

Benefacts Stakeholders Forum

Terms of Reference

July 2016

Introduction

Benefacts is a new social enterprise that has set out to transform the accessibility and transparency of Irish nonprofits.

Benefacts gathers and re-uses data from a variety of regulatory sources, and publishes extracts on a free searchable public website, updated daily. The kinds of organisations listed include charities, NGOs, sports bodies, schools, religious entities, philanthropic organisations and many more besides.

Nonprofits don't need to take any action to be included in the Benefacts Database of Irish Nonprofits since they have already placed information in the public domain by providing it to regulatory authorities (including the Companies Registration Office, the Charities Regulator, Revenue and others).

The Database is a unique and growing source of directory, governance and financial information for and about the sector, with 18,600 entities at July 2016, likely to grow to 20,000 by year-end. Extracts are published on benefacts.ie, a searchable free public website which also allows users to explore the sector at large or its twelve component sub-sectors.

Funding

Benefacts' programme 2015-2017 is co-funded by government and philanthropies. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) has provided a grant over three years of €1.95m, and the Atlantic Philanthropies and the Ireland Funds together are providing a combined total of €1.8m.

Governance

Benefacts is an autonomous not-for-profit company, incorporated as a company limited by guarantee. See our constitution [here](#). The Managing Director and founder is Patricia Quinn. The other Directors are Rory Coveney, Bernie Cullinan, Bob Ottenhoff (US), Brian Sheehan, Philip Smith (UK). All Directors serve in a voluntary capacity.

Stakeholding accountabilities

Benefacts reports regularly to an advisory board chaired by a senior official of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The members of this group – which meets about six times per year – are drawn from the public and private funders as well as the government departments and agencies that have an active interest in the project.

In addition, an independently-chaired **Stakeholders Forum** provides robust feedback and insights into the potential impacts of Benefacts on the nonprofit sector. This group also meets about every eight weeks, and is chaired by an independent sector leader (who is appointed by the Benefacts Board).

Stakeholders Forum

Members

The Benefacts Stakeholders Forum has at least 8 and no more than 12 members who are broadly representative of the stakeholding interests outlined below. Members serve for a term of one year and for no more than two consecutive terms.

Role

The role of the Forum is to assist the company in ensuring that the deployment of the Benefacts Database of Irish Nonprofits serves the public interest.

Purpose

The Stakeholders Forum provides Benefacts with a means whereby leaders in the sector and in civil society more generally are involved in active dialogue with the company about the ways in which it pursues its mission to enhance the accessibility and transparency of Irish nonprofits.

The first members of the Forum were nominated by the Benefacts Board in 2015. After 12 months, following the launch of benefacts.ie, the company is now inviting people to put their names forward for participation in the work of the Forum.

Selection

A committee of the Benefacts Board will meet in the first week of September to review these names (including people who served on the forum in 2015/16) and confirm the invitation to serve for 12 months September 2016/17.

Participation

Membership of the Stakeholder Forum is voluntary (unpaid) and is non-transferable; while nominees of organisations may be seen as having a representative function, their participation is personal

Forum members serve at the invitation of the Board; if insufficient numbers or ranges of people put themselves forward, the Board will co-opt individuals, in consultation with the Forum Chairperson

Stakeholders Forum Competencies

Members of the Forum are selected by the Benefacts Board so as to achieve a spread of knowledge and experience representative of stakeholding interests in the project, with at members drawn from each of the interests summarised overleaf

- Charities, foundations, religious or community bodies and their umbrella/representative bodies
- Representatives of civil society organisations more generally including non-charities (e.g. sports bodies, chambers of commerce, trades unions)
- Nonprofits or individuals interested in civil society engagement in public policy including transparency, open government and public advocacy
- Academics, analysts and journalists
- Professional service providers and nonprofit sector intermediaries

General

- Meetings of the Stakeholders Forum normally take place in Dublin either during or outside of office hours according to the preference of its members
- Agenda and other papers are issued on behalf of the Forum's Chairman; administrative supports are provided by the company secretary of Benefacts
- The Forum meets at regular intervals, as determined by the Chairman and members
- The Forum is advisory and does not have management responsibility for the project, its staff or its finances
- The Chairman of the Forum will meet at least twice a year with the Board of the company, and on other occasions as s/he and/or the Board consider necessary to assist the successful realisation of the project's goals.