



What's stopping us?

Barriers to action by Community and Voluntary Groups;
with specific reference to involvement in Climate Action

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A word of thanks

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Preface

Ireland's first National Climate Action Plan was published by the Government of Ireland in 2019. In the interim there has been increasing ambition for delivery of climate action by local communities. During this period, the Public Participation Networks (PPNs), have become acutely aware of the pressure felt by this sector in relation to both expectations to engage with and deliver positive climate action.

PPNs were established under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 to represent the community and voluntary sector in all Local Authority areas. They are tasked with enhancing the capacity of community groups to achieve their objectives. Sligo PPN, with over 600 member groups partnered with Atlantic Technological University to design and deliver the “Power to Change” project, a capacity building programme specific to climate action. The project offered one to one mentoring and support to community groups to lead on climate action. It ran from October 2022 to December 2025 engaging with communities in Sligo, Mayo, Galway, and Donegal. The project was part of the Community Climate Action Programme funded by the Government of Ireland through the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment.

Despite the outreach and significant supports available through Power to Change, the uptake on these offerings was slow. Sligo PPN had anecdotal knowledge of

the challenges faced by community groups. Groups reported a struggle to conduct their core activities. Groups also reported that increased time was required for administrative tasks including (but not limited to) insurance, funding, and governance compliance. Consequently, additional training offerings, despite their importance, were often viewed as extra work and onerous.

The Power to Change project team deemed it crucial to develop a clear, evidence-based analysis of the challenges facing community groups and understand the barriers to engaging in climate action. This information would identify approaches and actions to reduce the burden of everyday activities experienced by community groups and provide opportunities for engagement in climate action. This research was awarded to Dr. Harriet Emerson, an independent research consultant, in accordance with Atlantic Technological University's procurement policy and procedure.

This report presents analysis, insights gained, and key recommendations for national and local government, PPNs, and stakeholders.

Statement regarding quotations

Quotation references are adapted to protect the anonymity of respondents. The following annotation is used for quotation references; first word capitalised and remaining words lower case. The name provided is indicative of the work of the community group and is not intended as an identifier of the community group.

Introduction and summary



Why this research was necessary

An enormous volume of voluntary work is invested in our communities, our people and our local environment by diverse community organisations in Ireland. Those involved in the community and voluntary sector are conscious of the considerable challenges that community groups face in delivering work in a voluntary capacity. While there is anecdotal evidence and recording of reported difficulties encountered by community groups, there is a paucity of dedicated research on these issues and how these issues present barriers to action.

The Government has sought to partner with community and voluntary organisations engaged in climate action to respond to the threats posed by climate change; seeing communities' involvement as key to achieving national climate targets. The importance of mobilising communities in our national response to climate change means that it is vital to understand in depth the challenges and the barriers that prevent community groups getting involved.

Introduction and summary

The Power to Change project led by Atlantic Technological University (ATU) in partnership with the Sligo Public Participation Network (PPN) ran from 2022 and 2025. The project offered mentoring and supports to community and voluntary groups across Sligo to engage in climate action. This initiative supported over 10 groups to creatively and successfully fulfil climate action projects. As Sligo PPN has over 600 member groups, an up-take of 10 groups was considered low. This posed a series of questions to understand the barriers to engagement, the persistent challenges faced by community groups, and the potential of a significant lag time in converting training and education activities to action.

The Power to Change project commissioned this body of research to further develop an understanding of the challenges faced by community groups in Ireland, and the relative impact of these challenges, with a particular focus on the issues that prevent groups engaging in climate action.

The significance of the community and voluntary sector

Across all areas of Irish life, community and voluntary groups have long provided infrastructure, services and supports. They work collaboratively at different scales and are responsive to diverse needs that emerge. In practice, community organisations are the immediate first responders within communities as witnessed in their mobilisation in response to major events such as the COVID19 pandemic, the impacts of the war in Ukraine, and weather emergencies. They have established reputations, networks and systems. Their significance and impact is recognised by the many citizens who benefit either directly or indirectly from their activities.



The 2022 Census indicated that 17% of the population over 15 years of age were active volunteers, with over a third of these being involved in more than one volunteering activity (CSO, 2024). A conservative calculation from this data suggests an estimated 1 million volunteering roles being carried out in Ireland. Data for organisations registered with the Charities Regulator in 2018 showed volunteers giving an average of 226 hours of their time annually. The monetary value associated with this volume of work can range from €3.2 billion to €5.6 billion annually (depending on whether the minimum hourly wage or national average wage is employed in calculations). Given that many volunteers are highly skilled and use these skills and their experience in their voluntary roles, this is likely to significantly underestimate the monetary value of the work. This data does not reflect the many non-monetary values that voluntary work contributes but which is arguably integral to resilient communities, individual and community wellbeing and strengthening social fabric.

The scale, significance, and potential of this sector have been recognised in the Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A Five-Year Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland 2019-2024 and the National Volunteering Strategy (2021- 2025). Both strategy documents are currently under review with the publication of the next phases expected in 2026.

The importance of community engagement for climate action

The Government is faced with an urgent need to address the challenges of climate change and to meet its commitment to a 51% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050. The community sector has been identified as a key ally for success in delivering on climate action commitments in every home, workplace, and network that supports our lifestyle.

In the first national Climate Action Plan 2019 Government declared its intention to “provide more community-based training and support to allow community and voluntary groups enhance their capacity and understanding in the area of climate action, ensuring that the local champions who act as catalysts for action have the knowledge and capacity to do so” (CAP, 2019, p.1336).

Introduction and summary

There is considerable ambition for delivery by the community and voluntary sector in Government rhetoric:

“... it will be possible to cocreate a new social contract between government and the people around climate action to deliver a long-term commitment to deliver a carbon neutral future. This will require a change in the way we work, travel, consume food and goods, and also a change in our hearts, minds and behaviours. This future is one where everyone shares responsibility and accountability in a manner that is fair, accessible, and just and everyone benefits from the opportunities that the transition to a clear and sustainable future offer.”

(National Dialogue on Climate Action, Monitoring & Evaluation Report, 2022, p.3)

A wide range of measures have been initiated to support climate action. The Climate Action Fund (CAF) will invest at least €500 million in community climate action projects and capacity building to support this work up to 2027. The Community Climate Action Programme Strands 1 and 1b administered by Local Authorities are intended to “empower communities to shape and build low carbon, sustainable communities in a coherent way”.

The 2025 Climate Action Plan (Climate Action Plan 2025, p.64) continues the aim to deliver two outcomes in relation to Citizen Engagement, namely

- A strengthened social contract between the Government and the Irish people that has arisen through collaboration on climate action
- Delivering the vision of climate action for Ireland through the shared values of fairness, collaboration, and positive change

Furthermore, the Climate Conversation (2024) report highlighted that *“The community’s interest signifies untapped potential for deeper climate engagement. a readiness to get involved with climate action at a community level, albeit with some educational*

outreach required. With 60% community organization involvement overall, the integration and expansion of climate action roles could hold promise for further growth.”

The reality for community organisations

The reality for those involved with the community and voluntary sector is often an uphill battle simply to operate at all; with groups reporting a continual, fundamental, challenge to

- secure core and specific project funding
- maintain administration burdens and comply with governance requirements
- recruit volunteers, and
- access appropriate space and facilities

In other words, there is huge investment of volunteer time and effort in community groups before they can engage in the core activities for which they were established, leaving aside involvement in additional activities such as climate actions.

These challenges have significant impacts on the ability of community organisations to deliver on their aspirations, and on their resilience. High ambition and motivation are frequently curtailed by external factors.





What was known about the barriers to action

Initial desk research was conducted into existing work on the challenges faced by community groups and on the efforts of government to engage community groups in climate action specifically.

A body of anecdotal evidence exists which points to the various challenges experienced by community organisations. The Visions for Community Wellbeing undertaken in all 31 PPNs provided extensive detail about the difficulties encountered by diverse community organisations.

The information gathered was used to inform the original research undertaken for this report.

How was this research carried out

The desk research was used to develop an initial typology of challenges experienced by community organisations, with a description of each. The accuracy of this typology was explored and tested with focus groups consisting of representatives from the community and voluntary sector.

Focus Groups

The first consultation phase involved focus groups with

- volunteer representatives from Sligo PPN member groups that encompassed each of the three PPN colleges; whose members are concerned with social inclusion, environmental, and community and voluntary activities, and
- PPN co-ordinators from across Ireland

(A list of focus group participants can be found in Appendix A)

An initial list of issues identified from the research into previous community feedback formed the basis for discussions. Group members were asked to confirm whether the issues listed were valid and, if so, accurately described. They were invited to expand and explain how these challenges arise and how they impact community groups. They were also invited to add and highlight issues that had not been previously identified.

National Online Survey

The second consultation phase involved a national online survey of voluntary and community organisations. The survey assessed the significance of challenges on the operation of these groups. It also explored the groups involvement in climate action. (see Appendix B for the survey questions)

The survey was open to all community and voluntary sector organisations. It was circulated and promoted by the PPNs in all 31 local authorities. It was considered important to reach out as widely as possible beyond PPNs so that no groups were excluded. In support of the research, the Wheel, Social Justice Ireland and the Irish Environmental Network broadcast and promoted the survey.

The survey was open for responses between July and November 2025 allowing time to communicate widely the significance of the research and the value of completing the survey. The survey was also promoted at the Power to Change Celebration Day in Sligo (September 2025), and a stand at the PPN National Conference (Westmeath, October 2025).

Validation of Findings

Feedback on the different types of challenge faced repeatedly referenced details that confirmed the accuracy of the focus groups' output and the categories of challenges included in the survey.



Initial findings from the survey were analysed to explore potential gaps in knowledge and topics that may need to be further tested and challenged with community groups. A particular focus was given to areas where assistance was needed with understanding or interpretation of responses received. This was achieved through two events; an in-person workshop with community groups in County Sligo, and an online workshop with the PPN National Secretariat.

The insights gained from both of these sessions were used in the interpretation of data, to confirm, explain, and add to the findings from the research.



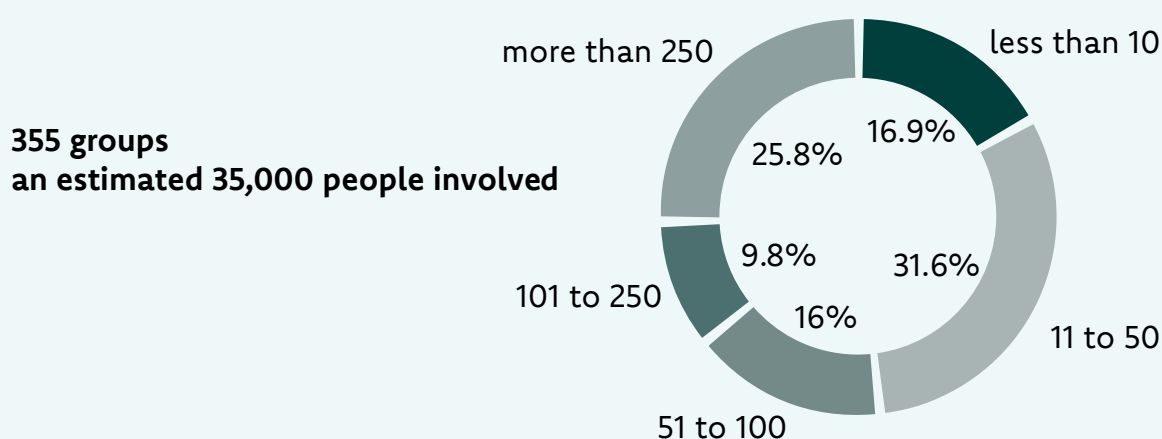
Research findings



The groups who responded

355 community groups responded to the survey, including organisations from all local authority areas, and from across each of the three PPN Colleges; Social Inclusion, Environmental, and Community and Voluntary. Diverse interests were represented in the responses received. Participants reflected the range, scale and scope of community organisations.

How many people are actively involved in the group or engage with services or activities provided?



Research Findings

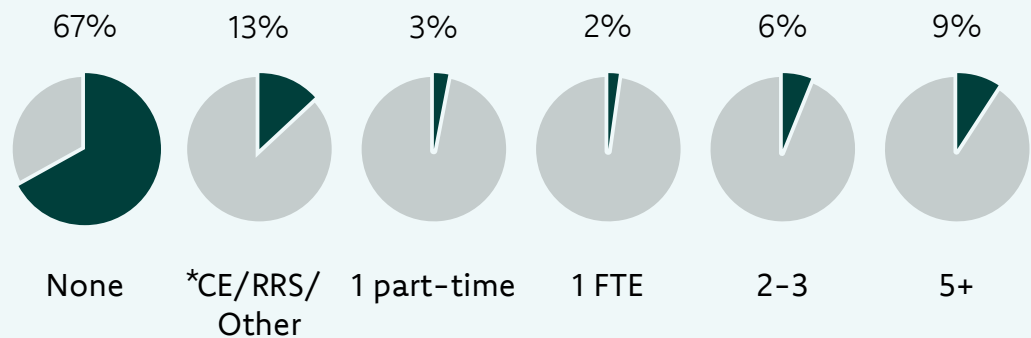
The majority of groups were members of the PPN (92%). Numbers involved in administering the group varied, over 40% have 5 or fewer people involved, and larger organisations tending to have larger committees. It is evident that the workload of operational organisation falls to a small sub-group of volunteers in most cases, even in organisations with employed staff.

There was considerable variation in the scale of the groups when measured by the numbers who are actively involved or that engage with the services or activities provided (see figure on previous page). The 355 groups who responded to the survey engage with a minimum of 35,000 people and potentially considerably more.

More than 25% of respondents have a reach to greater than 250 people indicating the impact of the community and voluntary sector. The diversity of groups at all scales also highlights that this sector has the potential to contribute significantly to Government-led actions.

20% of respondent groups have directly employed staff, with 15% having two or more staff members. Several respondents explained how volunteers must take on responsibility for supervision of staff, or workers on employment schemes. This task increases workload, responsibility and stress. It requires skills and expertise across a range of areas from payroll to managing disputes. It is noteworthy that even in the largest organisations with staff management structures that the final responsibility lay with a volunteer board.

Number of staff



*Community Employment Scheme, Rural Social Scheme

13% of groups who have employment scheme workers identified issues and challenges related to such schemes. These ranged from difficulties of finding a suitable person for the role who is willing to commit, to the “transient nature of scheme workers [that] really challenges the implementation of long-term plans for communities.” (Community development company). Employment scheme workers were seen as helpful but as “...the worker needs, and is entitled to, supervision and instruction, it is not as beneficial to the group as it could be, as we are not available or remunerated for that supervision.” (A small tidy towns group).

The potential benefit of employment schemes was nonetheless recognised.

“These schemes should be broadened out to include more members of our community ie stay at home parents who could come in and do a few hours while their kids are at school. Small community groups need people supported and encouraged to come and help the volunteer leaders within the community. Our core committee are happy to run our organisation without any personal financial gain. But we all have full time jobs and need help with the day to day running of our hall. This support is essential if we are to keep our community building open.”

(Community council)



EVENTS

WE ARE OPEN
Mo-Fr 11⁰⁰ - 1⁰⁰
HEUTE: + LunchChili +in Gänge + Rausf. +
mit / ohne Digital Stamp
+ Salad (M)

urbanize!

RESPECT



What was discovered about barriers faced by community groups in their day-to-day operation

Respondents were asked to indicate how significant each of the following types of challenges were:

- recruiting volunteers
- securing core funding for the group's operation (such as insurance, building costs, staff costs)
- difficulties in obtaining funding to run particular projects or actions
- difficulties in finding physical space or facilities (such as offices, to meet, for activities)
- administrative requirements (such as Garda vetting, applying for grants)

Research Findings

The most striking finding from this survey question was the extent of the difficulties faced by community organisations to secure the fundamentals needed to operate and deliver their core objectives.

- 80% of all groups identified recruiting volunteers as exceeding what they considered a manageable challenge.
- 74% of all groups identified securing core funding as exceeding what they considered a manageable challenge.
- 81% of all groups identified obtaining project funding as exceeding what they considered a manageable challenge.
- 65% of all groups identified managing administration as exceeding what they considered a manageable challenge.
- 47% of all groups identified securing appropriate accommodation as exceeding what they considered a manageable challenge.

Community organisations are also dealing with the pressure of cumulative challenges. 86% of groups experienced challenges that were more than manageable in one or more of the five areas considered (see table below). Almost half the groups (48%) are experiencing this level of challenge in four or five of these essential areas of operation.

Cumulative challenges experienced by community groups

Critical, significant & moderate challenges						
	0	1	2	3	4	5
Groups affected	14%	8%	11%	19%	28%	20%

This cumulative impact was highlighted by many respondents;

“All these [challenges] are intertwined with each other and can have knock-on effects e.g. if you cannot secure funding for office space, meaning having to apply for funding for renting space for activities or events, which makes more admin. work.”

(Carers organisation)

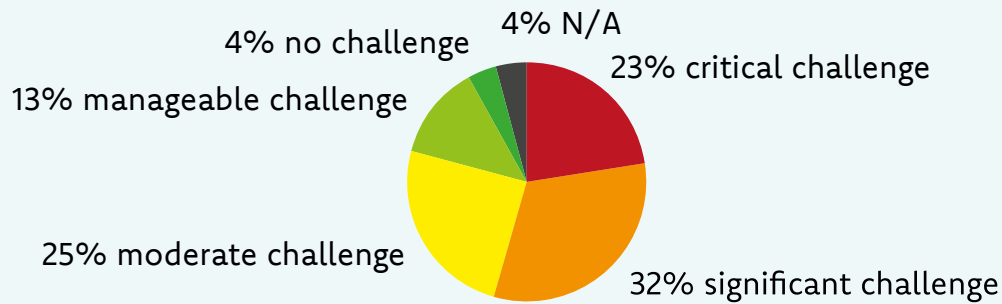
In addition, if a community group indicated that it experienced at least one “critical” challenge, it was more likely to experience “significant” challenges in other categories. No significant relationship was identified between experiencing a challenge in one category and any other. This data presents a picture of a majority of groups struggling to operate on multiple fronts.

Survey responses consistently pointed to the frustration experienced in trying to secure funding to operate, in ensuring groups were fully compliant with regulations, and in creating and maintaining momentum.

A majority clearly outlined that their long-term sustainability is highly uncertain as they struggle on a yearly basis for sufficient resources. Core funding made available only annually commits groups to greater uncertainty and require extensive efforts to seek and secure funding. This impacts on the ability to plan for long term goals and provide employees with reliable work conditions.

Respondents expanded and illustrated their experience of the challenges listed in the survey. The following is a summary of feedback provided.

Recruiting volunteers



80% of groups responding were clear that the challenge of recruiting volunteers was greater than a “manageable” challenge

Respondents expanded on the challenge of communicating their organisation’s message, encouraging people to volunteer, increasing difficulty of recruiting volunteers to committees or administrative roles, or to act as trustees or directors. The problem of volunteer burn-out and attrition of committee members further exacerbates recruitment difficulties leading to uncertainty of whether the group can continue to exist. 55% of groups identified recruiting volunteers as a “significant” or “critical” issue.

“...pressure on individuals in [committee] roles is considerable and to take on more [work] to maintain, sustain and grow the group. This is risky and not good for mental health”

(Residents group)

The sense of vulnerability amongst volunteers was illustrated.

“...potential liabilities and penalties that could be levied at organisations such as ourselves are troubling and may result in people no longer being willing to put their hands up in support.”

(Sports club)

The dependence on key individuals with necessary skills and/or willingness to devote the time required is often reported as excessive and unsustainable.

“Governance requirements are at a professional level and there is huge administration and workload involved”

(Education initiative)

The need for recognition and value being attached to volunteer participation in community activities was seen as important for the resilience of communities and our social fabric into the future. The aging profile of volunteers, committee members, directors and trustees is a cause for concern for some groups and a growing issue for the future; adding to the challenge of succession planning, retaining institutional memory and long-term sustainability.

Some respondents referred to a ‘new normal’ in terms of the reduced number of people engaging in voluntary activities since the Covid19 pandemic, with people viewing their time as more valuable. It was also noted that fewer men are getting involved, something reflected in the CSO data in all areas apart from sport.

Respondents recognised that the greater the challenges for community groups to operate, the harder it is to focus on the rewarding experience of volunteering. The

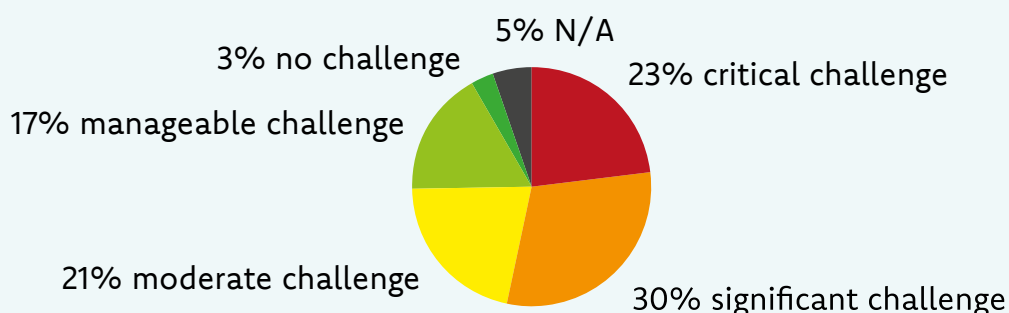
Research Findings

joy, enrichment and sense of purpose is eroded under the increasing demand for fundraising and administration.

Ultimately, where this struggle for the group to survive outweighs the benefits experienced, volunteer numbers will decline further and groups will fold. There was a strong sense from comments received that more active state support for volunteering is needed beyond the present volunteer centre structures. Suggestions included incentives for company-sponsored volunteering, tax credits for active committee members in community groups, and volunteer work being valued as match funding.

Feedback and suggestions circled back repeatedly to the need to reduce the administrative and fundraising burdens that are hampering the ability of many to engage in the volunteering work itself.

Securing core funding



74% of groups responding were clear that the challenge of securing core funding was greater than a “manageable” challenge

Respondents were clear that obtaining funds to meet recurring operating costs such as insurance, accountancy, wages (where relevant), rent and heat is difficult. These costs are all unavoidable for groups to operate in compliance with governance and regulatory requirements.

23% of respondents cited this as a “critical” challenge and a further 30% viewing it as a “significant” challenge. Over half of all respondents pointing to the fundamental difficulty they face in securing essential funding for basic operation and continued

existence. Groups experience this as a drain on their ability to carry out their core function and a persistent insecurity for the future. The need for more funding for community organisations was clearly articulated.

“As costs of living increase, things are getting dearer and the funds raised are getting lower. So we are watching our pennies and trying to come up with new fund-raising initiatives.”

(Women’s group)

The high level of costs for community organisations was commented upon with recurring themes including;

- Insurance costs (small groups have indicated that insurance costs are prohibitive and have reported that groups are unable to book a meeting room without public liability insurance)
- Business rates for utilities such as electricity and waste are applied to not-for-profit and voluntary organisations
- Rising transport costs for group activities and for volunteers’ personal transport

Respondents indicated that the structures required to receive funding led to increased complexity for community organisations. The increased administrative workload and need for increasingly sophisticated skills in writing grant applications were highlighted. It is noteworthy that efforts by local authorities to simplify applications for the Community Climate Action Fund were identified by some respondents.

Respondents noted that funding schemes rarely allow claims for inclusion of core costs and overheads. Where these costs are permitted the allocation is not reflective of basic operational costs required to support actions.

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“Funding only available for “projects” not for rent & insurance. No category for consumables – toilet rolls, cleaning supplies, light bulbs, general stationary, etc. No reimbursement for bank charges though there are additional costs for the new processes such as requirements for statements that are not ordinarily issued, as part of applications and reporting requirements. Need to keep a big “float” as don’t know if rent, insurance etc will be grant aided from one year to the next.”

(Women’s network)

In relation to recruitment and retention of staff, the once-off, non-recurring, or annual funding that provides for short- and fixed-term positions was seen as unhelpful. This situation was seen to make work in the sector less attractive when recruitment is already challenging and results in a high turnover of staff. Potential employees seek secure positions, known wage increments, and improved work conditions that certain groups are currently unable to provide. Groups experience repeated and continued disruption with consequent negative impacts on staff training and development and relationship building. Groups report a significant investment of time in training and re-training. Time is a limited resource for voluntary organisations activities and groups highlight that this cycle of training and re-training results in a significant loss of time. The need for multi-annual funding and/ or other initiatives to sustain community groups arose repeatedly.

“[our] Main challenge is the lack of core funding and multi-annual funding available anywhere. We need core funding to continue our work but we find often that grants expect us to start a new project in order to apply, whereas we just want to continue our work to support more families in need. These families don’t need a new approach; they need what we can provide. We also are limited in being able to expand and secure a premises due to the lack of multi-annual funding, we can’t commit to a 5 year lease when we literally only have funding to cover us until the end of this year. And this constrains our ability to plan for

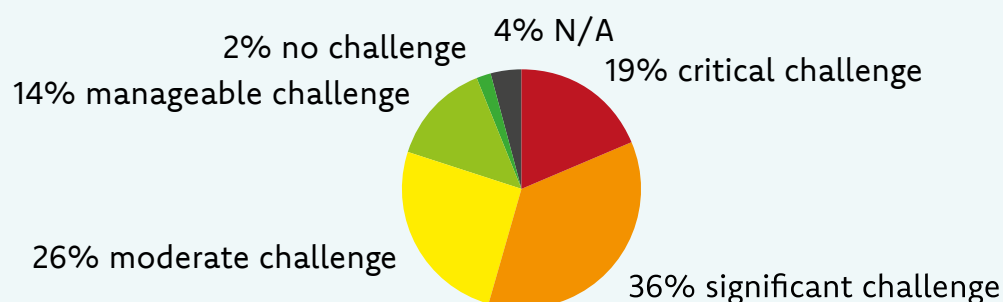
continuity of service and for any growth in our service to support more families. This is a huge problem across the Charity sector.”

(Newborn support initiative)

Community organisations spend much time and effort fundraising through their own initiatives to cover critical ongoing core costs. Additional projects cannot be explored without this core funding in place. Respondents were clear that this is an inefficient use of time and emphasised that fundraising for overhead costs is a far harder ‘sell’ when seeking donations and support.

The Revenue scheme enabling tax relief for donations to approved sports bodies was seen as positive. It was suggested as a potential model for giving wider relief and helping to fund to community organisations.

Difficulties in obtaining funding to run particular projects or actions



81% of groups responding were clear that the challenge of securing funding for projects was greater than a “manageable” challenge

55% of community groups identify securing funding as either a “significant” or “critical” challenge.

Interestingly, a sizeable minority of groups have actively decided not to seek funds from certain grant schemes due to the workload associated with application,

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administration and reporting that was perceived as outweighing the amount that might be obtained from this source.

Some funding programmes were viewed as having overly prescriptive outcomes with a subsequent impact on how groups viewed the usefulness and attractiveness of the funding scheme.

“...often linked to specific outcomes which may not always align with our core mission”

(Environmental group)

It was noted that government bodies’ adherence to set approaches were potentially problematic for community groups. Groups need to be responsive to their context which is seen as overlooked by policy and funding criteria. Funding schemes must seek greater engagement at the design phase to ensure that schemes are both optimal and flexible for the target groups.

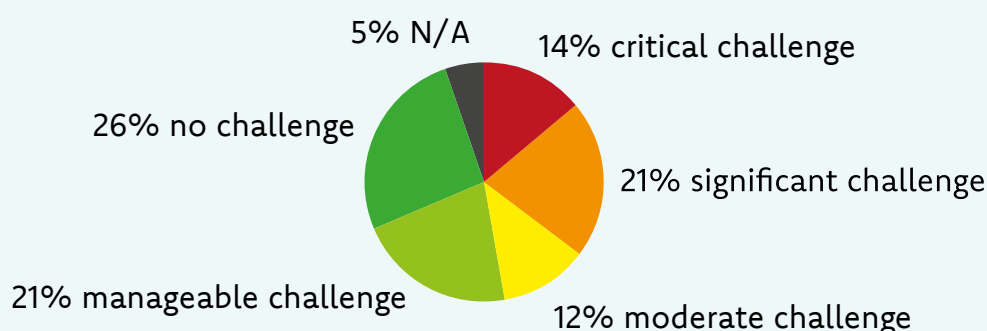
“[we are] at the mercy of agency-based policy e.g. Failte Ireland focus primarily on place-based tourism (places to go), whereas we are trying to get more focus on event-based, or activity tourism, particularly genealogy.”

(Heritage group)

Community groups are looking for additional supports, possibly from local authority personnel or local PPN, to assist with both project development and project management.

A detailed examination of the difficulties associated with securing funding is contained in the section titled ‘What was discovered about the challenges faced by community groups to obtaining funding.’

Difficulties with physical space and facilities



47% of groups responding were clear that the challenge of securing physical space and facilities was greater than a “manageable” challenge

Challenges related to physical space and facilities presented as a “significant” or “critical” challenge for 35% of respondents. Access to spaces and facilities for community groups in some locations is limited with inadequate capacity to meet demand. In other locations access to spaces and facilities is effectively non-existent.

This situation creates an imbalance of opportunity for certain groups in terms of their ability to determine their own activities. The profile of the groups facing this challenge can range from being recently established, to being small with respect to member numbers, or reflecting a smaller stakeholder group. This disadvantage can inhibit groups to operate or to fulfil their potential and can often lead to significant difficulties and imbalances when competing with other community groups for limited resources and funding.

Respondents provided insights to the limitations they face when reliant on favours from other community groups to access space. Access was ad-hoc in nature and availability of space was typically at unsuitable and unsocial hours. This impacted on the group’s ability to plan with confidence, to sustain the group activities, or grow group membership numbers.

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Diverse community groups have different needs in relation to the space and facilities they need. However, neutral and accessible spaces were identified as important to foster engagement, support volunteer initiatives, and enable groups to thrive.

Groups reported that they were ineligible for certain funding programmes due to either a lack of ownership or security of tenure on the premises used for group activities. Difficulties with meeting high rents was mentioned repeatedly. This has a negative impact on group costs, can reduce participation and threaten viability. Community groups who either operate in or have access to an old or heritage buildings have faced difficulties in getting planning authorities to partner in securing realistic futures for these structures.

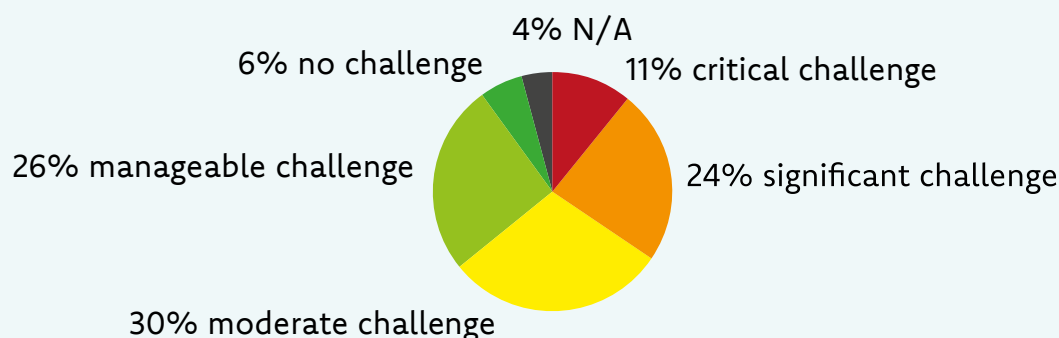
The problems of finding storage for equipment, materials and other resources was widely commented upon where groups do not have their own, dedicated space. Accessible and secure space is difficult to find. This lack of space has led to rising costs within groups due to deterioration of items kept in poor storage conditions.

The impact of space is multifaceted but the overriding message from groups is that unavailable, poor quality or unsuitable space is seen as a disincentive for groups to thrive.

“If we can’t find a venue, we will find it hard to continue.”

(Local arts group)

Administration requirements



65% of groups responding were clear that the challenge of administrative burden was greater than a “manageable” challenge

The volume and complexity of administrative work required of community groups means that 35% of groups experience this as either a “significant” or “critical” challenge.

“Weight of compliance with Charity Regulator, the CRO, Revenue, Health & Safety, Risk Management, Garda Vetting, HR compliance, etc. no matter what size your group, while necessary, it is a significant burden and can take away from frontline work.”

(Volunteer centre)

The extent of duplication in administrative tasks was a source of much frustration.

The “...need to provide copies of organisational information such as insurance, constitution, organisational details for every single grant application even at [XXX] Council level. This places a significant multiplication of process and an increased burden on an already under-pressure and challenged voluntary sector. Can there not be a central

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portal with all this information contained and updated each year that can be referred to by [funding] organisations to help ease this burden? Perhaps the PPN could play a role.”

(Community development group)

Respondents repeatedly referenced the necessity for additional supports. Groups identified the need for clear roadmaps to establish and grow a community group, training in areas related to administration, management and legal requirements, and funding to support community development workers and officers. Groups are ready and willing to engage and learn once structures and pathways are clear.

“There is no clear road map on how to start and grow an organisation. There is little guidance, for example, on whether a voluntary group needs to incorporate at all, and if so in what capacity. There is no start up engine or growth lab for community groups.”

(Community integration group)

“Funding for more grassroots community development workers – as mentoring is vital considering the current climate with [XXX] increased in population with many new communities living here and also sustainable funding for non-accredited training as this is the first step for many on the pathway of social and economic independence”

(Women’s network)

“We really need training and understanding of document management, reporting, office management, team administration and understanding who our moderator is in government organisations, who we should work with and how we should do it. We do a lot of things on our own without help. But we are ready to do more and learn more.”

(New communities group)

“In 2025, we applied for more than 10 grants that we found on our own, but only one was approved. We need training from the grantors to understand what they expect from the community”

(Social enterprise)

Attitude of state bodies and their operation

Comments from respondents illustrated how difficulties may arise or be exacerbated when government agencies demonstrate a poor attitude towards or lack of understanding of the voluntary sector. Dysfunctional operations and processes within and between state agencies also create problems for community groups who may fall foul of unresolved matters, disputed responsibilities, and contradictory policies.

There was a clear perception that government fails to make efforts to accommodate volunteers with groups stating that agencies make little effort to understand the reality for volunteers.

Research Findings

“The expectation of government/ civil service that we attend training sessions during the day which would mean taking time off work is unrealistic and unhelpful”

(Community development association)

“Managing public and government expectations of our work [is a challenge]. The more we do, the more is expected and the less it’s appreciated.”

(Residents’ group)

This challenge was particularly linked to the lack of value attributed to the societal benefits that groups generate such as engaging and retaining young people in sport, maintaining the built and natural environment, and supporting successful integration of marginalised groups into society.

Lack of respectful communications from Local Authorities regarding community work was noted, whilst groups were expected to maintain their work for the public good. One example of this was Tidy Towns groups feeling they had to beg their Local Authorities for access to equipment and resources to support their work.

Groups identified difficulties engaging with government agencies that have contradictory remits and no culture or incentive to collaborate positively with a solution-focused approach. Despite government rhetoric, community groups make



significant efforts to engage with government bodies but feel their inputs are largely ignored, which amounts to more waste of their time.

“Consultations are plenty but the resulting policies and communications lead us to believe that our input is rarely taken on board.”

(Women’s network)

Control

Community groups indicated that they feel a lack of control at all levels from every-day situations to the overwhelming work involved in grant application, to the ownership, power and decision of their existence and continued growth.

“[funding] agencies have the power to determine what groups survive and thrive, and what don’t”

(Environmental group)

It is apparent that a majority of community groups face challenges beyond what they find manageable in multiple core areas of their operation.





What was discovered about the challenges faced by community groups to obtaining funding

Respondents were asked specifically about the types of challenge they face in relation to obtaining and securing funding. Many of the problematic issues were repeatedly noted irrespective of the funding programme, funding agency, or funding administrator.

Eight different types of challenge were identified in the first phase of work with the focus groups (listed on following page). Survey respondents indicated how significant each of these were for their groups. They were also invited to identify other challenges not listed.

Research Findings

- Restrictions on the funding available
- Funding schemes lack flexibility, imagination or vision on what is eligible
- Administration burden is too great
- Lack of dedicated support to assist groups in making applications
- Application forms are too lengthy and complex
- Communication is poor
- Schemes are not administered consistently
- Deadlines are too short

Survey responses made it clear that the difficulties relating to funding extend beyond those involved in securing the funding initially.

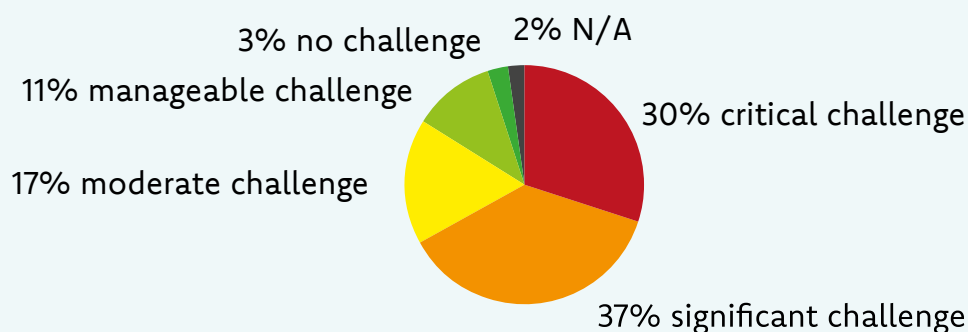
The majority of groups face multiple challenges in relation to funding. 63% of groups

Cumulative funding challenges experienced by community groups

Critical, significant & moderate challenges	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Groups affected	17%	3%	5%	7%	4%	9%	10%	14%	30%

experience challenges that are greater than a “manageable” challenge in five or more aspects of funding. The impact of these cumulative difficulties will vary between groups depending on factors such as the skillset of volunteers and committee members, the groups’ structure and governance, and the energy and motivation within the group. Furthermore, the funding challenges are exacerbated by reporting systems that lack the flexibility that is required for the voluntary sector. There is a strong sentiment that the systems fail to consider the end-user. Community groups do not shy from the responsibility of transparency, traceability and accountability. Instead, they question the efficiency and effectiveness of current reporting systems.

Restrictions on available funding



84% of groups responding were clear that the restrictions on available funding was greater than a “manageable” challenge

Restrictions reported by respondents include partial payment, match funding, retrospective payment, limited allocation of funding, inappropriate funding allocation to complete work, unrealistic and inflexible timeframes to spend funding, exclusion of core costs, and unreasonable accounting specifications. Multiple respondents reported these as deterrents to applying thus preventing the progress of proposed projects.

The impact of these restrictions cannot be understated. They can be the pivotal deciding factor on whether groups survive or fold. The depth of impact is evidenced in statements from respondents;

Partial funding

“partial funding doesn’t work as typically we don’t have the rest to cover the project in our core funding,”

(Crisis support centre)

Match funding

Match funding requirements were noted as a major difficulty for community groups. It was deemed inappropriate that personal loans or guarantees from community group members should be used to enable groups qualify for funding schemes. It was also noted that bridging loans are both expensive and unrealistic for most community organisations.

“We also need to change the building to be more suitable for purpose as life has changed so much in recent years, we don’t have the 25% needed to match the funding.It is making our building less useful and more and more time consuming to make it work as it is.”

(Community resource centre)

Reimbursement after project costs are paid

This practice often requires either group members to use personal funds or groups to secure bridging loans *if* this is possible. This generates risk, uncertainty, and additional costs to groups.

“At present, one volunteer forward pays for all our projects. That makes payment easier but it means that if a project runs over time because of the lack of availability of a contractor, the volunteer is out of pocket for at least 12 months.”

(Community enhancement group)

Unreasonable accounting specifications

“ [They] also require an invoice and receipt from the supplier, and that proof the payment went through the bank account.... We can manage to do this for arranged activities such as venue hire or paying a tutor, however it is not feasible to do this for buying the milk and biscuits for a meeting. Result is need to buy more expensive supplies through a specialty supplier e.g. specialist art shop rather than buying a few art supplies in Mr Price, and for purchases to take weeks.”

(Women's group)

Adaptive case management should be the norm for community and voluntary grants. The requirement for monies to be spent within the financial year does not allow or accommodate delays that may occur such as availability of tradespeople or weather-related issues. It does not encourage necessary adjustments that emerge as the project proceeds. Without an adaptive case management model community groups are vulnerable and liable for costs that are outside their financial capabilities.

Community and voluntary groups and organisations express a sense of lack of value, or equivalent value, placed on community members' time/ work. Volunteer hours involved in drafting and submitting applications, administering and reporting funding, and project delivery are not acknowledged or given weight. Many express the need to consider this as a pro-rata basis towards match funding.

Some groups also struggle to qualify for funding schemes because they are already in receipt of an element of state funding. They argue that if there is merit in their proposal and no other state funding available for it, it should be considered eligible to apply.

Occasionally community groups must battle with legitimate difficulties that arise through no fault of their own, examples include lost building deeds for long-

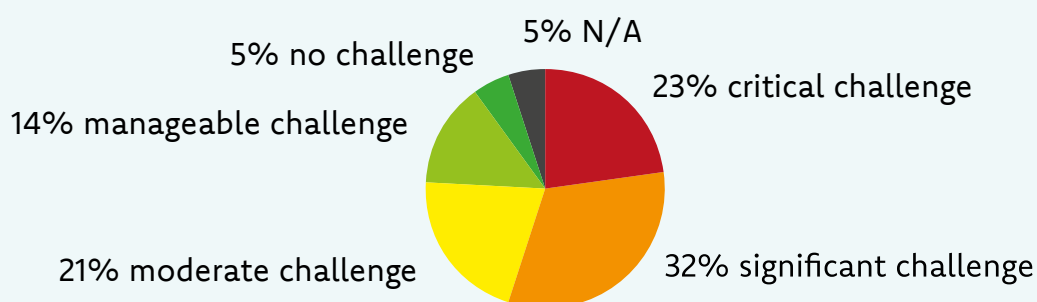
Research Findings

occupied accommodation and unknown errors in records relating to the group. Some understanding from the funding organisation and ability to allow for resolution of these is seen as important.

“One grant required that vendors be paid prior to us being reimbursed. We did not have enough money to pay them (solar panel installation) so applied for a credit union bridging loan to cover expenses until grant came through. That was in December 2024. CU told us they couldn’t do a background check as our name in their credit checking system was listed incorrectly. 8 months later that has still not been resolved. I personally lent the [group] the funds to cover the bill and was reimbursed when the grant came through.”

(Community development association)

Funding schemes lack flexibility, imagination, or vision on what is eligible



76% of groups responding were clear that lack of flexibility in funding schemes was greater than a “manageable” challenge

It was noted that funding schemes are often attempting to deliver pre-determined results deemed beneficial irrespective of local circumstances and miss opportunities to create more beneficial outcomes as a result. This lack of flexibility forces groups

to tailor proposals towards funding scheme goals whilst still attempting to achieve at least some of what is necessary locally; a compromise that often fails to deliver the optimum in respect of either objective.

The potential for funding schemes to support new initiatives and collaborations brought forward by community groups was raised by a number of groups.

“There are grants for solar power, however, we have a large number of rivers/streams and tidal waters that would be ideal for generating energy (with minimal environmental impact) which could feed street lighting, schools and community buildings – but there are no grants for feasibility studies. This would be an ideal topic for study and research for schools and universities...”

(Community forum)

Carefully defined eligibility criteria, without flexibility can result in unforeseen impacts. Applying a reasoned approach to criteria is needed so as not to inadvertently further disadvantage certain areas and groups.

“Falling between the criteria cracks. e.g. looked for Irish Language literacy supports, where fund is geared primarily for English. –scheme offered support for children’s activities for new communities, not for unique existing Irish language community.”

(Gaeltacht community centre)

“Our location mean we are not entitled to some significant funding (CLAR programme) as the boundary for funding stops at the edge of

Research Findings

our [property] boundary based on old ordinance survey maps. The club provides sports facilities and activities to the whole town of [XXX] on both sides of the boundary and yet we cannot seek CLAR funding due to the boundary line issue. It would open up a great funding resource for the club that is more locally focussed vs having to seek funding in more national funding programmes where success is limited.”

(Community sports club)

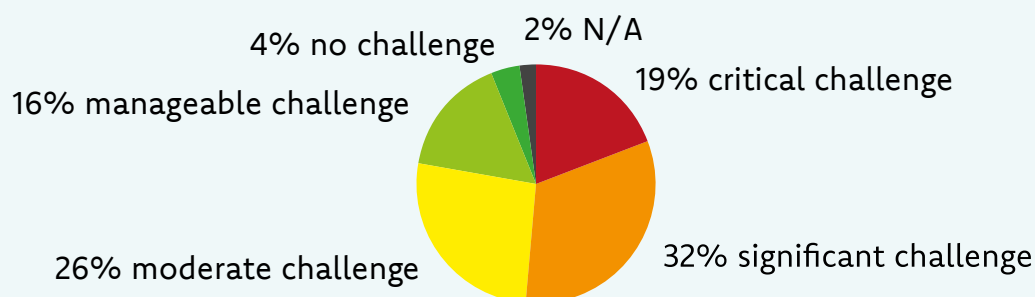
Respondents highlighted that societal capital and added value are not considered in funding programmes. At times these are specifically excluded.

“Social capital is not considered worthy of noting in many grants ran by the County Council and this is unreasonable.”

(Community enhancement group)

Lack of flexibility, fixed application dates, and rigid timelines may also mean that community groups are unable to take advantage of opportunities.

Administrative burden is too great



77% of groups responding were clear that the administrative burden of funding schemes was greater than a “manageable” challenge

The volume of work required to develop and submit applications and the associated record keeping and reporting requirements is identified as a considerable challenge by community organisations.

Funding applications require project conception, development, refinement and agreement within the community group itself. In some cases, this will involve community consultation and discussion with regulatory agencies or other third parties. Prior permissions or consents may be required, such as planning. Comprehensive costings are generally required, often to be supported by quotations, and sometimes extensive drafting is needed. This body of work demands time, commitment and multiple administrative skills. Acquiring quotations alone can present many challenges, reflecting regional, national or global circumstances, and in some cases are not feasible to obtain. The more significant the funding obtained, the greater the internal organisation and work involved on the part of the community group. Recognition of these challenges is required.

Success in securing funding can result in additional workloads ranging from management of significant sums of money, to employment of staff, to new legal agreements, to acquisition of property to be managed. Funding schemes often require reporting at intervals throughout the lifespan of the project that are specific in format to the funding scheme. This is an additional workload on volunteers.

Most schemes provide limited or no contribution towards core organisation costs or overheads. This point was raised by groups surveyed. They highlighted that it is unfeasible and unrealistic to encourage groups to do more without recognising increased workload and providing support for associated increased administration and core costs.

“Funding is often sent out too late and is a rush then to apply, and you don’t hear back for months on end, then you hear back and are given a deadline on when it has to be spent, then when you send off the proof

Research Findings

they continuously come back saying they need other proof, leading to a mountain of work which you already did not have time for.”

(Carers organisation)

Small community groups question equity of opportunity when they are tasked with the same administrative requirements as larger organisations. There is also a general sentiment that there should be a difference in the requirements applied between large and small grants.

“7 forms filled for €240 from [XXXX] to do the work for free and then write a report is a joke and insult community groups”

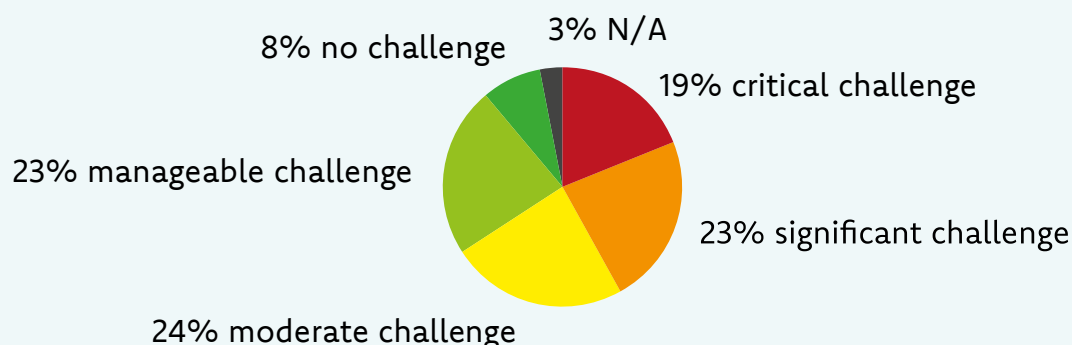
(Local environmental group)

Community groups report difficulties in drawing down funding and in their dealings with funding agencies. In some instances, it was reported that agreed funds had not been released before the year end, creating serious problems for community groups looking to audit their books and regularise finances.

“I must have wrote about 50 + emails to get the first €2k paid.”

(Sports group)

Lack of dedicated support to assist groups in making applications



66% of groups responding were clear that the lack of dedicated support in making applications was greater than a “manageable” challenge

“We really need a specialist or officer who will lead us step by step and moderate the processes for the first time. When we learn and become more independent, we will be able to work better.”

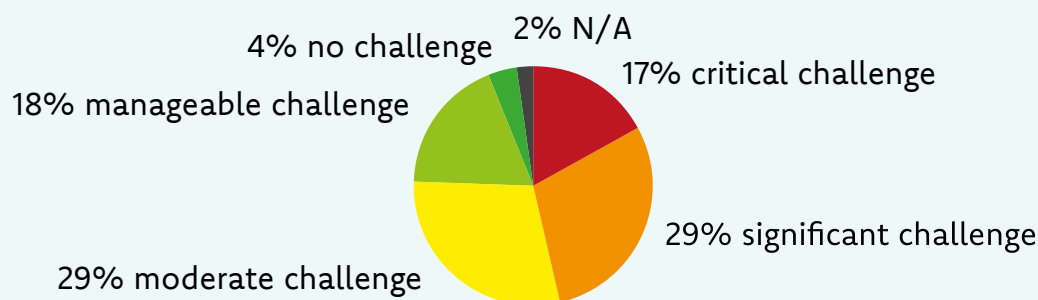
(New communities group)

Respondents identified the need for affordable/ subsidised access to genuinely expert advice and mentoring related to specialist dimensions of project (e.g. renewable energy, wildlife, or health experts) or high skilled dimensions of group or project operation (e.g. architects, accountants, solicitors).

“We need to access our own experts where needed to be sure we do the right thing and get the best results, these don’t always come from stipulated/ recommended sources e.g.[XXXX] but costs are prohibitive. Everyone loses out if we take a poor second best; project design, execution, end result....”

(Community energy group)

Application forms are too lengthy and complex



75% of groups responding were clear that application forms presented as a greater than “manageable” challenge

46 % of respondents found “significant” or “critical” challenges with respect to application forms. Difficulties outlined include overall length, complexity and repetition.

“Much funding, especially from [XXXX], is too complicated in its application phase as well as the delivery phase. The architects of these funds need to understand that volunteers have full time jobs, families and other commitments. The burden is onerous for someone in a voluntary capacity, especially with the lack of admin support. Additionally, it is expected that good governance dictates a turnover of the volunteers however it is usually helpful there is legacy knowledge which remains in place.”

(Community development assoc.)

Difficulties can be exacerbated by poor accessibility; applications restricted to online submission only, only available in English, and inaccessible to those with disabilities.

“None of the instructions to fill in forms are in easy to read or video format and I am not sure if [most] are compatible with a screen reader if they are in electronic format.”

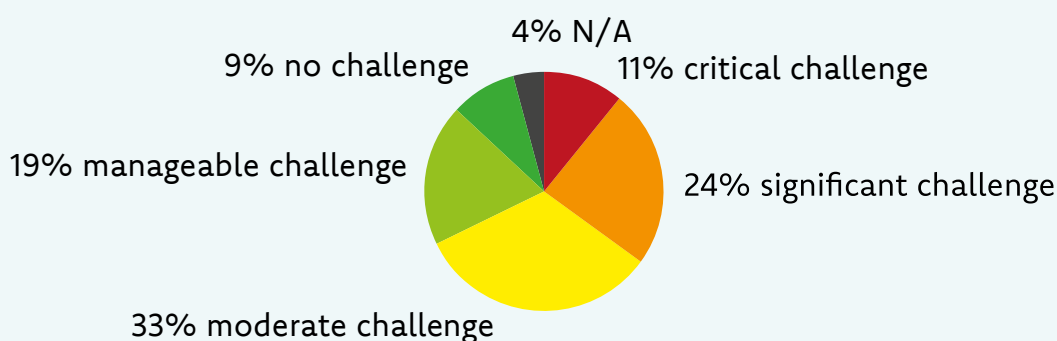
(Disabled persons group)

A range of groups questioned the requirements for so many supplementary elements to applications and the rigid formats specified. Obtaining the customary three quotations can be extremely difficult. It was noted that some Local Authority administered grants have acknowledged this issue and have adjusted their requirements accordingly.

A repeated frustration amongst community groups is the lack of consistency in how the same information is collected across different applications. This is seen as a duplication of effort that requires a considerable investment of time. It is widely felt to be unnecessary when a standardised approach could be adopted. Groups suggest a centralised reference centre be created that groups register with and update as necessary. Groups also felt that when submitting to a scheme from which they have previously obtained funds, they should only be required to submit updated information as opposed to submitting all details again.

Respondents reported incidents of glitches in online platforms causing the loss of hours of work on applications. Groups expressed concern over the reliability and functioning of some platforms. They suggest that funding agencies should adopt a check-in approach for minor errors in applications rather than dismiss the work invested out of hand. Groups raised these concerns in respect of cases where minor errors may occur due to unclear guidance and cases of applications discarded over small omissions or mistakes.

Poor communication



68% of groups responding were clear that poor communication was greater than a “manageable” challenge

35% of respondents found “significant” or “critical” challenges with respect to poor communication. Specifically, slow decisions on applications leads to real dilemmas for groups. This creates uncertainty as to whether they can proceed and can be disruptive of overall operational plans. In addition, delays in notification of successful grant applications can lead to insufficient time to deliver proposed actions. Particularly large work programmes or weather dependent activities can be impacted by this delay in notification. Sometimes, it is not feasible to deliver a proposed project as the timeline

Lack of feedback, especially but not solely where an application is not successful, is also problematic. Some groups reported that unsuccessful candidates received no formal notification at all. The majority of funding submissions involve considerable investment of time and work. Unsuccessful (or partially so) groups wish to know and understand the reasons for the unsuccessful outcome. This allows groups to gain a deeper understanding of what was expected of them.

“On more than one occasion (four times comes to mind, maybe more), I’ve learned of the outcome of a grant application from a social media post rather than been told the outcome directly. Our latest grant application (to the [XXX]) informed us that due to the high level of applications received, feedback on unsuccessful applications would not

be given- this is a cop out- if there was transparency in the assessment of applications then feedback could be easily mobilised.”

(Community development group)

Transparency on funding decisions is important to groups for them to have confidence that a scheme operates fairly and consistently. It also allows groups to gain an understanding of what the fund aims to support or encourage.

“Need a lot more transparency on the decision making and why certain projects granted funding and others not, also on the split of funds, e.g. why did we only get 50% of grant we applied for while another group got 80% etc. There is currently no transparency on grant awards.”

(Town development group)

Groups applying for funding or to a particular scheme for the first time, or with a complex proposal, would benefit from the opportunity to discuss their application with the funding scheme staff. It is suggested that this support would assist in identifying inappropriate applications, assist groups submit applications that meet all requirements, and ultimately develop capacity within community organisations.

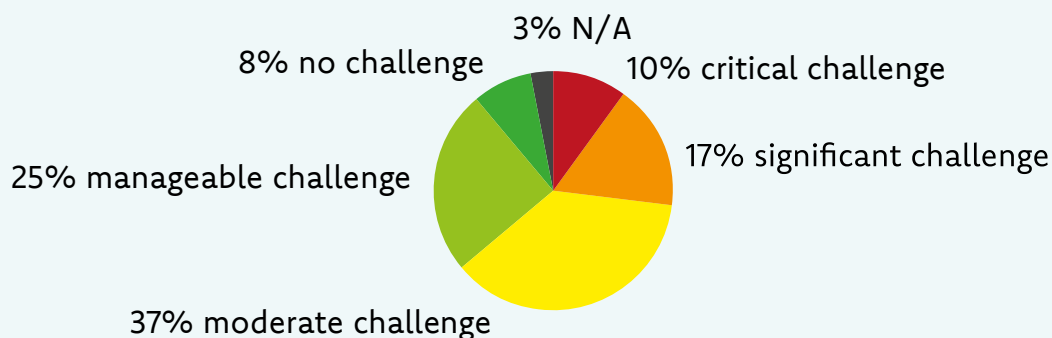
“It is often difficult to assess what is eligible, feedback on failed applications is rarely forthcoming, support on grant application process is typically very scarce. Process usually goes silent for months with no contacts for updates.”

(Community sports club)

Research Findings

Communication of information about funding opportunities is clearly critical for community groups and missed opportunities due to lack of awareness of schemes was widely reported in the survey.

Deadlines and time-frames



64% of groups responding were clear that deadlines and time-frames are greater than a “manageable” challenge

While funding scheme deadlines are problematic for community groups these present as a less acute challenge with respect to other issues encountered. Nonetheless, 27% reported funding deadlines as either “significant” or “critical”.

Issues contributing to the difficulties include:

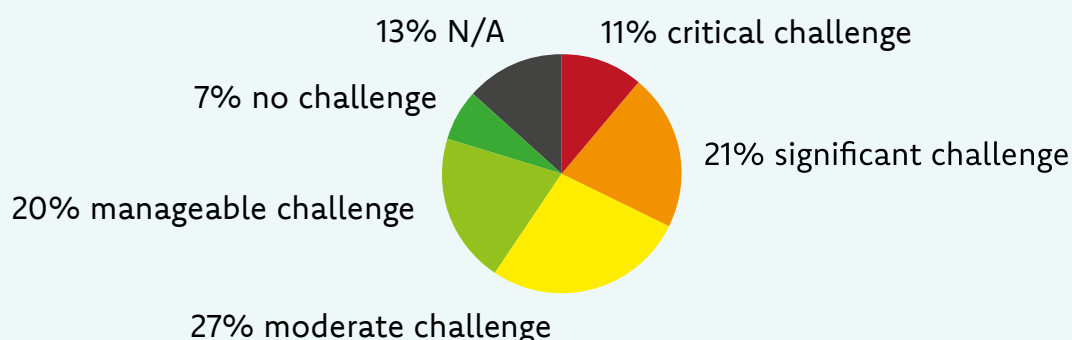
- Poor awareness of funding schemes where groups either have no knowledge of a funding scheme or learn of it too late to be able to submit
- Short time-periods between open and close of a funding call. Groups consider it an unreasonable expectation to be ‘shovel ready’ upon the open date of a funding call. Greater lead-in times or extended time periods are required to allow for adequate proposal planning, development of proposals, and group consensus.
- Shortened windows for actual delivery of the project works resulting from delayed notification of funding decisions, with no corresponding extension of the original time-period for the work to be undertaken, which may make it difficult to complete the works funded.

- Delays in payment or repayment of funds by funding agencies, creates financial management difficulties for groups.

“Application deadline Jan, decision deadline Feb not reached, decision came in mid April for significantly less than applied for. Appealed end of April and gained decision mid May. Project has to be completed by end Oct- delay has left it very short to deliver the whole project but funder does not see the issue”

(Rivers trust group)

Schemes are not administered consistently



59% of groups responding were clear that inconsistencies in administration of schemes are greater than a “manageable” challenge

Challenges related to administration of funding schemes were seen as a “significant” or “critical” challenge by 33% of groups.

Groups reported that changes in key staff administering funding schemes resulted in changes to how schemes operated. This wrong-footed groups in how they completed their application. Changes in interpretation of funding scheme rules have occurred without the necessary communication to potential applicants.

Research Findings

“Staff changeover in a fund office which previously supported us then discouraged us applying again as now [they’re] not seeing us as a community but instead as a sports club”

(Inclusion group)

Respondents also raised cases of apparent differences in how schemes operated according to beneficiaries. This has raised friction within communities.

Groups reported the lack of clarity in funding scheme criteria related to group suitability and eligibility. They highlighted that insufficient information is provided by schemes with key elements only becoming apparent once an online application is in process.

“It is VERY difficult to work out which funding is suitable for us to apply for and where to find the details for what I can apply for. I get lots of information but I often can’t work out how it would apply to me. I’m already so very very busy, I don’t have time to research things that don’t sound immediately obvious.”

(Community resource centre)

Eligible funding costs

Throughout the survey frustration was expressed at the lack of practical funding support for

- ongoing costs including ongoing-operational costs to maintain groups of demonstrable value

- ongoing funding for successful initiatives that maintain and sustain valued services and initiatives
- innovative and locally appropriate proposals
- administrative and volunteering time

“Complete lack of funding for operational costs. Everything is geared towards projects but maintenance and the operation of projects once they have been delivered cost money.”

(Community social enterprise & youth group)

“One off funding doesn’t work for this area, if we create a project for instance for an outreach area that will need to run each and every year but typically funding is only for that year, how do we continue it? There’s no growth to the current funding model “

(Rape crisis initiative)

“Community groups are forced to fight over breadcrumbs for the in-vogue project rather than be assured of financial support for the practical ongoing needs of the group.”

(Youth organisation)

Some groups report an uphill struggle with a lack of understanding of the social value of the community group, and the merits the projects they engage with and deliver.

Research Findings

“Our greatest challenge is in persuading organisations like the County Council, HSE, ETB and similar the value of their investing in our shed. In the medium to longer term, preventing loneliness and isolation, maintaining good mental health and contributing majorly to the wellbeing of men in our community prevents longer term problems and saves exchequer money by helping to eliminate the need for costly medical treatment and care down the line.”

(Men’s group)

Many groups touched on the amount of work done directly by community organisations that might arguably be expected to be within the remit of Local Authorities or other state agencies. When they experience significant difficulties in securing funds to carry out these works, it increases cynicism about government or local government commitment to partnership and equity. Respondents also saw it as essential for communities to actively pursue their own interests although this can sometimes feel like communities are competing against one another.

“No money is forthcoming unless WE look for it in our own free time. The community ends up RELYING on local leadership & volunteers to improve the area through their work. This burden seems to be growing. For example: we have to do a road sign survey and ask for sign repairs, cleaning, replacements. Why doesn’t the local authority do that? Similarly with broken street bins, Road repairs, blocked street drains. We notify and request work to be done. It seems the areas who don’t ask and follow up get left behind.”

(Community development group)



What the survey revealed about participation in climate action

What community groups consider climate action to be

The survey explored the perception amongst community groups about what constitutes “climate action”. It listed 8 broad areas in which positive action is recognised as supporting mitigation or adaptation efforts. Respondents were asked to identify all those that their group considered to be climate action.

Renewable energy, biodiversity and wildlife, and responsible consumption ranked highest as a climate action. 3% of respondents did not deem any of the categories as a climate action. It is also noteworthy that no area of activity exceeded a value of 75%. This data raises questions with respect to awareness and information across communities related to climate change and climate action. The workshop with Sligo

Research Findings

PPN member groups held in November 2025 confirmed that there are significant gaps in awareness about the climate crisis itself and the different aspects of climate action.

Which of the following does your group consider climate action to be?



Over half of respondents submitted additional information identifying additional climate actions areas beyond those listed in the survey. These included:

- Awareness raising, information sharing and development of environmental respect to promote behaviour change
- Promotion and support for circular economy and sustainable jobs
- Co-ordinated, sustainable, future-proofed local planning that actively involves the community
- Citizen science
- Regenerative and sustainable tourism
- Waste management

- Food production and agricultural initiatives
- Community resilience

Groups expressed the need for several principles to be applied to climate action and related funding including:

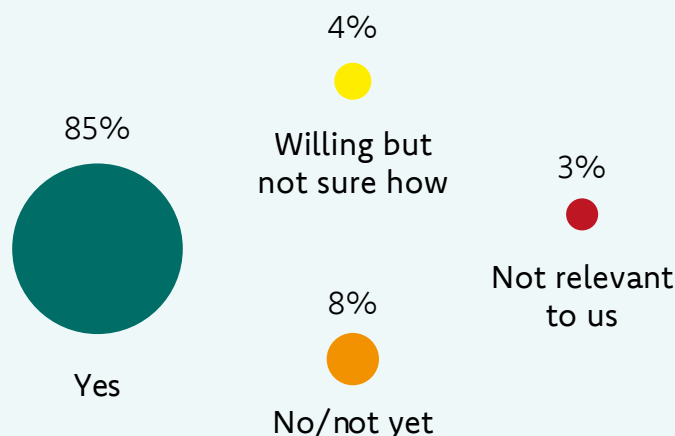
- Consideration of social justice, wealth (in)equality and inclusivity. Measures to address these should be included (as far as possible) in all climate actions.
- Actions should aim to enhance self-sufficiency with examples of food production and security, and community ownership of renewable energy provided.
- Skilled and experienced experts with real and robust track records must be involved to advise, mentor and support action. These costs should be eligible under funding schemes.

A wide range of examples of possible and delivered community climate actions were provided by community groups. This list may represent the beginning of a potential reference resource of actions that community groups could consider. (Appendix C)

How day-to-day climate action is taken on board by community groups

Does your group aim to be climate positive in your day-to-day operations?

Over 85% of respondents indicated that they were building climate positive action into their group's day-to-day operations. The nature and extent of this action varied widely with the type of group and their activities. Examples of actions ranged from recycling and re-usable



Research Findings

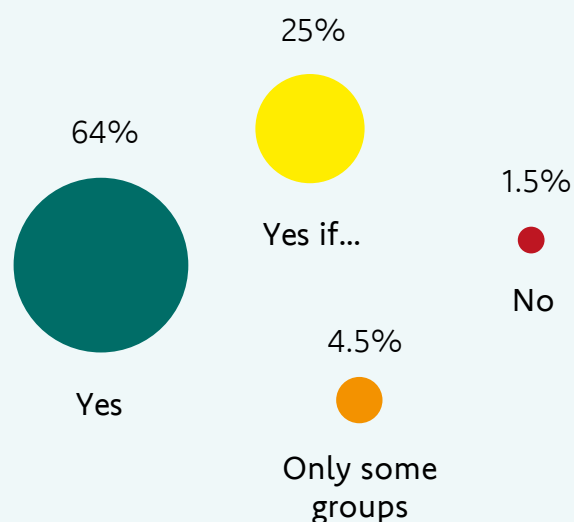
materials, through car-pooling and online meetings, to solar panels, sustainable events and prizes, rainwater harvesting, composting, use of electric lawn mowers and no pesticides, and planting of indigenous, pollinator friendly species. A small number of respondents indicated a desire to operate in a climate-friendly way but were not sure what this would or could involve for them.

Some of the groups that answered “no / not yet” or felt that climate action was not relevant to them indicated that this was a personal choice for individuals or that there was no consensus within the group.

What community groups think about taking on specific climate-focused actions

Does your organisation think climate action is something for all community organisations to get involved in?

A significant majority of 89% indicated that climate action was something for all community groups. Most were passionate about the importance of this issue, the threat that the climate crisis poses and the need for everyone to respond.



“Climate action affects all communities and has to be a priority for everyone. It’s not someone else’s problem to solve and the more educated people are about it, the more they will engage in it.”

(Local youth group)

25% of those who said “Yes”, qualified their answer to stress that climate action is something for all community groups to engage in *once they are able to work on their core priorities first.*

“It is very hard for us to consider climate when we are under so much pressure just keeping the doors open.”

(Community resource centre)

“Our main aim is to help support older people in our community and this has to be our priority. We would love to be able to do this and protect our climate but this is not always possible.”

(Older persons service)

While the long-term pay-back on investments was recognised, it was also noted that there are often higher costs involved in taking climate action and ‘doing the right thing’. Considering long-term payback is difficult for organisations that receive funding on only an annual basis.

“Yes, we believe climate action is something all community organisations can play a part in. Every group, no matter its size or focus, can take small steps that add up from reducing waste and saving energy to educating members and protecting local green spaces. Community organisations already bring people together, so they are in a strong position to inspire positive change and show that climate action is achievable in everyday life.”

(Youth organisation)

“While our core mission is to support mental health and wellbeing, we recognise that the climate crisis has far reaching impacts on the communities we serve. Environmental issues can contribute to anxiety, grief, displacement and trauma, especially among vulnerable populations. As a community organisation, we have a responsibility to not only respond to these emerging needs, but also to be part of the broader solutions that protect the wellbeing of people and the planet. By taking climate action, we can demonstrate leadership, build resilience and help foster a sense of hope and our values that align closely with our therapeutic work and commitment to holistic community wellbeing.”

(Mental health service)

It is apparent that there is a deep understanding among a minority of respondents of the many ways in which the climate crisis impacts communities. It was suggested that a simple-to-use but comprehensive audit guide for community organisations would be useful. This would enable groups to assess their activities and identify areas where climate action was possible. Improved information sharing platforms on climate action case studies for consideration by community groups was proposed. This would serve as a valuable information resource and would also support networking and shared learning. Respondents were clear that expert supports are required and should be available for large scale actions.

Community groups’ experience of being involved in climate actions

Thirty-seven percent (37%) of all respondents indicated that their group is or has been involved in a climate action-focused project in the community. The range of actions taken is incredibly diverse, reflecting the interests of the organisations in question and the opportunities they have identified. They include food cloud hubs, recycling/ re-use and repurposing initiatives for diverse materials, membership

of national environmental action initiatives, district heating schemes, building improvements, cycleways, and invasive species removal. (See Appendix C)

Of the 132 groups that have carried out climate actions, 89% reported that the experience had been a positive one. Over 100 of these groups gave detailed feedback on their project and/or the impacts they have had. In some cases, positive results have been confirmed with scientific data. Community actions have sparked local conversation about initiatives with a resultant knock-on effect of further action by groups and individuals. Climate actions were reported to build community connectivity, have a positive impact on the mental health of those involved, and be ‘fun’! Several groups have received awards for their climate actions.

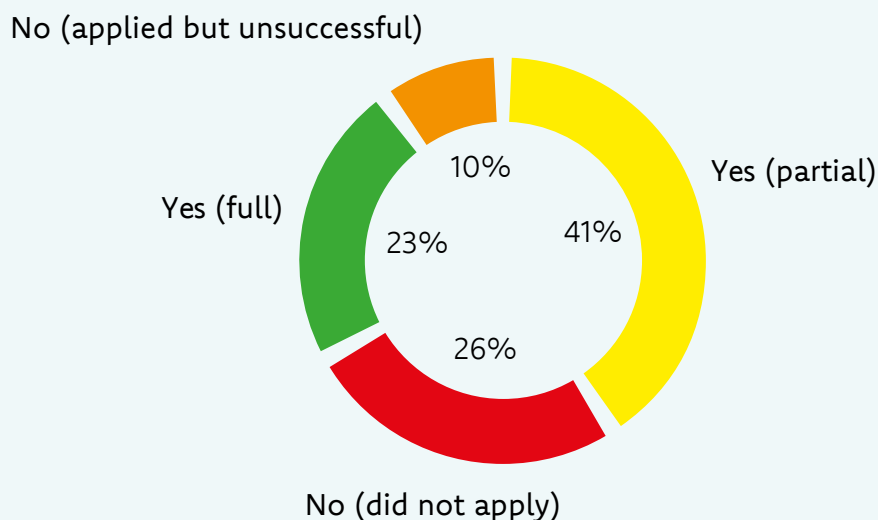
Some respondents pointed to the slow nature of much climate action and the battle for hearts and minds that is involved.

“Climate action is slow work. We do projects, support causes, give information, but at the end, we wonder if we are really making an impact. Doing projects is easier than changing minds or behaviours.”

(Environmental group)

The benefit of completing feasibility studies was highlighted, especially for larger proposed initiatives. Done well, these studies helped communities to come together to see what was needed and what might be involved in climate action, project delivery and the gains to be achieved. It helped improve project design and increase the level of preparedness for project delivery. This in turn informed decisions about whether a project should proceed and gave greater confidence of successful outcomes.

Did your group obtain funding to support your climate action?



64% of those groups involved in climate actions secured funding for projects with 23% receiving full funding. Interestingly, 26% of all the groups engaged in climate action did not apply for funding to support their initiatives. Although they were sizeable endeavours, many of these projects relied entirely on volunteer labour and expertise within the groups to deliver the projects. Many relied on volunteer labour and expertise within the groups to deliver the projects. In a small number of cases, respondents stated that the work involved in preparing funding applications were considered excessive.

90% of those who have been involved in climate action would seek funding for future projects. However, a number of caveats were outlined as influencing whether future funding was to be sought. It would depend on the action(s) considered and whether grants would be appropriate and not attempt to alter or 'hijack' the action proposed. Groups would balance the demands involved in applying to the likelihood of a successful outcome before investing significant effort and time in the application process.

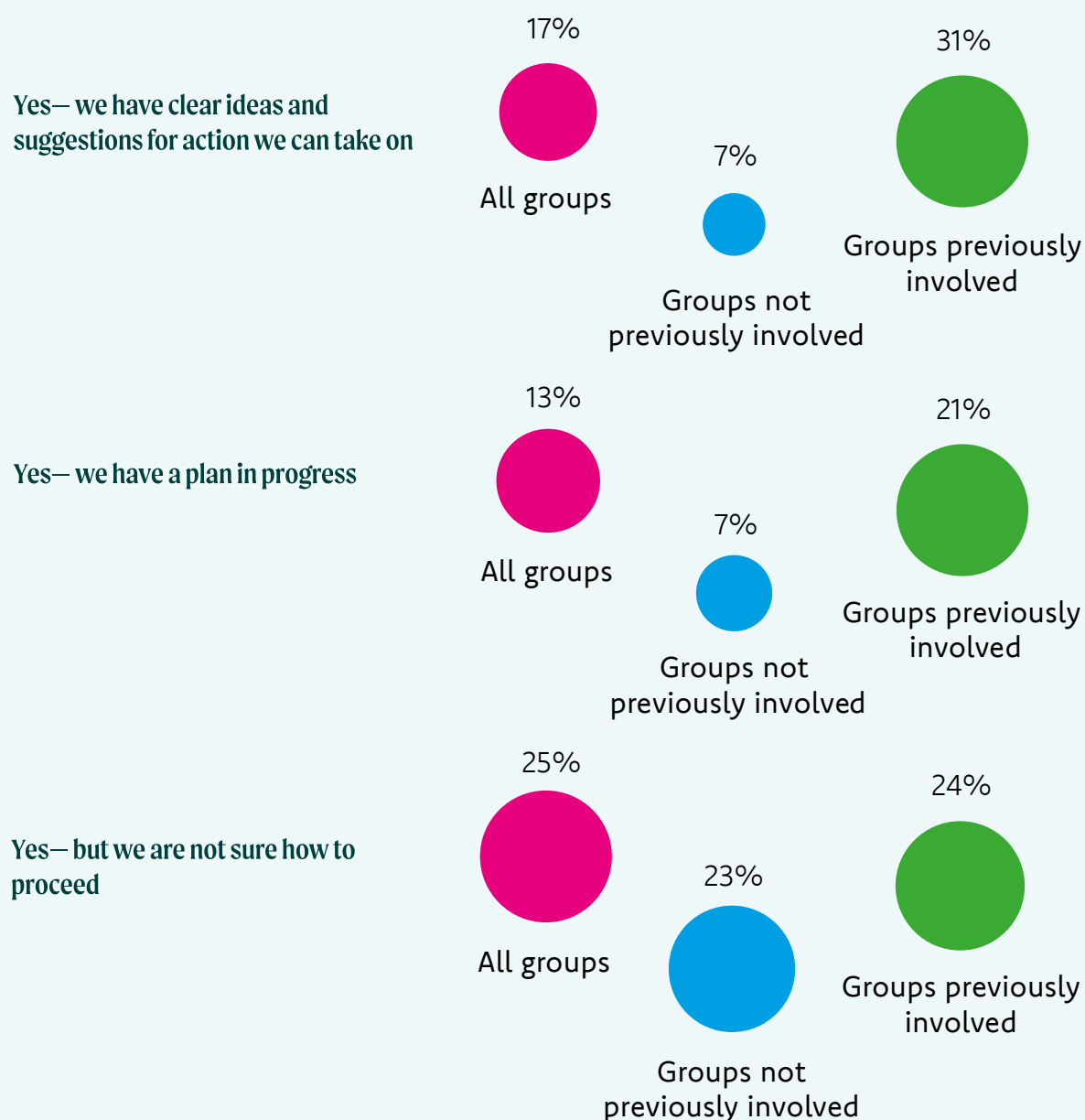
10% indicated that they would not apply for funding highlighting excessive paperwork and the demands of grant applications (e.g. for multiple quotations) as reasons.

The experience of climate action on balance would appear to be strongly positive, with over 95% of groups indicating that they would engage in climate action.

Engaging those groups not yet involved in climate action

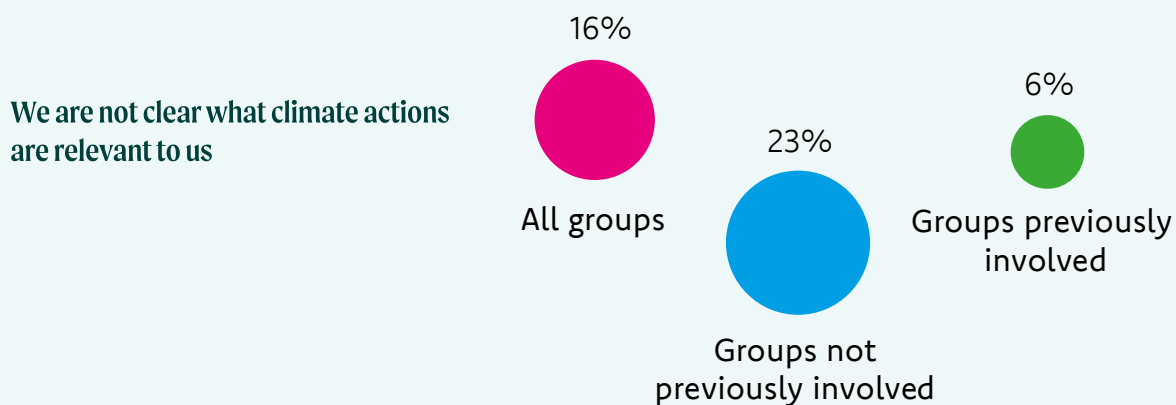
All groups were asked whether they would like to be involved in (further) climate action. The figures below show how responses varied between those groups that had already been involved in climate action projects and those who had not. The majority of responses were positive towards future involvement in climate action, irrespective of whether a group had been involved previously. This is consistent with the overwhelming support for climate action reported amongst community groups.

Over half (53%) of all respondents were keen to get involved in climate action, or additional climate action.

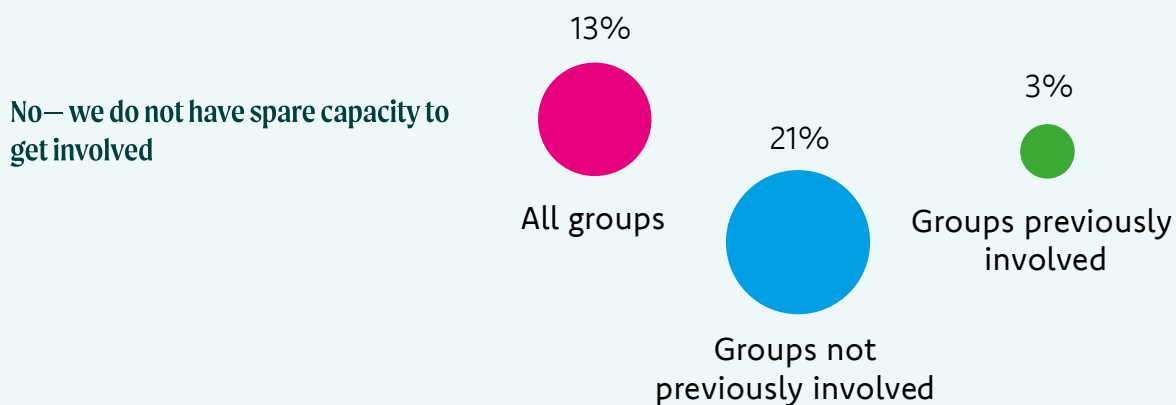


Research Findings

Those that indicated a desire to engage in further climate action projects listed a diverse range of activities addressing all aspects of climate action. Some projects are large scale and technically complex requiring feasibility studies. Other projects can be delivered with community expertise and voluntary labour at limited costs. (See Appendix C)

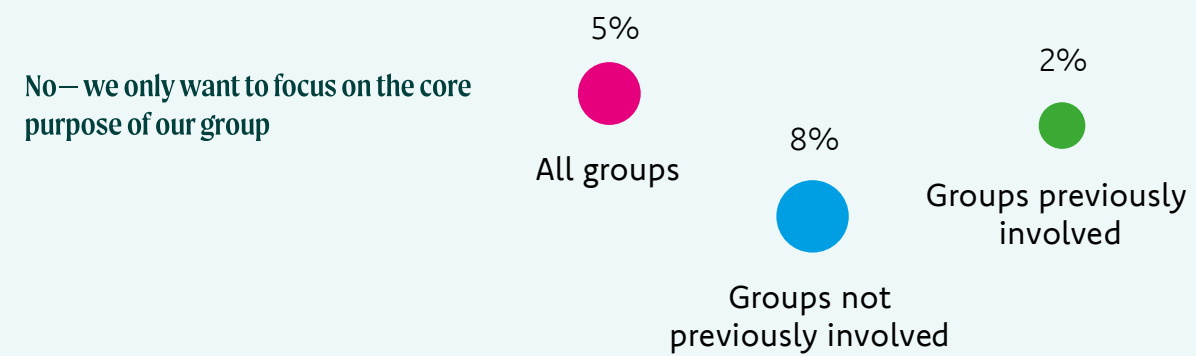


16% of all groups were unclear what climate actions were relevant to them. This figure is higher (23%) amongst those groups that have not previously engaged with climate actions. This suggests that there is need for targeted work to develop and communicate key climate action information. Clear advice and recommendations on action areas that are relevant specifically to community groups is required. Respondents indicated that single, 'go to' destination for information, guides and support is needed.

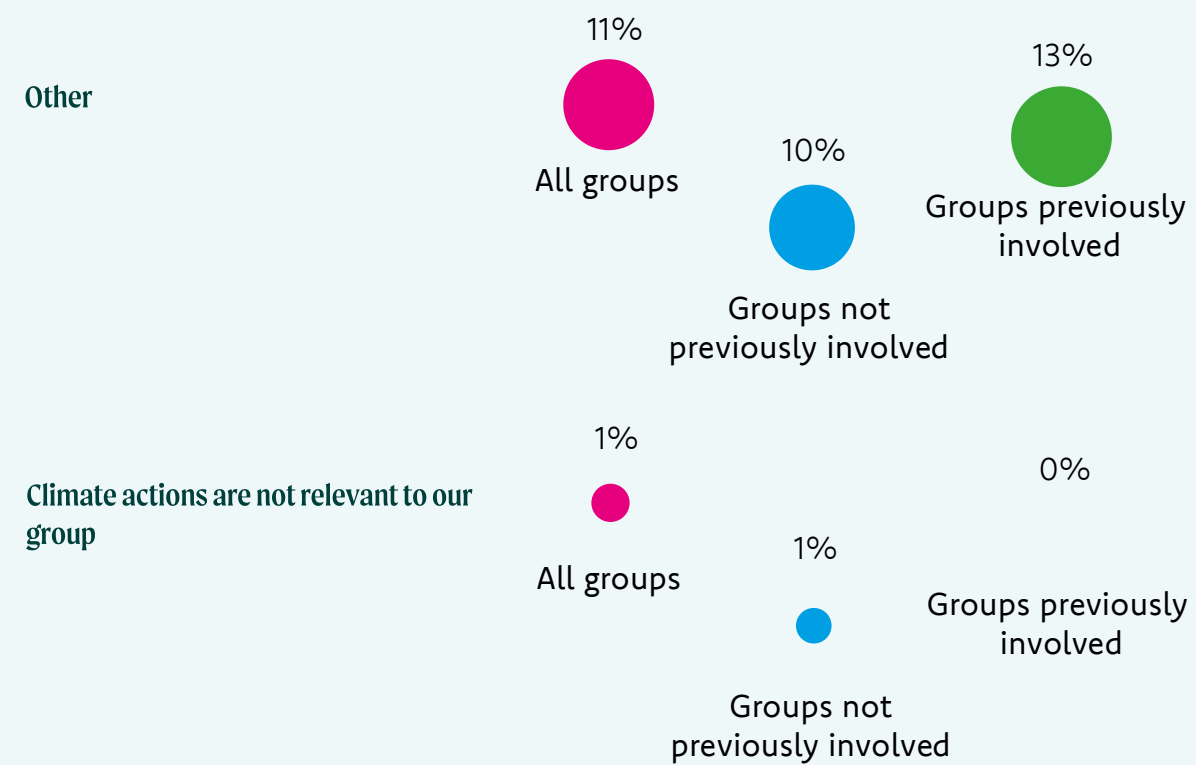


Almost all the groups who did not intend to pursue climate action provided rationale for their decision. Reasons included lack of resources (people, money and time), aging profile of group members, exhaustion, limited relevance of climate action

to the groups’ activities, the limited impact groups feel they can make, and the difficulties of interacting with funding agencies.



Increased awareness about relevant climate actions, and enhanced capacity within community groups could significantly raise the proportion of groups that would consider undertaking climate action.







Opportunities for action

What community groups would/ could do if the day-to-day challenges of operation were removed or reduced

It is clear that the desire to engage in positive climate action is widespread and consistent amongst community organisations. However, responses show a realism which recognises that for many groups this will not be possible unless operating conditions improve to allow them to fulfil their original purpose. Thereafter, they can build capacity to take on additional projects and initiatives.

Respondents were asked what they would do if the pressures on their day-to-day operation, even survival, were removed. Detailed responses to this question demonstrated a willingness to take on additional workloads and an ambition to do more for their community. It also points to a dedication to deliver projects despite justified cynicism resulting from past experiences.

Research Findings

Groups were clear that their priority would be to deliver on the primary aims of their organisations. Proposed additional activities included significant climate actions. Many outlined the necessity to speed up progress, to achieve more collaboratively and for whole communities, to realise long-term plans, and to take on new projects.

Many groups are established to address chronic issues that have significant implications for their communities. It is critical that these groups are supported to operate without the constant challenges to their viability to allow them to consider engagement in wider societal objectives like climate action.

“This survey is clearly focused on climate action whereas our concerns are more mundane involving the survival of our village as a tourist attraction. Fifty years ago, we were a thriving fishing village and exporter of shell fish to the Continent. Fishing has died because of EU regulations. Farming needs help. So, tourism is our mainstay,”

(Village development association)

Community groups’ one ask of government

“I would ask Government to adequately and accurately acknowledge the volume of work that volunteers in our community do. To give you an example, we recorded over 252 volunteer hours into just one award last year (Town and Village Renewal Grant) and the sign we were TOLD to put up said ‘This project was funded by the Dept of [XXX].... and [XXX] Council (who gave less than 5% of the total project award) under the... Town and Village Scheme’ – I asked our point of contact why weren’t the volunteer group (who managed all aspects of the project) acknowledged

on the plaque and got told to make our own plaque if we wanted that detail on it.”

(Community enhancement group)

There is a strong culture and tradition of volunteering and community action that supports all aspects of our lives in Ireland. Respondents were asked to identify one ask of government that would support continuation of this culture and goodwill. A broad range of suggestions were provided ranging from the structural and strategic to the local and practical.

Underlying a majority of responses was the desire to see government genuinely acknowledge the value and importance of community activity. A significant proportion of the challenges faced by community organisations could be addressed if this recognition translated into action.

The goals and ambitions of these groups are outward looking and focused on what they can deliver for their communities and stakeholders. Given this, support for this sector generates a high return in public goods, provision of critical services and supports in the absence of alternatives, and enhanced resilience of our social fabric.



Conclusion



The need to remove and reduce barriers

What can be done to remove, reduce or overcome these barriers for groups in general, and to climate action

This research evidences the stress and pressure felt by the community and voluntary sector in Ireland. It is to the credit of the commitment of the thousands of volunteers to their communities and local areas that this work continues despite the stresses that the sector is under.

Many groups are struggling to do what they were established to. They have to prioritise survival of their group. In such circumstances, it is simply unrealistic to expect these organisations to take on additional workloads.

Conclusion

“It is a constant battle seeking funding so we can keep doors open, pay bills and continue functioning.”

(Community development association)

Respondents have also been clear that the ability to tailor actions to local circumstances and context is vital and this is a sustained, generic, criticism of funding programmes.

Five priority areas have been identified for action that will support community organisations to deliver on their stated aims and full potential, and be able to engage in climate action projects and initiatives within their community.

1. Reduce or remove the challenges to survival faced by community groups. This will allow groups to devote their energy to the activity which is their primary focus and build capacity to engage in additional climate actions.
2. Ensure full availability of relevant funding information and streamline application processes. This is required both within funding programmes and across schemes.
3. Encourage more responsive funding programmes that demonstrate greater flexibility to allow for variations in local circumstances, approach/ solutions, and outcomes. Encourage and support creativity, shared initiatives and pilots with research institutes.
4. Provide clear examples of realistic climate action activities (mitigation and adaptation) that are relevant to groups based on region, scale, and interest and accessible at a known single location (such as a website or portal). Build networks to link projects and provide opportunities for shared learning.
5. Provide technical expertise, mentoring, and supports that work with community groups to identify local climate action needs and opportunities. Thereafter, creatively develop actions that deliver optimal benefits that secure community buy-in and involvement.

Some priority areas present as straightforward and affordable. However, it will take real political will to genuinely deliver improvements. It is hoped that the value of community organisations and what they do, the potential they could achieve and deliver, married with the climate imperative, makes a convincing case for commitment to and investment in this sector.





Recommended actions



Overcoming the barriers to action

The five priority areas for action identified should be viewed as a cohesive suite of actions. Inaction in one area will negatively impact upon the success of another area. While specific recommendations for each area are provided, it is strongly recommended that cherry-picking recommendations within each area will not achieve the overarching aim. These recommendations represent a model of the “whole is greater than the sum of each part”.

Priority area 1 – Recognition and support

Reduce or remove the challenges to survival faced by community groups to allow them devote their energy to their core focus of activity. This will enable groups to free up and build capacity and engage in additional climate actions.

Recommended actions

Recognise the value of volunteer work

1. Allow for the inclusion of volunteer hours invested in project delivery or group operation as match funding in grant applications
2. Allow tax credits for volunteers confirmed as active, especially in committee or other administrative roles
3. Provide benefits for employer-sponsored volunteer work
4. Include volunteer/ community group work with at least equal ranking to funding agencies in all accreditations

Priority area 2 – Centralised, comprehensive funding information

Ensure full availability of relevant funding information. Streamline application processes within funding programmes and across schemes.

Establish a centralised website listing all funding sources available to community groups.

1. Identify an agency or governmental department with responsibility for this website and resource accordingly.
2. Provide clear direction and a roadmap that all state-funded programmes follow to list funding on this central website. Include it as an essential requirement that funding agencies list their schemes on the website.
3. Invite bona fide non-state funded programmes to list funding schemes on the website.
4. Design the site following the principle of universal design and the end-user experience. Key considerations must be give to accessibility, ease of navigation, and functionality for community groups.

Provide a central fundraising registration function where each community organisation can lodge a standardised listing of core relevant information and documentation for all State funding schemes.

This can be updated annually by the community group. With the groups' permission funding agencies can access this information for funding applications made. This will minimise duplication and repetition in the application process.

Create best practice guidance for funding scheme design, operation, implementation and evaluation to address issues raised in section titled 'What was discovered about the challenges faced by community groups to obtaining funding'.

1. Once established all state funding-related schemes are required to use this guidance.
2. All existing funding programmes are to be reviewed according to the guidance once available.
3. Include a requirement for all funding schemes to be pilot-tested by a sample of community groups (who must be recompensed for their time). Feedback from these groups is to be used to incorporate necessary revisions to the schemes.

Priority area 3 – Responsive funding programmes

Ensure that funding programmes can encompass greater vision and creativity.

1. Secure cross-governmental agreement that funding schemes may support novel and innovative actions, academic/ community collaborations, and the development of community level practice, methodologies and new technologies
2. Funding programmes should have ring-fenced allocations to pilot new approaches and technologies, based on expert advice with support of the community.
3. Establish mechanisms and a central website or portal to facilitate networking between research agencies and communities to help identify local climate action needs, and develop tailored responses to these that deliver optimum benefits.

Priority area 4 – Collected climate action information

Provide clear examples of realistic and achieved climate action activities (mitigation and adaptation) that are relevant to groups based on region, scale, and interest.

Build networks to link projects and provide opportunities for shared learning.

1. Develop and deliver a targeted information and awareness-raising campaign on climate action for community groups. An objective of this campaign is to widely embed awareness of the “go to” central database for funding information and of the community climate action information (point 2. below).
2. Create database of community climate action projects, searchable by keyword, such as location/ area or funder. This will enable groups to explore achievable actions and build learning networks. It will also serve as reference resource to prevent groups “re-inventing the wheel”. Submissions to populate this to be required of State funding programmes and can be made by community groups, providing at least a minimum level of information about the project, expandable with pictures and more details.

3. Create a straightforward community climate action audit guide. Provide mentoring, where needed, to groups to work with their communities to identify actions that are needed and design proposals in response.

Priority area 5 – Expert and technical support

Provide technical expertise, mentoring, and supports that work with community groups to creatively develop actions that deliver optimal benefits with community buy-in and involvement.

1. Provide access to proven experts specifically in areas of climate action to work with community groups to design climate action projects. Experts must be cognisant of recommendations from the Just Transition Commission when designing projects with community groups.
2. Support access to expert advice in high skilled dimensions of community group or project operation (e.g. legal and financial).



Appendices

Appendix A: Focus Group members

1. Steven Barker, Cliffoney Community Forum
2. Clodagh Flynn, Medb's Dragon Warriors
3. Aisling Smith, Sligo Disabled Persons
4. Joan Swift, Sligo Cycling Campaign
5. Sarah Clancy, Clare PPN (staff)
6. Daniel Downey, Cavan PPN (staff)
7. Ruth Smith, Tipperary PPN (staff)
8. Muriel Tobin, Waterford PPN (staff)
9. Ruth Powell, Dublin City PPN (staff)



Appendix B: Online survey questions

Community Groups' Greatest Challenges!

This survey aims to collect the evidence needed to highlight and stress to Government the challenges faced by community groups.

It also aims to demonstrate that additional supports are needed for groups to operate successfully and thrive.

More and more is being asked of the community sector, including taking a leading role on climate action. How do we make this workable?

The survey will take between 10 and 15 minutes to complete.

The information you provide will be retained until the final research support is submitted. Data will be used to generate a summary report and presentation. All information will be anonymised before processing.

You can withdraw or delete your information at any point. Please email harriet@adjust.ie to request that the information you provided is deleted.

By selecting "OK" below, I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided and give consent for my data to be collected.

Thank you - your help is valued and appreciated.

Information about your community group, club or organisation

* 1. What is the name of your community group, club or organisation?

* 2. Is your group a member of a Public Participation Network (PPN)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

* 3. Please give your name

* 4. Please give a contact email address

* 5. Briefly tell us the purpose / focus of the group

* 6. How many people are involved in the committee (administering the group)?

- ☐ 3 or fewer people
- ☐ 4-5 people
- ☐ 6-10 people
- ☐ more than 10 people

Any relevant details

* 7. How many people are actively involved in the group or engage with services or activities you provide?

- ☐ fewer than 10 people
- ☐ between 11 and 50 people
- ☐ between 51 and 100 people
- ☐ between 101 and 250 people
- ☐ over 250 people

Any relevant details

* 8. Does your group, club or organisation employ any staff?

- ☐ We do not have any staff
- ☐ We have staff on a CE/ RRS or other employment scheme
- ☐ We have 1 part-time staff member
- ☐ We have 1 full-time staff member (or equivalent)
- ☐ We have 2-3 staff members
- ☐ We have more than 5 staff members

Additional information (if desired)

Understanding the challenges faced by community organisations in their day-to-day activities

* 9. Please tell us which of the following issues are **challenges for your organisation?**

	No challenge	Manageable challenge	Moderate challenge	Significant challenge	Critical challenge	N/A
Securing core funding for your group's operation (such as insurance, building costs, staff costs)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Administration requirements (such as Garda vetting, applying for grants)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recruiting volunteers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Difficulties in obtaining funding to run particular projects or actions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Difficulties in finding physical space or facilities (such as for offices, to meet, for activities)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendices

Any other information on these challenges

10. If there are other challenges not covered in the previous question, please can you give details?

* 11. Please tell us specifically about the **challenges you face in obtaining funding?**

	No challenge	Manageable challenge	Moderate challenge	Significant challenge	Critical Challenge	N/A
Deadlines are too short (<i>such as to apply for funding, to deliver the work</i>)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Application forms are too lengthy and complex	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Restrictions on the funding available (<i>such as partial funding, payment only after bills are paid, amounts inappropriate</i>)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Administrative burden is too great (<i>such as application, record keeping, reporting</i>)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Schemes are not administered consistently (<i>such as staff turnover and changed interpretation of rules</i>)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communication is poor (<i>such as slow decisions on applications, lack of feedback, opportunity to consult</i>)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Lack of dedicated support to assist groups in making applications

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Funding schemes lack flexibility, imagination or vision on what is eligible

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Any other information about these challenges

12. If there are other challenges you face in accessing funding which were not included in the last question, please give details here.

13. If you would like to tell us about a particular challenge your group has faced when seeking funding, please share those details here.

What climate action looks like to community groups

* 14. Which of the following would your organisation consider to be “climate action”? (You can select more than one option.)

- ☐ sustainable transport (such as car pooling to events)
- ☐ renewable energies (such as energy saving lightbulbs and devices, replacing oil boilers with heat pumps)
- ☐ responsible consumption (such as all events using re-usable cups, plates, crockery, decoration and green prizes)
- ☐ food waste (such as community foodshare initiative, composting)
- ☐ shopping & recycling (such as organising clothes swap shop or jumble sale)
- ☐ local climate & environmental action (such as highlighting issues relating to floods to a local councillor)
- ☐ biodiversity & wildlife actions (such as creating or protecting habitats, using native species)
- ☐ water conservation (such as rainwater harvesting, repairing leaks)
- ☐ none of the above

Appendices

15. Are there other activities your group considers as climate action?

16. Does your group aim to be climate positive in your day-to-day operations? *(please tell us a little about this involves for your group)*

* 17. Does your organisation think climate action is something for all community organisations to get involved in?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Yes - but only when groups are able to work on their core priorities first
- ☐ No
- ☐ It only relates to some community groups

please explain your answer

Involvement in Climate Action Projects

* 18. Besides improving how you operate day-to-day, is your organisation involved in any climate action focused project in the community? (Please give details.)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If "yes", please give details of this action

* 19. Has your group's involvement with climate action projects been a positive experience? *(please tell us a little about your experience)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please tell us a little about your experience

20. Did you obtain funding to support your climate action?

- ☐ Yes (partial funding)
- ☐ Yes (full funding)
- ☐ No - we applied for funding but were not successful
- ☐ No - we did not apply for funding

If you can remember, please list the funding schemes that your group applied for, and please indicate if the application was successful or not.

21. Would your group consider applying, or applying again, for funding to support climate action?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please explain your answer.

22. Would your group engage in climate action projects again?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please explain your answer

Appendices

* 23. Would your group like to get involved in climate action? or take further climate action?

- ☐ Yes - we have clear ideas and suggestions for actions we can take on
- ☐ Yes - we have a plan in progress
- ☐ Yes - but we are not sure how to proceed
- ☐ We are not clear what climate actions are relevant to us
- ☐ Climate actions are not relevant to our group
- ☐ No - we do not have spare capacity to get involved
- ☐ No - we only want to focus on the core purpose of our group
- ☐ Other (please specify)

24. If your group IS interested in getting involved or doing more, can you tell us what type of climate actions you would be interested in?

25. If your group is NOT interested in taking part in any climate action, can you explain the reasons for this?

Activities your group would like to be able to do

* 26. If the day-to-day challenges of operating your group were reduced or addressed, what other activities would your groups want to get involved in?

27. Community groups contribute a huge amount to enable their communities to thrive. If you could ask government to address just one key challenge to help community groups fulfil their potential, what would you ask?

28. Clubs, community groups and voluntary organisations also contribute a huge amount to shape the goals and ideals of their areas. If you could ask government to support **one** green initiative for your community, what would you ask for?

29. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Please share the link to the survey with other clubs, groups and community organisations in your area so that we can gather as much information as possible.

If you have any other comments, you are welcome to leave them here.



Appendix C: Climate actions identified by respondents as undertaken or planned

These actions were mentioned where the survey asked for further examples of climate action and do not represent all the actions being undertaken by respondents.

Energy

Changing Behaviours & Practices

- identifying & adopting energy efficiencies
- remote working opportunities & hubs
- online meetings for committee (no car use)
- pay as you use (for power)
- plan to get to Zero Energy (or as close as possible)
- joint applications for community energy upgrades & energy saving measures
- sustainable energy plan
- SEC established (SEAI useless beyond audit stage!)

Energy Sources

- solar/ Photo Voltaic (PV) panels
- local small scale water power projects

Appendices

- water power
- air-to-water heating
- battery backups for power & with solar panels
- alternative energy solutions
- direct / district heating scheme
- community owned renewables

Built Environment

- retrofit schemes

Use of Technology

- battery operated/ electric tools
- LED lighting
- install solar panels at a local performance centre
- equipping community centres for emergency situations (battery power bank, facilities, etc.)
- smart devices to reduce energy use
- use of AI to maximise energy efficiency management
- solar lighting in all enhancement projects
- timer switches for lights, heating, etc.
- replacement of diesel mower with electric/ solar automower

Travel

Choices & Behaviour

- reduce air travel
- purchase electric bus
- car-pooling/ shared transport to events
- promote a car share platform in a digital community space

Public Transport

- electrification of all public service transport
- campaign for Western Rail Corridor

Advocacy

- advocate for sustainable transport
- advocating for public transport

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

- electric vehicle chargers
- bicycle stands e-chargers

Active Travel

- walking & cycling paths
- increase walking & cycling opportunities to replace car travel
- bicycle shelter and racks to encourage people to cycle to [sports] training

Appendices

- bike racks
- community electric bike (ebike) / ebike library

Natural environment

Restoration & Conservation

- bog restoration / peatlands restoration
- invasive species removal/ action
- endangered species conservation
- dune conservation
- removal of barriers / mitigation of these in rivers (e.g. summer discharge levels are low due to climate change resulting in high river temps during warm periods. Removing barriers allows rivers to flow naturally)
- riparian/ water erosion project
- river restoration
- river corridor planting for biodiversity
- stream care
- wetland conservation and restoration
- seed saving
- manage a salmon river

Protection - places

- creation of nature reserves
- protecting lands under threat
- marine reserves
- nature reserve establishment

- Dark Skies & night wildlife
- dune awareness and protection measures
- create eco meadow

Protection - actions

- no hedge cutting during summer
- bee- friendly planting
- planting of native Irish species
- managing spaces for wildlife
- protection of biodiversity rich area (from OPW works)
- planting wildflowers (native)
- producing biodiversity plan
- delivering local biodiversity action plan
- Wild Inishowen
- tree planting
- recognising Rights of Nature

Providing Spaces

- community biodiversity areas (biodiversity NOT humans the priority)
- bird & bat boxes/ for different species
- tree planting, pond creation
- afforestation
- creation of a biodiversity area

Appendices

Data Gathering

- monitoring equipment for flora & fauna
- bird boxes in different material and structures to see what works best
- tree survey
- regular testing of nearby lakes and rivers for baseline data and monitoring
- ecology report on town

Water

Water Saving

- water butts
- water refill stations
- water harvesting & reservoir /storage
- rainwater harvesting & adapted “trike” to carry large tank to use for watering hanging baskets, etc.
- replace street flower planters with slow release “watering” planters
- planters connected to rain chutes
- planting in village but beds are actually “soakaways” (can’t get Council to get involved)
- automatic switch off taps
- co ordinated planting system in towns i.e. in the ground (rain gardens) rather than planters /hanging baskets. It is time consuming carrying water to planters and rain gardens would soak up rain water and allow for more sustainable planting

Water Management

- level out grass verges in the town to allow for water to flow off roads

- ways to manage flood waters (nature based)
- rainwater management ideas, rain gardens, wetlands

Water Quality & Standards

- EU WFD on minimum ecological baseflow to rivers
- water quality monitoring in local river

Circular Economy/ Waste management/ Resource use

Re-think

- food & fashion solutions [to waste, fast fashion, etc.]
- anti-litter campaigns & information on damage to wildlife/ drains/ etc.
- no plastic
- practical tips to reduce waste - workshops
- cloth nappy enterprise - supplying parents, re-usable
- smarter shopping
- sustainably sourced materials / prizes / food/ clothes.....

Reduce

- buying local
- NO waste food (food clouds, re-distribution, etc.)
- re-usable crockery & cutlery
- Meals on Wheels supplied on reusable plates
- reusable coffee cups
- composting

Appendices

- shared equipment/ community tool libraries
- sharing resources within the groups (wool/ yarn, needles, patterns, etc.)- use up leftovers so zero waste
- e-communications to replace paper
- reusable signage
- online media rather than printing
- using less paper, switching to online reporting & information storage

Re-use / Repair

- clothes swaps
- clothing / sewing workshops for repairs, upcycling, etc.
- uniform swap shop
- sewing bees
- furniture repairs, restoration, repurposing, recycling, etc.
- re-purposing of existing items & equipment, e.g. stage sets, costumes, etc.
- book swaps
- charity shops
- second-life for baby and young child equipment
- car boot sales
- sharing of plants
- reusable decorations at events
- community WhatsApp group for give/ swap items to encourage re-use & longer life
- Repair Café
- sale of unused unwanted items, that money goes to overseas to help educate women and children to become self sufficient growing their own produce sewing etc.

Recycle

- recycle everything!
- recycling – better, more accessible, more services/ goods, etc
- recycle bicycles
- recycling timber into bat & bird boxes
- Compressing solar powered rubbish bins with attachments allowing one to deposit recyclable bottles on the sides (rather than throw them into general waste)
- training in upcycling electrical goods
- ReTurn scheme support – fundraiser
- woodchip sourced from local recycling centre
- shred paper for compost

Managing waste well

- litter picking
- Compressing solar powered rubbish bins with attachments allowing one to deposit recyclable bottles on the sides (rather than throw them into general waste)
- removing harmful pollution
- waste segregation
- beach cleans & marine waste clear ups
- safe battery disposal/ collection of WEEE

Circular economy

- circular economy supports – upcycle training and market hosting
- Ciorcal – 2 year circular economy project
- circular economy for helmets and football boots, etc.

Awareness-raising, education & training

Awareness Raising

- community awareness raising through events such as bio blitz surveys, hedge link programs, nature enhancement, etc.
- collaboration with other environmental organisations for awareness raising & efficiencies & bigger impact
- awareness campaigns
- An Taisce Climate Ambassador
- promote & seek to comply with Sustainable Development Goals
- raising awareness of our impact and interactions with our environment
- interest and involve more of our community in climate action and awareness. Young couples (too busy), farmers (feel they are always being attacked, teenagers (too worried)

Education & Training

- community engagement to understand planning, regulation and frameworks for farming, water health, human & species resilience
- education for women & girls to fulfil leadership roles in their communities
- fun learning - test eco-friendly products against others (e.g. washing up liquid!)
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Go Goals Games evening
- community outreach, outdoor classes with community groups (elderly, children, pre-school, teens, etc.)
- using and promoting nature based solutions
- specific education on heat losses and suitable energy efficiency updates for traditional construction. Sadly the SEAI BER one stop shop system is COMPLETELY UNSUITABLE for these buildings.
- bat watching events

- educating local community & local schools on biodiversity, habitat threats, restoration, carbon challenges, etc.
- education on water quality
- Nocturnal Bat Walk
- sustainable living courses for local community

Community (& partners) mobilisation

Engaging People & Taking Action

- creative mobilisation with groups & the public to prepare for climate mitigation & adaptation
- engaging disabled people in environmental action and developing sustainable solutions
- reviewing planning applications with a view to protecting local flora and fauna & avoiding floodplain development, etc.
- create a climate action hub
- arts, creativity, photography project
- carbon mitigation schemes

Citizen Science

- citizen science for climate and nature
- kick sampling of streams & rivers

Established Initiatives

- ECO-Unesco youth activities
- GAA Green Club initiative
- being part of An Taisce International Green Flag Award for Parks &

Appendices

Communities

- participating in An Taisce Green Schools Award
- Uisce Álainn event
- Leave No Trace
- community engagement in climate & biodiversity activities
- beach cleans & marine waste clear ups
- “Leave the Area Cleaner than you Found it” for all festivals, events & activities

Community Resilience

- climate anxiety support and awareness
- build community climate resilience
- preparation for extreme weather and other events
- SCORE project – using an ecosystem-based approach to address water and climate related hazards and so enhance the climate resilience of coastal cities

Built environment/ retrofitting

Housing

- housing for all, energy efficient
- integrating solar energy & storage into social housing
- housing fit for climate change
- modular homes design on circulate economy principles
- building insulation
- replacing windows & doors

- community housing upgrades
- cluster retrofits

Retaining Community/ies

living streets/ communities

addressing dereliction

Heritage & Traditional Buildings

- heritage building preservation affected by climate change
- insulation techniques for traditionally constructed houses – information, training, dissemination

Community Facilities & Infrastructure

- replacing floodlights with LED
- upgrades to community centre
- upgrading energy efficiency of community buildings

General

- carbon capture through use of bio-based building materials
- energy upgrades
- promoting & trying to source sustainable materials in retrofitting
- Tidy Town projects

Green space & food production

Green Spaces

- community forestry parks/ woodlands
- community gardens
- planting for biodiversity around pitches, green spaces
- preservation & improvement of green spaces, more paths for walking
- native gardens
- canal cleanup
- initiatives in public green spaces
- biodiversity trail
- walking track with wildflowers and indigenous species
- stepping stone forests, mini woodlands & wildlife ponds
- sensory garden – wildlife rich
- rewilding of church grounds (30% by 2030 as per Bishops' Conference)
- provision of outdoor spaces for children
- walkway around pitch open in evening so floodlight benefits walkers and those training
- natural grass on pitches (not artificial)
- collect & store rainwater for community garden so we are self-sufficient
- polytunnel & grow seeds for summer planting around the community rather than buy in plants that have travelled miles

Information & Education

- information on biodiversity re grass cutting, hedge cutting & community gardens
- Community Garden Learning Hub @Zion

Community Food Production

- community orchards
- community garden generates fresh veg for creche next door and children get chance to help in the garden
- community fruit & vegetable production
- local food supplies/ suppliers - veg boxes, horticulture, sharing/ swapping excess, etc.
- community farm
- collaboration with community gardens & others for “green” manure & circular economy
- national pilot programme “Shared Plate” – community climate action & food resilience
- disperse apple orchards
- plant trees for beekeepers
- local food market

Changing Practices

- stopping use of pesticides and weedkillers
- organic, biodegradable bedding for livestock
- garden organically, use permaculture principles
- solar energy for watering/ heating greenhouses/ polytunnels
- wormery

Appendices

- composters
- make & use own compost for self-sufficiency
- planting oases for pollinators
- natural Irish hedgerow species along boundaries
- organic fertilisers
- organic manure production
- collect & use own / local seeds

Small Scale Initiatives

- pond for frogs
- planting oases for pollinators
- insect motels

Agriculture

- sustainable farming solutions
- horticulture
- working with farmers
- sustainable food production

Sustainable tourism & travel

- slow tourism
- regenerative tourism
- eco-friendly camping

Principles of action

- just transition
- inclusion – fair/just access to opportunities for climate action in the community not just those who can afford to benefit
- building community resilience

Other

- Unsure
- Give us suggestions
- Open to ideas
- We need tailored guidance

Query – unclear?

- transforming a local area from cPHN to PHN



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