



## Glasgow Communities Fund Third Sector Workshops & On-line Survey Results April 2024



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Glasgow Communities Fund (GCF) has played a vital role in supporting third sector organisations in Glasgow since its establishment in 2020. Following the implementation of Phase 2 of the Fund, a series of engagement sessions and an online survey was conducted with stakeholders asking for feedback on their experiences with GCF. The engagement focussed on 4 key areas: **communication and engagement**, **programme design**, the **application process**, and **timescales**.

The overall engagement process highlighted significant support for many aspects of the GCF framework and provided valuable insights into the programme's strengths and areas for improvement.

This report sets out the findings from the stakeholder engagement process and provides a corresponding action plan to consider and take forward feedback across all aspects of the GCF framework. Key messages and input from our third sector stakeholders are set out in line with the discussion topics used during the engagement process:

### Communication and Engagement

Stakeholders expressed a high level of satisfaction with the Council's approach, acknowledging improvements in communication from the GCF team, highlighting quick responses to queries, clear guidance, and user-friendly application processes. Recommendations include more in-person visits and opportunities for networking, learning and celebration.

### Programme Design

There was broad appreciation for the overall programme design, in particular, the current objectives, criteria and funding thresholds. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of maintaining clear funding priorities and alignment to the Council's strategic priorities. Recommendations suggest further consideration of local need and impact as part of the assessment process and ensuring a minimum 3-year funding commitment.

### Application Process

Stakeholders widely commended the user-friendly online application and the ongoing engagement and support resources provided during the application process. Suggestions include providing clearer feedback on funding decisions and enhancing transparency in the assessment process.

### Timescales

The indicative timetable for a potential GCF3 was well-received, particularly the early engagement with stakeholders in the review process. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of providing ample time for application preparation, community involvement in the review process and early notification of decisions.

Overall, feedback has been positive with stakeholders expressing appreciation for the ongoing engagement and continual improvements to GCF. This report will be used, in conjunction with feedback from wider stakeholders, to develop any future phase of the Fund, with the aim of enhancing the programme's effectiveness and ensuring it continues to meet the needs of communities and deliver on the Council's strategic priorities for the city.

**The GCF team would like to thank all stakeholders for their continued support and participation in the engagement process.**

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## Introduction

The Glasgow Communities Fund (GCF) was introduced by Glasgow City Council in October 2020. The Fund provides a programme of grant funding support to third sector organisations to deliver on the aims of the Fund, being:

- Building the skills, capacity and resilience of individuals and communities
- Supporting activities and services that enable and empower communities to become involved in the social, economic, and cultural life of the city
- Removing or minimising disadvantages experienced by people with protected characteristics

An overview of the Fund for 2023-26 can be found here ([Glasgow Communities Fund](#)).

The current phase of the Fund provides a programme of 3-year funding from 2023-2026. It funds 220 organisations to deliver diverse programmes of activity at a city-wide and local level.

## Engagement with Third Sector organisations

As key stakeholders in the GCF, feedback from third sector organisations is integral to the Council's commitment to ongoing learning and development, in relation to the review of Fund and development of any future phase of GCF. To achieve this, we engaged directly with 72 third sector organisations through three online engagement sessions hosted by Glasgow Council for Voluntary Services (GCVS) on 27 October, and 1 and 2 November 2023. At these sessions, we heard from organisations about their experience of the Fund over the last 18 months.

As a 'follow-up' to the sessions, we sought to gather wider feedback through an online survey which focused on the 4 key areas covered at the engagement sessions: -

- Communication and Engagement
- Programme Design
- Application Process
- Timescales

The anonymous survey was open from 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023 until 19<sup>th</sup> January 2024. It was sent directly to the **220 GCF funded organisations** by the Grants Team and issued to the **wider third sector** via GCVS's networks. A total of **119** organisations responded to the survey.

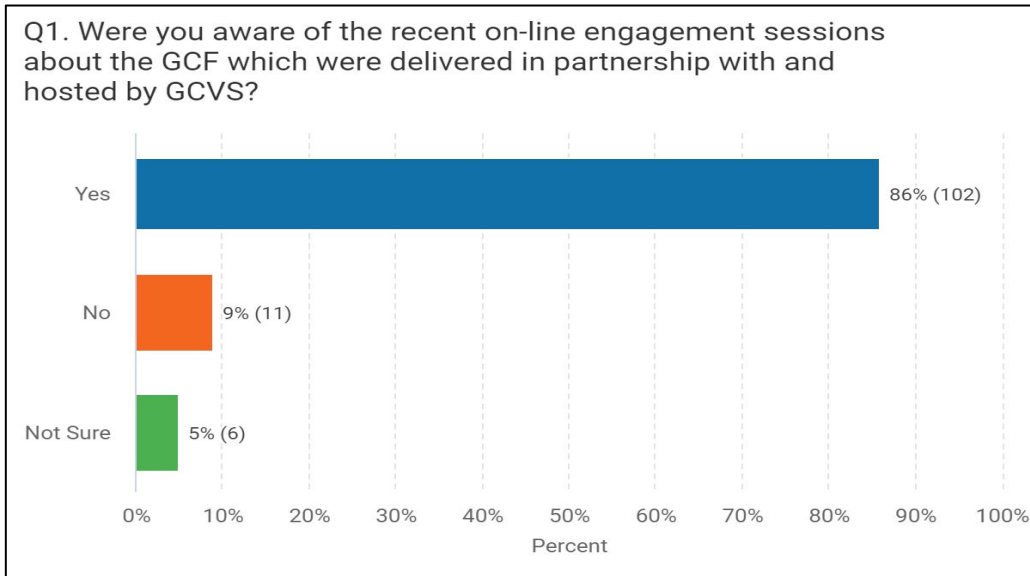
This report provides a summary of the results from the engagement survey as well the key points captured at the three on-line sessions held last year. It will be shared with all GCF funded organisations and wider stakeholders.

We are extremely grateful to all who took time to attend the sessions and/or complete the survey. The valuable feedback and analysis will be used to help inform and develop any future phase of the Glasgow Communities Fund.

## Section 1: Online Sessions

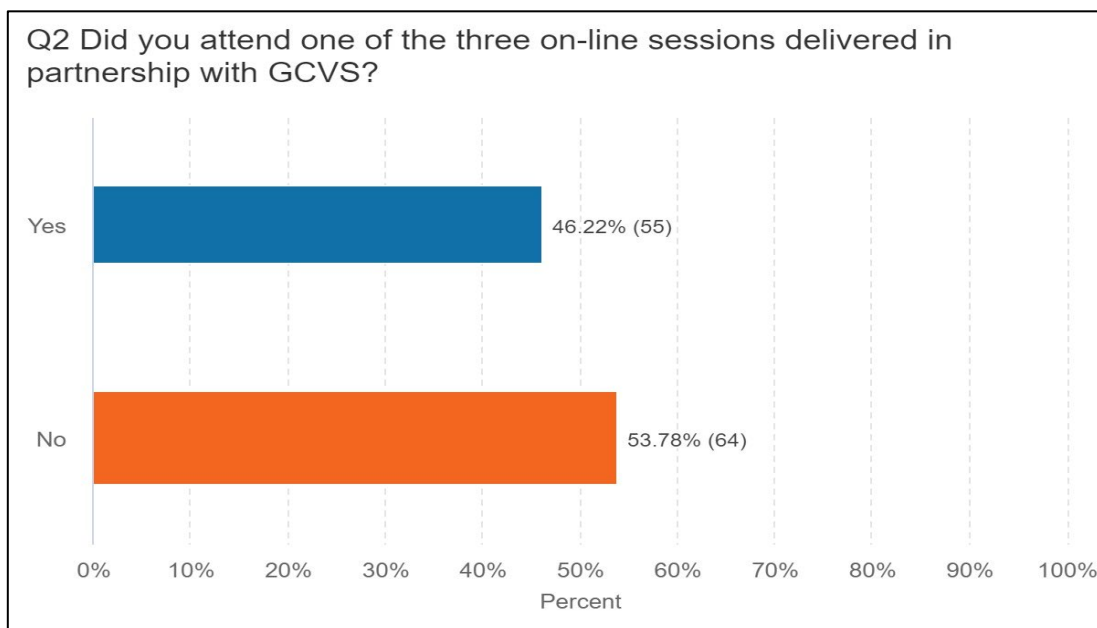
This section asked respondents about the on-line engagement sessions.

In **Question 1**, respondents were asked:



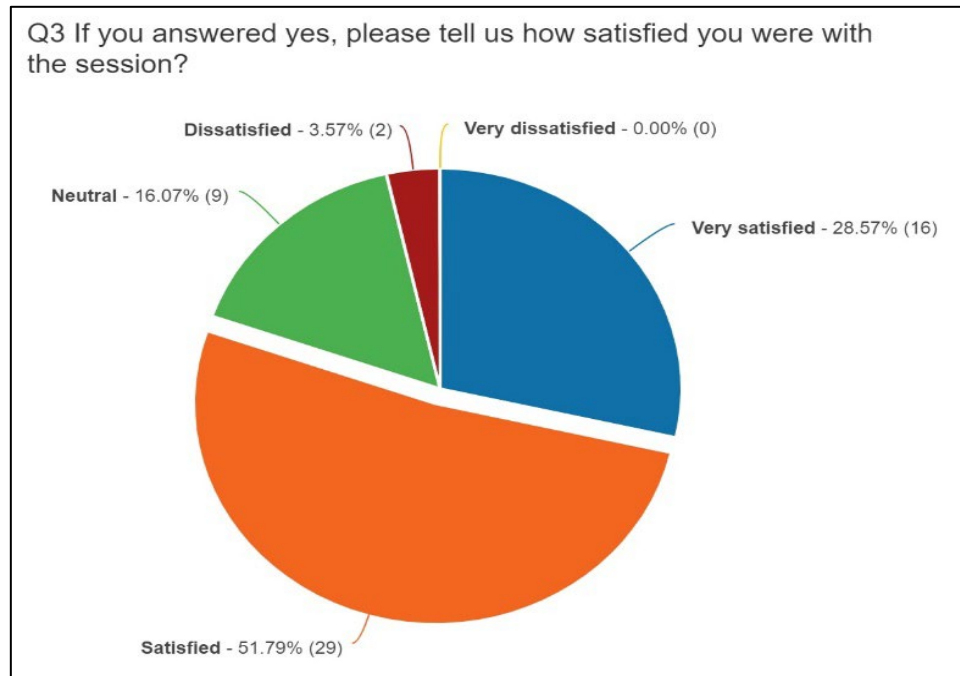
A total of **102 respondents** answered “Yes”. This question displays the effective communication between GCC/GCVS and third sector organisations as **86%** were aware of the online sessions.

**Question 2** asked *if respondents attended one of the three online sessions*:



Out of the **119 respondents**, **55 answered “Yes”** they attended one of the sessions. This leaves a total of **46% attending and 54% (64 respondents) unable to attend**. Further consideration should be given as to whether there were any barriers to attending.

Of the 55 who attended the online sessions, **80% were either satisfied (52%) or very satisfied (28%)** with the online sessions.



**Question 3** provided an open text box where **39** respondents added detail to the multiple-choice answer. Key themes emerged describing online sessions as being, “**very informative**” and ‘**helpful**’.

***“I found the sessions extremely useful, a great platform to be open and honest and felt a warmth from the hosts and a genuine listening ear.”***

***“Always find it useful to connect with funders and learn more about their approach and priorities. Also, useful to meet and hear from peers across the sector too and came away with some useful tips and suggestions.”***

Of the **20% who were either Neutral (16%) or Dissatisfied (4%)**, some suggestions were provided in the narrative on how the sessions could have been improved, including having ‘**advance information on the format of the event**’ and having a space/session for unsuccessful applicants to better reflect their experience. Organisations also asked that where feedback was given at a previous event and not used i.e. a 2 stage application, that we feed back the reason why it was not used.

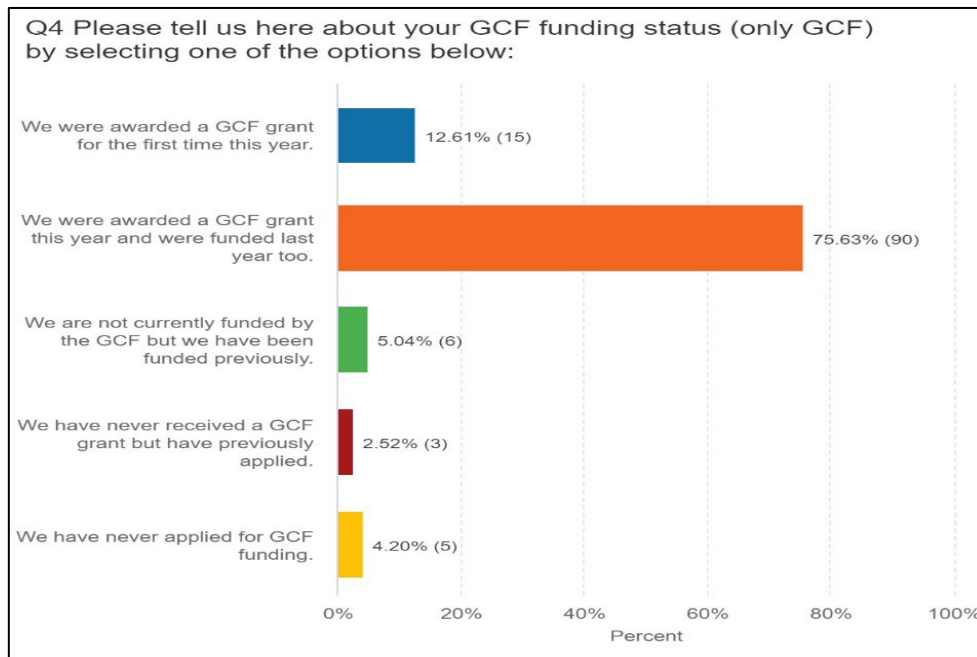
## Section 1 – Conclusion and Recommendations

Responses evidence that communication between GCC/GCVS and third sector organisations regarding the sessions has been effective, **with a high level of satisfaction indicated**. Potential areas for improvement which should be explored are detailed below:

- **Recommendation** - Ongoing dialogue with GCVS to consider how to achieve a better overall attendance at any future sessions.
- **Recommendation** – Continuous review of our communication and engagement methods including provision of detail on format and content in advance of any future engagement sessions.
- **Recommendation** – Contribute to/facilitate further opportunities for GCF organisations to network with peers.
- **Recommendation** – Continue to provide feedback to participants post engagement.

## SECTION 2: ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION

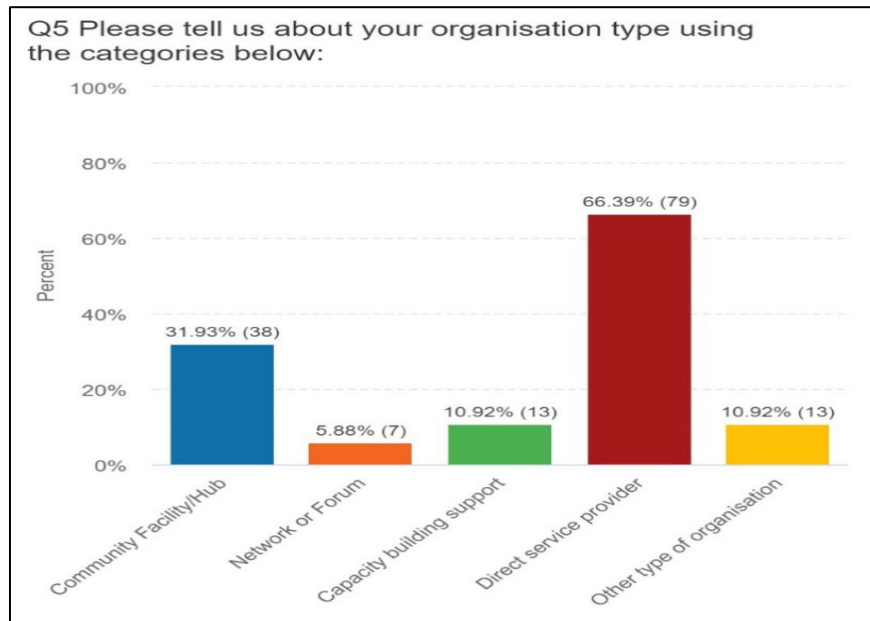
**Question 4** asks “Please tell us here about your GCF funding status (only GCF) by selecting one of the options below.”



Of the 119 respondents, **90 (76%)** were in receipt of a GCF award in both 2022/23 and 2023/24. A total of **15 respondents (13%)** were in receipt of GCF for the first time. Only **6 respondents (5%)** were not currently funded by GCF but had been previously. This could suggest, based on comments from the previous question, that further consideration should be given on how unsuccessful organisations can better reflect their experience of the fund. The remaining **8 respondents (6%)** have either **never received a grant (2%)** or **have never applied for the grant (4%)**.



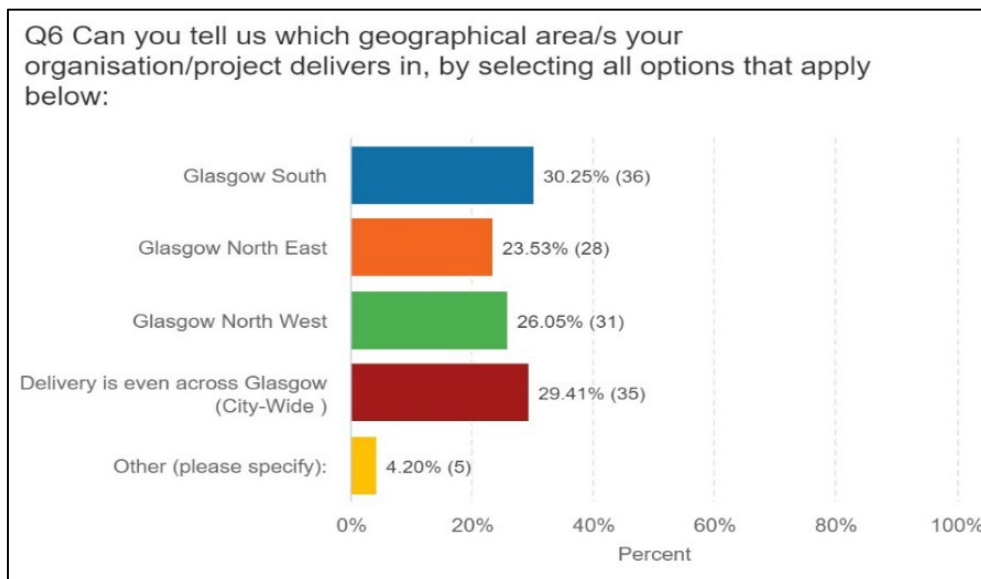
In **question 5**, respondents were asked to tell us a bit about their organisation:



Respondents had the option to select more than one category and as a result proportions will be greater than 100%. The majority of respondents (**66%**) chose Direct Service Provider with a total of **38** respondents (**32%**) choosing Community Facility/Hub.

Almost **20% (22)** of respondents identified their organisation as part of more than one category of service provision. The “other” option provided an open text box, which **9** respondents used. A quarter of these “other” responses were organisations who also selected one of the supplied categories. Most written responses could have identified with one of the supplied categories. This suggests that further explanation as to what is meant by each category should be included in future surveys.

**Question 6** asks about the **geographic location** of where respondents delivered their services across Glasgow. As you can see from the graph below, the 119 organisations that responded are **fairly evenly split** across all four key geographical areas.



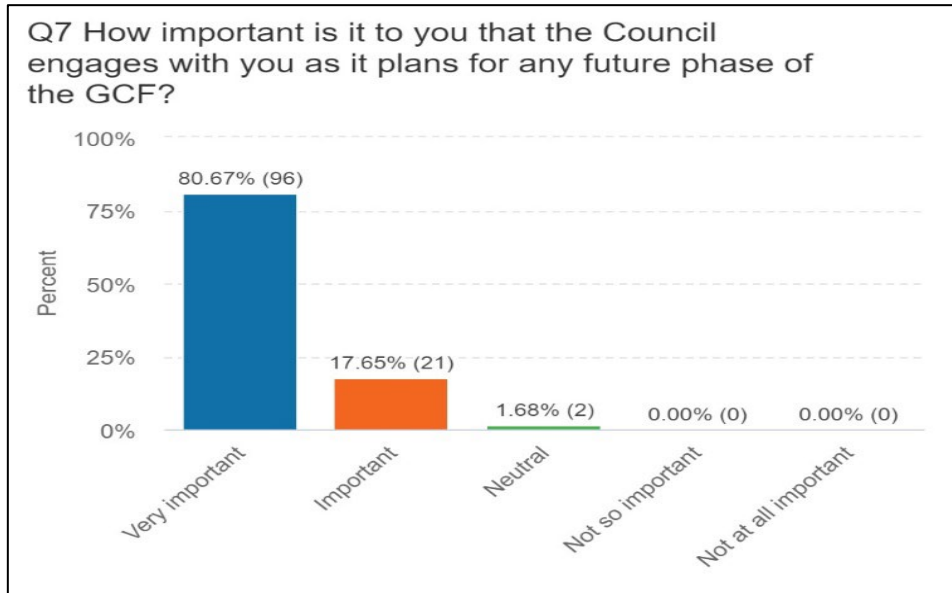
## Section 2 – Conclusion and Recommendations

Responses indicate a **high level of input from currently funded organisations**, but a low level of input from unsuccessful applicants to the review of the current phase of GCF. Potential areas for improvement which should be explored are detailed below:

- **Recommendation** - Ongoing consideration should be given to how unsuccessful organisations can better reflect their experience of the Fund.
- **Recommendation** - Provide more detail on each of the organisation categories in any future surveys or similar.

## SECTION 3: COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

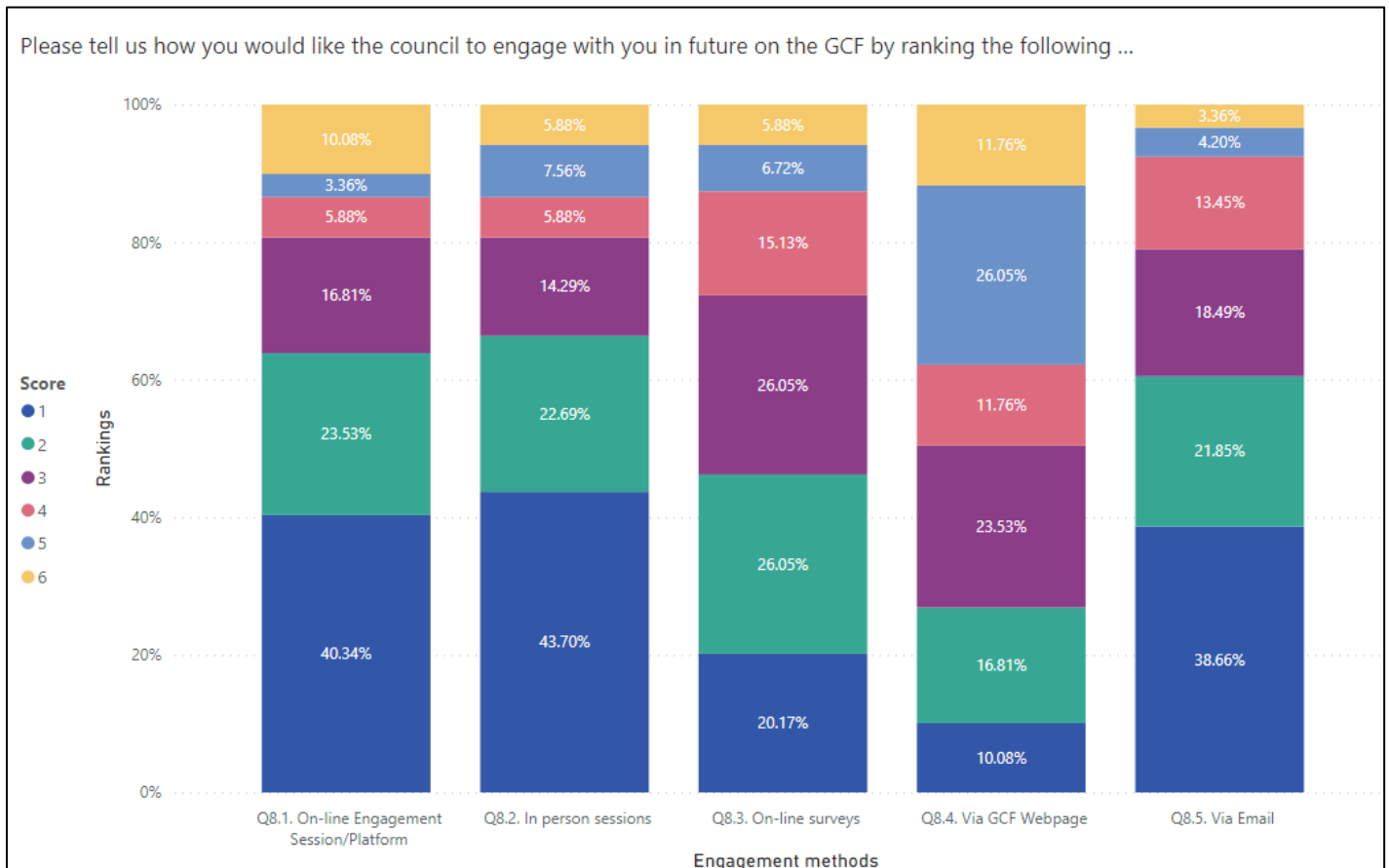
In question 7, respondents were asked about the *importance of Council engagement with any future phase of GCF*.



Out of the 119 respondents, **117 (98%)** believed engagement was either “**important**” or “**very important**”. Only 2 organisations responded as neutral. This shows a **desire** for a continued **depth** and **range of communication** across the third sector organisations for the GCF.

**Question 8** asked respondents to rank (1=most preferred and 6=least preferred) their preferred method of communication with third sector organisations using the categories provided.

The figure below displays question 8’s data:



**Online engagement and in person were the most favoured method** of communication, **via email was also popular**. The least popular methods were the online surveys and the GCF webpage. We can take a key insight from this that most popular communication methods are the options which **have an element of human contact** whether that be via online (MS Teams) or in person. Question 8 also had text box option to explain **“why”** for their preferred choices.

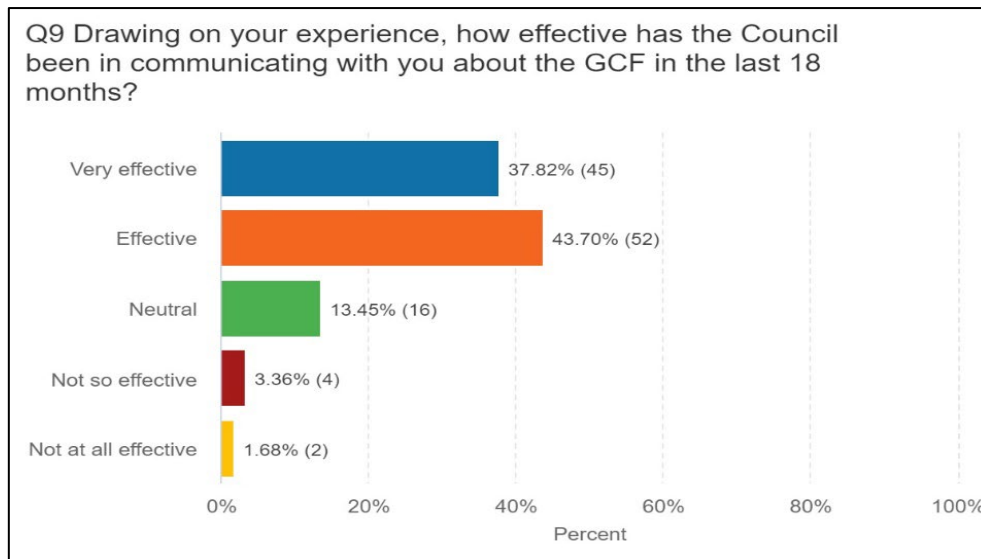
***“I found the online session very useful as it provides more of an opportunity to ask questions whilst also hearing from other organisations.”***

In addition, the surveyed organisations feel more face-to-face communication would contribute to developing stronger relationships and give GCC a better understanding of their organisations and aims.

***“I know it takes time and resources however I always feel that face to face is best as you can develop relationships and understand each service better.”***

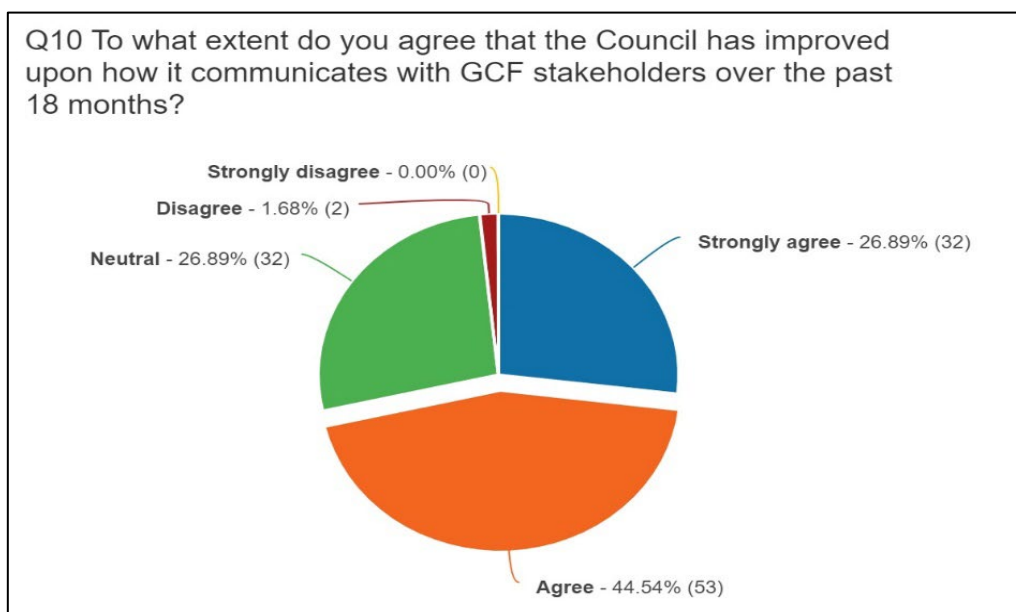
***“Engagement visits would be valuable too”.***

Questions 9 & 10 asked respondents about their impression of communication from GCC over the previous 18 months.



The results show a positive total of **81% (97)** of respondents believing **the council has been “very effective” or “effective” in communicating** with them over the past 18 months.

Furthermore, when asked if the **Council has improved its communications recently with GCF stakeholders,**

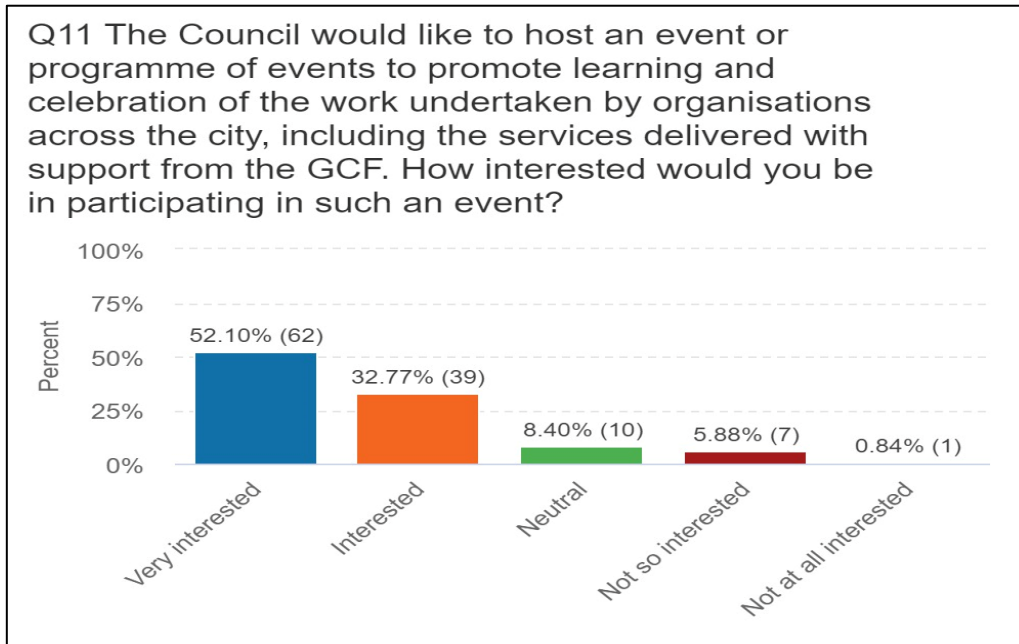




a total of **71% (85)** answered **“strongly agree”** or **“agree”** that communication has improved over the last 18 months. This positive response rate shows recent **communication has been well received by GCF stakeholders**. However, as highlighted in previous questions of the section, there can be **improvement with more face-to-face contact**.

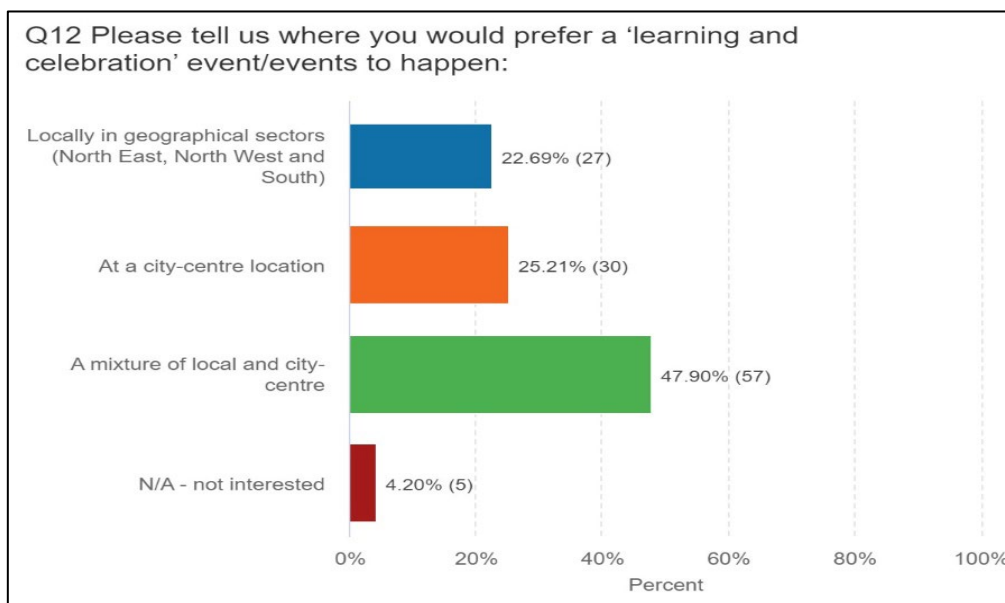
**Questions 11,12 & 13** discussed the possibility of a “Learning & Celebration event”.

**Question 11** asked respondents **if would be interested in such an event -**



There was a positive response rate of **85% (101)** that said they would be **“very interested”** or **“interested”** in such an event.

**Question 12**, asked respondents about their **preferred location for the proposed event**, respondents answers:



This data shows that the **most popular option would be a mixture of local areas and city-centre (48%)**. A possible future action is breaking it up into each geographical location for smaller local events and one annual event held in a city-centre location.

**Question 13** asked *about “any ideas or thoughts” for the proposed event*. The narrative response showed **key positive insights** with some participants expressing **enthusiasm for hosting or attending such an event**, emphasising the **importance of accessibility and partnership** between the sector and the Council. Ideas for the event include stalls, networking opportunities, show-and-tell sessions, and learning from other providers.

***“Participants could set up their own tables and we can visit each other’s tables to learn about their organisation. This may give us an opportunity to connect with other services, foster positive relationships and help each other.”***

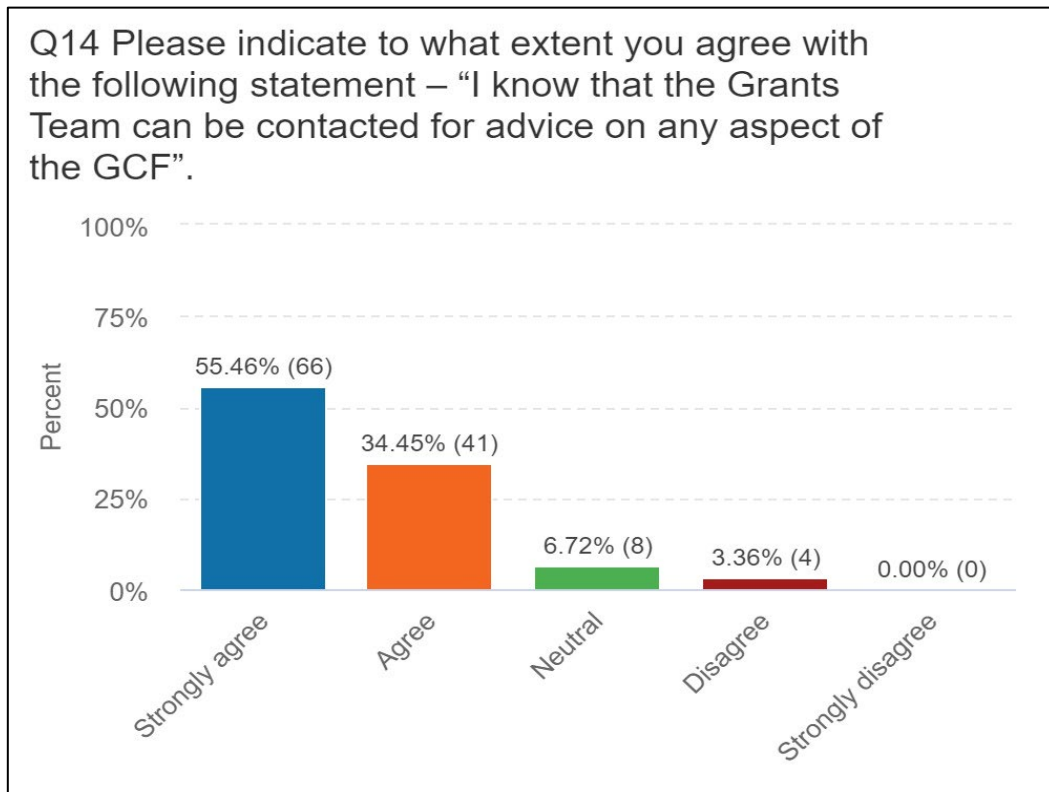
The **location, inclusivity, and involvement** of service users are also highlighted as important considerations.

***“The events could be put on at several locations and combine the work carried out by the organisations delivering in that area.”***

Overall, there is a **strong desire to celebrate achievements, foster positive relationships, and promote collaboration** among funded projects.

5 of 119 organisations were not in favour of the proposed event/s, highlighting concerns around value and cost during budget pressures and also capacity within the sector to participate.

**Question 14** asks about **accessing information** and/or **support** from the Grants Team in relation to GCF.



The data shows that **90% (107)** either “strongly agree” or “agree” with this statement. This is a clear indication that third sector organisations **know where and how to communicate with the Grants team** on GCF advice.

The final question of the communications section, **Question 15**, asked about **“what has worked well”** and **“what could be improved upon”** with communications. There is a consensus that communication **has improved over time, with clear instructions on GCF, regular updates, and helpful reminders.**

***“Having been funded by GCF over the past few years, engagement has very much improved.”***

***“Having one point of contact has worked well. Information sessions and updates have been valuable. Reporting process has been simplified.”***

Some participants suggested finding a balance between different types of engagement and ensuring face-to-face communication on a regular basis. As mentioned before, with communication there has been a **clear recent improvement** felt by organisations, but some would like **more face-to-face contact** with the GCC staff.

### Section 3 – Conclusion and Recommendations

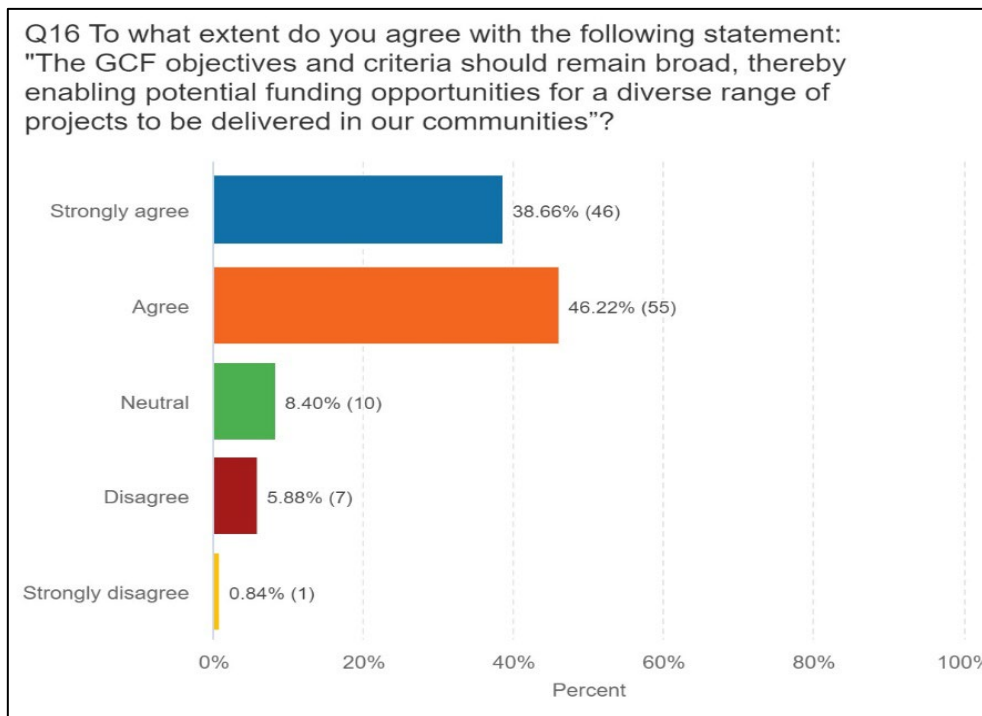
Responses indicate that the vast majority of respondents (81%) feel that **the Council has been effective in communicating with stakeholders on GCF phase two**, and that communication and engagement has improved over the last 18 months (71%). There is a **strong desire for more in-person engagement** to be established as part of the GCF framework. There is a **high level of interest in participating in a learning and celebration event** (85%). Potential areas for improvement which should be explored are detailed below:

- **Recommendation** – Strive for a balance between different types of engagement, including more face-to-face communication to strengthen relationships and understanding, especially where this is requested.
- **Recommendation** - Consider a mixture of local events and one annual event held in a city-centre location for all GCF funded organisations.
- **Recommendation** - Utilise the help and advice offered by respondents in the planning, design and set up of the events.
- **Recommendation** – Ongoing access to information and support from the Grants team with a focus on clear guidance, regular updates, and helpful reminders.

## SECTION 4: PROGRAMME DESIGN

The first two questions of this section are statement-based questions that ask participants to agree or disagree, if they disagree, they are then further asked to explain why. Again, there were no skips in either of these questions.

**Question 16** asks respondents to **tell us their thoughts** about the **GCF objectives and criteria**.



The data shows that **85% (101 respondents)** either “**strongly agree**” or “**agree**” with this statement. This shows a desire for the GCF objectives to remain broad. A total of **10 respondents (8%)** remained neutral with the remaining **7%** either disagreed (**6%**) or strongly disagreed (**1%**). However, there were some key insights from the written responses such as providing **more specific categories and definitions within them**, including objectives that reflect the priorities of the city and **tightening the criteria to prioritise local community-based organisations**.

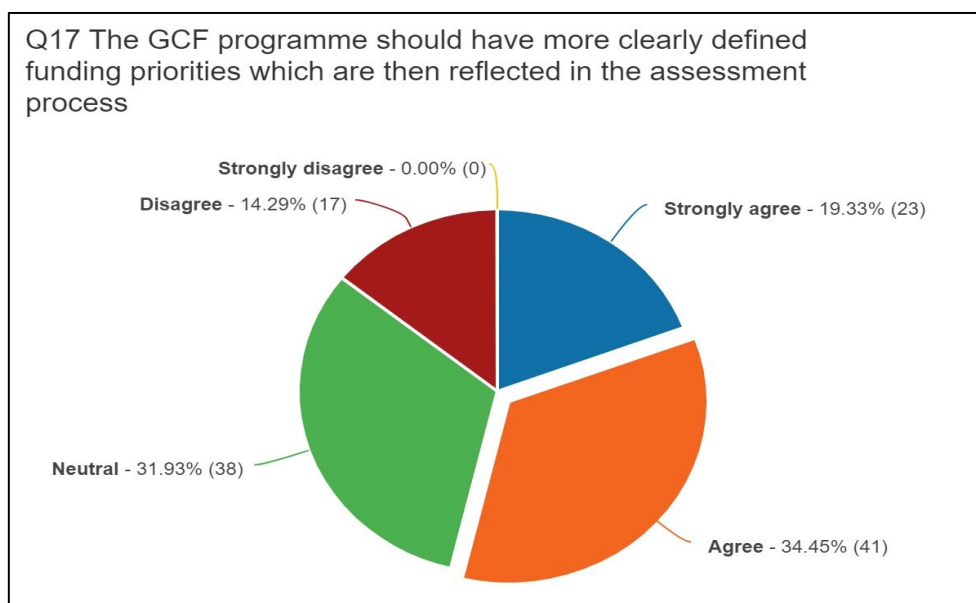
***“The objectives should align with priorities to tackle poverty and reduce harm”***

***“Categories should still be in place to ensure a spread of provision”***

Some respondents suggested taking a different approach based on type/size of organisation and include considering **separate budgets for new initiatives or smaller organisations** who do not require the £20,000 minimum fund.



Question 17 asks about the *clarity of funding priorities*:

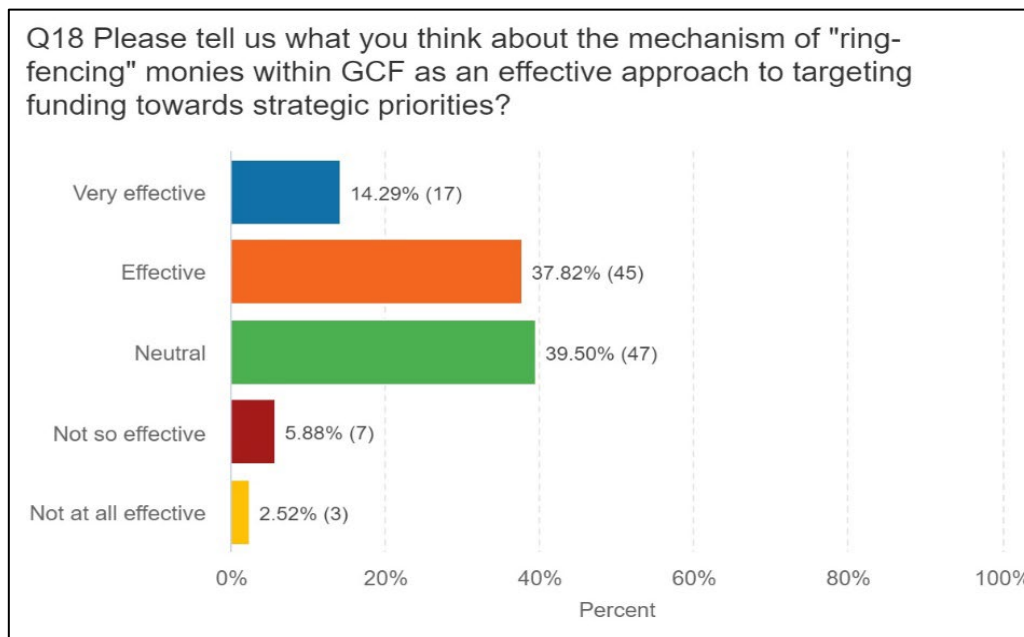


The overall response to this statement was mixed with of **54% (64)** responding with “strongly agree” or “agree”. This leaves **32% (38)** responding “neutral” and the final **14% (17)** responding with “disagree”. The mixed and neutral results leave little insight for analysis. The written responses provided mixed feedback on the funding priorities of the GCF programme. Some participants expressed **satisfaction with the clear and well-communicated priorities**, which allowed organisations to plan their applications. They believed that having defined priorities aligned with GCC strategies ensured a focused approach and prevented applications outside the Fund's scope.

***“Having funding priorities that link with Glasgow City Council strategies ensures that the city is working towards the same themes. It also ensures that you are not submitting an application that is outwith the scope of the fund.”***

Other neutral or negative responses outlined the importance of flexibility to accommodate innovation and emerging priority needs. Furthermore, there were concerns about the clarity of criteria, and the need for transparency in the assessment process. **Overall, the feedback highlighted the balance between clear priorities and flexibility in funding allocation.**

**Question 18** asks respondents about *the effectiveness of “ring-fencing” money within the GCF to target funding towards strategic priorities*. Again, the overall responses produced mixed results.

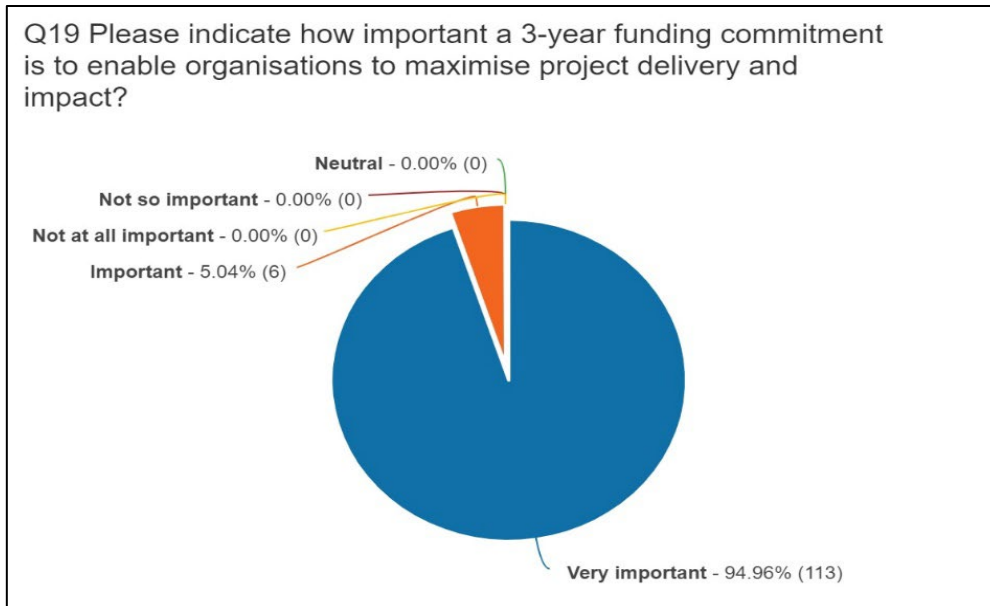


A total of **52% (62)** answered “very effective” or “effective”, when asked about ring-fencing. A further **40% (47)** responded with “neutral” and a combined total of **8% (10)** answered as “not so effective” or “not at all effective”. These numbers show a **narrow majority for “ring-fencing”**, however there is a **clear need for further discussion** and researching on this area. The open text narrative showed positive written responses that it can be a good mechanism if organisations are properly informed as it will allow for effective planning and contribute to becoming more, ‘secure and stable’.

There are also negative views, expressing concerns on constraints on flexibility and response to emerging needs.

The neutral and negative responses highlighted that many of the organisations didn’t fully understand the concept of ring-fencing. This shows a strong need for possible in-person sessions to explain to organisations the concept of ‘ring-fencing’ should it be a feature of any future GCF.

**Question 19** asks respondents about the importance of a **3-year funding commitment**.



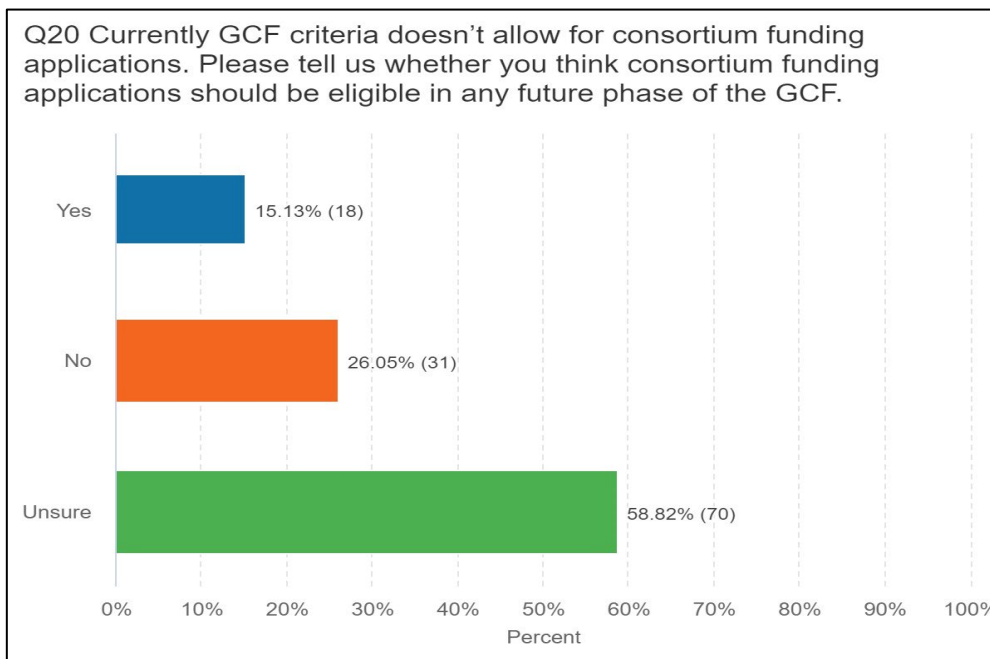
The overall response rate is **overwhelmingly positive** with **100% (all 119)** respondents answering with “very important” or “important”. The open text narrative then outlined why the GCF organisations find it so important. Positive responses included effective planning, leveraging additional funding, stability for staff and service users, strategic planning, efficient project delivery, and evidence of impact over time.

***“3 year funding is crucial to the 3rd sector organisations, it allows for planning and continuity of services, families relying on continued support need the reassurance of services still being there, and know it is not a short term fix which then creates a big problem when the service is withdrawn”***

Three-year funding provides **security, enhances recruitment, supports consistency**, and enables forward planning. However, some data shows there is a preference for longer funding periods with a small number (10) suggesting the possibility of having it for more than 3-years.

Overall, we can derive that there is a desire for a funding commitment from GCF of no less than a 3-year period.

**Question 20** asks if any future phasing of the GCF should allow for **consortium bids** for organisations in clustered areas of Glasgow.

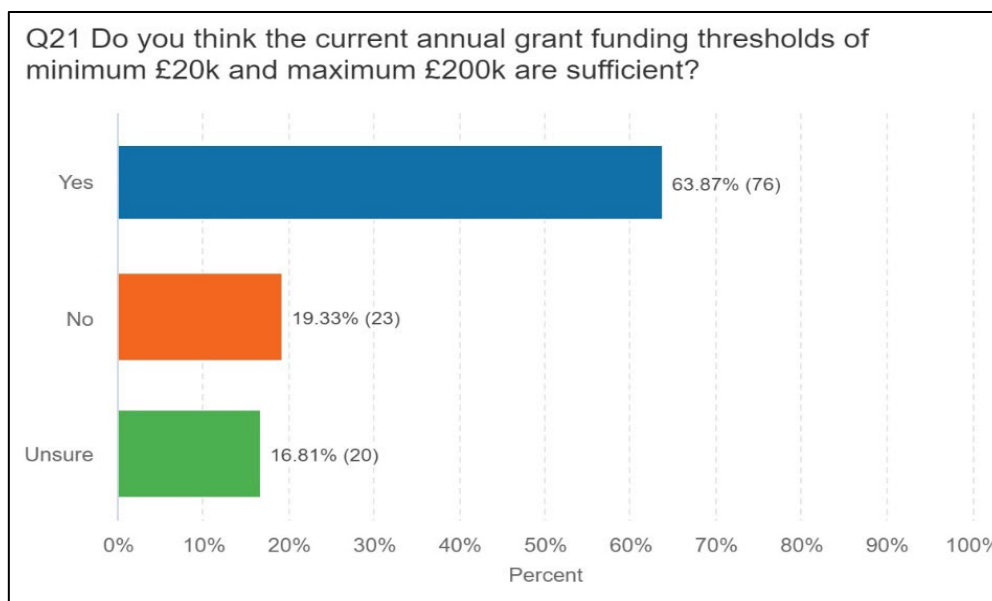


The data shows that majority of respondents answered “no” or “unsure”, a total of **85% (101)**. This level of negative response **suggests that consortium bids are not popular** with the GCF applicants. The written responses provided the view that consortiums can be **beneficial for smaller organisations, encouraging effective partnership working and securing larger funds**. However, many expressed concerns about the potential for **dilution of funds**, preference towards consortium applications, and the **complexity of managing and delivering** consortium bids.

There is also a recognition that clear plans, strong partnerships, and consideration of criteria are necessary for successful consortium applications. Furthermore, this also links back to section 1 and networking, **many organisations want the opportunity to get to know each other better**. Therefore, asking them to make consortium bids at this time could be a challenging task.

Overall, opinions question the effectiveness and impact of consortium funding bids, with few advocating for their consideration while others prefer direct funding to individual organisations to continue the way it currently operates. Based on the responses around networking, this needs to be discussed further and **organisations need the opportunity to network effectively first** before introducing the concept of ‘Consortium bids’ should it be a feature of any future GCF. **This underlines the importance of bringing people together, exchanging knowledge and celebrating what success looks like.**

**Question 21** asks about the sufficiency of the *funding thresholds* for GCF applicants.



A majority of **64% (76)** voted “yes”. A total of **19% (23)** voted “no” and a total of **17% (20)** voted “unsure”. Many of the written responses reported the current range of £20,000 to £200,000 is **sufficient and allows for a variety of organisations to apply**. They believe it provides opportunities for both small and large organisations to access funding and deliver impactful projects.

***“I feel this is a great range and allows for a range of projects to be funded. It opens the funding opportunity to many different organisations with a wide range of needs.”***

There were a few comments suggesting that the minimum amount could be lowered to benefit smaller organisations, while some argue for an increase in the maximum amount to accommodate rising costs.

***“With inflationary costs it may be better to look at thresholds and increase the upper level.”***

***“It is good to consider lowering the minimum amount in order to benefit more organisations.”***

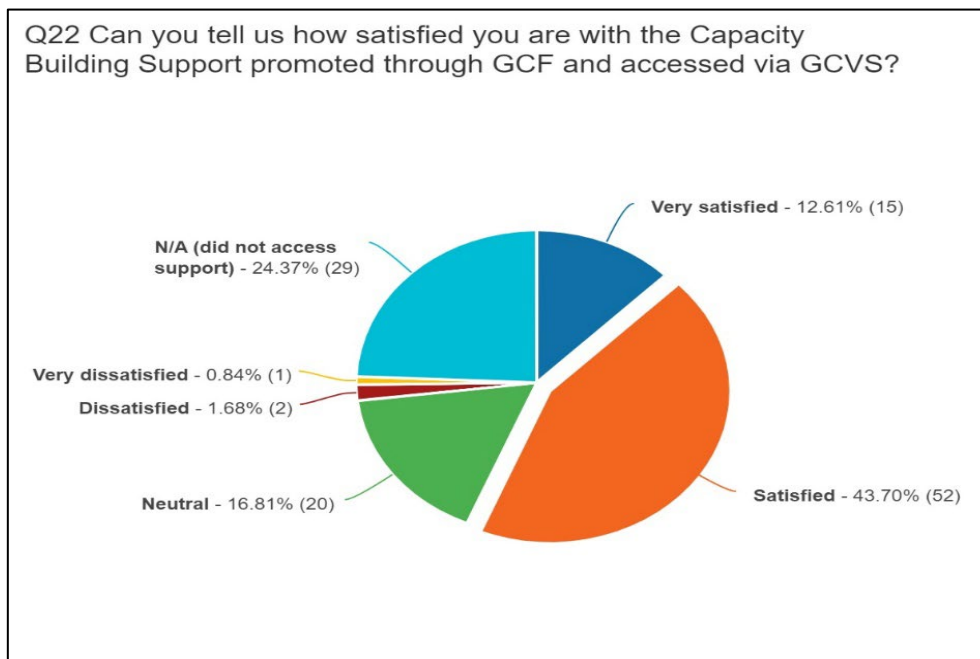
Furthermore, other concerns are about the impact the thresholds could have on the different types of organisations, organisations not receiving the amount that they applied for and the need for flexibility in funding allocations.

***“I don’t think that the process of offering applicants less than they asked for is helpful, unless there is specific reason relating directly to the individual application.”***

In summary, the **majority of respondents are happy with the current threshold** and possibly having a future phase of the fund offer less than £20k threshold for the smaller organisations.



**Question 22** asks respondents how satisfied organisations are with the *capacity building support* promoted through GCF -



A total of **56% (67)** responded saying they were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” This is a majority high satisfaction rate as **17% (20)** responded neutral and **24% (29)** answered N/A, leaving only **2% (3)** responding “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied”. Many organisations have not felt the need to use the available support yet, this provides an opportunity for a regular review when more organisations have accessed the support. This data insight **shows the success of the capacity building support provided** to organisations.

The written responses were a small sample but does reveal some key insights such as they appreciate the **clear**, useful, and **timely advice** received, as well as the well-prepared and informative online meetings and training sessions. Overall, there is a **great appreciation and recognition of the capacity building support provided to third sector organisations**.

**Question 23 is an open text box and asks respondents to reflect on what impact this support has made.** There are 42 written responses, some of the key insights are organisations have found the support to be beneficial, leading to **improved services, income streams, and governance**. They appreciate the **expert advice and training provided** by GCVS and partners in areas such as finance, employment law, and fundraising.

***”This support has allowed us to develop our team which has led to improved services, income streams and good governance. We have also increased our networks and have learned from other organisations”***

However, there are also organisations that did not access or fully benefit from the support due to various reasons, such as limited funding options or changes in staff. Some feedback suggests that certain areas,

like **managing facilities and strategic planning** could use additional support from our capacity building network.

**Overall, the support from the capacity building partners has been valuable to many organisations but there is potential for addressing more specific needs.**

**Question 24** is a 2-part final question of this section, that asks, **“what has worked well”** (part-1) and **“how can we improve things”** (part-2) with the GCF programme design. The first part received many **positive** correlations on the **simplicity** of the new **online application** and its abilities to save answers:

***“Doing it online has made things easier as you can save responses and return to them to complete. It’s also good that you can use a hard copy to do a draft before completing the online response.”***

This is just one of the many positive examples that GCF applicants liked about the current programme design. Furthermore, respondents **appreciate the clear communication, support** from the Grants team, and the **well-structured application and guidance process**.

***“The programme guidance was outstanding. The expertise in breaking down the components whilst keeping a coherent big picture, was the best we have seen anywhere. We actually felt we had been educated by the process of going through the programme, and we used it in our own strategic planning.”***

The **3-year funding** has been seen as a **“real stabiliser”** for many organisations. Some **improvements welcomed** by organisations mentioned include **simplified reporting methods** and **increased engagement with organisations and projects**.

Part 2 – **“how can we improve things”** - responses highlighted the importance of **face-to-face meetings** more often, **greater collective promotion** across the fund, **regular information sharing and more networking opportunities**:

***“perhaps regular [monthly] information about public events taking place by other GCF funded organisations so that we can all see/share our work”.***

A few respondents (3) mention the lack of focus on climate emergency, however, it should be recognised that this strategic focus is supported Council wide from a variety of funding streams. Some comments also mention the need for a **better method of engaging with communities on local investment priorities and needs**.

Overall, organisations appreciate the support provided by the Grants team and the flexibility to make programme changes when needed, indicating a generally positive perception of the programme's effectiveness.

#### **Section 4 – Conclusion and Recommendation**

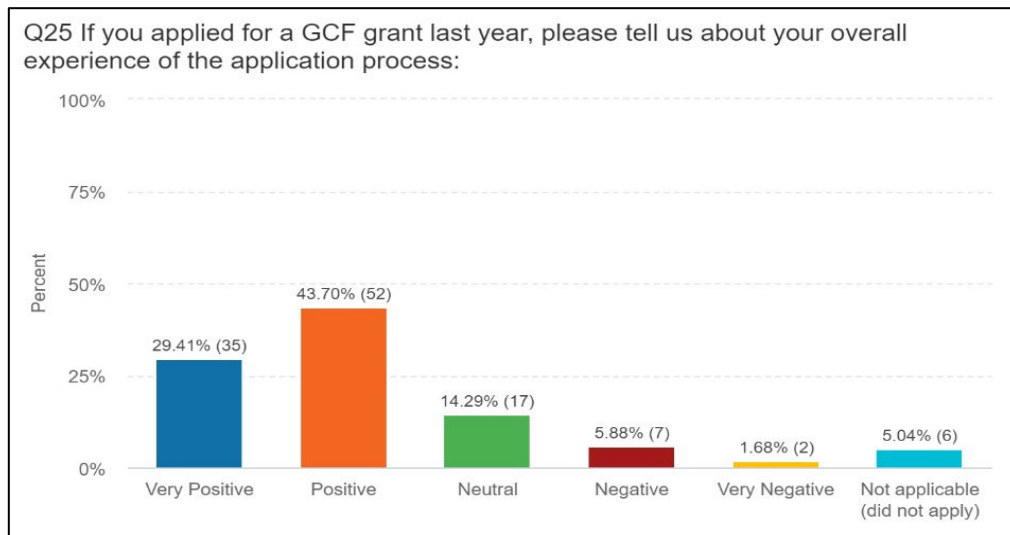
Responses to questions asked about the GCF programme design **show the current framework to be successful in terms of objectives, criteria, funding thresholds and a minimum 3-year funding commitment**. Capacity building support accessed throughout the programme is **well received and has provided positive impacts** for participating organisations. Potential areas for further consideration/discussion are detailed below:

- **Recommendation** – Ensure that GCF funding priorities clearly demonstrate alignment with GCC Strategic priorities and the Community Plan.
- **Recommendation-** The “ring-fencing” and “consortium” sections require additional research and possible further engagement with the third sector. Many respondents were unclear on ring-fencing and how that might work and there was no clear preference to whether consortium bids should be considered for a possible future phase of the funding.
- **Recommendation-** Consider maintaining a 3-year funding commitment from GCF to provide stability, effective planning and continuity of service.
- **Recommendation-** Discuss the limitation on funding duration currently set at three years
- **Recommendation-** Maintain the current funding thresholds (£20,000 - £200,000) to accommodate a variety of organisations and project needs.
- **Recommendation-** Investigate the possibility of offering funding below the £20,000 threshold for smaller organisations.
- **Recommendation** – Discuss with capacity building partners specific capacity building support needs identified by organisations such as managing facilities and strategic planning.
- **Recommendation** - Continue with the capacity building support arrangements for organisations and regularly review the support provided as more organisations access it.
- **Recommendation** – Consider further how to increase and improve community engagement in the GCF process.
- **Recommendation** – Explore most appropriate way to publish and maintain live data on key submission and event dates and milestones.

## SECTION 5: APPLICATION PROCESS

The first question, **Question 25**, of this section asks applicants about their **overall experience of the application process**.

The figure below displays the results.

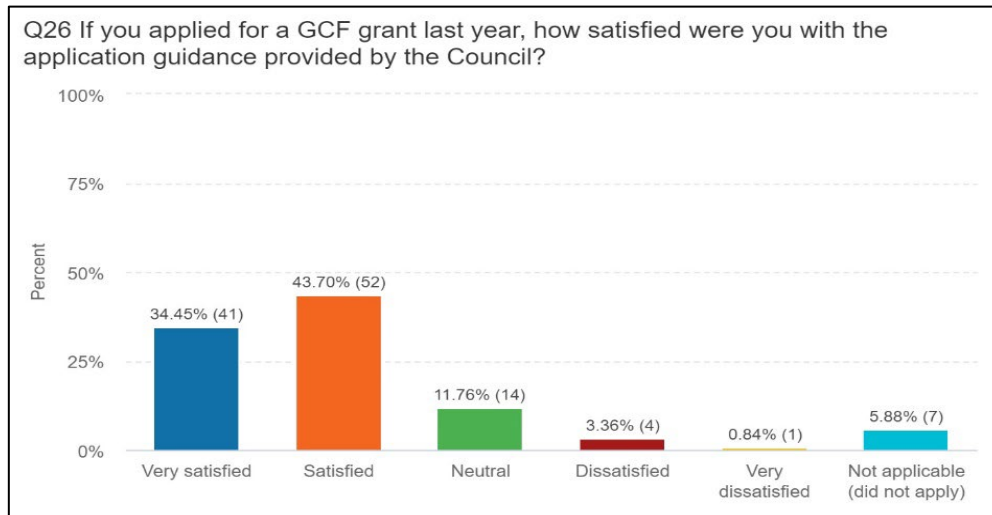


The above graph shows the overall positivity with the current application process, a total of **73% (87)**. Only **8% (9)** responded with “negative” or “very negative”. From the open text narrative, we can assume that the **application process is working** in its current format. The question then allowed for a written response to explain “why” for their selection. The positive written responses highlighted that the process was **easy to understand and complete, straightforward, online system worked and allowed convenient completion, user friendly**.

***“Completing the form was very straightforward. The questions were well worded and all were relevant and not duplicated”***

The few negative comments raised concerns about lack of contact with the funder, the need for more detailed criteria and **delays in decision-making**. These are possible future actions, but as highlighted previously **the overall experience is mostly positive**.

The next question, **Question 26**, asks *how satisfied applicants were with the application guidance provided by GCC*, this figure below shows the levels satisfaction.



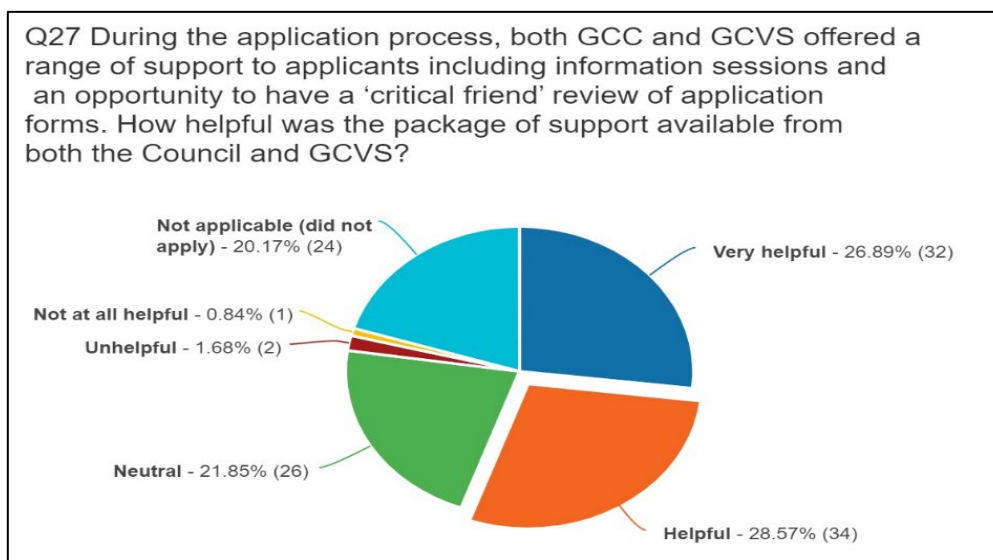
The figure shows a wholly positive satisfaction rate of **78% (93)**, the negative dissatisfaction rate was at just **4% (5)**. The small number of negative comments expressed frustration with the ambiguity in the criteria and lack of clarity on GCF strategic priorities, which affected their understanding of the outcome.

The comparative data shows **application guidance was useful and beneficial** to many of the organisations.

The second part of this question allowed for written responses, to explain why they chose that option. Due to the high satisfaction rate, many of the responses expressed **appreciation for the clear and concise guidance, helpful examples, and comprehensive support from the Grants team, communication, and straightforward instructions.**

***“The guidance was excellent. Clear, but not overly simplified, detailed, but always relevant. The pre-empting of questions that might be asked, was also a definite strength, and showed that the GCF team had clearly gone through past processes, and taken out the lessons and the questions most projects would be likely to ask.”***

Question 27 reads, *GCC and GCVS offered a range of support to applicants including information sessions and an opportunity to have a ‘critical friend’ review of application forms. How helpful was the package of support available from both the Council and GCVS?* The chart below depicts the data:



The data clearly showing yet again an **overall positive** outcome, a majority of **55% (66)** responded “very helpful” or “helpful”. Only **3% (3)** responded “unhelpful” or “not at all helpful”. This is a positive rate and displays that the **support available should be provided in a similar or more enhanced format in the next phase of the GCF**. It must be noted that many respondents answered “neutral” or “n/a”. This may indicate that many organisations did not feel the need or did not have the capacity to attend the information sessions.

The final question, Question 28, of this section asks about the overall experience of the application process and is broken up into 3 parts: “what has worked well”, “how can we improve things”, “what has worked well with other funders”. These are all open text responses, and some parts of the question received a higher response rate than others.

Part 1- “what has worked well”- received a response total of **56** respondents, many of the responses found the **process to be straightforward, with clear guidance and support** available. The online form was easy to complete, and the timeline provided sufficient time for applicants to work on their submissions:

***“The process was well informed, guidance was very good, the online form had been improved from the previous application process. We found it worked well, and the changes made were positive ones.”***

Part 2 - “**how can we improve things**”, this received the same responses total of **56** respondents. Many responded saying they were “unsure” on how to improve the system, many also continued to praise the current format.

Some responses expressed **a preference for face-to-face** interaction, concerns about the **length and complexity** of the application form and the **preference of a two-stage process**. There is also a desire for greater transparency and a streamlined process:

*“There's a trend from other funders to move to a 2-stage application process: an initial, short Expression of Interest with a quick turnaround for a decision, followed if successful, by a longer application (much of which is already populated from the initial EOI). This is much easier to work with from our perspective as the initial EOI requires less of a time investment than the full application, and we know within a month or so if we've reached stage 2.”*

Part 3 - “**What has worked well with other funders**”, this received just 17 responses. Due to the low responses, there is not much available data, however of those who chose to reply some did continue to praise the “**clear** and **easy**” Council funding process. Other responses referred that many other funders operate in a similar format and a desire for a less “time consuming” process. Overall, the comments for question 28 were mostly positive with some suggestions for an improved process.

## **Section 5 – Conclusion and Recommendations**

The move to an **online application process and guidance and support provided by partners are shown to be strongly well received**. Timescales between the application and recommendation stages requires more consideration along with potential areas for further consideration/discussion, detailed below:

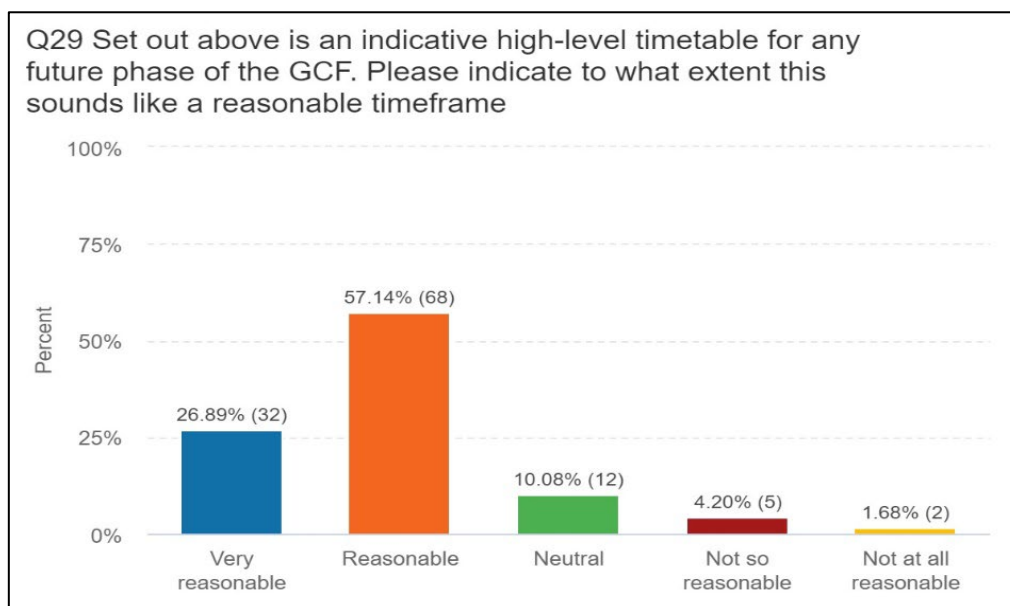
- **Recommendation**- Maintain the user-friendly online form and ensure it is continually reviewed and improved based on feedback.
- **Recommendation** - Explore the possibility of implementing a two-stage application process for future phase of the fund.
- **Recommendation** – Continue to explore further ways to make the application process less time consuming for applicants.



## SECTION 6: TIMESCALES

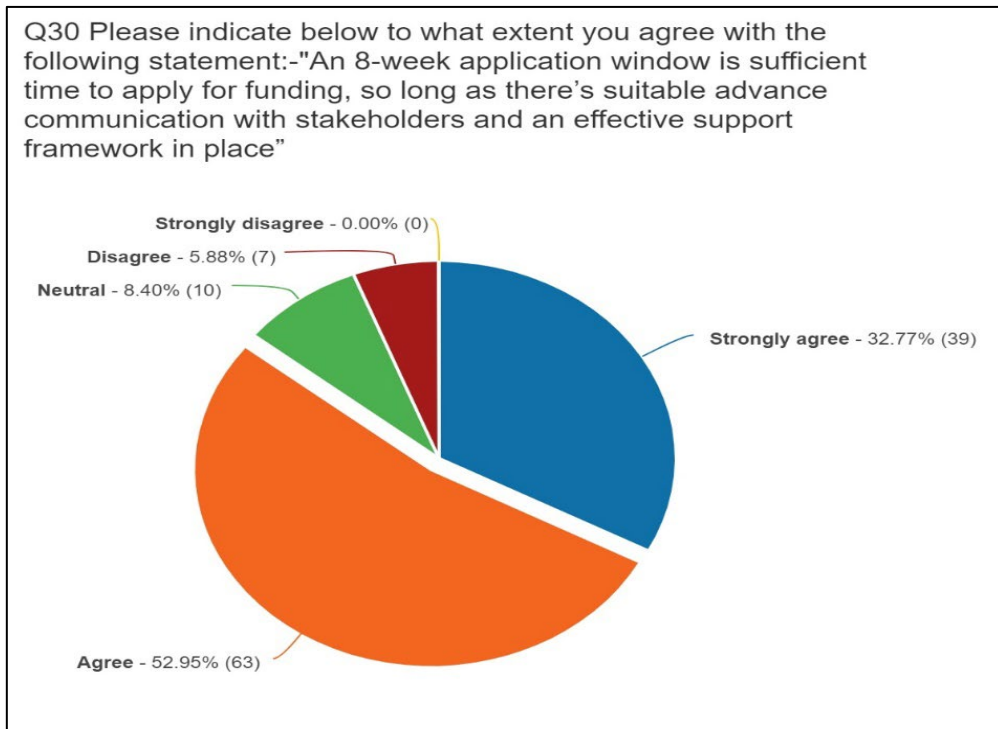
Question 29 of this section asks respondents to indicate to what extent the high-level timetable *below is a reasonable timeframe for any future phase of the GCF.*

Timeline	Dates
18 Month review period	June 2023 – September 2024
1 <sup>st</sup> Phase of Stakeholder Engagement	October – December 2023
Distil and analyse reports and learning	December 2023 – June 2024
2 <sup>nd</sup> Stage of stakeholder engagement	August 2024
Framework approved	October/November 2024
Application Process	January – March 2025
Assessment Process	March – August/September 2025
Recommendations made	October/November 2025
Go Live	1 April 2026



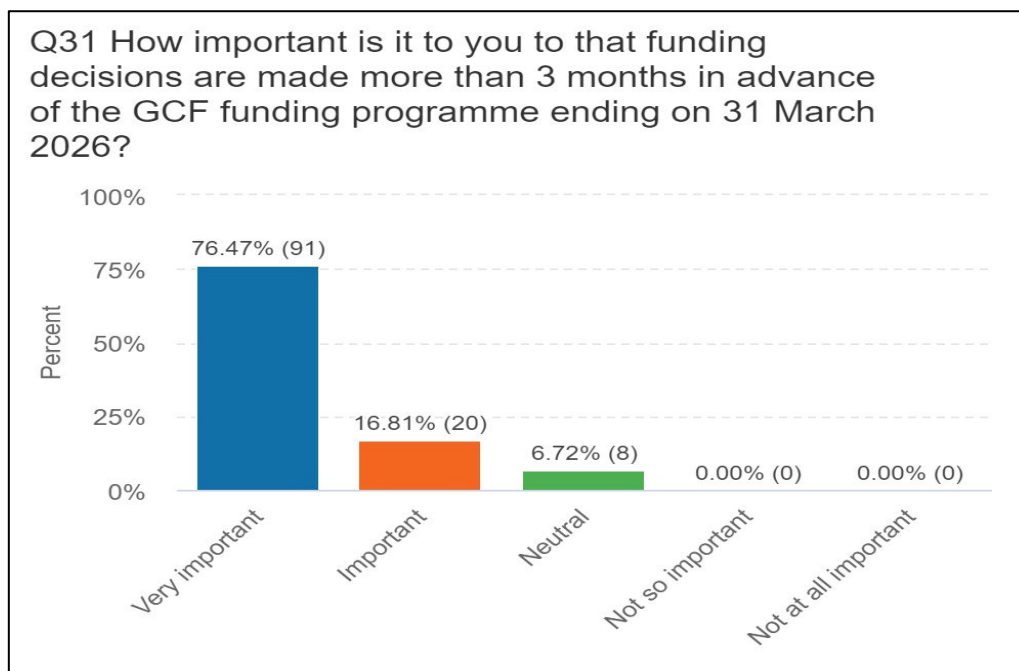
The **vast majority** of respondents found this timetable to be **“very reasonable” or “reasonable”, a total of 84% (100)**. Only **6% (7)** of respondents found this timeline to be “unreasonable”. The less supportive responses suggest that timeline could be shortened and found it is **too close to the financial year**. The written responses to this question included **“well-thought-out” and provides a good balance between stakeholder engagement and the application process, generous time to complete each stage and make informed decisions, gives organisations plenty of notice to prepare and accommodates part-time workers.**

**Question 30** asks about the time allocated to the application window.



Respondents were then asked to “agree” or “disagree” with the statement, if they **disagreed**, they were then asked to say why in the comment text box. A total of **86% (102)** respondents either “**Strongly agreed**” or “**agreed**” with the statement. A small **6% (7)** **disagreed** and **8% (10)** voted **neutral**. A few key insights to take from the written responses are an **8-week application window is sufficient**. Others suggest that a longer period, such as 10-12 weeks or 6 months, would be better to accommodate holidays, project planning, and the needs of small organisations. It is also mentioned that timing should avoid school summer holidays and other holiday periods to ensure availability of staff. **Overall, it was mostly supportive of this statement, with a few key insights to take into consideration.**

**Question 31** is a simple multiple-choice question that asks: *How important is it to you to that funding decisions are made more than 3 months in advance of the GCF funding programme ending on 31 March 2026?*



As seen above there is a **high level of importance** to organisations that funding decisions are made more than 3 months in advance. It is a question that received **no negative responses** inferring that the proposed timetable for decision making is well received.

The final question, **Question 32**, of this section is an open text box question *which asks respondents if they have any further comments on the timetable or general comments*. This received a **low response** rate, just 30 respondents submitted answers. Some expressed frustration at receiving funding news late which causes stress and disruption to strategic planning.

***“Having a decision as early as possible is vital for financial planning. If we are unsuccessful, we need sufficient time to look elsewhere for funding.”***

***“We need to be able to work with staff to give notice of redundancy & make sure we can alter services if need be due to decisions. As a sector we can rally round services that don't get funding & try and plug gaps in service if we know far enough in advance”***

Furthermore, many emphasised the **importance of early decisions** for financial planning, staff security and service adjustment.

## Section 6 - Conclusion and Recommendation

Results show a **high level of support for the indicative timetable** proposed, with a few key insights regarding the importance of having as much time as possible to complete the application process and early notification of decisions. Potential area for further consideration/discussion is detailed below:

- **Recommendation** - Maintain the current timing of funding decisions, ensuring that a minimum notice period of three months is provided. Any duration shorter than this may be detrimental to applicants.

## SECTION 7: FEEDBACK CAPTURED AT THE ONLINE SESSIONS

A series of online engagement workshops were held on **27 October 2023, 1 and 2 November 2023** with **72** third sector organisations.

As part of the registration process, attendees were asked a series of questions about their **relationship to GCF** and their **geographic alignment**. The results are shown below.

TOTAL NO. OF ATTENDEES	72	%
Currently in receipt of a Glasgow Communities Fund Grant	54	75%
Previously in receipt of Glasgow Communities Fund in the past but not currently	5	7%
Never been in receipt of a Glasgow Communities Fund Grant but has previously applied	8	11%
Never applied to Glasgow Communities Fund	5	7%
Delivery is mostly even across Glasgow (City-Wide )	30	42%
Mostly delivers in Glasgow North East	9	13%
Mostly delivers in Glasgow North West	21	29%
Mostly delivers in Glasgow South	12	17%
<b>27<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER</b>	<b>22</b>	
<b>1<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER</b>	<b>23</b>	
<b>2<sup>ND</sup> NOVEMBER</b>	<b>27</b>	

The workshop attendees were divided into groups with a facilitator and asked to discuss the same topics as were later covered in the online survey.

- **Communication and engagement**
- **Programme Design**
- **Application Process**
- **Timescales**

The key points from the discussions held across all three workshops are summarised below.

### COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Attendees were asked what has worked well in terms of communication. Based on the content of the feedback from attendees, it can be observed that there are several **positive aspects** highlighted by the individuals. The communication and engagement from the GCF team have **improved significantly** compared to the past, with **quick responses to queries and clear guidance provided**. The **application process is considered relatively easy**, and the availability of **multiple ways to demonstrate impact, such as uploading photos and videos, is appreciated**. The introduction of **in-person progress visits and a dedicated contact officer** has also been well-received.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, there is a sense that the **GCF is listening and responding** to the needs of those it supports, making the application and reporting **processes smoother and more responsive**. Some areas for potential improvements have been identified below:-

- **Recommendation:** More in-person visits by the Grants team and also attendance at productions/events that organisations invite the team to. Scheduled monitoring visits should avoid the end of the 3-year funding period.
- **Recommendation:** Make the website more accessible and use emails as the main source of communication. Implement email prompts to notify users when the webpage has been updated, as people may not have time to check for new content regularly.
- **Recommendation:** Create opportunities for dialogue and phone calls, rather than relying solely on email communication.

## PROGRAMME DESIGN

Attendees were asked what has **worked well in terms of Programme Design**. The selection contains various comments and feedback regarding the application criteria, underspends, listening sessions, funding thresholds, wide criteria, living wage, fair work, community work, overheads, and consortiums. Overall, there is **appreciation for the broad application criteria of the fund, as it allows for a wide range of projects to apply**. However, some suggest that **clearer and more targeted guidelines would be beneficial** to avoid wasting time and effort for applicants. The wide parameters of the fund are seen as valuable, as they allow organisations to adapt their work to fit different funding criteria. Additionally, there is agreement on the **importance of paying the real living wage and promoting fair work practices**. Some organisations express challenges in finding funders for general preventative community work due to narrowing remits from other funders. **Consortiums are seen as potentially challenging** if larger organisations prioritise management fees over service delivery.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, there is **satisfaction with the open nature of the fund compared to previous closed funds**, enabling work to be targeted to meet the criteria. Opportunities areas for potential improvements have been identified below:-

- **Recommendation** - Provide more clarity on funding priorities and program categories.
- **Recommendation** – Consider how local need is established and factored into funding decisions.
- **Recommendation** – Further discussion on consortium bids before considering for future phase of funding.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Attendees were asked what has **worked well in terms of the Application Process**. The **consultation prior to the application process was considered good, and testing the application was found to be useful**. The workshops provided valuable insights for new applicants and **the open and competitive application process was appreciated**. The **improved application form, including the ability to attach files, received positive feedback**. Knowing which participants the fund is reaching was seen as beneficial. New support resources and the **GCVS review support** were helpful in making the application process logical and easy to follow. The **GCVS information sessions and workshops were popular** and particularly valuable for smaller organisations. **Section-by-section guidance in the supporting documents was helpful for newcomers to the fund**.

Suggestions for improvement included implementing a **two-stage application** process to prevent wasted time on full applications unlikely to succeed. Providing timely and **clearer feedback on funding decisions** and **more transparency regarding the assessment process**.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, **the application process for GCF2 was seen as an improvement, with positive feedback on GCVS support and the step-by-step guide**. Additionally, there is an ongoing effort to develop a **funders group to facilitate collaboration** and make the funding process easier for the sector in the city.

Potential areas for further consideration/discussion are detailed below:

- **Recommendation** – Network with other funders and explore opportunities to streamline application forms/process across funders to reduce complexity and make it easier for applicants.
- **Recommendation** - Clarify the requirements for supporting documents, specifically board minutes.
- **Recommendation** - Use relatable examples in the guidance that align with the target audience's context.
- **Recommendation** - Publish more information about the assessment process to increase transparency.
- **Recommendation** – Explore the possibility of establishing a two-stage application process.
- **Recommendation** – Extend timescales for testing the application form.



## TIMESCALES

Attendees were asked **how they feel about the indicative timetable**. As the engagement for GCF3 has already begun, **there is positive feedback regarding the timeline**. The **3-year funding is considered important**, and there is a focus on the timeline between decisions and 1 April 2026. The **timetable for GCF3 is seen as an improvement compared to previous iterations**. It is suggested that the **application period in January to March would be ideal, as projects are busy with monitoring reports in April**.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, there is **positive feedback** on the indicative timetable and the suggestion of **funding decisions before the end of 2025 is welcomed**, with a cautionary note with regards to clashing priorities. **Organisations are encouraged that planning for GCF3 is starting early with both face-to-face (online) engagement and surveys**.

Some areas for potential improvements have been identified below:-

- **Recommendation** - If consortium bids are allowed, they may need a longer application window.
- **Recommendation** - Having community involvement within the recommendation review process and allowing sufficient time for their involvement is crucial.
- **Recommendation** - If applicants are offered a reduced award, there should be sufficient time built into the process to give them time to check if they can still deliver a large proportion of their application.
- **Recommendation** - Clashes with other funding application submission periods and holiday periods should be considered and avoided, where possible.

The table below captures areas for improvement identified by survey respondents and session participants which will be considered as part of the GCF review. A report on the outcome of these considerations will be provided later in 2024, in line with the indicative timetable set out above.

Area for Improvement	Recommendations/Actions
<p><b>Communication and Engagement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Ongoing dialogue with GCVS to consider how to achieve a better overall attendance at any future sessions.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Continuous review of our communication and engagement methods including provision of detail on format and content in advance of any future engagement sessions.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Further consideration of how we engage with unsuccessful applicants on their GCF experience.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Provide more detail on each of the organisation categories in any future surveys or similar.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Strive for a balance between different types of engagement including more face-to-face communication to strengthen relationships and understanding, especially where this is requested.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> More in-person visits and the Grants Team to attend productions/events that organisations invite them to. Timing of visits should be better, avoiding the end of the 3-year funding period.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Make the website more accessible and use emails as the main source of communication but avoid sending emails late on Friday afternoons. Implement email prompts to notify users when the webpage has been updated, as people may not have time to check for new content regularly.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Create opportunities for dialogue and phone calls, rather than relying solely on email communication.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Continue to provide feedback to participants post engagement.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Explore most appropriate way to publish and maintain live data on key submission and event dates and milestones.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Contribute to/facilitate further opportunities for GCF organisations to network with peers.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> – Network with other funders and explore opportunities to streamline application. forms/process across funders to reduce complexity and make it easier for applicants.</li> </ul>

Area for Improvement	Recommendations/Actions
<b>Programme Design - General</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Ensure that GCF funding priorities clearly demonstrate alignment with GCC Strategic priorities and seek to align with the Community Planning Partnership’s emerging local outcome improvement plans.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Consider further how to increase and improve community engagement in the GCF process.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Provide more clarity on funding priorities and program categories.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Consider how local need is established and factored into funding decisions</li> </ul>
<b>Programme Design – Ring fencing and Consortium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> The “ring-fencing” and “consortium” sections require additional research and possible further engagement with the third sector.</li> </ul>
<b>Programme Design – Funding Period and Thresholds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Consider maintaining 3-year funding commitment from GCF to provide stability, effective planning and continuity of service.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Discuss the limitation on funding duration currently set at three years.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Maintain the current funding thresholds (£20,000 - £200,000) to accommodate a variety of organisation /project needs.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Investigate the possibility of offering funding below the £20,000 threshold for smaller organisations in any future phase of the funding.</li> <li>• </li> </ul>
<b>Programme Design – Capacity Building Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Discuss with capacity building partners any specific capacity building support needs identified by organisations such as managing facilities and strategic planning.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Continue providing capacity building support to organisations and regularly review the support provided as more organisations access it.</li> </ul>

Area for Improvement	Recommendations/Actions
<b>Programme Design – Celebration Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Consider a mixture of local events and one annual event held in a city-centre location for all GCF funded organisations.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Consider how to utilise the help and advice offered by respondents to design and set up the events.</li> </ul>
<b>Application</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Maintain the user-friendly online form and ensure it is continually improved based on feedback.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Explore the possibility of implementing a two-stage application process for future phase of the fund.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Consider exploring ways to make the application process less time consuming for applicants, including clarification on requirements for supporting documents, specifically board minutes and review examples in the guidance.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Ongoing access to information and support from the Grants team with a focus on clear guidance, regular updates and helpful reminders.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> - Publish more information about the assessment process to increase transparency.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> – Extend timescales for testing the application form.</li> </ul>
<b>Timescales</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Maintain the current timing of funding decisions, ensuring that a minimum notice period of three months is provided.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> If consortium bids are allowed, they may need a longer application window.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Having community involvement within the process and allowing sufficient time for their involvement is crucial.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> If applicants are offered a reduced award, there should be sufficient time built into the process to discuss the impact on proposed service delivery adjustments and consequential impact.</li> <li>• <b>Recommendation:</b> Clashes with other funding application submission periods and holiday periods should be considered and, where possible, avoided.</li> </ul>