

THINK BIG, GET SMART:

A Data-Driven Approach to Social Change


InnovationLab



ourcommunity.com.au

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Our vision

Our Community's founding aim in 2000 was to build stronger communities through stronger community organisations. We have done this by creating useful online tools and capacity building education and training at a price even the smallest not-for-profit groups can afford.

We've also worked to keep the money moving, creating smarter grantmaking methods and tools, and a commission-free online donations platform. Billions of dollars are now moving into the not-for-profit sector more efficiently through our grants administration tool (SmartyGrants), while more than \$12 million per year is flowing from individual donations to good causes through GiveNow.

By forging partnerships with business, government and philanthropy we've accelerated our impact and increased our reach beyond our home zone of Australia. We're now servicing grantmakers in 46 countries around the world.

Now there is a new currency that is powering social reform. Data is reshaping our world. New tools allow us to collect, distil, understand and act on data like never before, hastening the pace of change. We want to make sure the social sector can grasp the possibilities presented by these new tools.

This brochure outlines some of the key initiatives that Our Community will use to propel the social sector into a new data era.

Our Community's data initiatives are seeded and driven by our Innovation Lab, with input from across the Our Community group.

For updates, visit www.ourcommunity.com.au/innovationlab.

Our values

The work of Our Community's Innovation Lab is guided by the principles outlined below, as well as the Our Community group's Manifesto.

DATA IS MERELY A MEANS TO AN END

- **Data is valuable.** Data should be seen as a community resource that can be used to inform decision-making and thereby create social good.
- **People matter.** Data without context, expertise and people-centred values is worse than useless. Data should support and inform decisions; not dictate them.
- **Useful beats interesting.** Every time.

CONTEXT MATTERS

- **Stories count.** Numbers need words; words need numbers. There is almost always a place for both.
- **Learning is better than punishing.** Transparency and accountability should be driven by a desire to inform and progress, not shame, reprimand and punish.
- **As open as you like.** We balance our enthusiasm for open data with our belief in an organisation's right to learn in private.

WE MUST LOWER THE BARRIERS TO ENTRY

- **Access is imperative.** Small organisations can create big impacts if they have access to the right knowledge and tools. Giving good organisations with small budgets access to data resources creates opportunities that can be reaped by society as a whole.

- **To scale it must be simple.** We have a responsibility to create tools that are simple enough for anyone to use.
- **Data literacy is fundamental.** Basic data language and concepts need to be understood by all people, regardless of age, sector and role.

WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

- **None of us is as smart as all of us.** Individuals and organisations that work in silos limit their progress and are doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past. We look for opportunities around the world to collaborate and share what works.
- **Sector-based silos need to come down.** Not-for-profits do not have a monopoly on creating social good. If your intentions are sound, you're on the team.
- **Without trust, we're sunk.** Anything that puts trust at risk is out of scope.

CHANGE IS INEVITABLE. LET'S MAKE IT AS PAINLESS AS POSSIBLE

- We embrace change where it signals progress.
- We strive to gain and keep the confidence of our stakeholders by articulating and living out our data principles.
- We hold ourselves to high standards but never seek to hide our human frailties. If we make a mistake, we'll acknowledge it, and work to ensure it doesn't happen again.
- We adhere to the highest standards of data governance, particularly when it comes to personal data. We treat your data as we expect others to treat our own.
- Speed matters. Deferring action is not an option. Ready, fire, aim.

Social sector taxonomy

(CLASSIE)

CLASSIE is a landmark initiative that enables systematic classification of social sector initiatives and entities – a social change dictionary.

Using the US Foundation Center's well-respected and recently revised taxonomy as the spine of the system, our taxonomy draws on a well of knowledge contributed by a voluntary team of more than 50 local subject matter experts.

CLASSIE (Classification of Social Sector Initiatives and Entities) is used to create consistency across Our Community platforms – without consistency, global insights are very difficult to extract.

Developing a common language helps us join the dots and derive insights that cut across a range of government, business and community activities.

AVAILABLE NOW

- Organisation classification – organisation types & sizes
- Subject classification – sectors/segments (arts, sports, health, etc.)
- Population classification – target populations of organisation/project

COMING SOON

- Outputs classification – how much, how many
- Outcomes classification – what was achieved, what difference it made
- Geographic classification – postcode, suburb/town, local government area, ward, neighbourhood, electorate, demographically similar areas
- Transaction type – how support is being provided (e.g. grants, loans, in-kind gifts, pro bono)
- Strategy – what strategy is being employed to create outcomes (e.g. operational support, leadership and professional development, capital and infrastructure funding)

More information about CLASSIE: www.ourcommunity.com.au/CLASSIE

Social sector data repository

We want to make it easier for community groups to recruit, raise funds, fast-track grant applications and manage all of their information in one place.

Our data repository centralises and systematises the storage and retrieval of reusable information about social sector organisations.

The repository will be linked with Our Community's numerous online systems (including SmartyGrants, GiveNow and the Join In, Join Up! directory), making uploading and updating of data into online appeals, grant applications and a range of other services and platforms instant and effortless.

The data repository also lays the groundwork for the creation of networking, benchmarking and governance/oversight tools that can help social sector organisations identify allies and collaborators, compare themselves with other organisations in their field or of their type, and super-charge their performance.

Working out what works

(Outcomes Engine, Centre for What Works)

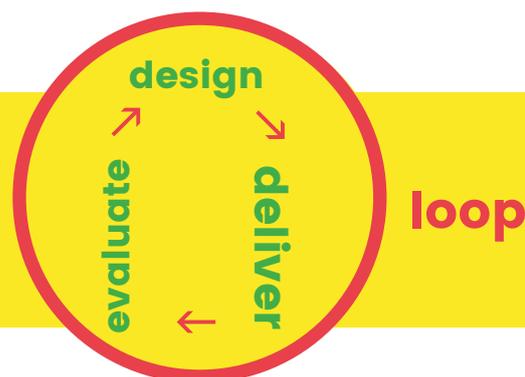
Millions of hours and billions of donors are flowing into the social sector each year – to what end? We want to know what changes are being created, and learn how we can replicate the good changes and avoid the bad ones.

We're working on the creation of a universal Outcomes Classification (part of CLASSIE) that can be used to help us collect and categorise information about what changes are being sought, and how those initiatives are panning out.

In addition, we're working on systems that can be embedded into our platforms (our "Outcomes Engine") that will help generate better-designed, better-interrogated, better-understood social-change initiatives.

Importantly, we want to showcase what is learned along the way to anyone and everyone working towards the same aim. *The Centre for What Works* will reveal insights about what activities and outputs seem to lead to particular outcomes, while the *Plans and Tools Bank* will provide a knowledge base of templates and tools associated with interventions that work.

Our 'What Works' initiatives will help our partners close the



Artificial intelligence

Machines can't do everything, but they can do a lot of things.

It's a brave new world, but we're getting started. Our first major step into this arena is an investigation of how algorithms and artificial intelligence can be used to eliminate bias and speed up grant application assessments.

We're also looking for ways to assist grantwriters to draft and check their applications, to improve the quality of applications submitted.

Next up is an online donations experience that's tailor-made for the user.

Open data initiatives

We support transparency in the social sector, particularly when it comes to knowing and showing where the money is going, and the effect that money is having in creating social change.

There is an increasing level of interest in open datasets, as well as new regulations that seek to apply transparency to the work of government.

We want to help our platform users open up their data, and provide tools to help them and others navigate it.

Work is under way to adopt an open data standard for grants information in SmartyGrants, and to provide a one-click tool to allow willing grantmakers to export what they want to where and when they want it.

Turning data into action

(Analysis, visualisation & dissemination)

We have an in-house data science team and a number of initiatives planned and in progress to interrogate the data we oversee.

Our outputs in this arena are underpinned by our “useful trumps interesting” mantra, driving us to ensure that any findings we arrive at have real-world applications.

Some samples of our outputs are outlined on the following pages.

WHO GIVES?

In 2016 we conducted an in-depth review of donation data in our GiveNow platform and launched ‘Who Gives?’, a ground-breaking report that can be used by not-for-profit groups to inform their fundraising strategies.

The analysis of more than half a million donations over 15 years allowed us to uncover emerging trends in donation patterns, as well as sector-specific and gender-specific donation patterns that not-for-profits can use to tailor their approach.

The typical donation varies a lot from one interest area to the next.

For example, 

ANIMAL WELFARE CAUSES RECEIVE MANY small donations.



While

ARTS & CULTURE



RECEIVE RELATIVELY few donations,

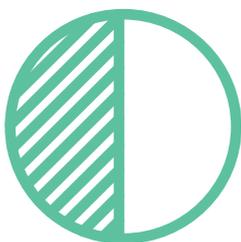
BUT THEY TEND TO BE much higher in value.



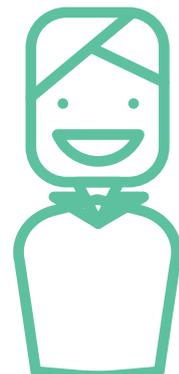
Women make more DONATIONS THAN MEN.

HOWEVER, MEN DONATE larger amounts.

AS A RESULT, WOMEN AND MEN DONATE ROUGHLY



EQUAL amounts.





IF WE LOOK AT ONE-OFF DONATIONS,

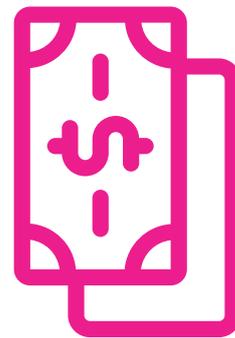
we find that **men** donate MORE IN TOTAL THAN WOMEN.



IF WE LOOK AT REGULAR DONATIONS,

we find that **women**

DONATE MORE IN TOTAL than men.



OF OUR 22 INTEREST AREAS, MOST ARE far more popular with women than with men.

The reverse is true for only a few interest areas. More men than women donate to:



Emergency & safety



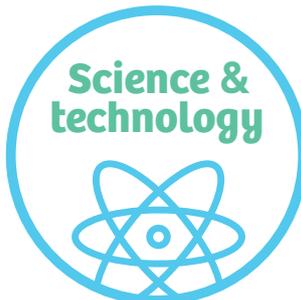
Education & scholarships



Youth



Gay & lesbian causes



Science & technology



Sport & recreation

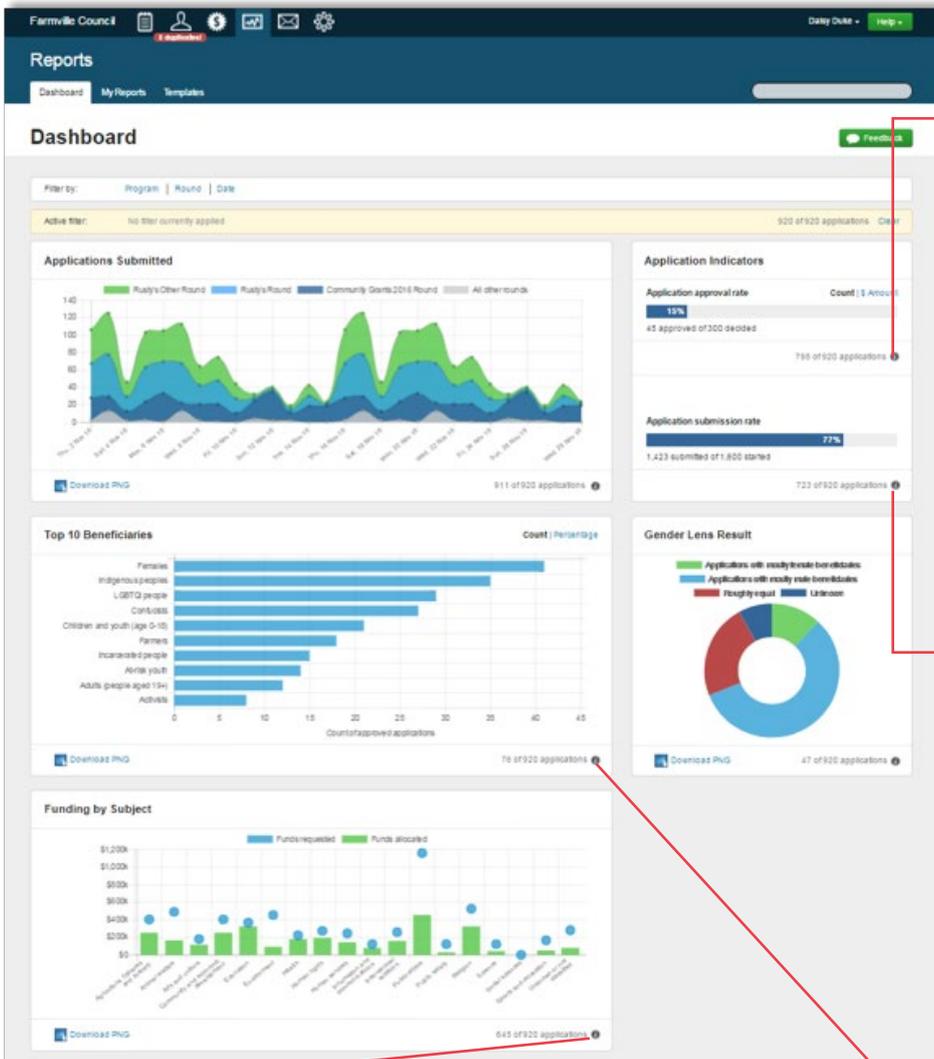
Extract from 'Who Gives?' (2016)

SMARTYGRANTS DASHBOARDS

In mid-2017, we launched dashboard functionality in SmartyGrants (our grants administration software) to deliver instant insights to grantmakers and help them visualise their data.

Dashboard widgets encourage grantmakers to think more strategically about how they administer their programs and interrogate more carefully their funding patterns.

SmartyGrants Dashboards, released July 2017



What questions does this graph answer?

- What is the success rate for applicants in my programs? (Or, how many people who apply to us for a grant miss out?)
- How big is the gap between the demand for our funds and our ability to provide funds?

Why does this matter?

A low approval rate may indicate that a large number of applicants are wasting their time in applying (and yours, in assessing).

What question does this graph answer?

- What proportion of applicants did not proceed to submission?

Why does this matter?

A high non-submission rate may indicate there are clarity problems in your guidelines or your form, or that your timeframes are too tight, or there may be some other factors at play.

What questions does this graph answer?

- Which types of beneficiaries are most commonly targeted in the projects/programs we fund?
- Are there differences in targeted beneficiaries for different programs/rounds?
- Are our beneficiary trends/preferences changing over time?

Why does this matter?

Answering these questions will help you to better understand the intended beneficiaries of the projects/programs funded by your grants, and to assess whether or not this tracks with need, demand and intention.

What questions does this graph answer?

- Are our grants going to the 'right' types of projects? For example, if you only want to fund Health projects, you shouldn't see much (or anything) appearing in other subjects. Alternatively, you may be keen to see a good spread across all subjects.
- Are some subjects receiving a higher allocation than others?
- What does the funding demand look like, when split by subject?
- Are we meeting demand? Are some subject areas under- or over-served by our grants?
- Are the types of projects/programs that we fund changing over time?

Why does this matter?

Answering these questions will help you to gauge whether your funding intentions track with your funding decisions. They may also help to guard against unconscious bias in favour of or against particular subject areas in the assessment process. And they will help you learn more about sector-based demand for your grants.

GRANTS IN AUSTRALIA RESEARCH PROJECT

Our latest Grants in Australia report (July 2017), the ninth instalment in a decade-long grants research project, combines the data analysis prowess of our data scientist with the deep grantmaking domain knowledge of our team, allowing us to chart historical trends and create practical takeaways for grantmakers, and benchmarking insights for grantseekers.



MAPPING TOOLS

We started producing aggregate maps as part of the 'Who Gives' report. We are now exploring the use of interactive maps in SmartyGrants to see where grant funds were requested, where they were allocated, and to help grantmakers identify areas that have been overlooked.

SMARTER FEATURE DESIGN

We use data analysis to help us design new product features. For example, we use techniques such as A/B testing to better understand user behaviour and to assess what options are the most appealing/effective.

Can you influence donor decisions about what amount to give to a particular cause? Our A/B tests are providing some deep insights.

APPLYING A GENDER LENS

We have created tools to help grantmakers and grant recipients uncover and remove gender bias, creating fairer, more sustainable social change.

Policies and practices

We are mindful of our obligations to provide proper stewardship and safeguards over the data that's in our keeping.

Data ownership, privacy and confidentiality are top of mind as we navigate the new era.

Our data reference group provides input into our decisions as we transition our policies and practices, nut out answers to some of the more difficult questions around access and security, and help gauge how our user base might respond.

Our policies and practices are designed to support our ambitious agenda, while maintaining our hard-won position of trust.

More information about Our Community

The Our Community group provides advice, connections, training and easy-to-use tech tools for people and organisations working to build stronger communities.

Our partners in that work are not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises; government, philanthropic and corporate grantmakers; donors and volunteers; enlightened businesses; and other community builders.

A Certified B Corporation and multi-award-winning social enterprise, Our Community's offerings include:



Funding Centre

Where not-for-profits go to find money



Institute of Community Directors

Governance help for the not-for-profit sector



Good Jobs

Advertise job & board vacancies; find contractors & suppliers



Communities in Control

Thought leadership for the not-for-profit sector



Not-for-Profit Training Centre

Practical, affordable training for not-for-profits



Join In Join Up

Explore the directory of not-for-profit organisations



Leadership & Advocacy Centre

Represent your community, your cause



Centre for What Works

Sharing experience, spreading lessons



GiveNow

Commission-free online donations



Community Finance Centre

Manage your money; celebrate money managers



Marketing & Communications Centre

Spread your message more effectively



Australian Institute of Grants Management

Where grantmakers go for help



SmartyGrants

Software & data science for revolutionary grantmakers

AICR

Australian Institute of Corporate Responsibility

Be a better business

Find out more www.ourcommunity.com.au/aboutus