

Community-led Behaviour Change – Policy Note 3

Climate Challenge Fund: Organisational networks

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Communities across Scotland include a wide range of complementary and overlapping interest groups. The Scottish Government's [Climate Challenge Fund \(CCF\)](#)¹ presented an opportunity for this research project to [explore the nature and benefits of these networks](#). In this brief, we look at the ways in which **networking between organisations** contributes to efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

Projects funded through the CCF are delivered by one or more organisations, each having a history and background within wider networks and relationships, both within their own communities and further afield. These relationships are dynamic and are key to understanding how messages about climate change circulate within communities and how behaviour change occurs. Our approach was to follow five case study projects, reflect on their learning over time and understand the 'organisational landscape' in which they operate, and which influences their success.

We found that groups running CCF projects are **engaged in multiple relationships with other organisations**. These relationships are frequently **dependent on key individuals** who act as **bridges** between different organisations, and that collaboration between groups is **mutually beneficial as well as producing tensions**.

3.1 Organisational relationships

Organisations funded through the CCF **do not exist in isolation**. They have pre-existing histories of networking with other groups and organisations both within their own communities and at regional and national scales. As one interviewee commented, *'So it sees itself as one of a range of people concerned with the environment'*.

CCF funding can enable organisations to cooperate more closely together. For example, creating a **shared physical space** which many community groups can use. Another example is through organising **joint events** around shared aims or key environmental messages, such as the opportunity provided by a beach clean-up to raise awareness about marine pollution.

Aside from visible signs of collaboration, our case studies also worked behind the scenes to **identify common goals and shared strategic visions**, such as tackling poverty through showing that environmental behaviour can be combined with poverty alleviation. CCF projects often work with **local schools and local authorities** to provide educational messages and activities around climate change. Pupils then share their new knowledge at home, for example by telling adults that putting a brick in a toilet cistern reduces water usage when flushing.

In general, **collaboration helps to achieve multiple aims** for different organisations. However, **conflict** can occur, for example, through confusion over who claims responsibility for delivery and success, with larger or more visible organisations sometimes receiving recognition for work done by others.

¹ <https://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/sustainability-climate-change/climate-challenge-fund/>

We found organisations that work successfully in partnership achieve more than those that work alone, with evidence of more ideas and opportunities generated to engage their communities around messages to change climate behaviour. But it takes time and effort to create and maintain these working relationships. Funders and groups should **be aware of the dynamics** that can occur with the insertion of funding into an existing set of relationships.

3.2 Individuals and bridging between organisations

Successful partnerships and networking often rely on **key individuals who are active in several organisations**. Experience of different roles (for example, as a Trustee or a Board member) means that they have **information about what these different groups are doing and how they could work together**. We found such individuals to be highly active within their communities, with a tendency towards those who are retired or semi-retired so they have the time to act in these roles and are usually acting in a voluntary capacity. The risk of ‘volunteer fatigue’ can be high if there are too few people to do this bridging work. We found case studies which lacked key bridging volunteers relied on project managers or other staff to be skilful networkers in their communities.

CCF projects also have key individuals who are **important in building relationships** between different groups. All our case studies had **strong and active project coordinators**, who were well-known in their communities and who had high **levels of social and cultural capital to facilitate networking** between different organisations. We also found that individuals might be selective in who they develop relationships with, which may result in **exclusion and restriction** to a relatively few people.

CCF projects which include people who can **facilitate relationships between different key organisations** within a community are more effective in achieving change because they create opportunities for showcasing behaviour change beyond the individual organization. Recognition that **time and effort are required to build partnerships** should be considered in project management and planning for longer-term success. **Training for collaborative working** could be offered to project coordinators to encourage development of successful partnerships and networking within communities.

3.3 Organisational relationships and change

Working together is a key component of achieving the goals of reducing carbon emissions and raising awareness of climate change. CCF funding can provide opportunities to **reinforce existing relationships and to create new ones**. It can encourage organizations with a climate change agenda to **collaborate with others for whom climate change is not a priority**. Our research found evidence of projects using CCF funding to reach out to groups tackling poverty, loneliness and wellbeing. This raises awareness of climate change with new actors, empowers them to change behaviour and demonstrates **how tackling climate change can address other social issues and bring about positive social change**.

CCF funding could more strongly encourage partnership working through **funding multiple organisations** within communities, and by funding activities that **create opportunities for groups to work together** or create a shared social space. Communities that successfully create strong partnerships could be recognised through the designation of some communities as **‘low carbon zones’** or ‘green lifestyle hubs’, indicating that multiple organisations or Business Investment Districts adhere to recognised green standards in recycling or other behaviours. This would raise the visibility of climate change as an issue within communities and reach beyond the CCF projects.

The work of previous relationships and predecessor projects could be used as a platform or a model for future endeavours so that **success is built upon**. There is also an opportunity for CCF to adopt ‘rapid response’ funding to make the most of sudden changes in public awareness. For example, we found that some of our projects were able to use the increase in concern over plastic pollution following ‘Blue Planet’ to organise events and encourage action combating plastic use and other environmental issues.