

Funders Together: Corporate Social Impact Investment Network

This proposal seeks funding from Access to establish a Corporate Social Impact Investment Network (CSIIN) as a two-year pilot. The network will bring together corporates that are already engaging in, or are interested in developing, social impact investment programmes as part of their philanthropic or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activity.

1. Context

Interest in social impact investing is growing among UK corporates as a way to extend the reach of traditional grantmaking and CSR. However, activity remains limited and uneven.

A recent research report commissioned by the Macquarie Group Foundation, "[Driving Impact: Unlocking Corporate Social Impact Investment in the UK](#)", found that while many corporates are interested in impact investing, most engagement to date has focused on investments that seek market-rate returns. The report highlights a significant gap in the use of impact-first and concessionary capital - including catalytic, first-loss and grant-linked approaches - that are often most effective in supporting social purpose organisations and developing the social investment market.

The report concluded that trusted, sector-led collaboration and practical learning are essential if corporates are to move from interest to action and put more funding into social impact investing. The Office for the Impact Economy is keen to engage, and sector organisations including the Impact Investing Institute, New Philanthropy Capital, the Association of Charitable Foundations and Impact Europe have expressed support.

2. The proposal

The proposal is to establish a Corporate Social Impact Investment Network, hosted by Funders Together and convened by Gail Cunningham, author of the *Driving Impact* report.

The report development was supported by an Advisory Group chaired by Macquarie Group Foundation including Bank of America, A&O Shearman, Better Society Capital, the City of London Corporation (observer), [Funders Together](#), UnLtd and others. This group is keen to take forward the report recommendations.

The network will provide a trusted space for corporates to:

- build understanding of impact-first and concessionary investment approaches
- learn from peers and real-world examples
- share challenges and practical solutions
- collaborate on common barriers that cannot be addressed by organisations acting alone

The network will meet quarterly (in-person or hybrid) supported by smaller thematic workstreams. It will focus on enabling better-informed, impact-led corporate participation in social investment.

Funders Together will provide fiscal and project hosting, communications and network support, and learning expertise. [Funders Together](#) is a national cross-sector infrastructure body that brings together London Funders, Collaboration Circle, 360Giving, the Place Based Giving Resource Hub and others.

Gail Cunningham will convene the network as a consultant to Funders Together, drawing on her experience running the Association of Charitable Foundation's Social Impact Investors Group, advising the Environmental Funders Network's Environmental Impact Investing Group, and working across legal and regulatory frameworks relevant to corporate social investment.

3. Budget and costs

Funders Together is seeking a £50,000 match funding contribution from Access, with total costs expected to be £90,000-£120,000 over two years.

Overall costs will cover:

- Network convening and coordination
- Facilitation of meetings and workstreams
- Communications and shared learning resources
- Programme review and sustainability planning
- Hosting and administrative support provided by Funders Together

Value for money is delivered through:

- Leverage: Relatively modest coordination cost aims to unlock much larger amounts of private capital for social impact investing.
- Match funding: Three organisations including the Macquarie Group Foundation have indicated an intention to support the pilot through their corporate foundations and philanthropy teams. These corporate contributions should result in a minimum of £40,000, with an intention to raise an additional £10,000 during the first year of the pilot towards the costs of Year 2.
- Volunteer input: Advisory Group members contribute their time pro-bono
- Hosted events: Many network meetings are expected to be hosted by corporates, reducing venue costs.

4. Key outputs

Across the two-year pilot, the proposal aims to deliver:

- **A functioning corporate network**, with:
 - at least 8 network events (including launch)
 - 20+ corporates attending each event on average
 - 40+ organisations engaged through a newsletter and shared communications
- **Improved learning and collaboration**, evidenced by:
 - corporates reporting increased understanding of social impact investing
 - new peer relationships and collaborations forming
- **3-5 focused workstreams**, addressing key short- and long-term barriers identified through the research and network discussions
- **Shared learning resources**, including signposting, templates, and case studies
- **A sustainability plan**, setting out funding options (such as membership fees) to support the network beyond the pilot

5. Key outcomes

In the short to medium term, the project aims to:

- Increase confidence and capability among corporates to use social impact investing tools
- Reduce practical and perceived barriers to participation
- Build a trusted community of practice around impact-first and catalytic investment
- Enable more informed and coordinated activity across the sector

In terms of unlocking new funding, the proposal targets:

- At least three new corporates making social impact investments or associated grants during the pilot
- £1 million or more of new impact-focused capital committed by the end of 2028
- A longer-term ambition of £3 million+ in new catalytic and impact-first investments by year five, assuming the network becomes sustainable

Overall, the proposal aims to support more capital reaching social purpose organisations, improve the quality of corporate engagement in social investment, and contribute to a healthier and more effective social investment ecosystem.