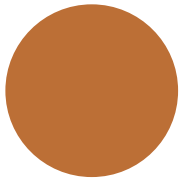




Member briefing

July 2024

Navigating the political landscape: Strategies for engaging with the new government, opposition and civil service



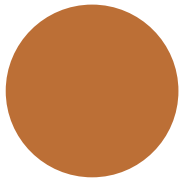
Event overview

In July 2024, ACF held a post-election debrief event as part of our [Members' Policy Forum](#), 'From election to engagement: navigating political change'.

The event explored the implications of the general election for foundations and strategies for effectively engaging with politicians and civil servants during this period of political change.

We were joined by three experts from the political advisory firm Flint Global:

- Sam White, specialist partner at Flint Global
- Dame Sue Owen, specialist partner at Flint Global
- James Hedgeland, director at Flint Global



The unique value of foundations to a new government

Charitable foundations in the UK have a lot to offer any new government through their grant-making, investments, and expertise in addressing key societal challenges. They work closely and flexibly with a diverse range of partners, cultivating strong relationships with local government, civil society and directly with communities. This deep engagement allows foundations to provide valuable funding, support and insight, enhancing the government's ability to tackle pressing issues.

For a government facing severe financial constraints, the involvement of funders is crucial. Ministers, parliamentarians and civil servants may not fully understand the role and operations of grant-making organisations. Foundations should ensure they explain what they do, especially if they're not asking for money, during their initial contact.

Government will be more open to ideas that save them money or are at least cost neutral. Foundations should consider both what they can offer and what they need when engaging with government ministers and officials, whilst also being clear that philanthropy is not simply a supplement to government funds.

"A new government with a new focus opens up a wealth of opportunities to enhance the fantastic work of charitable trusts and foundations. At ACF, our team is working harder than ever to represent the interests of our members with new political players, as well as maintaining strong relationships with those who don't change: civil servants, regulators and civil society partners."

For foundations who want to engage the new government on their unique areas of interest, we trust this briefing is a useful starting point. Please get in touch with the team if you would like a conversation or any more detail on what's in this document."

- **Catherine Seymour, ACF's director of policy, practice and research**

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How can my foundation engage effectively with the new government?

- **Start off on the right foot:** Send tailored welcome letters to relevant secretaries of state and shadow ministers. Don't forget your local MP too, especially if they're new to government. Tell them about what your organisation uniquely has to offer.
- **Pursue realistic and thoughtful engagement:** Highlight how your foundation's expertise aligns with a secretary of state/minister's priorities or present policy ideas that could help a Labour government achieve one of its [five missions](#).
- **Prioritise relationships with special advisers and Labour-leaning think tanks:** Face time with secretaries of state/ministers will be limited, so invest in your relationships with individuals who will shape their policy thinking.
- **Prepare for upcoming political milestones like the new government's first budget:** Start socialising evidence and research (particularly with policy special advisers) showing how investment in your foundation's priority areas could advance the new government's objectives.
- **Engage with 'rising stars' in Labour's new intake of MPs:** Build your relationships now with those new MPs who it is speculated could be junior ministers or committee chairs in a few years' time.
- **Show rather than tell:** Inviting the local constituency MP to visit projects you have funded may have a more lasting impact than a one-to-one meeting.

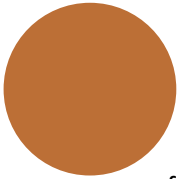
How can my foundation engage effectively with civil servants during the political transition?

- **Identify key officials:** Build strong relationships with officials in both DCMS (which holds the foundation brief) and the lead Departments for your policy priority.
- **Be mindful of resource constraints:** If you are a smaller foundation, consider approaching civil servants together with other organisations or through an interest body, such as ACF.
- **Engage with Departments' non-executive directors:** They may be easier to meet than senior civil servants and will hold some influence on policy decisions. Some NEDs may have trustee experience in the charity/foundations sector.
- **Engage with the government's new mission boards:** Highlight to civil servants how your expertise could help to advance the mission boards' work. For larger foundations, it may be possible to contribute directly to the work of a mission board, although this may be ad-hoc.
- **Feed into Spending Review discussions:** Costed and evidence-based proposals are more likely to land well with Departmental and HM Treasury civil servants.

How can my foundation engage effectively with opposition parties during the political transition?

- **Prioritise Conservative and Lib Dem MPs** who will have the most agenda-setting power – particularly the shadow spokesperson on your policy area.
- **Identify opposition MPs with a personal interest** in your priorities, as they may be keen to make a name for themselves as campaigners.
- **Build long-term relationships with 'rising stars' on the opposition benches**, particularly committee chairs in your priority areas.
- **Consider establishing an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG)** on your priorities if this does not yet exist.

- **Invite opposition MPs to your project launches in their constituencies** to introduce them to the positive impact of your work.
- **Remember – engaging the opposition first** can effectively put pressure on the government.



About ACF

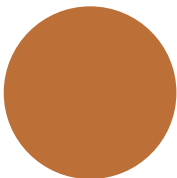
The Association of Charitable Foundations is all about creating an environment for foundations to thrive. We help people understand the role and value of foundations, including working with the government, and we provide opportunities for our members to achieve more together.

We're building strong relationships with the new government and will keep engaging across parliament and political parties to promote the foundation model of philanthropy.

We also focus on monitoring and influencing the external environment to ensure there's a supportive policy, legal and regulatory framework in the UK.

We're committed to supporting our members through our [Members' Policy Forum](#), and by providing opportunities for members, policymakers and key external stakeholders to engage and collaborate.

Members are welcome to speak to us in more detail about pursuing any of the above points. If you have any questions or ideas for ACF's policy work, please contact policy@acf.org.uk.



About Flint Global

Flint advises international businesses, investors and philanthropic organisations on policy, politics, regulation and competition.

Drawing upon their expertise in policy design, global diplomacy, economic modelling, and their extensive networks and experience, Flint advises philanthropic foundations and non-profit organisations on how to progress their policy objectives in an often challenging political, economic, and fiscal context.

