

Abstract for review

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Can philanthropy and government work effectively together? A case study from Ireland

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Abstract:

This paper reports the interim findings of a study of nineteen co-investments by The Atlantic Philanthropies (Atlantic) with government in the Republic of Ireland carried out from the early 2000s. The investments are primarily in the areas of children and youth, dementia, and disability. The focus of the paper is on the influence of Atlantic on government policy and practice. The context for the study is the fact that Atlantic is a life-limited philanthropy that ceases operation in Ireland in 2017.

The lessons learned from the experience of a philanthropy seeking to work directly with government in the achievement of social outcomes are of particular importance. Working together is not a straightforward task. Governments and philanthropies have different perspectives and emphases that need to be understood and addressed if they are to cooperate effectively.

These different worlds of philanthropy and government are not static, however, and change over time. Many governments are struggling with the ever increasing demands on the welfare state, while at the same time managing control of public expenditure in an unstable economic environment. In this context, philanthropy is seen by government as one of the potential

contributors to addressing the challenges faced. At the same time as government's views on philanthropy have been evolving, the world of philanthropy has also been changing. Rather than acting as a test-bed for new ideas, philanthropies are much more active in engaging with government and civil society to achieve their aims.

Particular issues for scrutiny in the paper include:

- Identifying the structures, processes and personal factors that facilitate or hinder government and Atlantic working together

- Building trust in the relationship between Atlantic and government (and with grantees)

- At a time of public expenditure constraint and fiscal challenge, avoiding Atlantic grant funding being seen as a replacement for government funding

- Mainstreaming of initiatives

- Examining the modalities used by Atlantic in working with government (including governance arrangements, funding analysis, building knowledge and practice communities, building capacity, supporting advocacy) as to their effectiveness

Most important references:

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