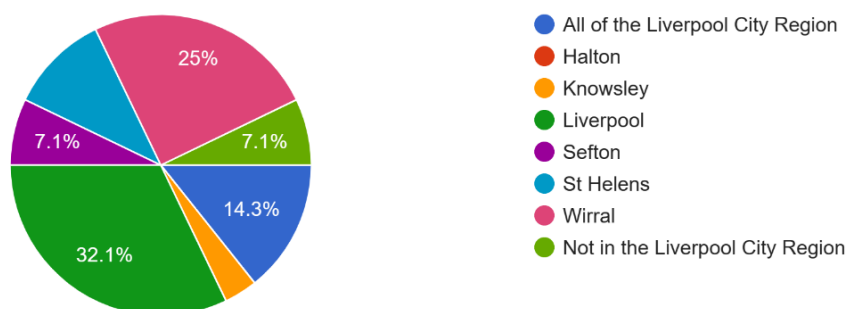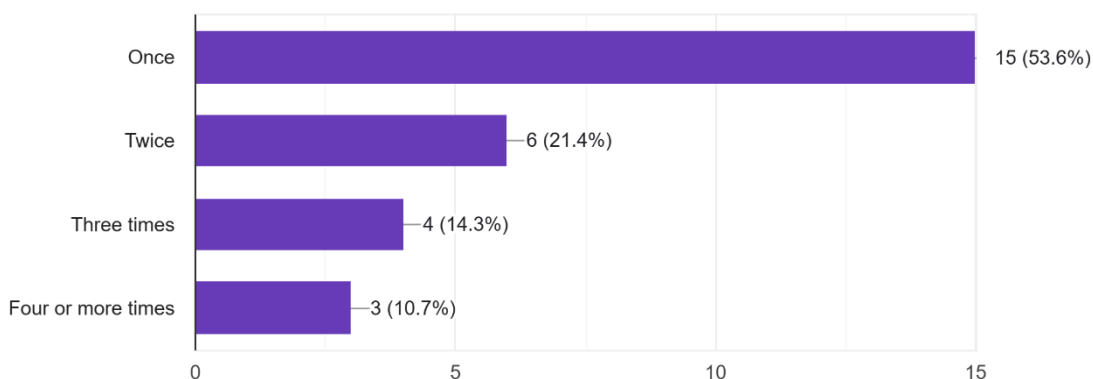**Community Consultation 2023**

Between the 6th September and 8th October 2023 The Voluntary Community Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector were consulted on proposed changes to improve the current Community Fund. Opinion was sought from both awarded and unsuccessful organisations to get a balanced view. Three regional Community Voluntary Services (CVS) also provided experience and help with the consultation process.
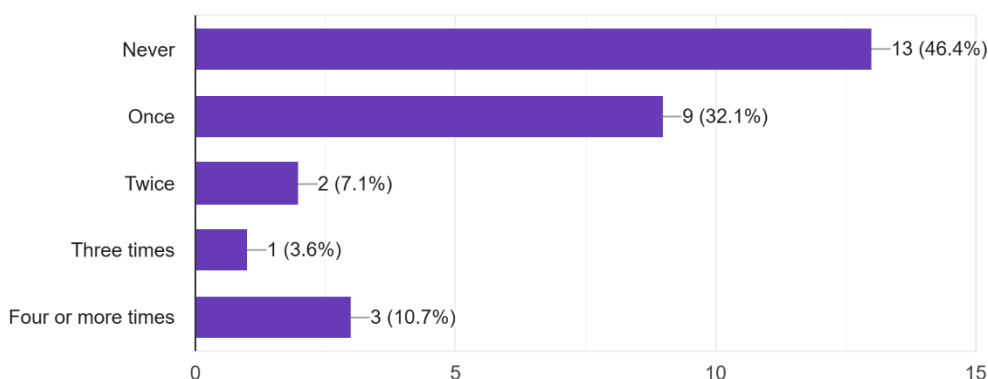
Q1.Consultees were asked what area of the city region their Organisation mainly worked in. There was a good response from the region.

Q2. Consultees were asked how often they had applied for Community Funding
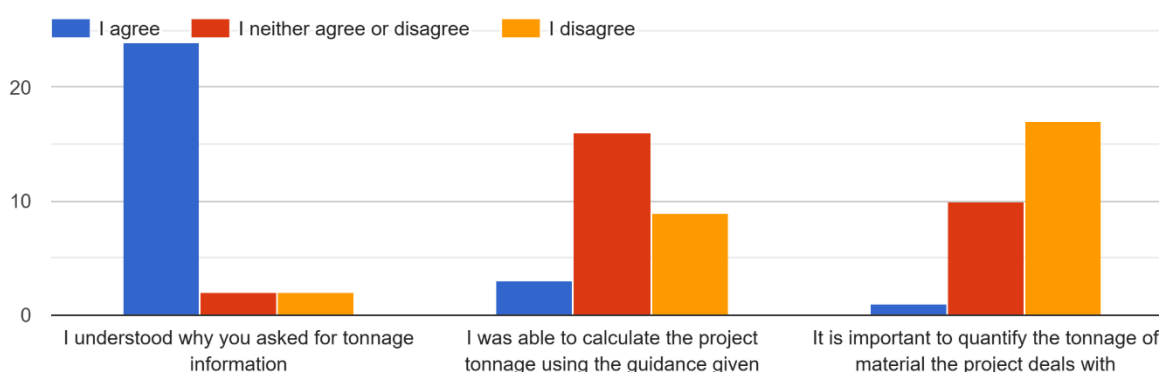

And how often they had been funded. These results show views from unsuccessful applicants contributed to the survey.

Q3 Consultees were asked the ways the application process could be better supported. A sample of the responses are shown below.

1. Have an officer to talk through the project to understand the impact clearly
2. Some of the calculations were quite onerous - our project focuses on behaviour change so not necessarily easy to know how much waste directly will be prevented
3. Short word count for questions
4. It would be useful to be able to preview the form so you can see what sections you need to complete and what information is required for each section.
5. Being able to pass the form over to organisational members to complete their section such as finance is a must and a good part of the form.
6. I think simple forms, and making sure you can access questions offline to prepare are handy.
7. FAQ's for each question with definitions also helps.
8. Online applications can be helped by real life examples.
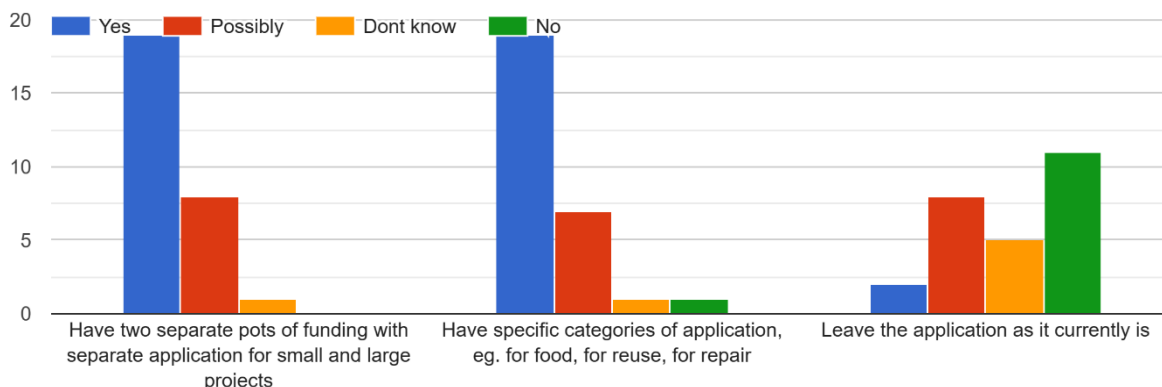9. I'm happy with the application as it is.

Q4 Consultees were asked about providing tonnage information in the application. Most understood why we ask for tonnage information. A large number found calculating tonnage difficult and the majority did not feel it was important to quantify the tonnage of materials their project would deal with.
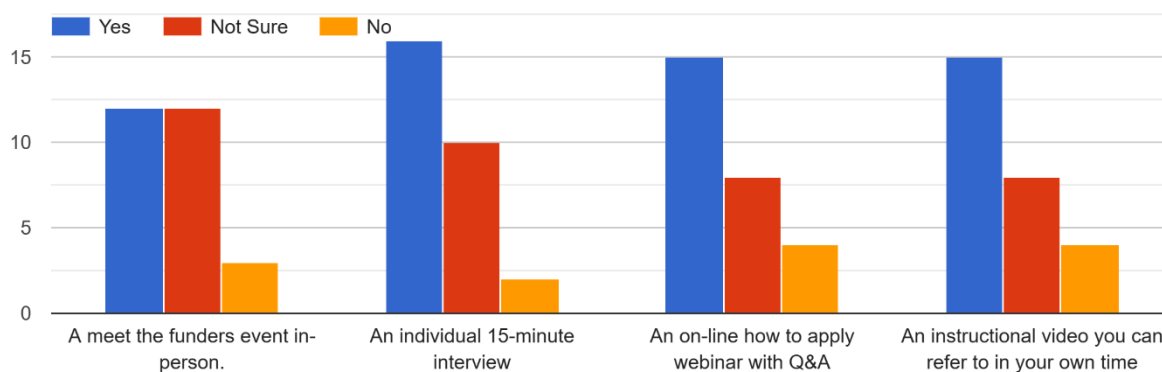

Consultees were asked how they felt identifying and quantifying materials could be done better.

1. Most of the project was easy to look at tonnage but education element was difficult to quantify
2. By the amount of products you would recycle reuse upcycle such as our project aimed to recycle 100 dresses
3. It is really difficult to quantify unless all participants weigh their waste
4. It can be really difficult to quantify waste that doesn't happen as a result of preventative activities.
5. It would involve a lot of in-kind work from freelancers in advance for the bid.
6. Visually via Easy Read or Photo symbols
7. Other methods would be complex - van loads/donations etc

Q5 Consultees were asked about having one application form for all levels of funding. A large majority thought two separate applications is more appropriate.
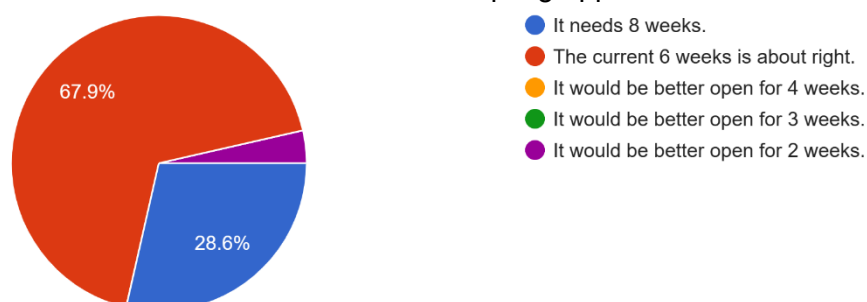

Q6 Consultees were asked what they felt could help them further with their application.
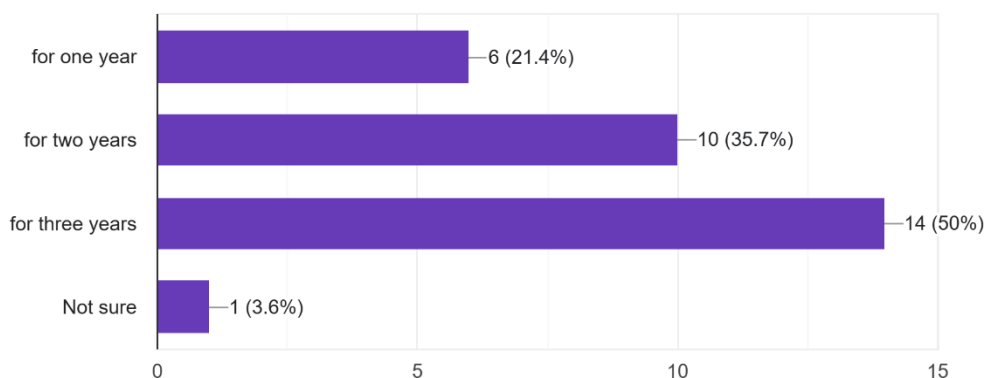

Consultees were asked if they had other suggestions for the application process, samples of the responses include,

1. Why are we looking for new projects but not supporting the ones that have continued to do work?
2. Separate out behaviour change/learning projects if these are eligible.
3. The form was easy to complete. It might make sense to have small grants complete a stage one and larger grants complete stage one and two.
4. Simple application accompanied by video supporting statement/evidence.
5. An application form is the easiest thing to administer
6. Showcase an existing project for continuation funding, a more practical view of how things work in reality.

Q7 Consultees were asked about the timescale for accepting applications.

● It needs 8 weeks.
● The current 6 weeks is about right.
● It would be better open for 4 weeks.
● It would be better open for 3 weeks.
● It would be better open for 2 weeks.

Q8 Consultees were asked about the time period that projects are funded. Currently we fund all projects for one year, in practice this is nine months for delivering projects.
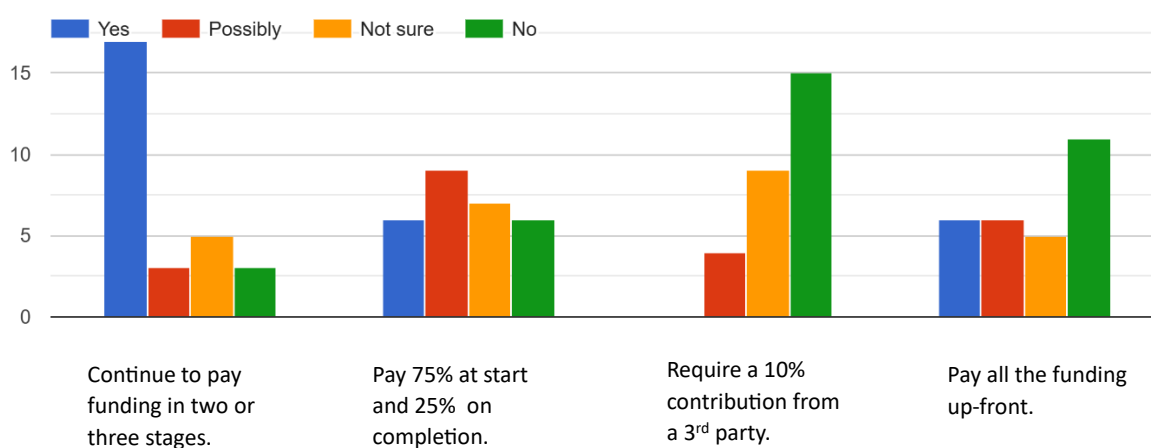

We asked the reason for the answer on the time period of funding.

1. Community is fast paced and forever changing 1 year is enough for small scale projects.
2. Three years would allow for better planning and less time/work spent on looking for funding = more time spent on delivery.
3. Longer term funding enables the project to develop and gives the project time to make it sustainable.
4. It would give us more opportunity to measure impact & behaviour change. As well as building meaningful links with the people & communities the project is designed to engage.
5. The setting up of sessions takes a while and so a longer funding period would benefit us to get better results.
6. Time to market/organise support/plan/gather data/spread word and evaluate.
7. Groups needs stability. submitting funding bids is very time consuming, especially if there are limited staff/volunteer time to do this. sometimes it feels more time is spent applying for funds than delivering.
10. Three years provides the ability to build and learn and invest in staffing and resources with confidence.
11. I think having security in 2 years funding, means we can really serve a community over a longer period of time. Needed 10 - 30k per year to really have an impact and keep staff employed to work on projects.
12. Bigger projects take longer to establish and see results, amazing things could happen in month 14 for example.
13. For smaller projects more than one year might lose momentum and we have several projects to work on at one time.
14. Three years supports longevity. This has the added benefit of not worrying about funding short-term enables us to focus on our business plan rather than funding applications, which aims to increase our self-sufficiency, reducing our dependence on funding.
15. Sustainability - Experience tells us that year 1 builds the project, year 2 embeds and year 3 the project begins to run itself.
16. In theory it's a one-year fund but post approval it's less than a year. If the project is focused on engaging the education sector, the current time frame is tight to

work within. Similarly, if seeking to engage new groups - time is tight. Three years also gives a significant period to embed and evaluate the project at regular intervals, it provides reassurance and job security, opportunities to engage at a much deeper level.

17. Some projects require a longer length of time to make a more meaningful impact + projects can be undertaken in phases

18. For small projects where the funding makes a huge difference and a relatively big impact in a local community, I think it could be worth investing a small amount for 2 or 3 years, subject, of course, to evaluations.
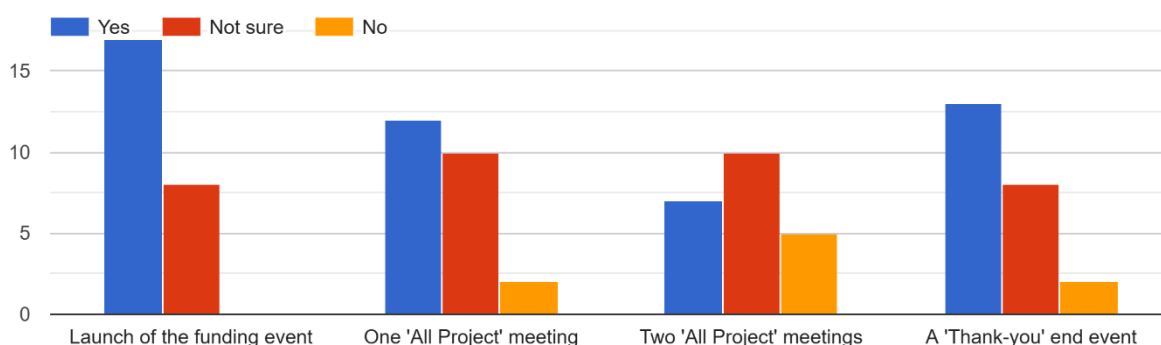
Q9 Consultees were asked about how the funding is paid, currently that is two or three stage payments.

Comments included,

1. Three stage payments on proof is acceptable and we would be happy with this. Transparency is key.
2. Does it need to be in three stages? What about a larger project initiation payment, followed by regular releases across the life of the programme based on deliverables & pre-set metric targets? Then everybody knows where they're at & what is required to be successful. With possible claw-back options or payment delays/pauses until deliverable metrics are hit again.
3. I think the accountability of 3 stage payments - keeps you up to date with your targets. I like the friendliness of the head office - very person centred.
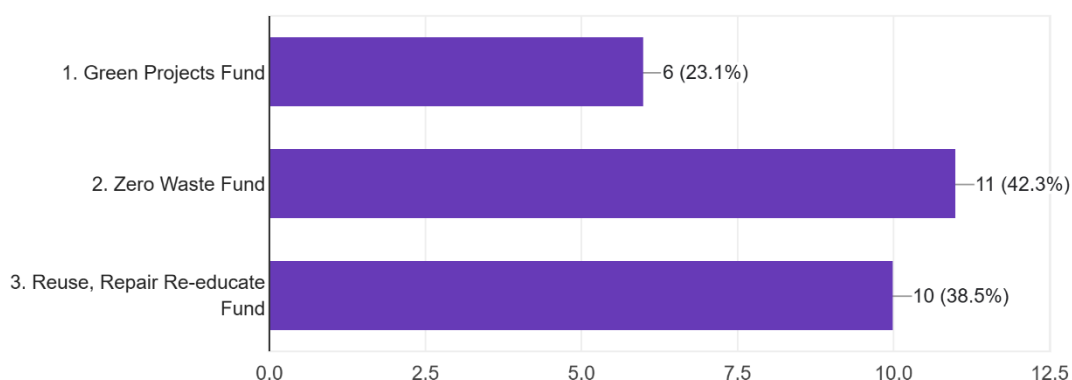
Q10 Thinking about other support for projects Consultees were asked about meetings they would like to attend.
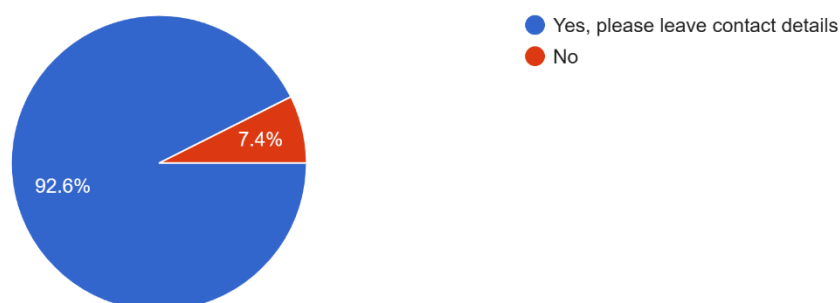

Comments included

1. If you move towards project meets and end events, enable applicants to include costs of attendance in their applications.

Q11 We asked Consultees if a change in name would better reflect our funding.

Q12 Consultees were asked if they would be willing to take part in future consultations, which had a positive response.

Q13 Finally, the Consultees were asked if there was any other support we could give that would help them to apply for funding.

1. If we had someone visits, we would be confident we would receive the funding.
2. Meet the funders with lunch then if you fail it's not that bad!
3. The opportunity to talk to someone about the bid being submitted to make sure you're on the right track, similar to the lottery funding.
4. Give examples of previous successful applications
5. I think a window to discuss a project idea before applying is useful and potentially time saving.