

Transcript

21 June 2024, 01:06pm

□ **Olivia McLoughlin** started transcription

OM **Olivia McLoughlin** 0:03

Hi Keshia thank you so much for joining us today. It's really great to have you here to talk a little bit more about the investment committees of the future programme and as well a little bit about how you've applied some of that learning in real life scenarios. Thank you so much for joining us before we kick off. It'd be great if we could hear a little bit more about you and your role and the work that you do.

K **Keisha** 0:17

Hi my name is Keisha. As you said, I used to be Keisha Sims, but I recently got married about four weeks ago, so I'm now Keisha Jean-Joachim-Eurasie which is quite a change. You can call me Keisha JJE for short. I've been in the voluntary sector since I left university, actually, so I think just over five years now, coming up to six. I've had, like, a few different roles within this space. So I started off in research and evaluation.

K **Keisha** 0:55

And then went into a bit more programme design before transitioning into funding and grant making. I feel like that was kind of where my heart is, a bit kind of having resources that you're there to figure out. How do we best, how do we best get this out to people and communities that can make the best use of it?

OM **Olivia McLoughlin** 1:15

Amazing and you completed investment committees of the future not that long ago. What encouraged you to sign up for the programme?

K **Keisha** 1:24

I think it was my time in Grant making had been really great, but I think I kind of realised that a lot of organisations that we were funding, they were in a just a constant cycle. I think as with charities across the sector, charities and kind of other

social organisations or programmes across the sector of just constantly applying for funding and not really having any kind of sustainability or stable income and I think for me, the more I kind of learnt about social investment. It felt like this maybe addressed that in a way because you were looking to invest in organisations in social enterprises whereby they do have an income stream and so I just felt like being in the social investment space or trying to find out more about what investment committees do and how it is that they make decisions about who to invest in. It would be a way for me to help kind of build a sector that is a bit more sustainable.

OM **Olivia McLoughlin** 2:28

And whenever you went through the programme itself, the investment committees of the future, was there anything in particular that surprised you about the learning?

K **Keisha** 2:36

I think what surprised me was that it wasn't as different as I had expected it to be from what I was already doing. So, I was in grant making. I'd sat in on different grants committees, so I was used to it in that format. But I think in my mind, as probably in a lot of people's minds, you think about investment committees, and you think they must be doing something so different or having really different conversations. So being part of that programme and learning a lot more about everything from kind of what the format of the papers can look like, the different sections, the different conversations that you would have as part of an investment committee, I think it kind of got rid of some myths for me that there were, yeah, that there was just something missing, a massive gap that was missing in my own knowledge and skills but actually I already had a lot of transferable skills that could be put to use in an investment committee.

OM **Olivia McLoughlin** 3:36

You've touched on this a little bit in terms of, I guess your perception was that investment committees are doing something really different and really finance. I guess the setting, aside from what grant panels and things are doing, do you think and I guess that really ties into kind of that knowledge piece of what investment committees do because they're quite there's not a lot of transparency around them. Do you think that's something or what factors do you think we hinder diversity and lived experience and investment committees?

K Keisha 4:07

Honestly, I think the biggest factor is while speaking. Personally, I guess one is belief in yourself as an individual that you have something to contribute and that you do offer a new perspective and that it's not that you need to be an expert in a particular field like finance or governance, but actually your experiences from speaking to people, from being in communities from your own life are all really valid to bring into that space and can be really valuable because not a lot of people in the space have them. And then I think from the other side, so in terms of the people that are facilitating those investment committees and bringing them together, I think there's something about, I guess that perspective on the kind of voices that they need and want to bring into the space. And I think there's definitely something about those individuals being more, I would say proactive or more open. I think something I learned on the programme is just how many positions on investment committees aren't really openly advertised.

And I think that alone says so much about the opportunities that actually exist for me, people like me, people who just want to get involved. How is it that we're meant to know that these opportunities are out there if it's not put out to the world in a sense?

OM Olivia McLoughlin 5:28

Brilliant and what's I guess, kind of what steps then do you see as being important to bring kind of more people who've lived experience of different I guess different funding processes of running social enterprises of running charities, how can I get back to the sector, really open up more and to provide path for people to join investment committees?

K Keisha 5:54

I think I guess part of it is probably a bit of a cultural shift within the space within the sector because so many investment committees do, I guess almost operate in the same way. OK, let's say you have a committee and they're looking for more female representation. For example, is very likely that they may just look within their own networks, think about the people that they already know and then approach that person in, like specifically and individually.

So I think there needs to be a bit of a cultural shift that kind of makes them realise that this approach is limiting who it is that we have access to, who it is that joins

these spaces, that joins these conversations. And so maybe to start think about, OK, how is it that we take the time, put in the energy to think more about what it means to open up these spaces, what it means to try and reach new people, new voices with different perspectives and also then to try and attract them as well. So, I think.

When you're coming from a community that isn't represented within a space, you can definitely have anxieties about what your experience will be. Once you go into that space. So even if you are accepted, you can think well, if nobody else looks like me, nobody else has my experience. Then how am I going to be treated? How am I going to be accepted? Am I going to feel comfortable and safe? So I think there's also a piece of work for committees to do about all around.

I guess almost kind of learning and unlearning what some of their biases may be, how they may perpetuate, like certain harms, or make sure what it is that they can do to make sure that they say the spaces that they're creating are safe for people from a range of different backgrounds. So I think it's not only, you know, about advertising a role on a new website or going to a new organisation that will bring in a diverse person, but it's also thinking about OK, given that our space has looked a specific way for so long, what does that mean about the way in which once that person comes in, how are they going to feel, and how are they going to experience this space? And So, what work do we also need to do kind of, you know, and a lot of that time, it's like deep internal work, like for yourself as a person as well as collectively. Yeah. What is it that we can do and should do?

And need to do to make sure that this space feels safe for everyone.

OM **Olivia McLoughlin** 8:35

That's such a great answer and I think that really really resonates with some of thinking that we've had around the programme because although we, you know, we can open up this space and say, you know, this is what it takes to be on an investment committee, this is what it looks like. It's actually, how do we turn that mind and say, how can investment committees themselves actually become much more inclusive, much more welcoming, much more accessible space. And so thank you for. Thank you for sharing that. That was really insightful. And I guess coming back to the investment committees of the future programme.

How's the programme supported you in any way to, I guess, engage with investment committees or apply for positions or anything like that?

K **Keisha** 9:20

So I was really fortunate that through the programme I can't remember what session it was, but there was a session where I think we had two or three different individuals who sat on investment committees kind of come and speak to us as a cohort. And one of those individuals was Matt Smith from the Key fund. So, I thought I really kind of resonated with some of the things that he'd shared during that session. And I thought, you know what, let me be brave. Let me just kind of put myself out there, so I'd sent him an e-mail, just to kind of thank him for what he'd said and just to see if you take a chance and let me come and observe one of his committees at the Key Fund and to my surprise, he was actually really open and really willing to do that. So, I was really fortunate to be able to sit in on two. Yeah, two committees that were run by the Key Fund and just see what they look like in action. So everything that we had kind of learned as part of the programme, kind of the different the papers. Kind of the different conversations that you've had that you would have as part of a committee, the things that you need to consider thinking about kind of lived experience also when you're considering investment decisions, all of that was kind of put into action in the Investment committee and it was just I think again it was really great to see that the similarity between what they were speaking about and the format of it and what I was used to in terms of the grant making and things like that. And to see actually the transition wasn't as big as I thought it would be, and even after the committee, Matt really kindly just had a chat with me, one to one where he just went through the paper with me and just gave me the chance, a chance to ask any questions that I'd had. If there was anything that I hadn't quite understood because the biggest change I would say is that when you're thinking about investments, you're of course thinking about the return and the finances in a in a different way to what you would when you're thinking about a grant. So he really kindly just kind of went through that with me as well and shown me showed me some of the things that you need to think about when you're thinking about investing in an organisation.

OM **Olivia McLoughlin** 11:35

That's really interesting that you got kind of that very much this bespoke support around that. And I think as well that's really, really helpful and it kind of ties back a little bit to the point you made that it's around kind of investment committees really

opening that space and really kind of making an effort to create paths and create kind of space for people to bring much more, I guess diversity of thought, diversity of opinion and diversity of experience to investment committees and really looking to understand, I guess what your key takeaways were from both the programme but also the and observing the investment committee and I guess how you use maybe apply these or how these are kind of informed your thinking or if they have kind of going forward.

K

Keisha 12:22

My key takeaways, that's a really good question. I think more than anything, it definitely reaffirmed there is space for me within the social investment space within the Investment Committee space, and that's because there is such a lack of diversity in that space and there is real value in someone like me having a voice in that space, in someone who has different lived experiences has comes from a different background. Being able to go in and occupy that space.

So that it definitely reinforced kind of my drive to want be in that space and to want be influencing you know where resource goes because a lot of the time it's like it's big, really big amounts of money as well. So you can really have a massive impact in terms of accelerating certain programmes or certain social missions or impacting certain communities. So the programme itself definitely, yeah. Boosted like my drive to want to get into that space.

And it also, I would say another take away was that, I guess just being in the in the investment committee with Key Fund and just a reminder that it sounds maybe sounds a bit silly, but like they're human as well, like everybody in that space is also human. So I think sometimes you can put people in a pedestal or think that they are and which they may be, you know, experts in certain spaces, but that doesn't take away from the their humanity. The fact that they are a human just like me and so they can make mistakes, they can get things wrong they will also ask questions as well. I think that was really nice to see in when I was in the investment Committee, people who were clearly far more experienced than I had been in that space for probably decades, you know, asking questions because they didn't quite understand a certain thing within the paper or they just needed to clarify. So I think it was that just that reminder of it's OK to not know everything. It's OK to come into the space and seek that clarification that you need because it's often, as they always say, it's very likely that someone will also have the same question as you.

And I think another really big take away for me was, I would say more of the maybe the practical side of it. So I remember as part of the programme, we went through some things around kind of the governance and the finances and just having a bit more knowledge kind of in depth knowledge of what some of the things you may. Be looking for like if you're doing an investment committee or some of the things you may want an organisation to present or have at the point of coming to an investment committee. Having that kind of knowledge has definitely really helped me to spread that and share that with friends or colleagues who have their own organisations and just to be able to kind of, I would say like take off that veil a bit. Again, just demystify what it is that actually happens within an investment committee and just to be able to say I've been in this programme, and this is what they've said are some of the things that you want to be able to speak to or show and demonstrate. Yeah, so just to be able to, I don't know the exact, I can't remember the exact term that I'm thinking of but yeah, just that knowledge being able to share it and not have it hoarded and to not have it, just catch within, you know, a really small group of people, the word that I'm looking for is just completely lost me. But yeah, to be able to kind of share that knowledge with friends, with people who will actually need it because they're in the process of applying for, for social investment and things like that has also definitely been really valuable. And a key takeaway for me.

OM **Olivia McLoughlin** 16:34

But brilliant and honestly, I don't know how you're saying you weren't prepared for this, like your answers are so great. It's really great to kind of hear, I guess the insights and experiences that we've actually going through the programme observing investment committees. Because I also like, you know, we'd have so much like really valuable experience where the roles that you've had to date and was there anything I guess in terms of either in the programme or observing investment committees, that I have so much valuable studies that I do bring to an investment committee?

K **Keisha** 17:11

That's a really good question.

I think it definitely gave me more confidence in the skills that I do have and the skills that I do have to use day-to-day just within my role.

And to know that, you know these are relevant transferable skills that would be put

to good use within an investment committee, I think it also honestly, I think it's also kind of my experience across different roles within the the voluntary sector. So as I shared at the start, I've kind of I started in research and evaluation. So I have a good foundational knowledge of kind of outcomes and impact and things like that. And then on the other side, I've also been in the programme design kind of role where we were designing a community led fund. So I really have an appreciation for the challenges that can go that you have in kind of setting something up, getting people bought in kind of getting the word out there, participation, retention, things like that. And then to go into the grant making space and to be able to look at organisations to be able to assess kind of financial positions, to look at governance, those were all additional skills I definitely gain there. And so I think for me it is that kind of having, I would say I guess a broad spectrum of knowledge like just from these different roles that I've had, but that are all really relevant for investment committees. It definitely gave me a sense of, well, maybe I would call it, self-belief in that this is all really valuable and really useful and will mean that maybe the questions that I have would contribute well into that space or my ability to kind of read through an investment paper and identify something that maybe would need to be checked, or we maybe need to confirm things like that. So I guess to like scrutinize in a sense, but in a from a way that feels constructive rather than it being, you know, to be the reason that we don't fund this organisation.

And I think actually more than anything just working with different people working with different organisations.

It's amazing how much a person a person when they have a really clear vision of what it is that trying to do and who their community is and the change that they want to bring about in their community that even if on paper it's not translating that while at the minute once you meet that person and speak to that person, you can help them to get that down on paper. And so I think having had those experiences, particularly within grant making roles, where at the application stage you know you're meeting with a lot of different people and just getting them to communicate who they are and what it is that they're trying to do to you verbally after you've read it on paper, I think there's something about when you're in then that investment committee space where you're reading these investment committee papers and you see something that you feel like it has potential, but it maybe just hasn't quite translated that well on paper. I think there's something about being in that room to be the advocate for that vision.

To say, you know, hold on, wait a minute. Is there something that we're missing? Is there something that we haven't quite understood? Is there a context in which they're working in which they haven't put down, that actually is the key to this whole thing being so necessary, I think it's those kind of experiences that, yeah, would that definitely make me think, I really want to be in that space. And I really think I could contribute while in that space as well.

OM **Olivia McLoughlin** 21:29

That's amazing. And just finally one last question is what is maybe one piece of advice that you would give to somebody who is, you know who has that experience of running a social life or is running a charity or a real understanding of kind of the sector of kind of what is needed in communities, who's maybe looking to move into that decision making position?

K **Keisha** 21:56

I would say one piece of advice.

I would say definitely go on the programme.

Definitely go on the investment committees of the future programme and it's not a plug that wasn't a plug. Don't worry, they don't pay me to say that. But no, do it more for your own like self assurance, for your own to give yourself kind of the evidence, the reassurance that you need to know, like yes, I do have the skills that that would be useful there. Yes, I do have relevant knowledge. I have relevant experience. So because that's I think more than anything what the programme gave me. Yes, I did learn extra things but also really reinforced the knowledge and skills that I do have. And I think like I shared that's kind of increased in me that drive or that motivation to go into the space.

I think I would also say kind of be bold in asking for opportunities as well. So the thing that that I did that I had to be bold with was just dropping Matt an e-mail and, you know, really fortunately, he was receptive to that and really welcoming and really kind, but that wouldn't have happened if I hadn't have kind of stepped out in that way. So to really encourage people who are interested to find people that they know in that space, whether it's whether it's on LinkedIn for example or just through your own research and reach out and see if they can make space for you to learn more to observe, or even just to have a conversation about, you know, about your experience today and what they would recommend you do to kind of build your own knowledge

and things like that.

So yeah, so go on the programme and be bold. Those are my two. My 2 bits of advice.

OM **Olivia McLoughlin** 23:59

Great advice and thank you so much. You just been so great to speak to you and thank you very much for your time today.

K **Keisha** 24:06

No, thank you. I really appreciate you. Yeah, inviting me to participate.

OM **Olivia McLoughlin** 24:12

I will stop the recording here and.

□ **Olivia McLoughlin** stopped transcription