

Learnings from the Pathfinder Hubs

The two pathfinder climate action hubs launched in September 2021 and have gathered the following key learnings from their experience to date to support hubs as they set up.

Your vision and aims

- When creating your vision, aims and objectives engage as widely as possible. A Hub can represent more than one network so ensure you set aims that will meet the needs of the area.
- Once you have developed a shared vision, aims and objectives, ensure that your team and partners are aware of them, and that they underpin all of the Hub's activities and projects.
- Publicise! To ensure support from stakeholders and partners, and to increase buy-in from the community, make sure your vision, aims and objectives are clear and well publicised across all communication channels.

Setting Up

- If a new organisation, the best legal structure for a Hub to benefit from cost reductions in goods and services and gain matched funding etc. is as a charity. Setting up a charity takes time though. The best legal structure for a 'non-profit' Hub that can be created quickly is a CIC and if it is limited by guarantee it allows for membership too.
- **Business Gateway** has some good relevant training sessions and is a great source of help. Join Business Gateway to gain an advisor and tailored help. Try to get onto the Early Stage Growth service. This will enable you to have dedicated advisor and access to free advice from specialists, including 7 hours of an HR specialist's time for free, marketing advice, help with your website etc

Systems

- It is best to set up a financial accounting system as soon as possible – such as XERO. These system often include training and support as part of the package. Sage Cloud Accounting is another recommended option. However it is possible to use an excel spreadsheet, which works fine if you are not dealing with multiple funding streams, lesser funding amounts and outgoings.
- It is recommended to use a payroll company – to keep payroll correct, and in line with any tax and regulation changes. It is an easy thing to outsource.
- You can use a HR system, such as Breathe HR - it covers hours worked, annual leave, sick leave, support and supervision etc.

- For the website, Hubspot is one of the most highly rated content management systems. Another popular option is Squarespace.
- There are many project management tools available, such as: Asana, or Monday.com which allows integration with a customer relationship manager. Monday.com also comes highly recommended as it can be used to manage membership, monitor seed funding, manage budgets, and make finance and travel requests.
- Other systems: Office 365 is commonly used for communications and file management; Mailchimp for handling our mailing list and newsletter; Canva for all graphics, posters etc.
- Many of these services come free of charge or with a discount for non-profit organisations. CICs do not currently benefit from these.

Recruitment

- Using a recruitment company can be cost effective and resource effective, especially if you have not recruited before and are only one person.
- During recruitment, consider your geographical area and how it will be represented. This could mean hiring a person or persons specifically located and focused in one area. Additionally, consider virtual interviews for accessibility.
Example: The Highlands and Islands Hub recruited an Islands Development Officer, separate from a Development Officer in the mainland.
- Do not underestimate the time it takes to recruit new staff: to write job descriptions and adverts, the time needed to advertise (minimum 3 weeks), the time to shortlist and interview (including forming the interview panel) and how long it will take new starts to join (average 4 weeks' notice to previous employer) and then the time to induct and train.
- Ensure you have an allocated budget for recruitment and if required team building/organisational development costs.
- Think about the skills and expertise you need. It might be advisable to bring in specialists, for example a PR & Comms Officer or Fundraising Officer, as these skills can be hard or take time to acquire.
Example: NESCAN Hub has a fundraising officer with experience in this area as members felt that help with funding was crucial.

Climate Action Hub Manager – Job Description Criteria

- Leadership, HR and Staff Management experience
- Experience of managing budgets, finance and reporting
- Strategic planning experience, how to set up a new organisation (where applicable), understand the wider strategic plans, networks and fit of the Hub within that.
- Experience in how to build a team to deliver and ensure that delivery remains on track
- Essential to have a wide range of contacts throughout both the region and nationally and the ability to network and build contacts further, developing in depth relationships
- Vision and able to “sell” that vision
- Mindset fixed on growth, self-development and the ability to develop and support the team including focusing on the training and support needed for staff
- Extensive knowledge of the community sector and how it operates
- Extensive knowledge of funding, projects, organisations and contacts throughout the region
- Extensive experience of community engagement and how to do this both in person and digitally
- Marketing experience preferably social marketing experience that promotes behavioural change
- Passion about the community being at the heart of a just transition to net zero
- Be able to listen and be a good public speaker as they will be the mouthpiece for the hub
- Self-awareness, recognising their strengths and weaknesses and therefore what they need in a team as well as what the network needs from the staff

Ways of Working

- Think about how you are going to build a team. How is that team going to effectively work together. If you are all working remotely then you need to build in time when you can physically meet to build those important personal connections that enable trust to form. You need to ensure that you have non work ‘connecting’ time online if you are not office based.
Example: NESCAN Hub has a weekly drop in social coffee time 9.30-10am every Thursday when you cannot talk about work!
- Ensure that all staff have a clearly defined work role, tasks and responsibility and understand and incorporate the organisational values in their work and as a team your work reflects that. It is easier starting a team with those expectations in place – value setting could be part of the initial team creation and revisited regularly.

Office Space

- Think about whether you need a full-time office or if you will be mostly working from home/ out across the region. If you only need a part time office then consider using serviced offices. A lot of these will allow you to book and pay by the day at a very good rate.

Insurance

- It is difficult to find insurance for a non-profit organisation – going to a broker that specialises in non-profit organisation makes the process a lot quicker and easier.

Creating a Board

- When creating the Board, consider what practical experience and guidance the team will need such as finance, HR, ICT, policy or strategy, etc.
- Have a constitution, terms of reference and/or job description in place before recruiting Board members to ensure they're fully aware of their role and responsibilities.
- The Board can be a valuable resource so understand its role and how it can really support the Hub. Sub groups can work well.
Example: NESCAN Hub has Board sub groups in governance & risk, finance and fundraising and HR and People.

Building connections / relationships / strategic overview

- Look for partners that have undergone certain processes in your region – such as mapping of climate action-related activity, research in mitigation and adaptation to climate change tailored to local needs etc. These partners could be Local Authorities and third sector organisations.
Example: NH&I build an early relationship with Highland Adapts, an initiative led by Highland Council.
- Map your stakeholders and understand where the opportunities for connections and partnerships are and the work and research already available.

Communications

- Involve local artists or designers to develop your logo and branding. Think about local symbology and elements meaningful to local communities.
- Establish a strong social media presence. It is easier and cheaper than developing a website, and can serve as a source of information if you decide

not to have a website, or if the website is not yet fully developed. Monitor your social media engagement to ascertain which content is most relevant to your local communities and brings new audiences to the hub.

Example: NH&I Hub emphasises encouraging and celebrating the activities of groups throughout the region, connecting with them and building connections between them.

- Create a monthly newsletter that members receive so you can share learnings from members, new initiatives and funding opportunities. It works to reach those who are not maybe on social media or would have missed posts etc. You can spotlight certain community projects to give inspiration.