

How funders can support COMMUNITY LED INITIATIVES

8

LESSONS LEARNED

Community Led Initiatives (CLIs) are the beating heart of sustainable and just cities. They address local needs by taking matters into their own hands - making a big difference, even if at a small scale. The primarily unpaid nature of their work, however, often leads to personal burnout and inability to continue. With the support of local governments, private foundations and other organisations, CLIs can blossom and have increased impact. [Click here](#) to learn more.

Is your organisation in the position to financially support CLIs? Through funding from the Robert Bosch Foundation, ICLEI Europe gave small grants and facilitated peer learning for nine CLIs across Europe. Read on to uncover the eight key lessons we have gathered through this process.

We hope that local governments, private foundations, and all others who are offering similar support to CLIs can take these insights into their own work.

CLIs

Any form of concrete action undertaken by self-organized groups of people towards environmental and social goals.

www.sustainablejustcities.eu



[linkedin.com/groups/13794274](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/13794274)



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UrbanCommunity
FOR SUSTAINABLE
AND JUST CITIES

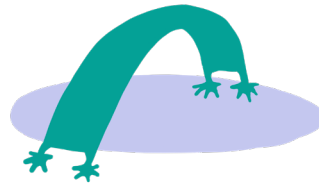


Local Governments
for Sustainability
EUROPE



Robert Bosch
Stiftung

1 KEEP IT FLEXIBLE



- Allow money to be spent where it is needed (e.g. covering staff costs, rather than asking for money to be spent purely on material goods)
- Avoid evaluating progress based on KPIs and rigidly sticking to expectations from the CLI's original proposal. Instead focus on the learning and adaptation process towards overarching goals.
- Understand that CLIs may need more time than originally anticipated to accomplish administrative tasks

2 CREATE SPACE FOR PERSONAL CONNECTIONS AND PEER LEARNING



- Organise in-person meet ups between funded CLIs
- Build a supportive group environment for sharing good practices and struggles, creating solidarity and a sense of togetherness
- Use multiple channels to connect with, and between, the funded CLIs (e.g. messaging apps, LinkedIn groups, online webinars, casual online drop-in spaces)
- Remember that these activities are all extra work
 - do not overask

BEING PART OF A NETWORK
CREATES SOLIDARITY,
WE LEARN FROM EACH OTHER
AND SEE WE ARE NOT THE ONLY ONES
DOING THIS.
THE ONLY THING IS THAT IT BECOMES
EXTRA WORK, NEXT TO DAILY
ACTIVITIES IT SOMETHING ELSE
TO DO.

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3 ASK FOR PROGRESS REPORTS THAT ARE FUN AND USEFUL



- Try out '**creative reporting**', where funded CLIs are able to share their monthly updates via a text, image, or video-based post on an online platform (e.g. a private LinkedIn group)
- Encourage an honest, non-sugar coated reporting style that shares worries, doubts and new ideas. Also encourage interaction with the others' posts.

IT WAS
THE FIRST TIME I FELT
SO SAFE TO BE HONEST
ABOUT MY STRUGGLES.
THIS HUMAN APPROACH
IS SO HARD TO FIND!

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USUALLY
WHEN YOU REPORT TO
FUNDERS IT IS KEPT
CONFIDENTIAL.
IT IS NICER WHEN YOU
CAN SEE WHAT OTHER
ARE ALSO REPORTING
AND DOING.

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4 SIMPLIFY YOUR FUNDING APPLICATION PROCESS



- Remember that applying entails unpaid work
- Pre-announce the application launch ('save-the-date') to give more time for idea building and validation at the community level, and keep holiday periods in mind
- Set up a low-barrier pre-selection round to save ineligible applicants from unnecessary effort
- Consider giving small grants to a selection of applicants for their concept-development, then select the best proposals to receive implementation funding

5 PLAN LONGER FUNDING AND PROJECT TIMELINES



- Promote more meaningful and durable action by lengthening the funding timeline. This enables trust and relationship building, continuity, stability and increased impact.

“WHEN FUNDING LASTS ONLY A FEW MONTHS OR A FEW YEARS IT IS DIFFICULT TO HAVE MAINTAINANCE OF ACTIVITIES AND TO CREATE A MORE STABLE STRUCTURE OF THE ORGANISATION (E.G. IN TERMS OF HUMAN RESOURCES, ETC.)”



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6 PAY PEOPLE FOR THEIR TIME



- Allow core CLI personnel costs to be financially compensated
- Encourage CLIs to allocate budget for further compensation of external individuals who also contribute to the initiatives

“WE CAN ONLY DO SO MUCH WITH ONE PART-TIME PERSON AND 20 VOLUNTEERS. I DON'T HAVE THE TIME AND ENERGY TO WRITE, SCHEDULE MEETINGS, PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES IF THE MONEY ISN'T FLOWING TO COVER BASIC NEEDS”



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“PAYING PEOPLE TO HOST WORKSHOPS WAS REALLY IMPORTANT FOR ENGAGING QUEER, GRASSROOTS AND CULTURAL COMMUNITIES THAT ARE SEVERELY UNDERFUNDED”



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7 BAKE IN MUTUAL CAPACITY BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES



- Ask funded CLIs which knowledge and skills they would like to build and provide chances to acquire them (e.g. facilitation training, initiative sustainability and upscaling workshops)
- Build your own capacity as a funder by collecting feedback and learning from the CLIs

8 ACT AS AN AMPLIFIER



- Connect funded CLIs with other actors that could support them financially and otherwise (e.g. their local government, local organisations and institutions)
- Broadcast their local events and outcomes through your communication channels for increased publicity

SUPPORT FROM ICLEI
HAS MADE IT POSSIBLE
FOR MY PROJECT TO GROW,
FOR ME TO GET A JOB
WITH A LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL
ORGANISATION, AND TO GET
CONNECTIONS WITH
THE LOCAL COUNCIL



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Illustration by Carlotta Cataldi

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