



2 November, 2021

Mr Tom Boland  
Chairman  
Benefacts  
6 Merrion Square  
Dublin D02 FF95

Dear Tom,

Thank you for your letter updating on the position of the Benefacts Board in advance of the meeting on 2 November.

I appreciate your concern, and that of the Board, concerning the future of the company in the light of the decision by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to no longer provide funding to Benefacts. When we met in September I set out our desire to ensure a full understanding of Benefacts' offering and its role in meeting the data needs of government relating to the non-profit sector, in order to consider the potential implications of that service no longer being available.

We undertook to engage with departments and agencies who have availed of Benefacts services to meet their data needs for non-profits in order to ascertain their views and to explore any alternative way forward. In the course of bilateral discussions, it was clear that departments and agencies have benefited from the value of both the raw data and routine and bespoke analysis that the platform provides. In some cases, Departments/agencies saw potential to develop such a platform for further use and as a possible alternative to building in-house data analytics capability. I should say that, despite this, no government department considered that they would be in a position to take on the role of lead funder for Benefacts. It is also the case that other work is being scoped out in respect of a single platform for state funding community and voluntary organisations – which is clearly related but at a very early stage of development.

Our analysis of those discussions and the background material made available has given us an overview of the broader data needs of government regarding non-profits and associated costs. However, unfortunately, at this point, it has not led us to the identification of the optimal way forward as yet, or what role Benefacts might play as part of any transitional or future arrangements. Further discussions will be required with departmental and agency stakeholders.

As you know, DPER have been the sponsoring department to date and any change in policy regarding future funding also needs to be determined in conjunction with that department.

I am sorry that I don't have any better news at this stage and I appreciate that this is a difficult time for the Board and the staff of Benefacts. I am very conscious of the urgency of the situation from the Board's point of view. I will continue to keep you informed of any developments.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Canavan

Social Policy and Public Service Reform