in delivering their plans.

As part of our commitment to open and trusting grant-making, we piloted group monitoring sessions with organisations funded through The Promise Partnership. The space was created for people to share the progress they had made, and the opportunities and challenges they faced. The insights from the sessions will form part of the overall measurement and progress of this programme.



Our response to feedback on reporting

From the 201 responses to our customer experience survey about a third of people had completed a progress report in the last year.

↑ 93% of respondents felt that the reporting requirements were either extremely clear or very clear. This was up from last year (71%).

↑ 85% of respondents who completed a reporting template felt it was either extremely easy or very easy to complete. This was up from last year (62%).

↓ 60% of respondents said that we gave them enough time to prepare their report. This is down from last year (70%).

↑ 57% of respondents said the reporting felt proportionate to the size of the grant. This was up from last year (41%).

We know that reporting templates can be helpful, and we will continue to offer these as a resource for all our funding programmes. We are committed to making all our reporting requirements less bureaucratic including when and how often we ask groups to report.

To enable people to spend more time delivering and less time reporting we will continue to:

- Follow [Harmonising Reporting](#) principles.
- Give at least six weeks' notice of any requests for monitoring information.
- Promote and encourage the acceptance and sharing of monitoring reports, so organisations only produce one report.

Our commitment for 2022/2023

We will continue to ensure our processes are proportionate, streamlined and equitable. Over the course of 2022 we plan to:



Write all our forms and communications in plain English. We will explain why we ask the questions and how we use the information.



Provide clear criteria, regular reminders of key dates and tailored pre-application support. All information will be made easily accessible on our website with the option to access alternative formats.



Acknowledge all applications and monitoring reports and provide straightforward feedback.



Ensure payments are made within ten working days of receipt of grant conditions being met.



Incorporate the lessons from our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work to ensure grant-making processes are accessible and equitable to all.

Our commitment to funding with a racial justice lens

As part of our commitment to open and trusting grant-making we addressed an identified gap in the people we are seeking to reach. The Henry Duncan Project Grants took a racial justice lens in targeting support to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. Learn more about what we did in the [Henry Duncan Project Grant Insight Briefing](#).

We are committed to:

- Continuing to ring-fence funds through our 2022 Henry Duncan Grants for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.
- Building on the learning from Henry Duncan Grants, as well as other programmes like the Equity Programme, and taking actions to embed racial justice throughout our work.
- Supporting Corra staff to ensure our criteria and materials support equity in access to funding.
- Whenever possible involving people with lived expertise in the design and decision making of funding programmes.
- Testing changes to our processes, for example alternatives to application forms and 'monitoring conversations' instead of lengthy written reports.

Appendix 1 provides an update on our progress against the eight principles of open and trusting grant-making.

Find out more about the grants made last year in [Corra's Annual Impact Summary 2021](#).

Appendix 1

Open and Trusting Grant-Making

Progress against principles of open and trusting grant-making

IVAR's Open and Trusting Grant-Making established eight principles that were co-produced with charities and funders. The principles look at how funders manage grants and relationships in a way that reflects funders' confidence in, and respect for, the organisations they fund.

The table below provides our own evaluation of progress against the statements Corra made against each principle and how we are striving to maintain or improve this.

KEY: ● We are exceeding. ● We are making good progress. ● We have reverted or making limited progress.

What we said	Our rating	Where we are and what next
1. We will not waste their time – we will explain our funding priorities clearly; we will be open and transparent about all our requirements and exclusions.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to make sure that application guidelines and priorities are written in plain English and accompanied by easy read versions, where appropriate. Ask people every year if we have got it right. Continue to make sure that the team is available and happy to discuss any queries or questions about any of the funding programmes Corra runs. Offer application information in different formats, for example a short video is available for the Henry Duncan Grants criteria. Whenever appropriate to do so, offer bespoke support to applicants e.g. if an applicant needs additional help to complete the form due to disability or language barriers and explore relevant formats (e.g. alternative languages). 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploring the possibilities of short video application forms on some funding programmes (Promise Partnership). Looking to expand tailored support to meet the diversity of applicants following one to one sessions provided through Henry Duncan Project Grants.
2. We will only ask relevant questions – we will only collect information that we must have to make funding decisions; we will test our application forms rigorously to make sure our questions are clear and do not overlap.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to conduct an annual customer experience survey and publish the findings, highlighting what changes we have made to forms and processes. Continue to ensure the information asked for in application forms is proportionate to the size of the grant. When delivering funds on behalf of others, discuss good practice in relation to the content of application forms, and make recommendations. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to adapt our materials based on feedback from our customer experience survey. Working with partners to embed good practice on proportionate application forms (e.g. Scottish Government's Winter Support Fund).

What we said	Our rating	Where we are and what next
3. We will accept our share of risk – we will be realistic about how much assurance applicants can reasonably give us; we will clearly explain how we assess risk when we make our funding decisions.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure risk measures are proportionate to the size of the grant. • Conclude the reviewing of our risk policy and publish it on our website. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small grant application forms no longer ask detailed finance or governance questions. • Working with our finance team to develop clear guidance on bank accounts. • Our risk policy will be published on our website this year.
4. We will act with urgency – we will seek to work at a pace that meets the needs of applicants; we will publish and stick to our timetables; we will make our decisions as quickly as possible.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work to a rolling calendar of activity to ensure efficiency and publish the timelines for all funding programmes. • Where decisions are outwith our control (managing funds on behalf of others), we will work to agree timelines that are in the best interest of prospective applicants. • Aim to give a decision within four weeks for applicants seeking less than £2,000. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% of applications for less than £2,000 received a decision within four weeks (24 working days), 77% within 30 days. • Continue to work with partners to share good practice, promoting at least eight weeks for development of proposals for larger grants.
5. We will be transparent about our decisions – we will give feedback; we will analyse and publish success rates and reasons for rejection; we will share our data.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide tailored individual feedback on the majority of funding programmes. • Continue to publish our grant information on 360 Giving. • Continue to publish an annual impact report that includes application and grant analysis. • Commit to carrying out more detailed analysis on the diversity and equity of grant distribution and publishing this. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will publish our first Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) progress report. • 2021 Impact report provides information on applications and successful grants made to organisations led by people with lived expertise.

What we said	Our rating	Where we are and what next
6. We will enable them to respond flexibly to changing priorities and needs – we will give unrestricted funding; if we can't, we will make our funding as flexible as possible.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide unrestricted funds whenever possible through the Henry Duncan Grants programme. • Not restrict funding to a specific item, if project funds are requested being clear that the grant can be used for any aspect of the cost to deliver the project, including overheads. • Aim to offer unrestricted grants in the majority of our funding programmes within the next five years. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have increased opportunities for small grants to have funding based on organisations needs. • All Henry Duncan organisational grants now offer unrestricted, multi-year funding.
7. We will be clear about our relationship from the start – we will be realistic about time commitments; we will ensure that our contact is positive and purposeful.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim to build relationships based on respect and trust. • Recognise organisational expertise and not interfere. • Continue to regularly ask applicants about their needs and offer support they would find helpful. • Continue to review grant offer letters to ensure all grant holders are aware of reporting requirements, type of relationship, time commitment and support offer available. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building offer will be relevant and proportionate to the needs of grant holders and applicants. • We are reviewing our grant offer letters based on the feedback from our 2021 customer experience survey.
8. We will commit to light touch reporting – we will ensure that our formal reporting requirements are well understood, proportionate and meaningful.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wherever possible, accept reports produced for other funders. • Aim to provide optional reporting templates that are proportionate to the size of the grant for all our funds by the end of 2021. • Make sure that reporting templates are written in plain English, and whenever possible offer tick box options for monitoring and accountability purposes. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will look to reduce the frequency of reporting.

About Corra Foundation

Corra Foundation exists to make a difference to the lives of people and communities. It works with others to encourage positive change, opportunity, fairness and growth of aspirations which improve quality of life. Corra wants to see a society in which people create positive change and enjoy fulfilling lives.

In 2020 Corra launched a ten-year strategy. It is long term because making a difference on the big challenges will take time. At its heart is the strong belief that when people find their voice, they unlock the power to make change happen.

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