

The
Atlantic
Philanthropies

Republic
of Ireland

Mosaic mural by the late Desmond Kinney depicts the old Irish tale of Buile Suibhne and incorporates lines from Seamus Heaney's "Sweeney Astray" at the University Concert Hall, University of Limerick.

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The
Atlantic
Philanthropies



Republic of Ireland

BY LIAM COLLINS



Chuck Feeney receives an unprecedented joint Honorary Doctorate of Laws from all nine Irish universities.

To Charles Francis Feeney, whose generosity
and vision have improved the lives of millions,
on the island of Ireland and across the globe.



“The past is a foreign country;
they do things differently there.”

L.P. Hartley, “The Go-Between”

The Mall at
Dublin City
University.

Foreword

In the not-so-distant past of the 1980s, Ireland was indeed a very different country from the one we know now, and we did things very differently there. The nation was facing many challenges, both economic and social. Economic recession and high levels of unemployment led to mass emigration.

Ireland remained a conservative society where human rights for many were constrained, and services for the young and old were limited, at best. Perhaps unsurprisingly in this environment, education suffered from a serious lack of investment, and, in particular, higher education was in the doldrums.

This was the Ireland that Chuck Feeney encountered when he began to explore the country of his ancestry in the mid-1980s. Like the great visionary he is, he recognised that education is the pathway to social advancement and economic prosperity.

“Irish education had not kept pace with the rest of the world,” Feeney stated. “With educated people you can achieve more.” And so began a journey of three decades that simply transformed Ireland. It began with higher education and then progressed to human rights and services, and supports for the young and the old.

I witnessed these changes at first hand, primarily through my experiences in higher education but also via my involvement in the area of ageing. Before the intervention of Chuck Feeney, the global reputation and ranking of Irish universities in terms of scientific research was very poor indeed. This

derived primarily from a major infrastructural deficit arising from many years of under-investment. Of course, we had good scientists in Ireland, but they frequently had to leave the country to perform experiments on state-of-the-art equipment, and they were often attracted away altogether.

The advent of the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLTI) changed all that. This innovative partnership between Chuck (and Atlantic Philanthropies) and the Irish Government led to massive investments in research infrastructure that transformed the higher education landscape for decades to come. Very quickly, we had world-class laboratories equipped with state-of-the-art instrumentation and, importantly, teams of high-performing researchers that wanted to stay in (or indeed come to) Ireland.

Moreover, a fundamental element in the PRTLTI model was that universities had to establish, for the first time in most instances, evidence-based, strategic research plans focussing on their respective, prioritised themes. This represented another “sea change” in the professionalisation of research in Ireland. Across its five cycles to date, transformation is the word most often associated with PRTLTI, but this was not simply a transformation of infrastructure. It also resulted in a transformation of operations and a transformation of aspirations. The last one is perhaps the greatest legacy of all!

In terms of my own institution, Dublin City University (DCU), investments by Atlantic Philanthropies in more than 15 buildings have had a major influence on the dramatic development and impact of DCU since its formal establishment as a university in 1989. In the 28 years since, DCU has achieved international recognition for the quality and impact of its research, its focus on the student learning experience, and its emphasis on social inclusion and equity of student access to educational opportunities. It ranks consistently in the top 50 young universities worldwide (QS Top 50 under 50).

None of this would have been possible, at least in this time-scale, without the support and investments of Atlantic. The growth and transformation of DCU has benefitted—and will continue to benefit—tens of thousands of students, and Irish society in general. This impact has been replicated right across the higher education sector in Ireland.

With respect to the earlier reference to Ireland being in “the doldrums,” we are now ranked consistently in the top 20 countries in the world in terms

of scientific research outputs; and we are in the top five in areas such as immunology, genetics and nanotechnology. Put simply, the clear vision and generosity of one man has catapulted a small country onto the global stage.

One anecdote about Chuck: His foundation helped fund incredible research centres, the library and our magnificent Helix performing arts building; but the one that attracted most of his attention was our multi-storey car-park. This reflects his interests in logistics and enhancing the university experience for students and faculty. Another benefit was that it provided a modest income stream for DCU.

But the work of Atlantic in Ireland has not been confined to education and research. The focus progressed from education to include human rights, ageing and supports for disadvantaged young people. Having had some involvement with developments in ageing initiatives, I can comment with some insight in this area. Among a range of impactful initiatives, Atlantic supported the Ageing Well Network, a Chatham House Rules think tank that focused on ideas that would make Ireland “the best country in the world in which to grow old.”

While this particular achievement has yet to be reached, we have witnessed remarkable developments in ageing-related research; the unique, longitudinal ageing study TILDA; government policy on ageing; age-friendly counties; and customised, state-of-the-art housing for the elderly. Ireland is now recognised as one of the leaders globally in age-friendly communities and initiatives, including, for example, DCU’s establishment in 2013 of a global network of age-friendly universities.

Moreover, the recently established ISAX (Ireland Smart Ageing Exchange), which seeks to leverage an economic dividend from innovations in products, services and technologies associated with ageing and to make Ireland the global hub in that regard, can be traced directly to dialogue that started in the Ageing Well Network. The acorns of Atlantic Philanthropies continue to yield many great oaks.

This book captures very well the impact and transformation effected by the vision and investment of Chuck Feeney and The Atlantic Philanthropies. The past may indeed have been a foreign country, but the future will be a much better place for all who live in Ireland due to their incredible contributions.

Brian MacCraith, president of Dublin City University



“I am approaching my subject by stealth, and I do so in order to imitate the methods by which the Atlantic Foundation has for years been doing its own legendary work of philanthropy.”

Seamus Heaney, at a dinner for Chuck Feeney, Dublin, 1997

University
of Limerick
campus from
the air.

Preface

Chuck Feeney was, ironically, the greatest distraction when trying to get to the heart of The Atlantic Philanthropies' work in Ireland.

He permeates the story to such an extent that those who made the journey with him are all too eager to regale you with their "Chuck" anecdotes, humorous, touching, life-enhancing and quirky.

"For years I was afraid to buy a new car in case he thought I was wasting money that would be better spent elsewhere," says one academic, who would occasionally collect Chuck from the bus or train station when he came to town.

His frugal lifestyle might have seemed at odds with his vast wealth, but his rigorous approach to the task he set The Atlantic Philanthropies was never in doubt.

While I was writing this, Atlantic and Chuck Feeney's name opened every door, from Prime Ministers to eminent academics, from executives to front-line workers helping the marginalised. The reaction was the same: We have been so fortunate to be involved with them, what can we do to help?

If some of those to the forefront of all this work think there is too much "good news" in the ensuing book, it may be because their struggles are now forgotten, but the results of that cascade of funding are proof that it was worth fighting for.

The Atlantic Philanthropies have left their footprint on the landscape of modern Ireland, a reminder of the unique contribution by one man and the foundation he created to the home of his ancestors.

Liam Collins



The early emphasis on secrecy that characterised Atlantic gave way to a more general altruism that encouraged grantees to take the credit for their work rather than stressing the funding from the foundation.

Award-winning
Engineering
Building at
NUI Galway.

Summary

Despite the enormous presence in the form of buildings, social programmes and policy advances, the role of The Atlantic Philanthropies in the Republic of Ireland remains, to some extent, elusive.

While Irish people will instantly recognise both the name of the foundation and its founder Charles F. (Chuck) Feeney, the sheer scale of their work over the last 30 years, more than 1,000 grants, totalling over €1 billion, has to an extent obscured the enormous contribution they have made in so many ways to this country.

The evidence is on university campuses around the country, and in programmes for the young, the old and the disadvantaged, as well as fundamental social change, such as children's rights and marriage equality, which Atlantic helped to foster.

The early emphasis on secrecy that characterised Atlantic gave way to a more general altruism that encouraged grantees to take the credit for their work rather than stressing the funding from the foundation.

Yet there always seems to be that residual question among Atlantic staffers: "Did we get it right?" It is partly that questioning mentality that sets the foundation apart from most other nongovernment organisations (NGOs) that came before.

There have always been those who do good work, but often there was an ulterior motive or a political imperative. Organisations, even ones with the best intentions, became bound up in their own existence rather than their original aims. With Atlantic, many of the physical projects so beloved of its founder were built and opened without the general public even being aware of the donor who had initiated the development and provided funds.

Having the initial Atlantic contribution of €93 million matched by the Irish government was a strategy to raise the game and get everyone to buy into a shared vision to transform higher education.

The Atlantic Philanthropies story in the Republic of Ireland really began in Limerick, a city that, back then, was down-at-heel and unloved. It was those qualities that endeared it to Chuck Feeney when he first visited. It was a place where he knew Atlantic could make a “real difference.” It was also somewhat haphazard, based on a chance encounter and an attachment to the visionary leaders who wanted to turn a local college of higher education into a full-blown university. Feeney knew that here he could watch the physical progress of the University of Limerick as it played to the strengths of the people, particularly their prowess at music and sport.

It wasn't all about money either. It was about opening doors to leading thinkers in education, science, research; it was about identifying areas where funding was lacking; and it was about bringing in partners and raising money to co-finance projects.

In 1998, the leaders of Atlantic concluded that they could make a sustainable and lasting contribution to building a knowledge economy in the Republic of Ireland by helping create a strong third-level education sector. Investment in university research at that time was 11 per cent of the EU average, comparable to that of Bangladesh. To make real change, it was necessary to attract top class academics and researchers and give them the facilities and the tools to allow them to bring university standards more into line with European averages and embark on world-class research programmes.

Having the initial Atlantic contribution of €93 million matched by the Irish government was a strategy to raise the game and get everyone to buy into a shared vision to transform higher education.

This led to the creation of the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLTI), in which Atlantic ultimately invested €177 million over three cycles between 1999 and 2001. It was not an easy concept to sell, especially as the donor, The Atlantic Philanthropies and Chuck Feeney, remained “silent” partners in the enterprise. But with the support of senior figures in politics and public service, the collaboration brought about the transformation envisaged by those who pioneered the programme.

The investment in higher education was the beginning of a virtual avalanche of more than €1 billion of funding that would see the physical projects and an increase of research scientists and programmes that had characterised the development of the University of Limerick replicated on all Irish campuses. PRTLTI led to an explosion in research into many areas of human endeavour.

In 2002, Atlantic underwent a fundamental transformation. It wasn't easy either for those who worked for the foundation or those who had come to depend on its funding. Two decisions changed the way Atlantic did its business: The first was to move away from funding higher education; but the second was even more transformative, to spend the entire endowment by 2016. In other words, Atlantic now had a finite lifespan.

Funding helped to strengthen existing organisations, to bring in professional expertise, to develop their role in advocacy, and to encourage some to join together rather than compete with each other.

The new programmes focused on ageing, children and youth, population health and human rights—issues chosen, not only because of their fundamental importance, but because Atlantic believed it could make a real impact in those areas in its remaining years of grantmaking. Switching the

focus of the organisation to these core elements was not easy, but it was carried out with consideration for previous grantees and a determination to make a difference in these chosen areas.

In broader terms, the strategy was to move away from the physical aspect of building programmes and concentrate its energies in partnering with existing organisations already working in these sectors. Funding helped to strengthen existing organisations, to bring in professional expertise, to develop their role in advocacy, and to encourage some to join together rather than compete with each other.

There was also a strong emphasis on evaluation. Outside experts and consultants were brought in with Atlantic funding to help grantees develop an ongoing professionalism that would allow them to survive when the grant-giving came to an end.

Research centres in Dublin and Galway aimed at making Ireland the most successful place in the world to grow old.

The building aspect did not end completely. The university sector, which had benefitted so much from this work, also colonised aspects of the new plan with research centres based around these themes. One of the most important results was The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) to collect data, and the research centres in Dublin and Galway aimed at making Ireland the most successful place in the world to grow old.

The focus on outcomes rather than activities was crucial to making grantees more professional and sustainable in the longer term.

Myriad other programmes large and small aimed at young and old, at mental health and palliative care characterised this new departure. The aim was to generate positive change and an improved quality of life for the older generation, for young people, and for marginalised and neglected groups in Irish society. The focus on outcomes rather than on activities was crucial to the aim of making grantees more professional in outlook and sustainable in the longer term.

Atlantic also funded a number of human rights organisations like Amnesty International, the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, and GLEN—the Gay

and Lesbian Equality Network. The funding was aimed at supporting the Irish human rights agenda; not, as a few claimed, for using Atlantic's largesse to influence political decisions.

What is striking about Atlantic is the quiet, methodical ways staff went about their business in the Republic of Ireland. Senior figures in the organisation say that, while Chuck Feeney expected results, good thinking and "informed activity," he did not dictate the direction that the foundation took. This was left to the Board and senior executives. It was a culture, they believe, that also often carried through to grantee organisations.

The lessons from The Atlantic Philanthropies' work in the Republic of Ireland are many and varied. The foundation has certainly pioneered a new way of doing things and, while this book can impart only a flavour of the work and impact over 30 years, there are pointers for those inspired by what Atlantic achieved.

- It is not all about money. It is also about ideas, opening doors and doing high-quality research before making investments.
- Selecting the right people to create and implement a vision is as important as the vision itself.
- Focus on the outcome rather than the organisation. That means setting goals for grantees and rigorous evaluation, but also providing the necessary back-up from the foundation to ensure that the grantees achieved their missions.
- While the scale of The Atlantic Philanthropies was vast, their strategic "partnering" with government and with other foundations was a vital part of the process.
- No organisation can do everything, so it is vital to know what you want to do and whom to do it with.
- Atlantic Philanthropies' legacy contains lessons for less well-endowed organisations where giving a little with care and precision can make a big difference.

The Atlantic Philanthropies

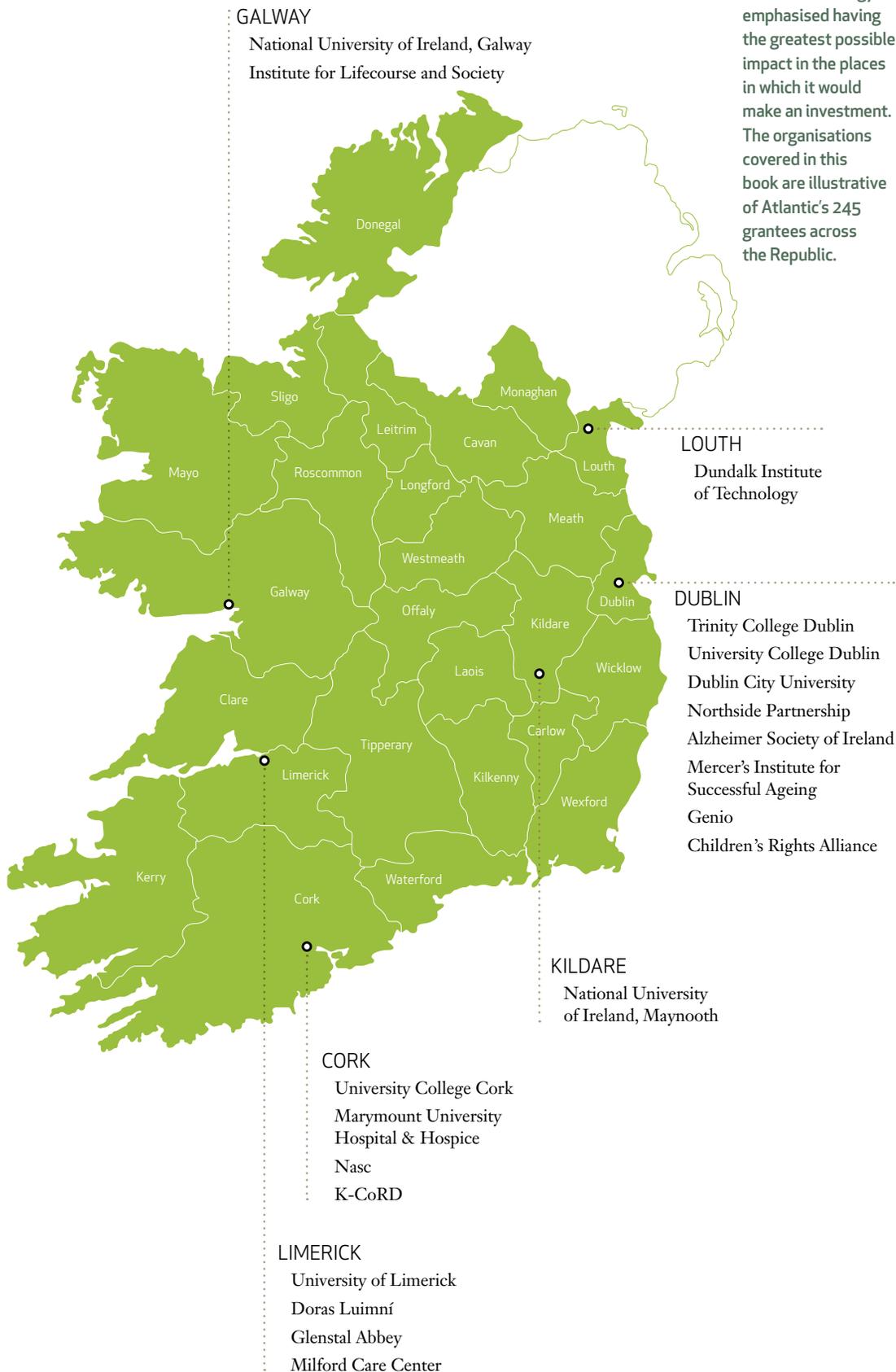
Republic of Ireland



Chuck Feeney, founding
chairman of The Atlantic
Philanthropies

Atlantic in the Republic of Ireland

Atlantic's strategy emphasised having the greatest possible impact in the places in which it would make an investment. The organisations covered in this book are illustrative of Atlantic's 245 grantees across the Republic.



SUMMING UP

At a 2012 dinner in honour of the founder of The Atlantic Philanthropies, Charles F. (Chuck) Feeney, the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny T.D.,* expressed his “deepest appreciation on behalf of the Government and the people for your unrivalled contribution to Irish life.”

The scale of the contribution, in terms of money and giving, is just too big for most of us to comprehend. But Atlantic estimates that between 1987 and 2016, when it completed its grantmaking, it has invested more than €6.5 billion in grants, with €1.1 billion** spent on a whole series of projects in the Republic of Ireland. The foundation also persuaded successive Irish governments to match much of that funding.

“The enthusiasm, the training, the motivation, the evaluation, the research—that was all very striking,” says Frances Fitzgerald, Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality and a former Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. “Atlantic developed a model that can be replicated and taken out to the broader population.” It involved collaborating with multiple agencies of government and enlisting diverse expertise, which was, acknowledges Fitzgerald, “the key to delivering services.”

Although Chuck Feeney and Atlantic leave behind no monument bearing their name, their imprint is an unseen but formidable presence on university campuses around the country, in the research centres delving into the depths

* As this book was going to press, Enda Kenny announced he would step down as head of his party and as the Taoiseach, as soon as his successor is chosen.

** Includes an estimate of the portion of a larger grant made to the University of California, San Francisco and allocated to Trinity College Dublin as partner in the Atlantic-initiated Global Brain Health Institute.

of the human brain in an effort to prevent or find a cure for dementia, in drop-in centres where people find solace, and in the social change that has transformed the lives of many marginalised people in Irish society. Atlantic's influence stretches from such diverse places as the deprived Dublin suburb of Darndale to the library of the Benedictine monastery in Glenstal Abbey near Limerick.

The number and scale of the projects Atlantic has funded is captured in the graphics throughout these pages. Feeney and staff carefully chose, evaluated, supported each project and sometimes discarded them when the standards did not match the aims. But Atlantic's philosophy was always more important

“I cannot think of a more personally rewarding and appropriate use of wealth than to give while one is living—to personally devote oneself to meaningful efforts to improve the human condition.”

Chuck Feeney to Bill Gates, in a 2011 letter

than the size of its grants. So if it was €409,000 for the Forum of People with Disabilities or €143 million for the Global Brain Health Institute, the objective remained the same: maximum impact, or as Chuck Feeney asks, “What do we have to show for it?”

Ian Robertson, professor of psychology at Trinity College Dublin, marvels at Atlantic's willingness to support what he calls the “infrastructure” of human progress, “and the core infrastructure in research is people.” They pick leaders and give leadership, he says, creating resources and a culture that didn't exist before.

“None of this, absolutely none, could have happened without funding from Atlantic,” agrees Professor Rose Ann Kenny, director of the Mercer's Institute for Successful Ageing (MISA) at St James's Hospital, Dublin. “There wasn't even a mood for this at the time. There was no appetite in Ireland for this kind of work in the ageing field. Atlantic's model of funding enabled leverage of further funding... and they resourced things properly, they didn't do things by half.”

Asked to sum up the effectiveness of Atlantic, John R Healy, who organised and led the staff of The Atlantic Philanthropies (originally known as Tara Consultants) in Ireland and was president and chief executive officer of the global organisation from 2001 to 2007, is a little more sanguine. “One of the big difficulties about philanthropy, unlike business for instance, where you either make a profit or loss, is that it is hard to know what the result of your investment has been, or whether or not you have made a difference,” he says. “There is a causal line, but it is often hard to draw a connection. There is no question in my mind that money invested in third-level [university] infrastructure encouraged the government to make similar investments, and that has transformed the research landscape in Ireland.” He also believes that Atlantic’s investment in children and ageing will change many lives in the years ahead.

What started as a personal and initially anonymous crusade fired by a wealthy man’s love of the city of Limerick turned into a series of clear objectives, which became ingrained in the Atlantic culture of giving and now come under the broad programme areas of education and health, children and youth, ageing and dementia, migration, disability and human rights.

“So much of the work of Atlantic has its roots in Chuck, the person,” says Christopher G. Oechsli, president and chief executive officer of The Atlantic Philanthropies. “His interests, his relationships, what he learned, his sensibilities about how one accomplishes something; and yet what is really distinctive about Chuck—and this is with respect to other major philanthropists—is that he also left a lot of space for others to initiate and to create.

“That didn’t mean he didn’t apply his filters or expectations to those independent explorations, but he did cede a lot of space, he didn’t dictate,” says Oechsli. “What he did expect was results and good thinking, informed activity, so those were the characteristics he expected, not necessarily specific topics. And some of that culture carried through in the grantmaking of Atlantic, at least that is what I hear from the grantees, ‘you bet on us’ and there is a certain element of trust and respect for the work they did, rather than dictating or micromanaging their work.”

Fundamental was the idea of partnering with grantees and of encouraging them to take credit for successful projects.

Fundamental to the organisation was the idea of partnership with grantees and a policy of encouraging them to take credit for successful projects.

Atlantic had its own personality, which reflected Chuck Feeney and his approach,” agrees Mary Sutton, country director for Atlantic in the Republic of Ireland. “When it became more formalised, we had a style and policy which put the grantees, the work they did and what they achieved, front and centre. Our focus was on enabling organisations to be more ambitious, to achieve more.”



Ed Walsh, founding president of the University of Limerick, which was the first major beneficiary of Atlantic in Ireland, says: “In many ways, they provided leverage and assistance way beyond the financial benefits. Chuck organised a co-operation agreement with Cornell University, which would have done far more than anything else to help us.”

Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, professor of music at Limerick from 1994 to 2016, recalls that, at the opening of the Concert Hall in the Foundation Building on the Limerick campus, as he was leaving the auditorium at the interval he got a tap on the shoulder from an “elegant and quiet man” he didn’t know, who said, “I am Chuck Feeney; we will be talking later about doing a bit of fundraising.” That was the way it was, a man of mystery dispensing his fortune for the betterment of others—provided his generosity was matched by enthusiasm and willingness to contribute.

As in every journey, there have been challenges and critics. The social agenda pursued by organisations largely funded by Atlantic’s money came in for criticism from some politicians and commentators. Senator Ronan Mullen, who opposed the Constitutional change that legalised same-sex marriage, said: “I have to express my concern about revelations about funding of the Yes campaign and the funding of the state agency for children and families, Tusla, by The Atlantic Philanthropies organisation and that this raises serious questions about the impact of a Yes vote on our public policy.”

In that and in several other cases where Atlantic-funded organisations that sought changes in Irish law and policy, some people mistakenly assumed that Atlantic funded these campaigns directly. It didn't, but the staff had to be constantly vigilant and sensitive to a perception that a wealthy "outside" institution might be exerting undue influence on the democratic process.

Perhaps the most controversial foray into Irish public life was the establishment of the ill-fated Centre for Public Inquiry (CPI), which set out to promote "the highest standards of integrity, ethics and accountability" and was closed following considerable political and media criticism. John R Healy comments, "We made over a thousand grants in Ireland, and most of them went well. This one didn't, but that's life. It is part of the Atlantic story.

"When the shutters come down and time has elapsed, it will be possible to take a cool look at the balance sheet, but reasonably good things happened," says Healy, adding, "that doesn't mean the outcome was desired by everybody."

TOP FIVE GRANTEES

Trinity Foundation**	€207 million
University of Limerick Foundation	€153 million
Dublin City University Educational Trust	€118 million
Cork University Foundation	€90 million
Galway University Foundation	€67 million

THE SECRET BILLIONAIRE

Chuck Feeney was born on 23 April 1931, into an Irish American family in New Jersey, the second of three children. After serving in the Korean War and graduating from Cornell University, he and three partners established Duty Free Shoppers, which would become the largest chain of airport retail shops in the world. He first visited Ireland in 1971 looking for business opportunities and was so taken with the land of his ancestors that he frequently returned.

** Includes an estimate of the portion of a larger grant made to the University of California, San Francisco and allocated to Trinity College Dublin as partner in the Atlantic-initiated Global Brain Health Institute.

Shannon Airport was the site of the world's first duty free shop, a small kiosk opened in 1947, that was the brainchild of Dr Brendan O'Regan, a visionary with whom Chuck became friends. They shared interests in business, peace in Northern Ireland and East–West relations. In Feeney's biography, *The Billionaire Who Wasn't*, Conor O'Clery credits O'Regan as having provided the business model from which Feeney made his fortune.

“He believed that the substantial social conflict, like that in Northern Ireland, would be extremely difficult to break. The best way to resolve the conflict was to ensure the next generation was well educated.”

Ed Walsh, former president of the University of Limerick

As he pursued business interests in Ireland, Feeney saw the devastating effects of the deep recession of the 1980s with the resulting brain drain from thousands of the country's brightest young people emigrating to find work. He was convinced that investment in higher education would unlock Ireland's potential, and would provide strong social returns in the form of benefits to society that would far exceed the costs.

“He believed that the substantial social conflict, like that in Northern Ireland, would be extremely difficult to break; you needed lawmakers who would implement change and an economic surge of development to take people out of crisis,” said Ed Walsh. “The best way to resolve the conflict was to ensure the next generation was well educated.” That launched a huge spending programme on both sides of the Irish border under the auspices of Atlantic.

The University of Limerick reaped a gigantic portion of that funding, €153 million in total which enabled it to grow from 11 to more than 40 buildings and to establish world-class research and cultural institutions. The Living Bridge over the River Shannon as it flows toward the city and the sea symbolically links these projects, the joint funding arrangements between Atlantic, the Irish government and various other individual donors who provided matching funding to make these dreams possible. In the years



The Living Bridge connects the campus where the River Shannon runs through the University of Limerick.



Chuck Feeney with Dr Maurice Manning, chancellor of the National University of Ireland, at the conferring ceremony in Dublin Castle where Feeney receives an unprecedented joint Honorary Doctorate of Laws from all nine Irish universities.

that followed, the same generosity was lavished on other universities in the Republic of Ireland in eye-opening quantities: University College Cork, €90 million; Dublin City University, €118 million; Trinity College Dublin, €207 million;** University College Dublin, €47 million; National University of Ireland Galway, €67 million; National University of Ireland Maynooth, €32 million; and National College of Ireland, €14 million.

Such was the scale and manner of this generosity that in a unique ceremony held in St Patrick's Hall in Dublin Castle on 6 September 2012, the nine Irish universities in the Republic and the North jointly conferred an Honorary Doctorate of Laws on Charles F. Feeney; and the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, hosted a ceremonial dinner in Feeney's honour in the Irish State's Official Guest House, Farmleigh, to mark the occasion.

The focus on hard realities, rather than Irish idealism and the “ah, sure it will be grand” attitude, is one of the factors that made the investments of Atlantic so different from what went before.

While the final sums donated to a project were often vast, there was a moment on such occasions when Feeney's finger would go up, and, according to Kevin O'Dwyer, former head of the Marymount University Hospital & Hospice in Cork, “He would ask the one question that nobody else in the room wanted to address: ‘Where is the rest of the funding going to come from?’”

In the early days, “we were constantly being tested,” agrees Walsh, with “very small amounts of grants being given, and the fact that we were able to deliver on time and on budget impressed him.” In those early days, Feeney also got a roguish sense of fun from communing with musicians and visionaries, like the late artist Desmond Kinney, whose mosaics adorn the walls of some Atlantic-funded buildings in Ireland like a secret sign.

During the first 14 years in the Republic of Ireland, from 1988 through 2003, the bulk of Atlantic grants went for higher education. “He [Feeney] loved physical projects, seeing things come out of the ground,” says Ed Walsh. “It reached the stage where the argument about buildings was fine, but what happens inside was of far more importance.”

Feeney wanted to enhance the university experience for students and faculty with dormitories, and cultural and sporting facilities.

** Includes an estimate of the portion of a larger grant made to the University of California, San Francisco and allocated to Trinity College Dublin as partner in the Atlantic-initiated Global Brain Health Institute.

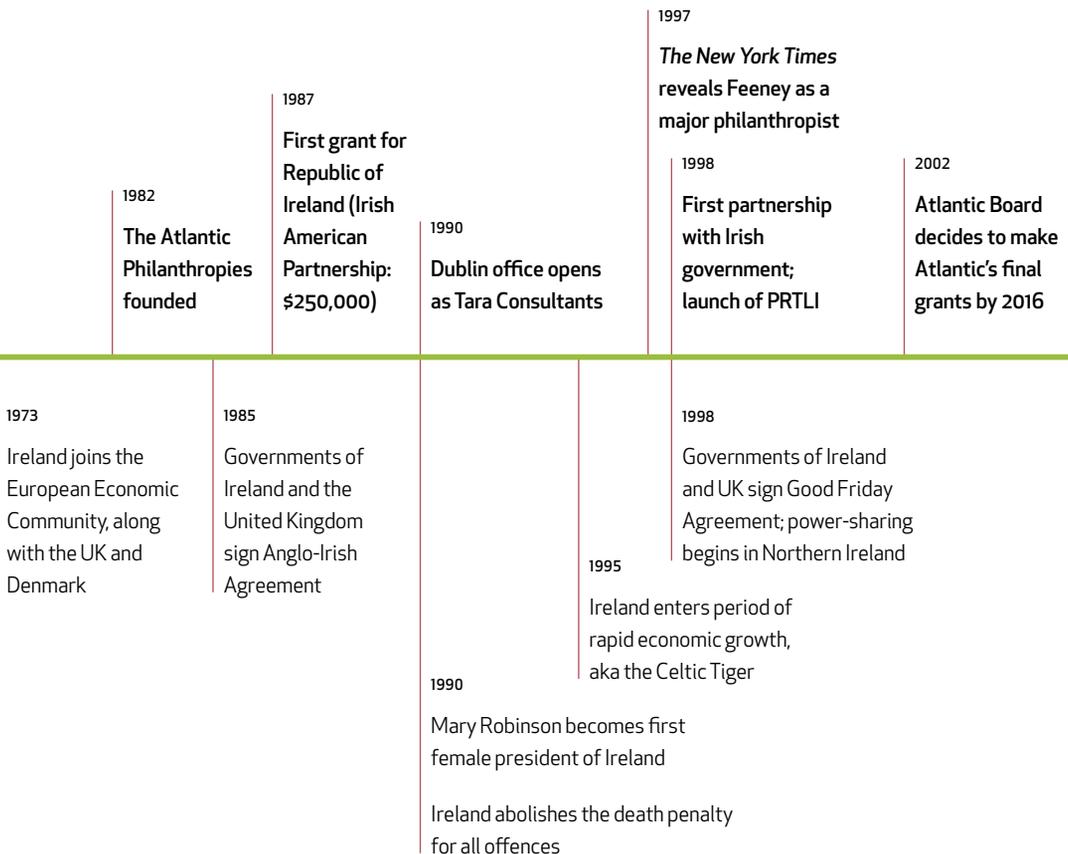
The purpose of the physical projects, says Colin McCrea, retired senior vice president of Atlantic, who oversaw much of this work, was not only to create space for advanced research, but also to make Irish universities more attractive to students and faculty and, as he puts it, “to enhance the university experience” with dormitories, and cultural and sporting facilities. Atlantic staff believed that Ireland’s future prosperity depended on its ability to create new knowledge and opportunities that university research could generate.

In those early days, Feeney “kept a foot in both camps, of business and philanthropy,” says Oechsli. Feeney was well aware that if the lack of higher education was hampering his own business interests, so other employers must also be finding it difficult to get properly trained and educated staff for the expanding Irish economy.

In the introduction to his book *The Creation of the Future*, Frank H.T. Rhodes, president of Cornell University for 18 years and chairman of the Atlantic Board from 2000 to 2008, addresses the importance of higher education

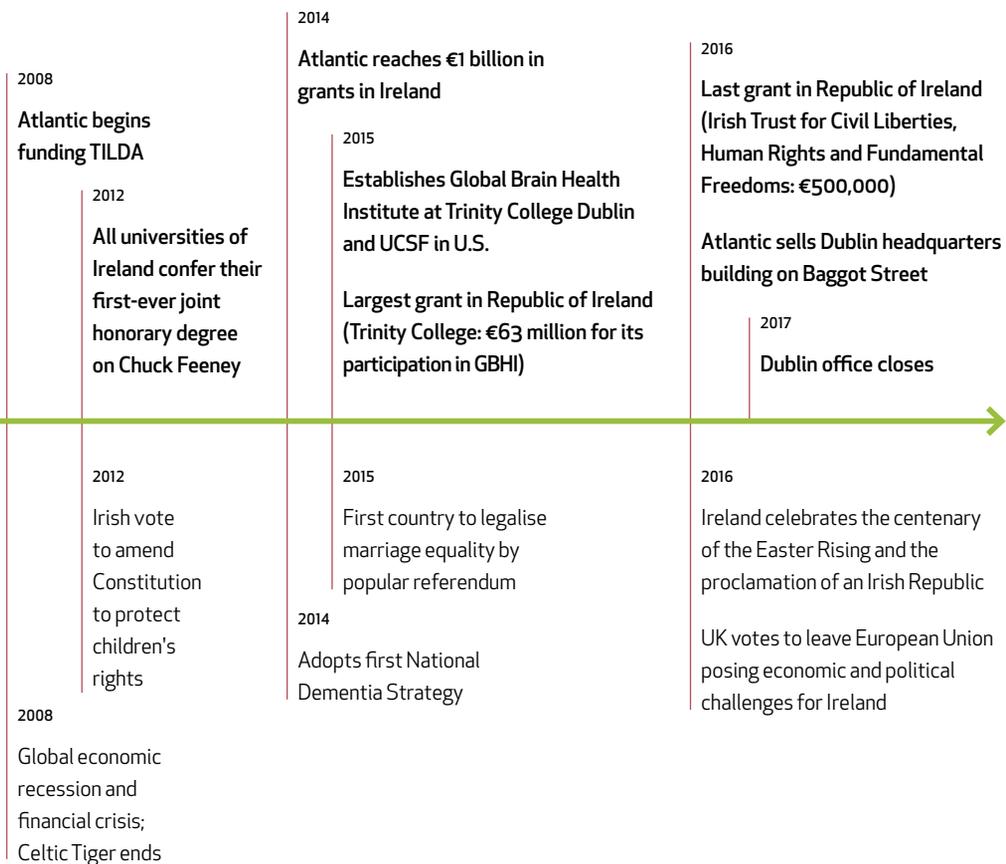
Atlantic in the Republic of Ireland

1982–2017



in context. “The university is the most significant creation of the second millennium. From modest beginnings over 900 years ago, it has become the quiet but decisive catalyst in modern society, the factor essential to its effective functioning and well-being. The university promotes neither political action nor government policy, but it provides the knowledge and data on which both are developed. It manufactures no products, but it creates the science and technology on which those products depend. It produces no mass circulation newspapers, magazines or television programmes; but it trains their publishers, writers and producers. It informs public understanding, cultivates public taste and contributes to the nation’s well-being as it nurtures and trains each new generation of authors, business leaders, engineers, farmers, lawyers, physicians, poets, scientists, social workers and teachers — as well as a steady succession of advocates, dreamers, doers, drop-outs, parents, politicians, preachers, prophets, social reformers, visionaries and volunteers — who leaven, nudge and shape the course of public life.”

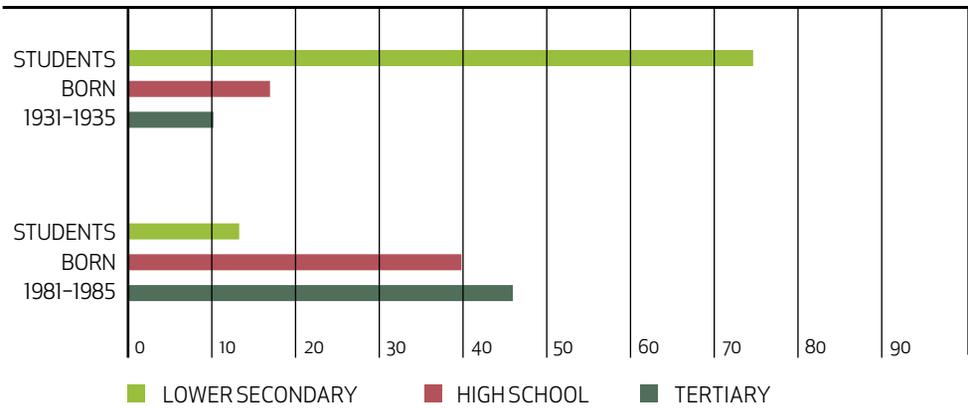
Atlantic in the Republic of Ireland (continued)



“While Chuck is a person of few words, that passage indicates what underpinned his interest in the power of higher education,” says Oechsli.

In previous co-funded projects, grantees had sourced the matching funds themselves, either from fundraising, other donors or, in some cases, state agencies. But in its quest for lasting and meaningful change, Healy and Feeney became convinced that to achieve the maximum benefit from the vast amount of money Atlantic was spending, the Irish government should make a long-term commitment to collaborate and co-fund programmes. “Chuck, like a lot of very successful mega-businessmen, didn’t regard governments very highly,” said Dr Don Thornhill, a former secretary

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN IRELAND



Source: Irish Times Premedia, 2015

general of the Department of Education. Around this time, Thornhill had been appointed executive chairman of the Higher Education Authority (1998–2005) and played a vital role in the next phase of Atlantic’s development in the Republic of Ireland.

Convincing the government and the Department of Finance took considerable time, and there was certain exasperation by Atlantic Board members at the ensuing delays in what became a multimillion-dollar collaboration. Nobody had ever tried anything like this before in Ireland, and to add to the

difficulties, Atlantic operated, at the time, from behind an inflexible curtain of secrecy. Yet those who had seen the work Atlantic had already done in supporting institutions of higher education were eager to make it work.

“It took us six months to put it in place,” says Healy. “Chuck Feeney said, ‘Do it,’ but I didn’t go to the Minister for Education, I went to see Don Thornhill. We didn’t want to deal with politicians because of confidentiality.” Contemplating working with government was unheard of, and even senior Atlantic executives were sceptical about the outcome.

“Over the course of this journey, and alongside others who contributed enormously, I learned and came to appreciate the challenges and complexities of philanthropy.”

Chuck Feeney in a letter to Bill Gates

Then Taoiseach Bertie Ahern was not long in office when the outline of the plan for an Atlantic–government collaboration on third-level research surfaced. He had previously “tick-tacked,” to use his own words, with Chuck Feeney regarding “the Troubles” in Northern Ireland. But now he was faced with something entirely different. Would, or could, the Irish government put up the funding for the first of what would become a series of co-funded programmes with Atlantic?

The Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLTI) was born in 1998. Its conception and birth was not without trouble. The Department of Finance was “not enthusiastic” about the sudden commitment to new public expenditure, and the Department of Education was almost overwhelmed by its scale. When the first round of funding was announced, Atlantic’s contribution was attributed to a mysterious “private donor,” although the source of the finance was widely known in academic circles. Atlantic gave a total of €177 million in three cycles of PRTLTI funding.

“By matching funding from Atlantic we could move very quickly,” says Ahern. “PRTLTI was of great benefit to this country. We got buildings up in jig time. Without Atlantic, we wouldn’t have done it in 30 years.” Adjudication of the various research projects was carried out by a high-quality international panel which was independent of government — “a remarkable aspect, given the very large scale of funding involved,” according to a paper later written by Rhodes and Healy.

“It was a huge expansion programme that fast-tracked the whole of third level education, and is one of the legacies of Atlantic’s work in Ireland. It revolutionised third level education.”

Bertie Ahern, former Taoiseach

Out of PRTLTI came projects such as the National Centre for Biomedical Engineering Science at the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG); the Tyndall National Institute in Cork; Trinity College Institute of Neuroscience in Dublin; the Conway Institute at University College Dublin; and a whole raft of research centres, some of which have become globally recognised. The other long-term benefit was that Irish universities began to attract top-class academics and researchers.

The investment in higher education was timely. The introduction of free secondary education in 1967 resulted in a doubling of participation from 40 per cent to 80 per cent over the following 30 years. By the 1990s, the demand for third level education was strong, but investment was sorely needed to expand and improve the physical infrastructure of campuses, the quality of teaching and research opportunities. It is estimated that between a third and a half of Ireland’s economic growth over the period 1990–2010 arose from the improving educational attainment of the labour force. Atlantic’s investment in the Irish universities and later in PRTLTI contributed to this “growth bonus.”

This commitment to research was used by the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) and Enterprise Ireland to convince multinational

corporations that Ireland, with its output of students holding doctoral degrees, now had the capacity to do the research and development needed by these firms and that Ireland was the ideal location for their European headquarters. “All that good came out of the relationship with Atlantic,” says Ahern. “The universities were better, academic programmes were better, there were far more students, graduates staying in Ireland. It was a huge expansion programme that fast-tracked the whole of third level education, and is one of the legacies of Atlantic’s work in Ireland. It revolutionised third level education.”

To a young Brian MacCraith, who arrived at Dublin City University (DCU) in 1986 and is now president of that institution, the support from Atlantic for PRTL I was transformative.

MacCraith discusses the dramatic impact of one investment: The National Centre for Sensor Research (NCSR). One of three new research centres established at DCU in 1999 during PRTL I Cycle 1, NCSR has, by any measure, achieved great success on the international stage.

COMMERCIAL IMPACTS FROM PRTL I-SUPPORTED CENTRES AND INITIATIVES

	SPIN-OUTS	ESTABLISHED COMPANIES	TOTAL
Company impacts identified	44	113	157
Number of company impacts in terms of commercial turnover, investment or savings identified	24	26	50
Estimated commercial impact in terms of commercial turnover, investment or savings identified	€99.6 million	€654.1 million	€753.7 million
Estimated employment impact resulting from the research undertaken by PRTL I-supported centres and initiatives	192 jobs	1,063 jobs	1,255 jobs
Number of companies where future impact in terms of commercial turnover, investment or savings is projected	12	19	31
Estimated future impact (next 5 years) resulting from the research undertaken by PRTL I-supported centres and initiatives	€96.3 million	€1.012 billion	€1.108 billion

Source: PA Consulting Impact Validation Exercise, *Ten Years On: Confirming Impacts from Research Investment (PRTL I) 2000-2006*, August 2011

He says: “NCSR has had a steady stream of major research initiatives and pioneering breakthroughs. Its world-class infrastructure, combined with excellent human capital, led to the establishment of a number of major research initiatives in biomedical diagnostics, data analytics, bio-pharmaceutical analysis and nano-biotechnology. The resulting dramatic metrics to date: competitive research income of over €200 million, more than 1,500 refereed journal articles and more than 250 PhD students graduated.”

“In fact transformative is almost too weak a word for what happened,” says MacCraith. “PRTLII changed the culture of thinking strategically around research; that was one of the big legacies. But while it was making these ‘big bets’ on Irish education, Atlantic was also making small investments that planted the seeds for what would become core priorities in the next phase of the foundation’s work.”

“The culture of secrecy was well motivated but ultimately became impossible to sustain — when you become famous for being anonymous, you know the game is up.”

John R Healy

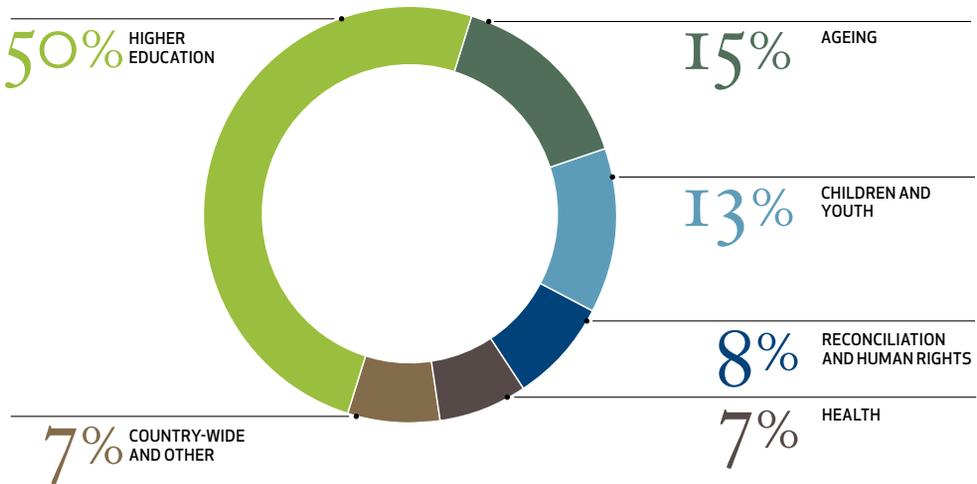
In the years that followed, Atlantic found new pathways that took it right to the heart of under-resourced areas of Irish life with 107 partner organisations, funding early intervention programmes for children, strengthening the voice of older people, bringing dignity to those in hospice care, addressing the needs of people with disabilities and mental health issues, helping migrants, and funding organisations advocating for change.

CHANGING DIRECTION

The mission of The Atlantic Philanthropies shifted quite dramatically in 2002 after an internal process which asked the fundamental questions: Where can we make the greatest contribution over the next 15 years? What are we good at? Where are we most needed?

“We couldn’t make the kind of impact we wanted with 16 programme areas in different geographical locations,” says John R Healy about Atlantic’s global programmes. “We weren’t a coherent, unified body; and we were finding it very hard to measure our impact. We needed to up our game and do better.”

FUNDING BY FIELD



The key to driving change and “turning the place inside out” was related to a decision to spend the organisation out of existence. In 2002, because of Feeney’s commitment to Giving While Living, the Atlantic Board decided that it would distribute the entire endowment over the next 15 years, in an effort to complete its work during the founder’s lifetime. “That concentrated the mind,” adds Healy, who by then had been promoted to president and CEO of The Atlantic Philanthropies.

Its work was also largely unknown to the general public in Ireland, operating as it did from offices in Baggot Street, Dublin, under the name of Tara Consulting. “The culture of secrecy was well motivated but ultimately became impossible to sustain—when you become famous for being anonymous, you know the game is up,” said Healy.

But even more groundbreaking than emerging from this tightly-woven “cocoon” of secrecy was the prospect that Atlantic would dispense all its funds by 2016 and disappear by 2020. This decision to “spend down” presented difficulties, in that Ireland has a strong charity sector but a poor track record in philanthropy. Dependence on Atlantic resources created tough realities for some of its grantees (and foundation staff) to face in the final grantmaking years.

Oechsli understands the difficulties that faced many grantees as a result of the planned 2016 exit from grantmaking. “For better or worse, new leadership comes and reassesses and often says we need to improve, refine or change. Grantees who have been working with a foundation suddenly find they are no longer part of the programme,” he says.

With the decision to focus on fewer areas, Atlantic concentrated its energy and money on a small number of other general issues also neglected by government that lacked the structures or organisations to bring about much needed and effective change. “Considerations of impact contributed strongly to elements of Atlantic’s new programmes on ageing, disadvantaged children, population health and human rights,” says the 2006 McKinsey report on this transition.

AGEING

As part of its focus on positive ageing and the gains and opportunities from increased longevity, Atlantic established the Ageing Well Network and Older & Bolder. The Ageing Well Network took a leadership role in focusing attention on the positive contribution of older people to society in general. During its six-year tenure, it also explored “the challenges and promise of an expanding older population” and set out to create policy which presented longevity as a bounty, not a burden. When the government committed to make Ireland the best country in the world in which to grow old, the Ageing Well Network and Older & Bolder made substantial submissions which were largely adopted by the National Positive Ageing Strategy.



Madge Murphy enjoys a class at Mercer's Institute for Successful Ageing at St James's Hospital in Dublin with students in LAMP (Local Asset Mapping Project), which maps local health care services to meet the needs of an ageing and less mobile population.

55,000

people have
dementia
now, number
expected to
triple in a
generation.

Atlantic also focussed on the frailty and vulnerability of age. “Atlantic began to take an interest in dementia, not only with us, but with lots of others in academia, in the hospice movement, in research—through them we are all connected to each other, and that has created a focus,” says Tina Leonard, head of advocacy and public affairs at The Alzheimer Society of Ireland. “There are 55,000 people with dementia in the country, and that will treble in a generation. How do you prepare a society for that? Atlantic’s contribution has been enormous in allowing various organisations to make the country a better place to live for those with dementia and their carers.”

In partnership with the Department of Health, Atlantic’s capital investment supported construction of Mercer’s Institute for Successful Ageing (MISA) at St James’s Hospital to create a national centre of excellence providing integrated care for older people. It officially opened in September 2016. McCrea recalls some of the difficulties and delays that bedevilled aspects of the collaboration, including the Minister for Health agreeing to build MISA. He later learned that the project had been stymied at a high level

“In political terms we used to be told, ‘It [ageing] is not an issue on the doorsteps.’ But because of our advocacy programmes, it is now.”

Tina Leonard, head of advocacy and public affairs at The Alzheimer Society of Ireland

in his department. McCrea was eventually told that the funding was being pulled. “I am not going to have philanthropists setting my agenda,’ a senior civil servant told me, and he was right,” McCrea concludes. After seeing further evidence of the benefits it would bring, the civil servant changed his mind, “but it took a long time.”

Another capital investment supported the Institute for Lifecourse and Society at NUI Galway, which brought together six established centres at NUI Galway, with three supported by Atlantic, including the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology.

Critical to much of this work is the research project TILDA, The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing. Atlantic championed TILDA from the beginning in 2006, investing €11 million towards this ongoing study and leveraging a further €18 million from the Irish government. Recognising the importance of this project, a final grant of up to €5 million was allocated to support TILDA to the end of 2018, and the government is committed to funding it into the future. Designed to chart the social, economic and health circumstances of some 8,500 people living in Ireland aged 50 and over, it is a mine of information on the ageing population for researchers everywhere.

Illustrating that increased longevity represents an increased “bounty” rather than “burden,” results from 2016 show that older people make substantial contribution to their family and communities, for example:

- Adults aged 54 years and over with children are more likely to provide financial assistance to their children (48 per cent) rather than receive financial help from them (3 per cent)
- Fifty per cent of adults aged 54–74 provide regular child care for their grandchildren for an average of 36 hours per month
- More than half volunteered during the previous year, and 17 per cent do so at least once per week
- Volunteering, regular social participation, minding grandchildren and supporting children are significantly associated with better mood and quality of life.

Although based in Ireland, the database has international implications. “We are now considered at the cutting edge of longitudinal research, and because it’s a longitudinal study, we can track every two years the impact of policy on older people,” says Professor Rose Ann Kenny, a medical gerontologist at Trinity and founder of TILDA. It has already contributed enormously to the National Positive Ageing Strategy and the National Dementia Strategy.

Various strands such as TILDA, research programmes in the universities, and the Global Brain Health Institute (GBHI) have all brought critical mass to Ireland’s determination to make a lasting impact on issues of ageing.

“We are now considered at the cutting edge of longitudinal research. ... We can track every two years the impact of policy on older people.”

PROFESSOR
ROSE ANN KENNY,
FOUNDER OF TILDA

30%

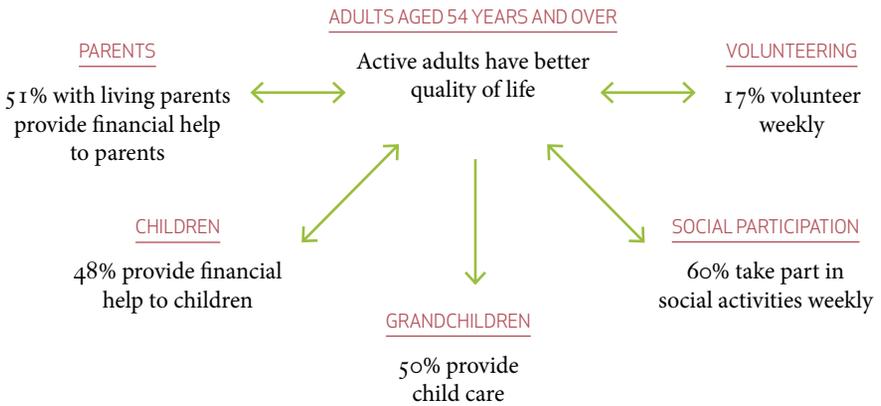
of dementia could be prevented by addressing vascular and lifestyle issues.

The landmark grant to fund the Global Brain Health Institute—a joint venture with Trinity College Dublin and the University of California, San Francisco to improve the practice of dementia care and shape the societal and environmental forces that affect neurocognitive health—is the largest programme grant Atlantic ever made. Part of the premise of GBHI is that by addressing vascular issues like high blood pressure and cholesterol, and lifestyle risk factors such as diet, sleep, exercise, and social and intellectual engagement, up to 30 per cent of dementia could be prevented over the next 20 years.

Its influence on policy is also growing as more data emerges and members of the team monitor progress towards the goals set in the National Positive Ageing Strategy.

In contrast, Deirdre Cullen and Tony Foley, two general practitioners in Kinsale, County Cork, illustrate how much smaller funding can transform the lives of people living in a small town. When Genio, a nongovernmental organisation established with Atlantic support to pilot and demonstrate person-centred approaches to services for people with disabilities and mental health issues, put out a call for projects to apply for funding, Kinsale

TILDA | Contributions of older people to family and communities



Source: McGarrigle, C., Donoghue, O., Scarlett, S., and Kenny, R.A. (editors). "Health and Wellbeing: Active Ageing for Older Adults in Ireland. Evidence from The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing," 2017.

Community Response to Dementia—known as K-CoRD—was one of the successful applicants. “We were awarded €630,000 in funding, which allowed us to get properly organised. The results were transformative for older people living in Kinsale,” said Deirdre.

“What Atlantic has done is leave a legacy of sustainability which is very important,” says Tina Leonard. Sixty-three per cent of people with dementia are still living at home. “It is the best outcome for their health to participate in the community for as long as possible,” she says. “What we have been able to do with the Atlantic money is to develop consistent themes and build those into the organisation. As part of our funding, there is a commitment to the future. In political terms we used to be told, ‘It is not an issue on the doorsteps.’ But because of our advocacy programmes, it is now,” says Leonard. “We have made it a constituency issue. Political parties have picked up on it because we have made it an issue on their radar.”

63%
of people with
dementia are
still living at
home.

HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE

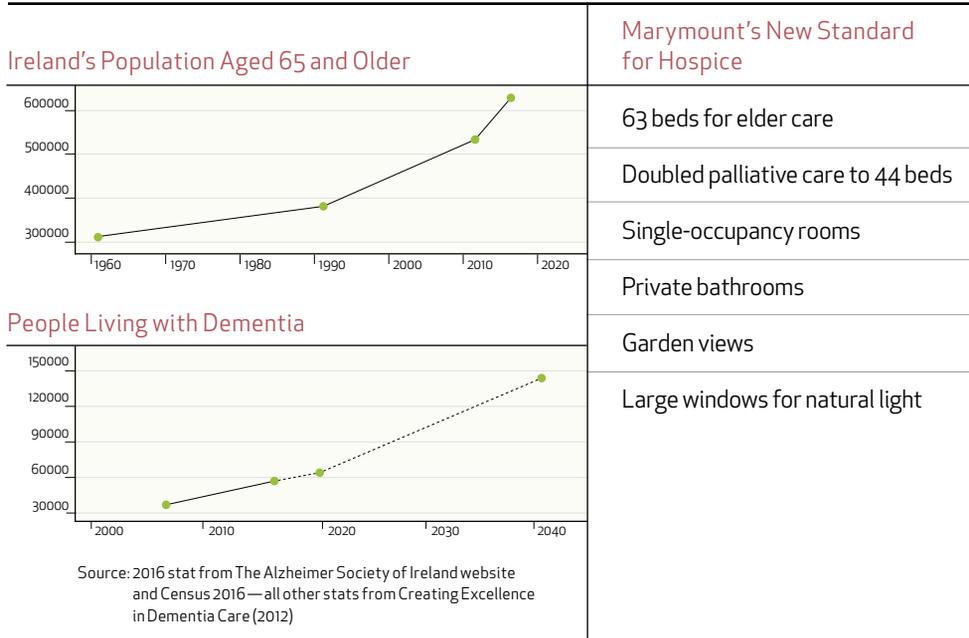
While Irish government policy enunciated that end-of-life or palliative care should be provided for all, a study funded by Atlantic found that too few people near death received appropriate care. Over 60 per cent of all deaths in Ireland took place in acute hospitals, many of them in impersonal, overcrowded conditions causing distress to the dying and their families.

Marymount University Hospital & Hospice on Wellington Road, near Cork city centre, was struggling to adapt its 141-year-old buildings to new standards. Kevin O’Dwyer, then chief executive officer of Marymount, had the complex task of deciding how this should be done—by renovating the Wellington Road buildings or, as suggested by Feeney, constructing a new Marymount on a green-field site at Bishopstown, some distance from the city centre. “I had never heard of Atlantic, but Micheál Martin TD [leader of Fianna Fáil—the Republican Party], who had dealings with the foundation previously, suggested we should approach them on the basis that if they agreed to fund the project, we would raise the other half of the money.”



Marymount University Hospital
& Hospice. The wards face onto
a serene campus.

HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE



Timing was everything. Atlantic was interested in funding a prototype of a modern hospice, and Marymount was the most advanced project on the drawing board at the time. “We were told, ‘Don’t ask for money, just tell them what your plans are.’ As a result, we got approval for a €10 million grant, but they [Atlantic] were not happy with the Wellington Road site,” says O’Dwyer.

Atlantic funded an international study to validate its concept that every room in a modern hospice should be “single-occupancy,” something that both the hospice board and the Health Service Executive (HSE) regarded as “extravagant” at the time. But as far as Atlantic was concerned, this was a “deal breaker.” It was a long and tortuous process for all involved in what turned into a €58 million project.

Today as he walks around the bright, airy building, O’Dwyer says the current Marymount is a template for the highest quality palliative care. With Atlantic’s guidance, Marymount set a standard of 100 per cent single-



Dublin City University student
tutors primary school pupils.

occupancy rooms that other hospice projects now follow at home and abroad. Atlantic funded further standard-setting hospice programmes in Dublin and Limerick over a seven-year period, including capital projects and allocated core and project funding to the Irish Hospice Foundation, the All-Ireland Institute for Hospice and Palliative Care, and the Irish Association for Palliative Care.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

In considering programmes to benefit young children and their families, the staff at Atlantic insisted on knowing “what success looked like”—how would supporters know whether a programme succeeded, and what would be the long-term consequences of that success? To many nongovernmental organisations, programme and process assessment was an alien concept.

So most Atlantic grants came with an evaluation budget. There are clear measurements for the success of its early childhood and youth development programmes, and measuring success was not only a priority, but an essential part of partnering with more than 50 programmes. Childhood Development Initiative (CDI) was one of these programmes, and its outcomes are summarised below.

CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

10 YEARS: SEPTEMBER 2007—AUGUST 2016

13,400 children, young people,
families and staff supported | **€21 m** total
invested

3,600 children and
young people | **8,600** parents
and adults | **1,000** staff
members

Source: Child Development Initiative: Impacts and Outcomes report

When Atlantic went looking for existing early childhood programmes to support, those with data on their results were few and highly variable. The concept of randomised controlled trials as a means of measuring the effectiveness, or otherwise, of programmes was unheard of; the notion of

rigorous programme monitoring and evaluation hardly existed. Myriad small, often overlapping, organisations got by on “a wing and a prayer,” often not knowing whether they were making a difference. It was not enough to think they were making a difference to get funding from Atlantic; they also had to look to long-term strategies so that they could answer one basic question: “What will be the outcome of this programme if you get funding?”

“Families would come to a centre, and often there were great volunteers and everybody was happy and it was good, but they didn’t know if it was making a difference,” says a staffer. The commitment of Atlantic to evaluation was not negotiable. Grantees had to deliver the services, but they also had to manage external controls. “The motivation wasn’t to police them. We all wanted to learn and to have a robust outcome; that was the real purpose. They were given money and responsibility, but we wanted more than just an organisation of enthusiasts,” she says.

“Instead of starting with the problem, you start with the outcome and what you would like to see in 10 years’ time. Our theory is that, if you can support parents to do a better job, everyone benefits right down to the community.”

Noel Kelly, director of Education and Welfare Services at Tusla, Child and Family Agency

Atlantic staff tell the story of The Mate Tricks programme, which was aimed at improving the prospects of children with behavioural difficulties by providing them with a range of structured activities in a non-classroom setting after school. An evaluation of the programme discovered that, instead of getting better, the children’s behaviours were becoming more challenging and disruptive. It was always anticipated that some programmes would not work; and there were challenges when that happened. The Mate Tricks programme was discontinued.

Beginning in 1991, Atlantic provided development funding to Barnardos, Ireland’s largest children’s charity. “Atlantic forced us to sit down and do that introspection: ‘How do we know we are making a difference? What are we

52 evidence-based programmes in prevention
and early intervention supported...

90,000 children and young people | 23,000 parents or caregivers

4,000 professionals | 39 partner agencies

Source: "The Atlantic Philanthropies in the Republic of Ireland 1987-2014," July 2015

hoping to achieve?" says Suzanne Connolly, director of children's services with the organisation. It was, she says, an arduous journey of self-discovery. "It's great now that it has worked out really well, but it took time. Bringing staff with you takes time. You have to say to some, 'You could be doing better,' or 'We have to do this—or that.' We all hate change; it was tough."

Introducing evaluation consultants to organisations Atlantic was funding didn't always bring about a meeting of minds. "I found that process really hard," admits Connolly. "I think Atlantic expected things to happen more quickly. It's very hard to explain complexity in a way that's attractive. Our relationship developed over time." But Connolly has seen firsthand the credibility that The Atlantic Philanthropies' funding gives an organisation. "If Atlantic hadn't been involved, the early intervention/prevention, which everyone talks about now, including politicians and civil servants, would not be to the forefront. It's that clear. And that's a massively important policy issue," she says.

Evidence suggested that too many services in Ireland were designed to respond to problems only after they materialised. As a result, the government was spending a great deal of time and money intervening too late in a child's life—at a point when solving problems was much more difficult, and when the effort was much less likely to succeed.

As for what they have to show for it, Atlantic set out to change that by supporting 39 interventions and 52 evidence-based services through its children and youth initiatives. The grantees reached an estimated 90,000 children and young people, 23,000 parents and caregivers, and 4,000 professionals.

50+

children
and youth
programmes
measured for
evidence of
success

Noel Kelly, director of Education and Welfare Services at Tusla, Child and Family Agency, and former manager of the Northside Partnership’s Preparing for Life (PFL) Programme, was asked to present a case to Atlantic on what he believed would make a difference for children in some of the country’s most disadvantaged areas, on the northern fringes of Dublin city. He came up with the concept of supporting and investing in parents from pregnancy right through the pre-school years. With funding and support from Atlantic, he came back with data that indicated half the children starting school were not ready for it.

Preparing for Life’s school readiness ratio has risen from 50 per cent in 2009 to 66 per cent in 2016.

From this introduction came a €5.7 million home-visiting programme co-funded by Atlantic and the Irish government. “Without Atlantic I wouldn’t be doing what I’m doing now,” says Kelly. “I think a lot of other people in Ireland would say the same... that it has helped shape our thinking, has helped to shape the journey we’re on. It has changed how we do our business. Preparing for Life was strategically targeted—not to coach the children, but to coach the parents.”

As a result of the Preparing for Life programme, the school readiness ratio has risen from 50 per cent in 2009 to 66 per cent in 2016. Kelly says, “Instead of starting with the problem, you start with the outcome and what

IMPACT OF PREPARING FOR LIFE
FOR CHILDREN AT AGE 4

	PFL CHILDREN	NON-PFL CHILDREN
Overall IQ	10 points higher	
Below average score on cognitive development	13%	57%
Behavioural problems	2%	17%
Hyperactive and inattentive (on-track vs. not on-track)	16%	31%
Basic numerical skills	62%	44%
Required communication skills	79%	61%
Social competence (with peers)	75%	57%
Overweight	23%	41%
Protein intake (recommended daily allowance)	33%	23%
Hospital visits	37% fewer	
Treated for bone fractures (under 4s)	5%	18%

Source: Preparing for Life programme, 2016

you would like to see in 10 years' time" —a philosophy which, he says, was a "revelation" to him. "Our theory is that if you can support parents to do a better job, everyone benefits right down to the community," he says.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Dr Tony Bates' Jigsaw, The National Centre for Youth Mental Health (formerly Headstrong), seeks to ensure that no young person feels alone, isolated and disconnected from others around them. Bates originally received funding from Declan Ryan's One Foundation, which provided him with an introduction to Atlantic. "We had to get an evidence base for what we were doing, which we now have. Atlantic was very reassured by this," says Bates. "Youth mental health was a gap in the market, and early intervention is crucial. We have gained international experience as well as a national reputation. Young people are out there telling the story of the impact the organisation has had on their lives."

"Youth mental health was a gap in the market, and early intervention is crucial."

Dr Tony Bates, founder and director of innovation, Jigsaw

Set up in 2006, Jigsaw now has 12 centres across the country. It has engaged with more than 18,000 young people to change the conversation on mental health from one of stigma and mental illness to one of openness and resilience.

Jigsaw is now a brand that young people know about through community programmes, social services and informal settings such as social media and coffee shops. "Atlantic staff," he says, "didn't only write the cheques, they were part of our system, they gave us a strong sense of the work we were about and challenged us on aspects of it. There was great trust, but we were accountable as to how we developed the mission they were investing in. They wanted to see the difference."

18,000+ young people are changing the conversation on mental health from one of stigma and mental illness to one of openness and resilience.

With the Jigsaw project facing a “fiscal cliff” at the end of 2014, due to the conclusion of support from Atlantic and the One Foundation, the Department of Health and the HSE stepped in with almost €4 million in grant aid, because the earlier philanthropic donations had delivered such a strong and secure organisation and good outcomes. “Atlantic took a risk with something which was a gap in the service system,” Bates observes, “the really vulnerable young people between the ages of 10 and 21.”

However, there is some regret in Atlantic that a new stream of grantmaking to give youth a “voice” was withdrawn three years later. This rapid move from Atlantic-initiated expansion to contraction was confusing for the sector, to say the least, with expectations of funding raised only to be dashed within a very short period.

HUMAN RIGHTS

From 2004 through 2012, Atlantic invested more than €63 million toward the realisation of human rights in Ireland. Under the rubric of “Building Sustainable Change,” Atlantic allocated grants to expand capacity in a set of infrastructure organisations that would foster rights of people from

Human Rights Progress 2004–2015

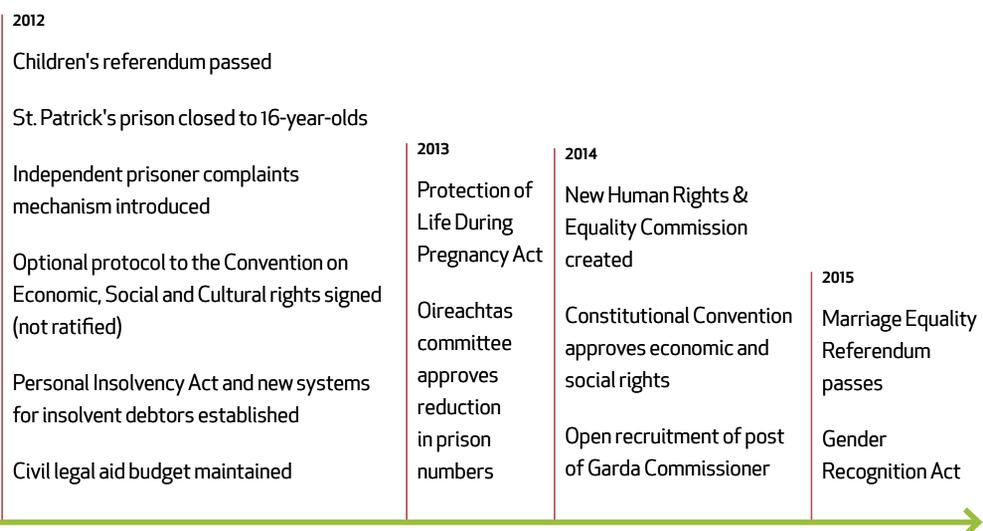
2004	2005	2007	2009	2010	2011
Ombudsman for Children set up	NGOs successfully take case to prevent deportation of Irish-born children	Office of Inspector of Prisons set up National Employment Rights Authority established Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission operational	Defense of human rights and equality bodies	TASC's Mapping the Golden Circle leads to restrictions on multiple directorships Civil Partnership Act	Reversal of reduction of minimum wage Thornton Hall prison abandoned Oireachtas powers referendum defeated

marginalised and disadvantaged communities. Grantees included The Irish Council for Civil Liberties, FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centres), Amnesty International and TASC (Think-tank for Action on Social Change). FLAC identified key legal challenges, among them the Lydia Foy case, which led in 2015 to the Gender Recognition Act that gave rights and equal status to those who have changed gender.

Among the outcomes, probably the most celebrated moment of 2015 was passage of the Marriage Equality Referendum, remarkably making the Republic of Ireland the first country to vote by public plebiscite in favour of same-sex marriage. “I believe the referendum on marriage and civil partnership would have happened without Atlantic funding, but it wouldn’t have happened so quickly,” says Kieran Rose, former chairperson of Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN). “That’s a huge thing, because people need those reforms now.”

The agreement with Atlantic to fund the Building Sustainable Change Programme in 2006 marked a significant “gear change” in GLEN’s development, according to a PA Consulting Group evaluation completed after the introduction of civil partnership. “For the first time, it had a fully developed

Human Rights Progress 2004–2015 (continued)



Source: Brian Harvey, "Making a Difference: Capturing the Learning from The Atlantic Philanthropies Human Rights Programme in Ireland," 2016

2015

Marriage Equality
Referendum
voted in with
62% approval

strategic plan to advance equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people with the resources to put it on a professional footing,” said the report.

“The central element of GLEN’s strategic approach has been securing legal recognition of same-sex couples,” the evaluators wrote. “GLEN’s approach was the recognition that it could not achieve progress on its own and that this could only be achieved in partnership with others.” Its “persistent, deliberate process of engagement and consensus-building” helped foster a sympathetic hearing from legislators and policymakers and led to all-party support for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) rights.

However, the report also noted that a concentration on stepping stones, such as civil partnership, did not meet with the approval of some gay and lesbian groups, who did not agree with the tactical approach adopted by GLEN and felt that marriage equality was the only goal worth pursuing.

At the other end of the spectrum, not everybody was happy with the agenda for social change pursued by Atlantic-funded organisations. These involved a referendum to enshrine children’s rights in the Irish Constitution, followed by civil partnership legislation and eventually the Same-Sex Marriage Referendum in 2015. “No” campaigner, journalist and teacher Breda O’Brien wrote that “shed loads of money was used to advance agendas” and that, because of its philanthropic status, Atlantic was “beyond scrutiny,” unlike other funders. “This is not The Atlantic Philanthropies funding a hospital or school.”

“Atlantic helped give voice to a marginalised community that had been too-long disenfranchised and excluded from full participation...”

Christopher G. Oechsli, CEO of The Atlantic Philanthropies

The referendum was passed overwhelmingly. Brian Sheehan, former director of GLEN,^{***} which received funding running into millions of euro from Atlantic for core support, stressed that Yes Equality, the umbrella organisation unifying the “Yes” vote, was fully funded through its own fundraising efforts and not by Atlantic.

^{***}On 18 May 2017, as this book was going to press, GLEN announced that it will be ceasing operations.

“Chuck Feeney is Irish by heritage and citizenship. Atlantic in Ireland is an Irish entity and populated with Irish citizens, and the ultimate force in the organisation is strictly Irish,” says Chris Oechsli in response to the charge of ‘American money buying an Irish referendum.’ “Of course, it is valid, in a democratic society, to question the role of organisations with unusually great resources. What Atlantic did was say, in the middle of the last decade: There are some people in society whose voices are not heard. So we supported organisations in the LGBT community, who were going to contribute to the discussion in a way that hadn’t been done before, including later advocating for marriage equality.”

IRISH HUMAN RIGHTS ACHIEVEMENTS

New rights for the LGBT community
Improved police accountability
New rights for children
Better conditions for prisoners
Improved treatment of rape victims in the criminal justice system

He adds: “One could argue whether that was undue influence or levelling the playing field. But the intent, and the reality, was to level the playing field. When Atlantic staff in Ireland were approached about funding the Yes campaign, they said, ‘no, that is not what we do.’ Atlantic was not going to be involved in the political process, not going to be involved in funding that activity. Atlantic helped give voice to a marginalised community that had been too-long disenfranchised and excluded from full participation in society, and whose voice had too-long been silent.”

MIGRANT RIGHTS

“The work that we do has been helped no end by Atlantic Philanthropies,” says Aideen Roche, communications and campaigns officer at Doras Luimní, the Limerick-based organisation which helps migrants and asylum seekers access accommodation, education and the complexities of the Irish welfare system.

“It allowed us to increase support services, to bring professionalism and advocacy to our work.... It allowed us to pursue our mission at a higher level,” says Roche. “Over the last couple of years, our policies developed, we were more equipped to effect change at the government level, to give a voice to people who don’t have a voice. Most of us are defined by what we work at, and some of our clients are doctors and engineers—but... are simply defined as asylum seekers.”

Efforts to change the Irish government’s “Direct Provision” system for those seeking asylum in Ireland have failed so far. Under this system, the government disperses asylum seekers in 35 centres around the country; it does not allow them to work or cook in their accommodation, and they must eat in canteens at specified times. The average waiting time for a determination on their status is three years, although some have been waiting for seven years or more.

“We were more equipped to... give a voice to people who don’t have a voice.... Some of our clients are doctors and engineers—but... are simply defined as asylum seekers.”

Aideen Roche, communications and campaigns officer at Doras Luimní

Doras Luimní and other activists want these restrictions lifted, particularly the ban on work, which many believe is inhumane in a society where there is work available and earnings would provide much needed financial support for those on the bottom of the social ladder.

Eighty kilometres further south, Atlantic lends its support to a similar struggle. Nasc, an organisation whose name means “link” in Gaelic, is halfway up Ferry Lane on one of the many steep hills running down to the River Lee in Cork city centre. Nasc has received vital funding to carry out its work among migrants and asylum seekers in the city.

Khatuna from Georgia is one of those who has arrived to talk to staff and update them on how she is settling into her new life. She came to Ireland in 2013. “I was feeling very stressed, and they helped me to find myself,” says Khatuna. “To me it was a strange country, and I didn’t have any legal rights, so I had to get documents. I am working now and my children have come over through family re-settlement and started in school, so the whole family is here. Without you, I don’t know what would happen to us.”

Fiona Finn joined Nasc in 2008 and became chief executive officer in 2011. “We have built up relationships with a lot of senior civil servants,” Finn says. “They are the keys that unlock almost all change. We also have good relationships with senior politicians, and we have to cultivate those relationships. Those are things that Atlantic has helped us to develop, because it was their funding that enabled us to develop and sustain such relationships. They ask questions: ‘What are your achievements? What were your failures? Most importantly, what did you learn from them?’”

These are just a few examples of the core areas in which The Atlantic Philanthropies invested after the decision to limit its philanthropic life. McCrea speaks about the extraordinary capacity of Chuck Feeney “to let you run your own show.” He adds: “The key thing was relationships. We looked at people who could be strong leaders—and who could tell us when we asked, ‘What do you want to do, and what do you want to do if we give you the money?’”

Grantee Profiles | Republic of Ireland



The Aughrim Active Retirement Group is part of the Lifecourse Institute programme at National University of Ireland, Galway.



Lauren Kelly (left), her son,
Hyland, and her case worker,
Sara Jane Leonard

Northside Partnership

DUBLIN

The Preparing for Life programme aims to ensure that children from deprived areas of the north Dublin suburbs are ready for school on both a social and an emotional level. Co-ordinated by the Northside Partnership, it offers each pregnant teenager assistance from early pregnancy to the moment when her child goes through the school gates at age five. “I heard about the programme because my cousin was already in it, and she thought it was great. I was only a few months pregnant at the time,” says Lauren Kelly from Coolock, who was 14 when she contacted Northside Partnership.

Sara Jane Leonard is a caseworker whose mission is to “help Lauren to be the best parent she can be.” Preparing for Life provides fundamental insight to young parents into the services needed during the most important time in the development of a child. The programme involves connecting pregnant teenagers to services like education and child care and helping them rear their babies so they are ready and able to enter the education system.

“I learned things like, if you’re calm, your baby’s calm,” says Kelly. “Loads of things I never knew, about attachment and bonding, when you’re looking at your baby and your baby’s looking at you, the mutual gaze... and the skin on skin when they’re first born, and about nutrition and breastfeeding and that what you eat is also good for your baby. I breast-fed exclusively for six months, and when I went back to school I expressed it into bottles—it can be frozen for six months. At the start it was hard, I had very little sleep and lots of struggles, waking every two hours.”

Without Leonard, her caseworker, Kelly says she definitely would not have breast-fed. At night time when there was no sleep for either mother or baby, she did baby massage to get her child to relax. “I used to do it every night. It was real relaxing for me too,” she says. After a February birth, Kelly was back in school by April and has been doing well. Leonard visits every few weeks. “I felt she was there just for me. I was nervous at the beginning,” says Kelly. “Without her I don’t think I would have been able to go back to school. When she came, it wasn’t like she was teaching me. She was more like a friend. She was like a different perspective from my Mam.”

“Without her I don’t think I would have been able to go back to school.”

Lauren Kelly

At the time of writing, Kelly’s baby, Hyland, is 15 months old and thriving. In the garden of their suburban home, he plays happily with his mother, who has the support of her extended family and friends in raising her child. From a fragile beginning, she has grown into a confident mother who repeated a year of school and intends to pursue her ambition to become a psychologist when she does her Leaving Certificate in 2017.

FEATURED GRANT

2005

€2.9 million for Northside Partnership’s Preparing for Life programme.

Doras Luimní

LIMERICK

Limerick's O'Connell Street in mid-April sunshine is bustling, and so is the cramped building occupied by Doras Luimní at one end of the street. This independent, nonprofit organisation working to support and promote asylum seekers and migrants living in Limerick and the Mid-West region was founded in 2000; and its name literally means "Limerick Door" to symbolise an opening for all to the local community. Doras Luimní received vital funding from Atlantic for its work with migrants between 2006 and 2014.

Jean Ryan, as he is widely known, is sitting, smiling brightly, in an upstairs office. "My parents are from Burundi, but I am from Rwanda. I came to Ireland in 2004 seeking asylum. I called to Doras Luimní the same day as I arrived in Limerick. They did everything I needed. They helped me a lot and they understood where I was coming from," says Ryan.

"I had to spend time [six years] in a hostel and was not allowed to work, so Doras Luimní created things for people to do... that would be helpful to us later."

Jean Ryan Hakizimana

Ryan's art studio and gallery on Liddy Street is hung with brightly coloured paintings that reflect both the Africa he left behind and the Ireland he now embraces. "I had to spend time [six years] in a hostel and was not allowed to work, so Doras Luimní created things for people to do, courses in English and other things that would be helpful to us later. Now I am on my own and I live my own life. But Doras helped me all the way, and that is why I maintain the connection with it. Doras was around for us all the time, trying to do something for our cases and what could be done to get people's passports sorted and help us get on with living our lives. Without

Doras, I don't know if I would have been able to get established in the way I have," says Ryan.

He teaches art classes, does picture framing and runs his own business selling printed greeting cards from copies of his paintings. On the wall of his studio is a picture of himself with the then President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, which he says illustrates how far a person can journey if offered the right kind of assistance. People in Limerick are amused at the "Ryan" part of his name, but he explains how it was taken from a friend of the family in Rwanda, and now fate has brought him right to the heartland of that ancient Irish clan.

Originally from the Congo, Maurice Kikangala arrived in Ireland in 2001 seeking asylum. He recalls that it was 10 days later, 22 June, that he arrived in Limerick and eventually made contact with Doras Luimní. He received refugee status in February 2002 and has since become an Irish citizen. Kikangala was a successful businessman and politician in his own country, but in Ireland he found himself in a new world.

"When we need help, Doras is there. The first thing is they make you welcome. It is a strange country to you, and they ask what you want to do, instead of telling you!"

Maurice Kikangala, business consultant with Doras Luimní

"Some people said to me that Limerick is a tough city and racist. Racism I don't care about, because racism is ignorance. Limerick is a good place to live," he adds. "I was warned about two areas and told not to go there, but I have gone there and I didn't find any racism there. I made good friends, then I met Sister Delia and she took me to Southill and I set up a choir... I started to sing in churches and everything."

As well as working with the choir, he has his own band and has released two CDs with the Elikya Choir, which stands for 'hope' in the Lingala language of the Congo. His wife and daughters came to Ireland as part



Jean Ryan Hakizimana
in his studio



Helen Rochford-Brennan,
Dementia Working Group
chairperson

of the family re-unification programme. “When we need help, Doras is there,” says Kikangala. “The first thing is they make you welcome. It is a strange country to you, and they welcome you and ask what you want to do, instead of telling you!”

FEATURED GRANT

2006

Doras Luimní received core funding totalling €1.5 million.

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland

TUBBERCURRY

What you need is someone to take your hand and tell you it is not a death sentence and explain the illness to you and give advice to your loved ones,” says Helen Rochford-Brennan, explaining how there was nobody to do that for her when she was first diagnosed with early-onset dementia.

Dressed in a blue suit and carrying a sheaf of papers under her arm, she has just been to Dublin City University, “thinking about how to develop better relationships with GPs [general practitioners]” as part of her role as chairperson of the Dementia Working Group, people in the early stages of dementia who advise The Alzheimer Society of Ireland.

“Some days are great and you think there is nothing wrong, but some days you feel sick because things are just not right in terms of word finding or slow thinking. Sometimes you just have difficulty holding on,” says Rochford-Brennan. Living a mile from the village of Tubbercurry in County Sligo with her husband, Sean, and her son, Martin, she is deeply involved in community work with the Western Development Commission and is an activist in On Track, a local movement to re-open the Western Rail Corridor. “I really enjoyed that side of my life,” she says.

There was, she says, “a slow realisation, like a creeping fog” that all was not right. She stayed out of the limelight until early 2012 when she was

diagnosed. “Then you realise that life will never be the same.... This was the darkest part of my life; it led to frustration, depression, anger and isolation,” and with it came the stigma, she says. “There are no state services or supports for those under 65, nobody to tell you how to proceed. I worked as a campaigner for refugees and other causes, but now because of my age, a random number, officialdom is going to deny me anything that would help me. There was no plan. I was wrapped up in heartache, shame and stigma, with nobody to talk to.”

“The greatest happiness I can give people with dementia is to discuss it openly.... I have truly come out of the darkness.”

Helen Rochford-Brennan

A chance encounter with a nurse in Sligo General Hospital pointed the way to a form of salvation. “‘You should get involved in research,’ she told me, and a couple of weeks later she told me she’d heard Professor Ian Robertson from Trinity College on the radio, and I should make contact with him. So, I finally got the courage to write to him, and Martin insisted I email him, which I did at 11 pm on a Sunday night, and by 9 am Monday he replied and referred me to one of his colleagues in Cognitive Rehabilitation Therapy. That gave me the tools to change my life.”

She was told about the formation of the Irish Dementia Working Group, and after plucking up the courage to join, Rochford-Brennan began to meet people who also have the illness. “We have worked on so many things, including advocacy groups for people with dementia, and that is where joining brought me to: where I could see the light and be of value to the community.

“Thank God for Atlantic funding,” she says. “As I have said to them, I am living proof that Chuck Feeney’s ‘bang for his buck’ works. What Atlantic has done is to empower and encourage, and we are now learning to speak up and have our voice heard. It is the voice of the people. Our work is for a better world, a better understanding of what the illness is, about community, about loving care at home for as long as possible. Atlantic funding has given

us a voice to tell people what we want, not what they think we want... We need our voices to be heard. We started as a Working Group to look at all the things that are important to us, and the funding helped me to expand and protect my rights and the rights of everybody with dementia.”

Advocacy is not for everyone, she concedes, but Rochford-Brennan is a passionate voice for people with dementia, just as she was for other worthy causes before her diagnosis. “It has been a long, hard journey, and it isn’t easy by any standards. Maybe this is not where I intended to be, but it is where I ended up. Despite everything, a lot more needs to be done. People walk on the other side of the street; they don’t want to have that conversation because they know you have dementia—whereas if it was cancer or some other illness, you would be treated so differently. The greatest happiness I can give people with dementia is to discuss it openly, and the funding provided by Atlantic allowed me to do that... It has enhanced so many people’s lives, and I for one have truly come out of the darkness,” she says.

FEATURED GRANTS

1990

The Alzheimer Society of Ireland received funding totalling €4 million.

Glenstal Abbey

MURROE

Walking through the grounds of Glenstal Abbey, a massive Norman revival castle built by Sir Francis Barrington in 1837 near the village of Murroe and close to Limerick city, Abbot Mark Patrick Hederman has an easy, relaxed style as he talks about the Benedictine abbey, its history and the generosity of Chuck Feeney. Passing the rhododendron bushes dotted around the grounds, he ruminates as to how Atlantic funded the Abbey’s precious library.

Ed Walsh, then president of the University of Limerick, was insistent that the university would have a non-denominational ethos, which led to a certain amount of conflict with the local Roman Catholic hierarchy. “Because there wasn’t a single person from the church at the groundbreaking ceremony for

the new Irish World Academy of Music and Dance,” Hederman recalls, “Ed asked me to say grace before the meal. Chuck Feeney was like God Almighty, and after the dinner he asked to meet me; and after our meeting I wrote to him to see if he might provide some funds for a badly needed library.”

In order to gain the philanthropist’s attention, the Abbot wrote his appeal in verse. “He told me that he would give me two million [euros] for the library. He didn’t want to help a religious house, because he believed that religion was the source of conflict in the world. Of course many of the books in our library are religious, but he said provided it was going to be helpful generally to the human race, he would support it,” says Hederman.

“We are connected to the University of Limerick Master’s course in the Music Academy through chant... and, of course, the university is a great asset to us, as is the library.”

Abbot Mark Patrick Hederman

“Chuck Feeney is very much a genius,” adds the Abbot. “He wanted connections between those things he funded, whether it was education or research into ageing.... And the thing is, we are connected to the University of Limerick Master’s course in the Music Academy through chant.” (Chant, for which Glenstal is internationally famous, is mainly practised by religious orders). “They have an MA course in the university, and we have here a whole repertoire of monastery chant. In September, we have a monk from Nigeria coming to do the course.... These are all stepping stones, we are interconnected; and, of course, the University of Limerick is a great asset to us, as is the library.

“At a time when people no longer value physical books, it is so important for us to maintain the tradition and to have a place where some 90,000 books are looked after with proper care and attention,” says the Abbot.



Abbot Mark Patrick Hederman
at Glenstal Abbey.

The library includes many antiquarian books from the 15th to the 19th century as well as the monastery archive. But it is utterly modern. Off the main library there is a relatively small locked room where they keep most of the library's rare books and manuscripts. He thumbs through a small but beautifully decorated "Ladies' Prayer Book" in Latin script, before remarking, "This dates from around the same time as the Book of Kells."

"These are the things that Chuck Feeney and Atlantic have helped to do here," adds Hederman. "Philanthropy is almost like a love affair. You want to be supportive and grow, increase and multiply. It is extremely intuitive, but (a) it has to be productive, and (b) it must be worthwhile."

LIBRARY GRANTS

2000–2001	€1.9 million to support the construction of the new library at Glenstal Abbey
1990–1999	€9.4 million for the Ussher Library and the Colonnades at Trinity College Dublin
1994–1998	€6.6 million for the John & Aileen O'Reilly Library at Dublin City University
1995–2000	€5.1 million for the Glucksman Library at the University of Limerick
2001–2006	€13.5 million for the Boole Library at University College Cork

Mercer's Institute for Successful Ageing

DUBLIN

Professor Rose Anne Kenny, who was renowned for her research into cardiovascular and mobile disorders in ageing, returned to Ireland after 20 years working abroad. In choosing to do so, she significantly has impacted a field so profoundly neglected in Ireland that it lacked even the most basic database.

Professor Kenny now operates from the Mercer's Institute for Successful Ageing (MISA) in St James's Hospital, a massive new building partly funded by Atlantic. She also is a sought-after professor at Trinity. In mid-2016, as

construction workers put the final touches to the Mercer's building before its official opening, Professor Kenny, in her medical garb, was already on site directing operations and meeting patients in a modern, relaxed setting that, with its wide corridors and modern look and furnishings, does not feel like a hospital.

“We are using this new institution and TILDA so that people can stay in their homes and die in their homes and have a good quality of life until the end.”

Professor Rose Anne Kenny

“MISA is the biggest dedicated facility for clinical research, education and training for ageing on these islands,” she says. “We are running new models of service delivery for all ages, not just older people. Ageing starts in many different strands in life. The purpose is to capture reversible elements of early ageing, so that we can halt decline and maybe even reverse it. We are all living longer, but we are spending an average of 10 to 15 years with significant disability—that is what we are trying to reduce. We want to enhance this time, so that it is a healthy lifespan.” MISA is the practical, concrete expression of ageing with support.

The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing is an extraordinarily ambitious study, started by Professor Kenny with Atlantic support, to chart the social, economic and health circumstances of some 8,500 people aged 50 and over. TILDA surveyors revisit the same people at home every two years for a lengthy interview. Participants attend a two- to three-hour clinical assessment in an inviting atmosphere, where staff use various technologies to assess their physical and mental well-being. This provides a rich seam of data about the population as it ages, such as the incidence of obesity, injurious falls, clinical depression, heart conditions and cognitive impairment. Blood samples, now in storage, represent a rich resource for researchers testing for the genes that cause Alzheimer's disease.



Professor Rose Anne Kenny,
director of Mercer's Institute for
Successful Ageing and professor
of medical gerontology at Trinity
College and St James's Hospital.

“This research is helping people to live a healthy, longer lifespan, both for the brain and body. Using the data we have from TILDA informs us what those early risk factors and indicators are that something might be going wrong,” Kenny adds. “We are using this new institution and TILDA so that people can stay in their homes and die in their homes and have a good quality of life until the end.”

As the name suggests, her work is about successful ageing. “We are some way off finding a cure for dementia, but we do know early factors, and we can do something about them,” she says. For example, she hopes that health policymakers will take sufficient account of TILDA research, which shows that improved vascular health and appropriate exercise in middle age can prevent dementia in later life in 30 per cent of the population.

Now 10 years in existence, the results of TILDA research are already changing policy and practice. When it revealed that two-thirds of older people had high blood pressure—many of them unaware of it—funding was allocated to community health nurses to monitor blood pressure more frequently on a national basis. Also on a practical level, TILDA has established that 31 per cent of Irish adults aged 65 through 74 do not have enough time to cross the road in the time allocated by pedestrian light signals.

Making changes that will reflect TILDA research is the goal of the project, as is making Ireland the most age-friendly country in the world.

Making changes that will reflect TILDA research is the goal of the project, as is making Ireland the most age-friendly country in the world.

FEATURED GRANTS

2008–2018	More than €16 million for establishing and supporting TILDA
2006–2016	€17.1 million for the construction of Mercer’s Institute for Successful Ageing



Ann Twomey, Genio delegate
and volunteer

Genio

What people wanted wasn't always what they got," says Madeleine Clarke, founder and executive director of Genio, an organisation funded by Atlantic and the Irish government to improve the lives of people with disability, dementia and mental health difficulties. "The government was spending a lot of money, but people weren't at the centre of the planning; they weren't asked, 'What would work for you?' It was well-meaning, but a 'one-size-fits-all' strategy. Genio asked the question: What is going to keep you at home, happy and productive?"

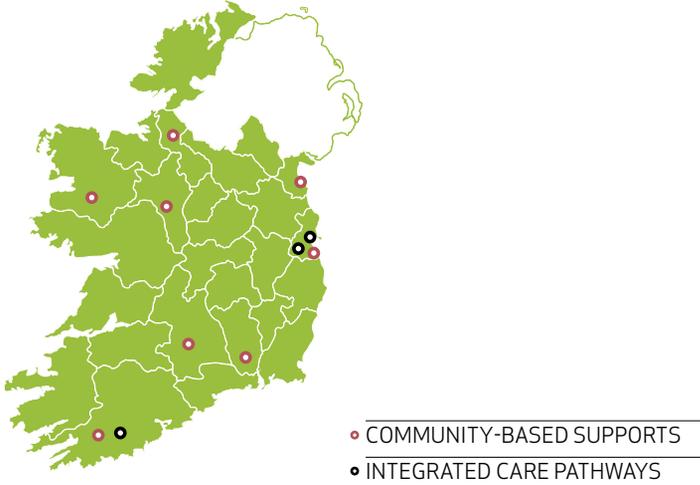
"We ensure that people with disability or dementia can remain living at home, pursuing their interests and activities for as long as possible," says Clarke. This also involves working with institutions so that people who are in care but are capable of looking after themselves given adequate support can leave a hospital setting and live in the community of families, friends and neighbours. "We are currently reaching over 14,500 people across Ireland—over 5,300 people are receiving personalised supports in the community; while over 9,000 families, carers and staff have attended information and training events through the projects we support," she says.

"We ensure that people with disability or dementia can remain living at home, pursuing their interests and activities for as long as possible."

Madeleine Clarke, founder and executive director of Genio

In partnership with government, Genio is designing and managing a Service Reform Fund of over €45 million to support the scaling up of service improvements demonstrated over the past five years. Founded in 2008, the organisation has its core costs funded by the Department of Health and The Atlantic Philanthropies until 2018, and Clarke is hoping that Genio's track record will ensure further state funding after that date.

GENIO COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



Ann Twomey, who cared for her husband Noel in Cork before and after he was diagnosed with vascular dementia in 2003, accessed the Genio website in 2011 and learned about an initiative in the nearby town of Kinsale, which changed her life.

“I said I could bring the perspective of carer to it, and K-CoRD [the Kinsale community response to dementia] was supportive,” says Twomey. “I took the lead in assistive technology. University College Cork became involved in a project on active ageing, and K-CoRD was ideal in that it was already operational. I became the Genio delegate, the face of older people. I was delighted when Genio advertised for potential projects it was prepared to fund. Out of 22 applications, eight were interviewed: Tony Foley, Deirdre Cullen and myself went for the interview; and we were successful. The idea was to test a model for individual care over three years and three months.”

Twomey was conscious from her own experience that for people with dementia there was no “one-size-fits-all” solution. “I became the advocate for carers, for their voice to be heard. I went to Europe and addressed conferences on living with dementia—they hate to be called ‘dementia sufferers.’ I knew we had to go the extra mile for people with dementia,” she says. “It was

also therapy for me. I was in the grieving process, and it took me off in another direction.... Of course, it would stir up memories as well. It was lovely working with K-CoRD.” Genio re-granted €633,000 to K-CoRD from an Atlantic grant.

Funding from Atlantic also was crucial to the National Disability Policy, which is aimed at getting value for money, regardless of whether it comes from government or other sources. “Atlantic did great work. They took it from an idea in my head 17 years ago to a place where there are thousands of people all around the country living better lives as a result of this funding,” said Clarke.

FEATURED GRANTS

2007–2018 Genio has received €25.8 million and leveraged in excess of €50 million from government.

Children’s Rights Alliance

W started as CEO with the Children’s Rights Alliance (CRA) in August 2005, having come from the business sector but with a history of volunteerism in youth and children’s rights,” says Jillian van Turnhout. The Alliance is a coalition of more than 100 voluntary organisations working to improve the lives of children and young people by securing changes in policies and services for them. “It was at a very critical funding stage. CRA had done great work but there was no plan. I was brought in to bring an organisational discipline and to develop a strategic plan,” says van Turnhout.

In 2005, both Atlantic and the One Foundation were looking at ways to support the Children’s Rights Alliance. An integral part of its mission was to secure full implementation in Ireland of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Atlantic provided funds to engage a consultant to help formulate a strategic plan. “It was really good, because when we did get the strategic plan, we had absolute clarity. It was a really robust road map for five years, and we kept to that plan. Everyone said it would take 10 years



Jillian van Turnhout, former
chief executive of Children's
Rights Alliance

to get the children's referendum. The constitution was a constant blocker in areas such as adoption, custody, guardianship—all the things that are about the best interests of the child. If we didn't set our sights on that, we might as well pack our tent," she says.

“When the referendum succeeded, who did I think of first? The children in long-term foster care, whose rights to adoption were extinguished when they turned 18.”

Jillian van Turnhout

“With core funding [to the Alliance] from Atlantic, the state was made to pony up as well. It came up with a three-year grant, which was unusual for a government department. It was a process towards the referendum. Initially everyone thought the referendum was a pushover, but we knew that whatever the question, there would be a core number opposed to it. The Children's Rights Alliance managed to keep all the parties on track and together. In Dáil Éireann, only one voice was raised against it,” says van Turnhout.

“When the referendum succeeded, who did I think of first? I thought of the children in long-term foster care, whose rights to adoption were extinguished when they turned 18. By passing the referendum, we gave them a chance of that security. We were so fortunate. Atlantic built the capacity of the organisation. It gave us trust and the belief that we could do it, kept us on the path, and kept us focussed,” she says.

The Thirty-First Amendment to the Constitution, which strengthened children's rights, became law in April 2015. The Children's Referendum had passed in November 2012, but was held up due to a court challenge that the Supreme Court ultimately rejected.

FEATURED GRANTS

2004–2014 The Children's Rights Alliance received €3.2 million.

National University of Ireland, Galway

GALWAY

The Institute for Lifecourse and Society on the edge of the National University of Ireland, Galway campus is a light-filled building specifically designed to accommodate and welcome community groups who participate in the academic investigations of ageing, promoted and financed largely by Atlantic. “The academics are the least important people here,” says Professor Eamon O’Shea, who was one of the early pioneers in the study and investigation of what it is like to grow old in Ireland today.

“We are the first centre in the country dedicated to the study of age and ageing, and particularly rural ageing and social exclusion or inclusion. Our aim is to have the voice of older people heard in policy and practice. I focus a lot on dementia, on policy on the whole issue of how society and the state treat the older person. In practical terms, to make the voice of people with dementia heard, to find out directly from them, ‘What do you want?’” the professor says.

He emphasises words like “home” and “community” because that is where Professor O’Shea believes people should stay as long as possible. “Our aim is to make sure dementia is diagnosed in a timely way so that people can make provision. When people are at the moderate stage, we are picking up ways to communicate with them... The exchange has to be each way and has to be based on basic humanity. While we are primarily engaged in research, research only is not enough; we have to engage with them if we are to develop a successful strategy,” he says.

After the age of 65, the number of people with dementia doubles every five years; by the time people reach age 85, there is a 30 per cent statistical probability of someone in that cohort suffering from some form of dementia. There are currently 55,000 people in Ireland with dementia. This is projected to treble to 152,000 by 2046, with 4,000 new cases each year.

4,000
new cases
of dementia
are diagnosed
each year



Professor Eamon O'Shea, School
of Business & Economics

“We are also concentrating a lot on brain health and making sure its importance is recognised,” says O’Shea. “Here in Galway we are learning more about the brain itself and the importance of brain health and activity—the connection is huge, as is the connection to community and family. If communities are welcoming and aware of dementia, it is easier to live in those communities. That is even before we get to the whole issue of state care. We need people to ‘keep an eye out’ for family members, relatives, neighbours and friends and make sure that as a people we are all aware.

“Our aim is to have the voice of older people heard in policy and practice.... on the whole issue of how society and the state treat the older person.”

Professor Eamon O’Shea

“I had worked in the Early Stage Dementia area, and I was lucky that Atlantic came along with support. From 2006 to 2011, they played a central role in support of the National Dementia Strategy. On a practical level, they asked, ‘How can we change the way services are delivered and funded?’ and this has transformed the landscape for those with dementia,” he says.

This also led to connectivity among the National University of Ireland, Galway; Trinity College in Dublin; and other research projects, many of which have been undertaken in Ireland with crucial funding from Atlantic. “They encouraged action through funding, to make an impact on this issue, and their support for advocacy has been crucial,” O’Shea says. “It was a coalition of interests, and Atlantic was the catalyst for change.”

FEATURED GRANTS

1997–2017	The National University of Ireland, Galway received funding of €66.9 million for a variety of projects, including €7.2 million for ageing work.
2015	Trinity College Dublin is partnering with the University of California, San Francisco on the Global Brain Health Institute; Trinity’s portion was approximately €63 million.

Nasc

CORK

Jan, an asylum-seeker from the war-ravaged city of Kobani in northern Syria, came to Ireland in October 2014, and his wife, Sherin, joined him in 2016. “As an engineer, I was in my little town when Isis [Islamic State] came. We all went to Turkey, 500,000 people. Kobani has been 90 per cent destroyed by Isis,” he says, taking out his phone to show me the ruins of the city, which is now little more than heaps of rubble, its wrecked streets almost obliterated by the destruction.

“I gave money to someone to take me out to Turkey—we were put on a big ship. It cost €13,000 to come here. I said I wanted to go somewhere democratic, and they told me Ireland is best, so I came here. I didn’t know anybody, except one person from home was in Cork; and he told me this is a good country and nice people, and they support us. I got refugee status quite quickly and within months came down to Cork to meet my friend and he told me about Nasc and the support centre, and they are a very nice team. I told them my story, and they helped me to organise my documentation,” says Jan.

“Life only starts... when the family re-unification process is successful, and they are re-united in Ireland.”

Fiona Finn, Nasc CEO

“The family re-unification programme started before we met Jan,” says Fiona Hurley, a senior legal officer with Nasc. “He ran into a few obstacles, but Jan is very strong. For Sherin, staying on was a terrifying experience, but she didn’t have a passport; and it would have been extremely dangerous to travel outside her town to get one, so there was a lot of difficulty getting travel documents. She was very brave and got her passport and visa stamped, and we worked with the Turkish authorities to resolve various difficulties. It took seven months, and she only arrived here in Cork two weeks ago.”



Sherin, a refugee from Syria

Jan takes up the story: “Without Fiona and Nasc, I don’t know what I would have done. I could never have got the supporting documentation. In Syria, I was an agriculture engineer. I had my own business in Syria, a good life. We had a good house and everything was going well until this happened.”

One of the group suggested he might be able to work in agriculture in Ireland, but Jan laughs, contrasting the green fields of Munster to the sands of Syria. He is now pursuing further education in the hope of getting a qualification that will enhance his employment prospects.

Nasc has helped hundreds of migrants and their families through its programmes, which are aimed at helping them to access their rights, to re-unite them with their families by bringing close relatives to Ireland where this is desirable and possible, and by helping those who want to remain here become naturalised Irish citizens.

Nasc staff Fiona Hurley, Clare Comiskey and Susan Mackey, a researcher on migrant children in care in Ireland, have all been involved in trying to re-settle migrant and asylum-seeker families. “Life only starts for many of the people who come here when the family re-unification process is successful, and they are re-united in Ireland,” says Fiona Finn, Nasc CEO. “It is labour-intensive, but it is also really rewarding.”

Nasc has helped hundreds of migrants to access their rights, re-unite with their families, and become naturalised Irish citizens.

FEATURED GRANTS

2006–2011 Nasc grants totalled €1.3 million.

Lessons

Republic of Ireland

The atrium of the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick features a mosaic by the late Desmond Kinney depicting the origin of the River Shannon, which is only a few metres away.



“Part of what was happening was that construction of partnerships—with communities, government agencies, other funders. The point was to demonstrate how mainstream services could be transformed, not to implement one-off pilot projects that would thrive for a moment, then disappear.”

Mary Sutton, Republic of Ireland country director for The Atlantic Philanthropies

The Preparing for Life programme helps children develop through play so that they are ready to start school on time.

Lessons for the Future

For his 80th birthday, the University of Limerick made a short video for Chuck Feeney featuring some of the musicians attending the university's Irish World Academy of Music and Dance. After outlining their reasons for coming to Limerick to study, the students were asked what they knew of Chuck Feeney. One said, "I never heard of him." Another had a vague idea of who he was, but the final student from Japan, after asking the interviewer to repeat the question, replied: "A Chuck Feeney... what's that?"

What indeed! A man who has devoted almost his entire fortune to philanthropy, did it in his own lifetime and, according to Don Barry, former president of the University of Limerick, "never once asked for a single expression of thanks." Had the same student been asked a slightly different question, the answer might well have been a variation on the theme: "Atlantic Philanthropies... what is that?"

For more than three decades, Chuck Feeney, Atlantic, its staff and its grantee organisations have changed the face of Irish society from the cradle to the grave, by strategy,

seizing opportunity, initiating research and insisting on evaluation—asking “What have we to show for it?” At the heart of it was a philosophy that aimed to connect and serve people—linking academics investigating brain health with dementia sufferers, connecting those seeking change in Ireland’s social agenda with like-minded groups, connecting the great investment in third level education with business opportunities through research. “Part of what was happening was that construction of partnerships—with communities, government agencies, other funders,” says Mary Sutton, Atlantic’s country director for the Republic of Ireland. “The point was to demonstrate how mainstream services could be transformed, not to implement one-off pilot projects that would thrive for a moment then disappear.”

The ultimate aim was that the best elements of such programmes would be mainstreamed into services that would be adopted and funded by the Irish government. “It was all about services, making them robust enough to stand on their own feet, or ensuring that they were of such vital importance that they became part of state services,” Sutton adds.

“Atlantic really developed advocacy in this country... Atlantic is very standards-led, which we’re not so great at in Ireland. From my perspective, it was very positive for the children of this country—and for equality.”

Frances Fitzgerald, Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality

Another thread running through its approach was investing in better lives through advocacy—particularly in the second half of Atlantic’s mission in Ireland. Atlantic funded organisations helping the most vulnerable, giving these organisations

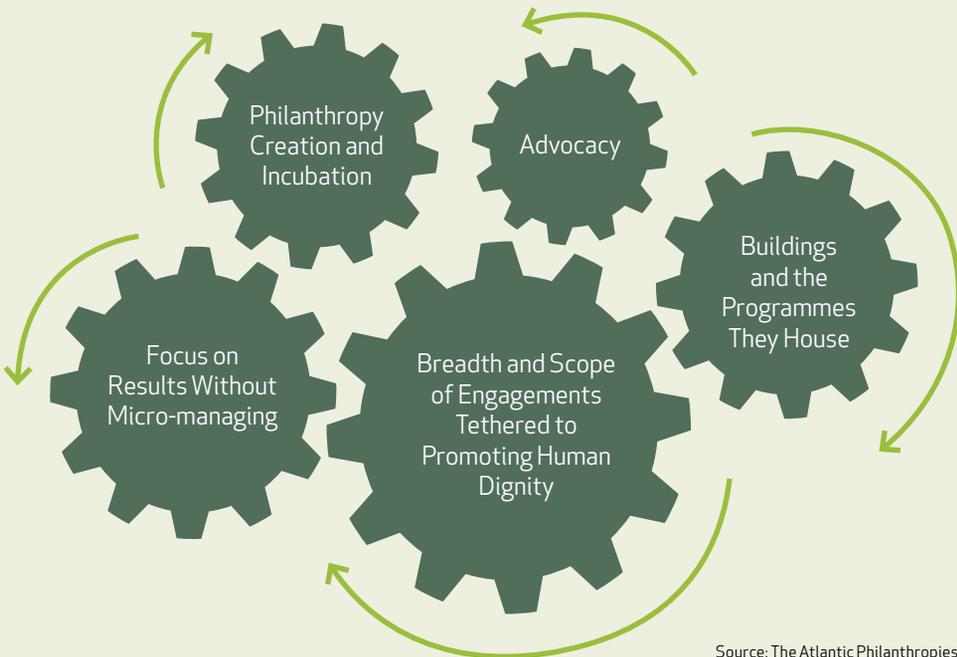


The Irish World Academy of Music and Dance offers research, rehearsal and performance facilities.

the resources to fulfil their mission and to make them no longer dependent on anecdotal evidence but on cold, hard facts that could influence public discourse, funding and policy. Nobody had ever done that before.

“Atlantic really developed advocacy in this country,” says Frances Fitzgerald, Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality. “Governments always have mixed feelings about this, obviously, but I come from an NGO background myself, so I don’t get bothered about it. I think it’s a good thing that they developed the NGOs to be very effective voices in a variety of areas, that they helped them to develop advocacy skills and to be very professional. I believe those advocacy groups—and there’s a whole range of them—felt incredibly supported. Atlantic is very standards-led, which we’re not so great at in Ireland. From my perspective, it was very

ATLANTIC’S FIVE DIFFERENTIATING FACTORS



Source: The Atlantic Philanthropies
Stakeholder Assessment by
Artemis Strategy Group, 2014

positive for the children of this country—and for equality. That’s a big part of what Atlantic does, that ethos of equality and opportunity. Oh yes, I would say they certainly made a difference.”

“The pressure he’s [Feeney] put on successive governments, the way in which he made sure that modern Ireland, North and South, would invest in education and people, we’re all grateful for that.”

Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland

It isn’t only governments who have “mixed feelings” about advocacy. Breda O’Brien would agree that Atlantic made a difference, but not necessarily for the good.

Writing after the same-sex marriage referendum was passed, she opined: “Given that Atlantic Philanthropies had been bankrolling and providing expertise to the LGBT community for over a decade, and investing tens of millions in the drive to secure gay marriage, we [the No campaign] did not do too badly.... Just imagine for a minute that groups advocating a ‘No’ had received millions of dollars over a decade. Imagine the screams of outrage from the media! Not a flicker of interest resulted when it was money invested in a cause with which they agreed.” Atlantic invested €7.4 million in LGBT work from 2004 through 2013.

But while there were those who disagreed with the equality agenda pursued by organisations funded by Atlantic, like GLEN, the Children’s Rights Alliance and the Irish Council

for Civil Liberties, the vast majority of people look upon The Atlantic Philanthropies as a benign organisation whose object was the pursuit of equality and improving the lot of Irish people in general.

At a ceremony in the Royal Irish Academy in September 2015 to launch a book about Atlantic's capital investments, entitled *Laying Foundations for Change*, Taoiseach Enda Kenny spoke of the many thousands of Irish students who owed their university experience to the vision of Feeney but would never know his name because he had never allowed it to adorn a single building or programme.

“The vision of Chuck Feeney, and the pressure he's put on successive governments, the way in which he made sure that modern Ireland, North and South, would invest in education and people, we're all grateful for that,” said Mary Robinson, the former president of Ireland, on another occasion. “His relationship with the Irish people is personal... Taken all together, the beneficial effects to our intellectual potential are countless, impossible to measure.”

“He has put in place a new infrastructure, which has now put Ireland within the top 20 countries in the world in terms of scientific research,” said former senator and president of the National University of Ireland, Dr Maurice Manning, as he conferred an Honorary Doctorate of Laws from the nine Irish universities on Chuck Feeney, an event which has never happened before and is unlikely to happen again.

Another great philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie, strove, through the libraries he built around Ireland in the early 20th century, to give ordinary people “ladders on which the aspiring can rise.” Atlantic has taken that aspiration so many steps forward, giving the same ladders of aspiration to

students, to refugees and asylum seekers, to young mothers in deprived housing estates, to researchers and advocates seeking to change our lives forever.

Barnardos, Ireland's largest children's charity, summed up this contribution not just in terms of funds, but also in terms of motivation and responsibilities. Its report, "The Legacy of Atlantic Investment for Barnardos," states: "We know that what Atlantic would want from us, and what we want from ourselves, is that we remain committed to the continued delivery of our long-term outcomes as we engage in the next strategic planning process. We will always want our service to operate to the highest standards based on evidenced need. We will always want to influence statutory and non-statutory providers in the design, delivery and effective evaluation of children's services."

"He has put in place a new infrastructure which has now put Ireland within the top 20 countries in the world in terms of scientific research."

Dr Maurice Manning, former senator and president of the National University of Ireland

These are aspirations shared by almost all the other organisations that have not only benefitted from the largesse of Atlantic, but also learned from the ethos of evidence-based outcomes that was contingent on receiving those funds. At Atlantic's Laying Foundations for Change launch, Taoiseach Kenny quipped: "It's always more enjoyable when the giver has a pulse.... Chuck Feeney got to find out what that's like. His objective was to catch people before they fell."

Of course, no one person or organisation can catch everybody, but Atlantic has caught more than most. Now many of the organisations it funded are able to stand on their own feet—but many will also need the assistance of other philanthropy if they are to carry their work into the future.

“We will always want to influence statutory and non-statutory providers in the design, delivery and effective evaluation of children’s services.”

“The Legacy of Atlantic Investment for Barnardos”

So 2016 marked “The End” for Atlantic grantmaking. It has largely closed the book; the funding (apart from exceptional grants already allocated) has ceased; and the organisation itself is deeply into the process of winding up. So what now for those it has left behind and for those who, in the future, need philanthropic funding to carry out their mission?

Sadly, Ireland, with some notable exceptions, is not a place where philanthropy is ingrained in the psyche of those who have the wealth to “make a difference” as Feeney and Atlantic did over several decades. “I wish they were still here,” says Dr Tony Bates, who runs Jigsaw (formerly Headstrong), Ireland’s national centre for youth mental health. “We have to work very hard to fundraise... Everybody needs to know that a really good philanthropic plan can make an enormous difference. There really is a role for it, and that role hasn’t disappeared. I hope somebody will take up the baton that Atlantic carried, because it is needed.”

“Before you go into something, you should know how you are going to conclude,” says Oechsli. “For example, we go in and have that part of the discussion upfront: ‘What are you seeking to accomplish?’, and there is a very explicit

acknowledgement that we can't be there for the entire journey. We also need to think in terms of 'What does life look like for the recipient beyond the Atlantic chequebook?' And, do we consider that, if they achieve a certain outcome within a certain time, that the life of the organisation is secondary to the impact they are seeking to achieve?

"Atlantic is leaving the field, we haven't saved the world, there are many problems we could work on forever," says Oechsli. "In defining our own life and what we seek to achieve, we are also asking our recipients and institutions to do the same. Sometimes the issue becomes a discussion on sustaining the organisation. That is one of the reasons why Chuck Feeney wanted the foundation to have a limited life, because organisations can be the same. We are all human and our identity gets wrapped up in the organisation, and sometimes we are not attuned as we should be to the impact and outcome of what we are doing and what we are seeking to achieve."

"It's always more enjoyable when the giver has a pulse.... Chuck Feeney got to find out what that's like. His objective was to catch people before they fell."

Taoiseach Enda Kenny

The great need for philanthropy concerns Éilis Murray, executive director of Philanthropy Ireland, who is hoping to change the Irish mindset. "In Ireland, we have the highest number of people in Europe who give, but it is reactive giving. It is not part of our DNA to give in a planned and strategic way. We are great for disasters and overseas aid, putting a patch on a crisis. But in terms of making fundamental changes for the longer term, we don't think like that. The Atlantic Philanthropies have shown us what can be done and how things can be done in terms of smaller grants.



Aerial view of the University of
Limerick campus

They have also brought the word ‘philanthropy’ into the vernacular; it wasn’t part of our everyday language. That is something that made a difference as well.”

“One of the issues that can put people off was that Atlantic was so big, the money was so vast,” admits Sutton. “What we want to convey is that in our experience, you can achieve a great deal with smaller amounts of money. With well-chosen interventions, modest grants can achieve amazing results—it is not always about the money; it is about vision, ambition, focus on outcomes, partnership; it is a commitment to building capacity.” Out of a total of 1,030 grants made by Atlantic in the Republic of Ireland, 34 per cent of them were in amounts less than €100,000.

34%

of Atlantic grants
were in amounts
less than
€100,000

“In Ireland, we have the highest number of people in Europe who give, but it is reactive giving. It is not part of our DNA to give in a planned and strategic way.”

Éilis Murray, executive director of Philanthropy Ireland

“We struggled with that,” admits Oechsli when questioned about the sheer size of Atlantic’s largesse and the possibility that it could put others, with less to give, off the idea of philanthropy. “You don’t need to have a large cheque to make a difference. There are plenty of opportunities to make a difference with much smaller gifts. Atlantic’s amounts were motivated by Chuck’s philosophy of Giving While Living.”

He continues: “There is a tremendous personal satisfaction in doing that in your lifetime, whether you take a spiritual or a religious view, or whether you say, ‘This is the most enjoyable thing I can do in my life.’ If you have the resources, isn’t it really more satisfying to make a difference and leave

the world a better place? Chuck ultimately felt that way. It is not about the size of your fortune; it is about what you can achieve with the resources you have.”

Atlantic’s story is just that—a single instance with all the ups and downs of any human enterprise. “It is not a template,” says Sutton. “Some traits that served Atlantic well are captured in this volume. Crucially, we had a strategic focus on carefully chosen sectors and outcomes—to the exclusion of other equally worthy causes—and a steadfast commitment to stick with issues and be realistic about how

TRAITS OF THE ATLANTIC PHILANTHROPIES



Source: The Atlantic Philanthropies Stakeholder
Assessment by Artemis Strategy Group, 2014

long it would take to achieve our desired goals. We valued partnership and collaboration, recognised the central role of government, and sought opportunities to partner for a shared objective.

“Atlantic also provided resources to countervailing voices who would hold government to account,” she says, “Sharing a conviction that a strong civil society is vital to democracy, which is always a work in progress. We bet on the talents and expertise of grantees to achieve success and bolstered that capability with resources. Finally, we recognised that some of our interventions were ill-conceived or poorly executed and committed to learning from success and failure.

“It may be that some of these traits are of wider interest and applicability,” says Sutton.

There is often a failure to understand the difference between charity and philanthropy, and indeed in Ireland there is the suspicion of an ulterior motive around philanthropy. “Atlantic Philanthropies was neither pompous nor arrogant,” says Éilis Murray of Philanthropy Ireland. “What people give is only a fraction of what government spends... but philanthropy can bring things in more rapidly, they can pilot and motivate in a way governments cannot and wouldn’t be allowed to. I would challenge anybody to say that they or those around them have not, in some way, benefitted from philanthropy.”

After shedding the veil of secrecy, The Atlantic Philanthropies were interested in partnering with others for maximum impact, says Mary Sutton. “In terms of other foundations, the options were limited in Ireland, but we did partner with the One Foundation, The Ireland Funds, The Community Foundation for Ireland and others, to a lesser extent, when the conditions were right for such collaborations,” she adds.

Although he was known to be frugal, Feeney also recognised that by not properly resourcing something there was a real danger it would fail. “He would say, ‘That is a lot of money, but if it isn’t enough, it is wasted,’ and encouraged us to give more to get the results we wanted,” says Colin McCrea.

There was also a clear focus, especially since 2011, on preparing for Atlantic’s exit. “We focussed hard on making a responsible exit, on making sure that organisations which benefitted from Atlantic did not fall off a financial cliff,” says Sutton. That meant a concentration on bringing elements of its ageing and youth grantees into mainstream partnership with government and academic institutions. There were 19 major partnership grants with government, many of which will continue into the future.

“Philanthropy can pilot and motivate in a way governments cannot and wouldn’t be allowed to.”

ÉILIS MURRAY,
PHILANTHROPY
IRELAND

Chuck Feeney and The Atlantic Philanthropies changed the way Ireland sees itself and the way others look at us. It has also transformed the idea of Giving While Living.

Atlantic also tried to ensure through its final grants that NGOs were well positioned to deliver on their missions and build sustainability by taking a clear, even hard-headed, view of the future. In the last round of grants, Atlantic included more stringent matching conditions. “We needed them to look at life without Atlantic and to develop new streams of income,” says Sutton. “We worked with them to ensure a viable, sustainable path, and we put in as many supports as we could.”

Chuck Feeney and The Atlantic Philanthropies changed the way Ireland sees itself and the way others look at us. It has also transformed the idea of Giving While Living. While there will never be another Atlantic, the priority is to find other philanthropists who may be inspired to follow in what has been described as the “broad and deep footprint” that The Atlantic Philanthropies have left on the Irish landscape and in the hearts and minds of its people.

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