

>> This call is being recorded.

>> Hello everyone and welcome to the Markets for Good podcast. My name is Andrew Means [phonetic]. I am the head of Beyond Uptake, the civic and philanthropic arm of Uptake. And I'm excited to have with me today Rachel Rank, the Chief Executive of 360Giving. Rachel, welcome to the podcast.

>> Thank you. Thanks.

>> Well so for those that might not be familiar with 360Giving. Can you give kind of a quick elevator pitch about your work?

>> Sure. 360Giving is an open [inaudible] initiative. We were launched in 2015 and our aim is to enhance charitable [phonetic] grant making by bringing greater visibility to the sector. So we've developed an open data standard that allows grant makers to share their info in a simple way that anyone can access and compare.

>> That's super interesting. And your work is primarily focused in the UK right now, correct?

>> It is at the moment. Yeah but anyone can use the open data standards that we've developed. So we welcome anyone who wants to publish their grant [inaudible] using this format but at the moment, we've got many UK grant makers that we're working with.

>> Great. Great. Very interesting. And one of the things that I wanted to make sure we talked about when I had you on the show today was data infrastructure. I find data infrastructure to be something that's vitally important to the sector and I think it was something that you have a lot of experience working with. So why do you feel that data infrastructure is so important for the philanthropic space?

>> Yeah, I'm glad to hear that you're interested in that. Data infrastructure, it sounds dry but it's actually at the base of really good collection and curation of all the information that organizations collect. So how you collect, store, release, use, and allow others to use your data is really important for telling people who you are and what you do. So it's the idea that, you know, if you're putting information out in the public domain, you wouldn't do that in PDFs. That's a bit like putting a document in a drawer. It's very hard to access that information. So the idea around data infrastructure is that you would look at the core information items. You as an organization would want to release. So, for example, if you're a grant maker, what kind of core information would you want to release around your grants? And how would you store and then release that in a way that means both you and other organizations and anyone that wants to gather information can use it in a meaningful way? And that really comes down to standardizing your information. So it's comparable with others which really means it's as useful as possible because it opens up to be shared and compared in lots of different ways by lots of different users.

>> You know that's a really important point that the necessity of creating kind of open data standard. And it's something that I think a lot of people talk about and talk about one thing to do. I think fewer people have actually gone through the process of creating an open data standard that's actually adopted. So can you tell us about your experience in actually creating an open data standard that you're now seeing adopted and what it took to actually get there?

>> Sure. I mean it's a really simple idea. It's the idea that you would use a spreadsheet with the same headings in the same way that other grant makers would be using it. So when you talk about your project title, you're putting it in the same column as all the other organizations who are publishing using the same standards. When you're using the date, you're putting the date format in the same way. It's little things like that. Just getting that right and standardizing it. It's such a simple idea but it does take a bit of work to develop the standard in the first place and decide what those key information items are. And the way you want to present them. So the 360Giving standards, we mainly use Excel spreadsheets. We can also use [inaudible] if you wanted to as a publisher but most organizations find it easiest to use Excel. And we've developed a sound schema that covers the basic information items that you'd want to give around grant. And then organizations that want to use the standards would release their data in a spreadsheet using that standard template and they'd link it on their website to a url that we can then pick up and link in our central registry. But before we got to that point, we had to look at the actual information items. What's useful? What do people want to know? And it's actually a pretty basic set of information. People want to know who you gave the money to, how much, when you gave it, what for, where your organization is based. It's those kind of – the 10 pretty basic information items that everyone wants. And it's just making sure that everyone's covering that in a meaningful way. So if you wanted to compare grants to a certain organization to a certain region by capturing things like organization identifiers say the charity number or the company number, you're able to do that in a meaningful way. So it's just getting those kinds of nuts and bolts, the basics, pinned down so then when people come to publish, they understand oh this is why we would collect a charity number or a company number because it means everyone else could see grants to that charity or company as well. So we did a lot of consulting on that when we were first starting out in 2015 and developing the schema. And we spoke to [inaudible] makers and other users of grants data. So fund seekers, academics, and other people that had developed standard schemas before and looked up the basic information items we want. And then we tested out the schema. To check it was fit for purpose. So that's a crucial thing is you know, you can develop these ideas but we needed to test out that it really worked in the real world. So we got some organizations to publish their grants data [inaudible] schema and they found it pretty straight forward. So it's really now just a numbers game for us to get more and more data published. So we can build up a really great comparable data set for people to access and use.

>> And so how have you gone about having people adopt the standards? I

think that's one of the most challenging aspects. You can create an open data standard. And in some ways, you know choosing the right headings and things like that, there's a process in figuring out how to do that well really is important but sometimes adoption getting people to actually use the data standard is a whole other challenge. So can you talk about how you've encouraged and incentivized adoption of the 360Giving data standard?

>> Sure. I mean it's – you're right. It's – developing the standard was in some ways of fairly straight forward. We've got a lot of experience with that. We've worked with organizations that were involved in open contracting data standards and the international age transparency initiative. So we've got a lot of learning from them on what does and doesn't work but the big job for us is now to get organizations to publish their data. And that, of course, means doing a lot of outreach and engagement, partnering with organizations, helping them to publish their data. We provide pro bono tech support to organizations that want to publish. So we help them through that process. Advising them on things like data protection, privacy policies, making sure that they're competent when the data goes live. That they've got it in a way that, you know, they're comfortable with. And it's really for us, you know we need to demonstrate I think the potential of the data. We're not just a transparency initiative. We're about more informed decision making learning around grant making. So we need to test the data is fit for purpose. So for us, I think that's an argument that we should be using the data as soon as possible. Testing if it works. Is it answering real life questions that grant makers and fund seekers face? Buildings [inaudible] and platforms off the data which we started to do. And raising data use pilots in sectors or regions which we're hoping to start doing early next year. So early 2017 to see, you know, can we look at all grants going to the environment or to human rights? Can we look at all grants going to the Northeast of the country? And what can we learn from that? You know [inaudible] gaps, cold spots, overlaps. So for us I think it is that next step of get as many publishers as possible but show to them that there's a real impact for them if they do this. And I think, you know, as a voluntary initiative it's for us to engage really positively with grant makers and to help that demonstration through working with them.

>> I think that's really important talking about kind of why – like the benefits of the data standard, right? And you've hit on this idea of, you know, a piece of this is not just about transparency. It's about using it to inform better decision making and inform the sector more broadly but are there also – do you speak some to to the benefits of the transparency aspects of the 360Giving data standard?

>> Yeah. I mean we are big fans of transparency and accountability and access to information. That's what we want the data all to be open. We think it's really important to people to say who is funding, what, where, and why. You know? The grant makers are often publishing this data already on their websites and their annual reports and in their returns to, you know, the [inaudible]

authorities here in the UK. So it's not going to [inaudible] organizations on already being quite transparent about what they're doing. It's about making that information more meaningful. So rather than having to go to 29 different websites and annual reports to get this data, we've now got 29 organizations where you can get all their grant data in one place. That's really exciting for us and you couldn't do that up until about four months ago. It wasn't possible to get open comparable data from grant making in the UK until those 29 organizations joined 360Giving and started publishing their data. So it's not that we're saying that organizations weren't being transparent before, but there's something about meaningful accessible information and standards being an underlying base on that. That you can then build lots of different tools and do lots of different things with different ways that we don't necessarily want to always be driving. We don't want to say you must use the data in this way. I think we'll get some really interesting ideas from different data users next year on how they want to use this information in different ways. And I think that's the really exciting part. It's about taking this raw data, putting a mirror to it, and putting the front end tools and things that we wouldn't necessarily think about ourselves here at 360Giving. So we're really excited about that potential to let people go out and play with the data.

>> That's awesome. And I think really the work that you guys are doing is so important. I think data infrastructure, shared data standards is actually becoming more important for our sector than it is in other places given how many organizations and [inaudible] we have, we need to find ways of sharing information better. And making it accessible and making it usable. And so I think the work that you guys are doing at 360Giving is a great template and example of how creating a shared data standard can not only increase transparency but increase the value for organizations across the sector. So great work. And –

>> Thank you.

>> – for the people that want to learn – for people that want to learn more about 360Giving, where can they go to learn about your data standard and more about the work that you're doing?

>> The best place to go to our website. So that's threesixtygiving.org. All one word spelled out. And then the other thing I would encourage people to do is go and check out two of the platforms that we're supporting development of. One is called GrantNav which means you can search all the data we've currently got published in the 360Giving standards. So you can really see what that means in kind of terms of potential of how you'd use that raw data. And the other one is called BeeHive Giving which is aimed more at grant seekers which is think of it like as an online dating app which matches grant seekers with the best funders for their needs. So go and check those out. And we'd love feedback on those different platforms and to hear from people how they'd want to use the data. So come and talk to us.

>> Awesome. Rachel, thanks so much for being on the podcast today.

>> Thanks for having me.

>> And for all of our listeners, be sure to subscribe on iTunes or go to marketsforgood.org to check out past episodes and blog posts and stories and tons of information about data infrastructure in the sector. And of course, sign up for the joint Do Good Data Data On Purpose conference coming up this February at Stanford. Thanks everybody.