

# PHILANTHROPY IRELAND

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## PATHWAYS FOR CORPORATE PHILANTHROPY

*Case Study on Bank of America*



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# INTRODUCTION

Philanthropy Ireland is delighted to partner with Bank of America to publish this case study, their work underscores the significance of meaningful corporate engagement in philanthropy across Ireland.

In this report, we explore the importance of corporate philanthropists using their convening power to encourage and inspires others in the industry to meaningful engage with philanthropy to support core issues for the communities in which they operate.

Bank of America has effectively leveraged its grant-making and partnership strategies in Ireland to support a number of key social issue areas including:

- Fostering **Social Progress** and **Economic Mobility** through Empowering vulnerable individuals and marginalised communities with programmes focused on workforce readiness, skills training, and job creation, which we will delve into in this report.

Additionally they have supported:

- International **Arts and Culture** projects that conserve, education and ensure meaningful engagement.
- Driving **Environmental Sustainability** through core partnerships spanning a range of climate justice and conservation issues,

This case study illustrates the power of strategic corporate philanthropy, showcasing how diverse approaches can foster meaningful social change while also bolstering the communities in which corporates operate and enhancing employee engagement.

Through initiatives like these, Philanthropy Ireland is committed to supporting corporates as they navigate the philanthropic landscape, ultimately helping to drive sustainable social impact across Ireland.



# CONVENING FOR CHANGE



Bank of America has been a long standing member of Philanthropy Ireland and an overall champion of philanthropy for many years. At the end of 2024 Bank of America, in partnership with Philanthropy Ireland brought together key players in the banking industry to discuss the importance of corporate philanthropy and how they have utilised their own grant making and partnerships to support skilling into tech roles, especially for underrepresented communities in the Irish tech space.

This productive roundtable discussion, with input from the Banking and Payments Federation Ireland, highlighted the impact of Bank of America's corporate philanthropy in Ireland through case studies from Generation Ireland and Belfast Metropolitan College.

This report not only provides an overview of the reach and impact of Bank of America's philanthropy on the island of Ireland but it showcases the opportunities for other corporates to get involved in meaningful philanthropic initiatives that aim to support impactful social change while also opening up HR opportunities in untapped markets.

Below you will find a selection of inputs from those who participated in this engaging and thought-provoking session that really highlight the crucial role we all have to play in the philanthropy ecosystem, from supporter, to convenor, to facilitator and to beneficiaries. Each stage is crucial and allows for a diversity of voices that strengthen the role philanthropy can play in reshaping narratives, building trust, fostering strategic partnerships and delivering real, measurable impacts.



# **BANK OF AMERICA: THE FUTURE OF WORK IS DIGITAL**

Bank of America's commitment to community engagement reflects its broader Responsible Growth strategy, which emphasises supporting local communities around the world. In Ireland, Bank of America's philanthropic work is designed to enhance economic mobility, focusing on creating job opportunities and helping individuals transition into sustainable employment. Through substantial financial contributions, including nearly \$290 million distributed globally last year alone, the bank continues to make a positive impact in regions where economic stability is most needed.

In Ireland, between 2020 and 2024, Bank of America allocated almost \$5 million in grant funding. This was directed toward fostering social progress and enhancing economic mobility through workforce readiness, skills training, and job creation programs. Notable partnerships, such as those with Generation Ireland, Belfast Metropolitan College, Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, and Jobcare (through Rethink Ireland), underscore the bank's dedication to driving social impact through collaboration. These multi-year partnerships aim to equip individuals from marginalized backgrounds with in-demand technology skills, positioning them for meaningful careers in the digital economy.

This focus on tech skills is critical, as the future of work becomes increasingly digital. Technology is reshaping industries at a rapid pace, making tech skills vital for individuals and businesses alike to stay competitive in the evolving economy. Despite this demand, a global talent shortage persists, with approximately 500m people underemployed or unemployed worldwide, while 77% of businesses report a shortage of skilled talent. These challenges are compounded for vulnerable groups such as women, people of color, low-income families, and younger and older workers, who often face barriers to entry into the tech sector.

As part of a national push to address this skills gap, Trinity College Dublin, through the National Digital Skills Platform, launched initiatives aimed at equipping the Irish workforce with essential digital skills, underscoring the broader need for corporate support in bridging these gaps. Corporate philanthropy in technology skills training can significantly drive inclusive economic growth, helping to address workforce challenges that prevent sustainable employment for marginalized individuals.

By investing in such initiatives, companies can contribute to building a skilled, competitive workforce and empower more people to participate fully in the digital economy. For corporations globally, the example set by Bank of America demonstrates the importance and impact of aligning philanthropy with workforce development. In doing so, companies strengthen communities and lay the groundwork for a more resilient, digitally capable global workforce.

# BANKING AND PAYMENTS FEDERATION: STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

This was a great opportunity to work together, learn from each other, and figure out how banking organisations can continue to be ambitious in recruiting new skills to the sector. The central issue addressed was about non-traditional upskilling and job recruitment of diverse new talent to the Banking and Payments sector. The industry fully supports this collaboration and wants to continue showcasing the many good examples across its diverse membership base. There are excellent examples of FS boot camps, mentoring, tailored industry-led courses that respond to skills needs, and how best firms can help new staff develop their career beyond entry level.

The Generation Ireland example of working closely with a major Irish pillar bank, such as AIB, was used as an example that other banks might consider. There was also very useful information from Belfast Met on FS course development, and how relatively small amounts of funding from basis.point can make a dramatic difference to youth training groups helping young adults from diverse backgrounds. It was highlighted that in recent years the growth in multicultural labour markets in Ireland has helped the FS sector become a more diverse sector. Many BPFi wholesale and pillar members now offer attractive career paths from entry to more skilled talent opportunities.

One of the takeaways from the event is the need to advocate for more joined-up funding. Combining greater public funding with greater corporate philanthropy to increase non-traditional upskilling in Ireland needs to be prioritised for the future. The point was well made that while unemployment in Ireland is historically low, there are still over 125,000 unemployed people, many in long-term inter-generational unemployment. It was noted that the possibility of more north/south "shared island" funding might provide funding for more North/South collaboration in the future. Funding now exists via the Taoiseach's Department to support North-South project collaborations. similar to this one.

Corporate Philanthropy in Ireland has the potential to grow further. There are notable exemplars in the banking sector, such as that of Bank of America, J.P. Morgan, and other banking and payments firms who collaborate with basis.point to support social giving. There is significant momentum and opportunity to seek more Government spending from the National Training Fund for third-level and upskilling in Ireland. Getting the right outcome on skills and talent requires a strong public-private partnership and a strong commitment from government to work with the sector.



**basis.point**  
joined up giving

**Basis.point** was delighted to attend the Bank of America Skilling into Tech Roles Roundtable Sept 2024 Event - it was a powerful discussion on how organisations can utilise strategic philanthropic partnerships to provide the skills and opportunities to diverse communities to access entry-level tech hires.

The two case studies presented reflect great work being done in educating, training and equipping those experiencing barriers to employment either for the first time or returning to work in the area of tech.

At basis.point we believe that education is key to breaking that cycle of poverty and that the earlier the intervention the better. We channel our funding into programmes working with children and families from pre-school up to 18 years of age. The programmes work with children and families from socio-economic disadvantage, rural isolation, underserved communities, minority groups and communities. Our vision is an Ireland where children have the opportunity to reach their potential through education. By driving this social change, we aim to create brighter futures for vulnerable young people and contribute to a more inclusive society.

Many of the programmes we support have a strong focus on technology, the programmes awaken and inspire young people to engage in learning more about the STEM subjects. In particular with a focus on creating an environment where young girls believe that they have the ability to engage in the STEM subjects - our charity partner teen-turn is having huge success empowering young women from emergency accommodation, refugee and direct provision to take up STEM



subjects at school with a view to post leaving cert qualifications and ultimately employment in the area of tech. .

Change is difficult and takes effort, but by bringing Corporate Expertise and Resources to match with Not-for-Profit expertise, passion, bravery, and ambition, change can happen. Corporates recognise that they need to give back, not just financially, but with real authentic engagement. Our donors engage at all levels of non-financial support, volunteering, mentoring, internships, and career development. At basis.point, we have brought a highly competitive industry together to collaborate to focus on one specific issue - that of educational disadvantage.

Corporate Philanthropy has gone through a revolution in the past 20 years - from the very ad hoc, leader-led giving all the way to employee driven programmes. Corporates recognise that engaging in the community they live and work in, is a fundamental part of their social contract.

My takeaway is that there are still too many dots left unjoined. Sharing of best practice and more collaboration from both the for-profit and the not-for-profit sectors could deliver wider benefits. If Corporates are going to fully engage in financially supporting programmes, then that should extend out to support of people once they are in employment, stewardship and guidance does not stop once they have the job.



**Belfast Met** is the largest Further and Higher Education College in Northern Ireland and one of the largest in the UK with on average 22,000 enrolments in the College each year. We deliver across a broad range of areas including entry level provision through to Degree and Post-Graduate professional programmes. The College has developed a dynamic economically relevant curriculum which has been designed to mirror the priority growth sectors of the NI economy as this is where the future jobs will be created. Through our partnerships with industry, we constantly adapt our curriculum provision to meet the skills demands of our economy. Supporting enhanced approaches to digital skills across a range of sectors is key to the future success of Northern Ireland on a global scale covering cyber, advanced manufacturing, fintech, and professional services.

At Belfast Met we know that developing digital skills is critical to fostering continued growth, productivity, and innovation in our economy. We are only too aware that we won't achieve our full potential while too many are held back. There are so many experiencing barriers to work; whether that is through a lack of confidence and self-belief or a lack of awareness of the range of pathways to skills, qualifications and jobs if they had the right support and guidance.

We know that many of these individuals could be reached with the right support. Through our BofA funded Digital Skills Academies we are focused on some of those key groups to provide them with tailored training and support and skills development to help them progress into further education, training, or employment.

We will be delivering 30 Digital Skills Academies over a 3 year period working with 600 individuals in a range of targeted cohorts including women returners, NEETS, adults, those with disabilities including neurodivergent individuals, and new migrant communities. We are working in partnership with a range of partners to ensure we are co-designing the right tailored interventions to support those participants to reach their potential.

### **Opportunities for Corporate Philanthropy**

Targeted tailored training and support via initiatives such as the Digital Skills Academies work, and are key to engaging with groups who are economically inactive and those who are under-employed to help them develop the digital skills needed to obtain and maintain employment. But much needs to be done to roll out further support, to remove the barriers to work for many individuals, and to address the role of employers. Working with education and training providers in a co-design capacity is crucial to doing that.

There needs to be more of a focus on skills required for job roles and not just formal qualifications which could allow employers to secure new talent within their organisation. Employers need to consider how they could be innovative in their HR practices including recruitment and selection approaches to ensure that their workplaces are more inclusive, supporting hidden unemployed or underemployed groups. They need to focus on continuous support and potential for development when in employment to help individuals maintain employment and look to opportunities for growth.





**Generation** is a charity in Ireland with a PURPOSE of achieving a meaningful career and sustained well-being for every person via skills bootcamps. Our MISSION is to support people facing barriers to employment into life-changing careers that would otherwise be inaccessible. We launched in 2020, and are part of a global network of non-profits that have supported over 120,000 people across 17 countries on their journey to employment. Having been set up in late 2022, Generation Ireland are committed to supporting the most disadvantaged and under-represented in society, and to date have had 600 learners supported through our bootcamps. Our learners are at the heart of what we do, and hence we offer differentiated training-to-employment support that prepares, places and supports adults of all ages into life-changing tech careers that would otherwise be inaccessible. Our approach gives adults access to further third level education for free. Our learner-centered approach results in a 90% graduation rate and ~70% employment rate 3-6 months post-graduation. Our bootcamp learners complete our 6-12 week bootcamps with the practical skills, knowledge, growth mindset and employability skills they need to succeed in a new career.

BofA hosted roundtable showcased companies such as AIB who have hired ~20 Generation candidates, and created tailored hiring and on-boarding processes to make joining more successful. The Roundtable also resulted in Belfast Metropolitan and Generation exploring opportunities to collaborate between Northern and Southern Ireland to create an all-island approach to skills-to-employment programmes for under-served communities.

## What opportunities exist for companies to get involved in this work?

Companies have several opportunities to get involved with Generation Ireland, a workforce development initiative aimed at tackling unemployment and closing the skills gap.

### 1. Hiring Graduates from Generation Programs

- **Talent Pipeline:** Companies can tap into Generation's diverse pool of job-ready graduates trained in high-demand sectors like tech, and green sector jobs. These individuals have been equipped with practical, role-specific skills and soft skills to be job ready from day one of their employment.
- **Diversity & Inclusion:** Since Generation often focuses on supporting underrepresented communities and people facing barriers to employment, hiring from their programs contributes to diversity and inclusion efforts in the workplace.

### 2. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Partnerships

- **CSR Initiatives:** Partnering with Generation aligns with CSR goals related to education, employment, and community development.

### 3. Volunteering Opportunities

- **Skills-Based Volunteering:** Employees from partner companies can volunteer as mentors, guest speakers and mock interviewers. This allows companies to contribute directly to skills development while offering their teams meaningful volunteer experiences.

### 4. Sponsorship and Funding

- **Program Sponsorship:** Companies can sponsor specific programs, focusing on sectors relevant to their business. Sponsorship helps ensure the sustainability of Generation Ireland's programs and strengthens their impact.



The Trinity Access Programmes (TAP) were established over 30 years ago as the outreach arm of Trinity College Dublin. TAP offers a range of initiatives aimed at working with students, teachers, and schools in areas with historically low progression to higher education

By fostering a positive mindset and providing tailored supports, TAP helps students advance on their educational journey, from primary school right through to university, and beyond. TAP's programmes encompass a wide spectrum, creating pathways to university and offering practical, financial, and academic supports. These initiatives ensure that students from all backgrounds can reach their full potential in education and in their future careers. Addressing access to education is a societal issue that requires collaboration from many stakeholders. TAP actively engages with alumni, who provide mentorship and financial support, as well as corporate partners who share TAP's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and the transformative power of education.

**Pathways to STEM:** Extensive research has highlighted that access to graduate professions and careers continues to be dominated by students from higher socio-economic groups. Working in collaboration with corporate partners, the TAP Pathways Programmes deliver tailored career guidance, school engagement activities and undergraduate support across industries to inspire disadvantaged students and support them in planning their careers.

**Educational disadvantage starts early:** Pathways to STEM is structured across four areas to support students throughout their educational journey to study STEM subjects and build careers in tech:

**Participation - School Outreach:** TAP works with 39 linked primary and secondary schools in the greater Dublin area and 93 network schools across Ireland to encourage underrepresented students to consider studying STEM subjects at third-level. We offer extra tuition, career guidance, guest talks from industry and an extensive suite of STEM-related programmes including Bridge to College, TAP Summer School, Code Plus, and STEM open days.

**Progression – Undergraduate Support:** For undergraduate students who enter Trinity through alternative admissions routes, TAP offers supports including scholarships for some students, a pre-university orientation week, supplementary tuition, mentoring, career coaching, internships, and networking opportunities with employers.

**Corporate Collaboration:** 'If you can't see it, you can't be it' – students from socio-economically disadvantaged communities often have limited access to role models in professional careers. Working with our corporate partners, TAP provides opportunities for tech professionals to interact with students through their undergraduate studies via talks, speed meets and mentoring programmes.

### **Corporate Partnership for Pathways to STEM**

We work with our corporate supporters to create tailored partnerships that will help deliver on corporate responsibility goals, involve employees in a rewarding enterprise, and achieve real outcomes for students, schools, and communities.

Our corporate donors can choose to get involved in activities such as career development sessions for undergraduate students, internship support and mentoring, charity fundraising activities, public speaking training, corporate office visits, 'speed meet' networking events and career awareness workshops.

We work with our partners to create a sustainable model of engagement based on the skills and interests of their volunteers and the resources that they have available. These engagements can be short bursts of activity that last for an hour, a full day, or continue throughout the academic year. We would be delighted to discuss opportunities for partnership with corporate donors.







# SUPPORTING CORPORATE PHILANTHROPY IN IRELAND

Corporate Philanthropy in Ireland is rarely spotlighted and celebrated. But there are many fantastic organisations creating real impact on pressing issues, as illustrated by the Bank of America case study above. By shining a spotlight on the efforts of Bank of America we hope other corporates will join them in sharing their impacts and encouraging knowledge sharing and collaboration.

We hope this case study acts as a point of inspiration if you are looking to start your own philanthropic journey, there is no one size fits all in philanthropy but it can be a powerful driver for good, not just in addressing social issue areas but also in opening up opportunities. The roundtable discussion and following contributions highlighted the role corporate philanthropy can and is playing in addressing critical societal challenges, especially within the fields of education, digital skills, and access for underrepresented communities. Through strategic philanthropic initiatives, corporations have the opportunity to address this skills gap, drive economic mobility, and foster inclusive growth by investing in programs that equip individuals with the technical and digital competencies needed in today's workforce. The contributions of some of the representatives from the roundtable discussion should provide a flavour of the opportunities available to corporates looking to engage in philanthropy to support this important issue.

If you are a corporate looking to find out more about the world of Corporate philanthropy and to engage with others who are thinking about, exploring or implementing philanthropic initiatives we encourage you to join the Philanthropy Ireland community. We have a dedicated Corporate Network and a range of events, content, networking opportunities and membership benefits that can support your journey. Visit our website [www.philanthropy.ie](http://www.philanthropy.ie) or reach out to our Head of Communications and Relationships, Hazel Hennessy at [hazel@philanthropy.ie](mailto:hazel@philanthropy.ie)

Philanthropy is not just the business of a few- it is everyone's business, and ultimately, everyone's benefit!





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