# Accelerating climate action: the role of in-country local leadership networks in delivering Net Zero

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# Foreword

This UK100 report, published during COP26 in Glasgow, is a vital piece of advocacy and practical guidance to local authorities and community networks tackling decarbonisation and mitigating climate change.

The report focuses on the efficacy of in-country local government climate networks, and their ability to deliver solutions and advocate for the change that can facilitate further progress towards reaching national Government goals.

Leadership is indeed the crucial success factor and I cannot emphasise enough that decarbonising our transport systems, our industry and energy supply systems and our domestic heating and cooling by 2050 is not a matter of waiting for new technology to come along. The technology that we need to get to at least 80% of the way to Net Zero targets exists today.

The report highlights common features of successful climate networks from a range of countries including Argentina, Australia, Canada, Japan, the USA and the UK. One size does not fit all. Unlocking finance from local authorities, private capital and government investment to deliver sustainable projects at significant commercial scale is achievable, if networks adapt strategies locally and share and learn from each other's experiences.

The clarion call from this report is to act now, learn from examples of success, use local contexts to develop solutions that work, work together to scale up these solutions and innovate to speed up.

Managing large networks can be complex but there are ways to cut through and decisive, empowered local leadership is vital.

**Carl Ennis**
**CEO UK Siemens plc**

National Grid is proud to be partnering with UK100 at this vital time for the delivery of a Net Zero future. This is a critical decade to deliver the new energy systems that will help power carbon free communities and businesses.

Local leadership is a vital component of that delivery, and we know that the UK will only meet its commitments to hit Net Zero if local communities and leadership are engaged and helping enable the changes that will allow the UK to make the most of the economic, jobs and environmental opportunities that are offered by the transition to Net Zero.

We would like to thank the brilliant UK100 team and members for their work at this vital time. We know that if we work together we can all help create a strong, sustainable future for all.

**Duncan Burt**
**Chief Sustainability Officer, National Grid**

# Executive Summary

## Local government networks and the climate crisis

Local governments are critical actors in tackling the climate crisis. As climate impacts become increasingly evident, they are the first layer of government to encounter citizens' concerns and demands for action. They also know their communities and localities best and so are the most appropriate authority to design and implement solutions to local problems.

But many local governments, particularly the majority who are not large cities, often lack the knowledge, skills and resources to tackle their climate problems at the speed and scale required. To address this, local governments are increasingly doing what they have always done – forming networks to share information, address common challenges and aggregate their political power.

There is a long history of local government networks and their success in driving change. It is one defined by increasing specialisation, not least in the environment and climate sectors. Today, for example, local governments are well served internationally by a number of influential climate-focused networks. These emerged alongside the growth in global climate governance structures such as the UNFCCC. Notable examples include ICLEI and C40 Cities.

Climate action, however, is now rightly focusing on national implementation of global commitments. Crucially, this is informed by the Paris Agreement's acknowledgement of the importance of all levels of government in addressing climate change. As a result, local governments are seeking a far more granular understanding of the policies, tools and financing available to them within their own jurisdictions and national boundaries. A consequence is the rise of so-called 'in-country' climate networks – the focus of this report.

## The importance of 'in-country' networks

Simply put, in-country local government climate networks connect local authorities within a single country, so members share a common regulatory environment. This means knowledge exchange, collective problem-solving and political advocacy can be very practical, focused on immediate real-world issues and with outcomes that impact directly on day-to-day operations.

The benefits of in-country networks extend beyond their local government members, however. These networks also have an important role to play in the overall functioning of effective multi-level climate governance systems within countries. This report describes a simplified, ideal model which is used to underpin some of the key findings presented below.

## In-country network case studies

To illustrate the benefits of in-country networks to national and indeed global climate action, seven case studies are presented in this report. The networks reviewed are: UK100 – the only network for UK locally-elected leaders committed to ambitious action on climate change and clean air; RAMCC – Argentina's ground-breaking climate network of towns and cities; Climate Caucus – a Canadian network for elected local government officials established in 2019; Climate Mayors – the only national body in the US for city mayors committed to the Paris Agreement; ICLEI Japan – a driving force of local government climate action in Japan and a key player in the influential Japan Climate Initiative (JCI); Cities Power Partnership – Australia's only national local government network dedicated to climate action; and Climate Alliance – the original local government climate network that has grown from its German and Austrian roots to being a major voice across Europe for local government.

The case studies provide a factual overview of each network, including their establishment and national context, membership criteria, key activities, achievements and challenges. The networks were selected from a review of over 40 local government networks identified around the world, whose activities suggested significant engagement with or interest in climate action (see Annex 1).[1] Case study material was obtained through a combination of desktop research and interviews with network staff (see Annex 2).

In-country networks are largely absent in some areas of the globe, notably Africa and parts of Asia. The networks investigated in these regions were either focused on single issues, such as transport in the case of the Mobility and Transport coalition in Côte d'Ivoire, or interaction between local and national government was organised centrally via national government departments. International and regional networks such as ICLEI and C40 are often present where there are no specific in-country networks.

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1 This long list was not exhaustive but identified the networks whose sole focus is climate and those who have a significant workstream focused on climate. Additional insight on how the Scottish Cities Alliance, a non-climate focused organisation is mainstreaming climate into its activities can be found in Annex 3

## Key findings

It is difficult to draw definitive conclusions from a small number of case studies. However, a number of key themes do emerge that provide insights into the roles, benefits, challenges and opportunities of in-country networks. These are:

- Multi-level climate governance is flawed in case study countries and in-country networks are filling the gaps
- National circumstances have a major influence on network focus and design
- Networks are leaders in climate ambition in their countries but implementation of action can vary
- Leadership is a key factor in network establishment and success
- Networks share common features but are also innovating in interesting and different ways
- Collaboration with other networks and like-minded partners is important to achieving goals
- Longevity provides depth of institutional structures, but youth is no barrier to driving change
- Managing large networks is a challenge and well-resourced secretariats make a difference.

## Conclusions and key recommendations

The in-country networks profiled in this report highlight three critical points for global climate action. The first is that local governments are rapidly increasing their climate ambition, with action moving from a vanguard to the mainstream in many countries. This shift is being enhanced and enabled by in-country networks.

The second point is that this action is taking place within flawed multi-level governance structures where the needs and priorities of local government are not being adequately served or even recognised. This is hindering the full potential for action.

The third point is that in-country networks can be seen as a reaction to this dysfunction, helping local governments become climate leaders despite the structural challenges they face. At the same time, these networks should not be seen as a substitute for the climate governance reforms needed, but rather as a key partner to realising this change.

These points are essential for national governments to understand as they convene in Glasgow for COP26 and take decisions that will determine whether the world achieves the climate goals it needs to by the end of the decade. Through local governments and in-country networks they have willing and increasingly able partners who have the potential to drive rapid and transformative climate action if the right policy, finance and data environments are created.

As governments and ministers negotiate in Glasgow, the following recommendations are offered to help them create the outcomes and impacts their local communities want and need:

- National governments need to overhaul multi-level climate governance structures within their countries to fully empower local government action. The experiences and insights of in-country local government climate networks should inform this restructuring
- National governments should encourage the creation of in-country networks as a key component of a well-functioning multi-level climate governance system or alternatively help strengthen local programmes of international networks like ICLEI or Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM) for this purpose
- The funding community should direct more support to the secretariats of in-country networks in recognition of the vital role they play in the functioning of these networks
- The networks themselves should establish mechanisms for connecting and sharing their experiences in order to improve their operational efficiency and effectiveness
- In-country networks were found to be notably absent or nascent in much of Asia and Africa. More research could be conducted to further map in-country network activities around the world; particularly in these regions. Given the benefits highlighted in the report of establishing in-country networks, and as Africa is recognised by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as the continent most affected by climate change, support to facilitate the establishment of in-country networks in areas where there are currently none would enable more effective local delivery of Net Zero globally.

# Table of contents

# Background

## The role of local government networks

Local governments have long created networks to exchange knowledge, address shared challenges and aggregate otherwise disbursed political power. United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), for example – the world's largest local government organisation – traces its roots back to 1913, while COSLA,[2] the official body of local government in Scotland, claims no less than an 800-year lineage. Indeed, in many countries, and globally, local government networks have long histories and legacies of collective action and collaboration.

As the world has become ever more interconnected and complex, the opportunity and need for such networks has also increased. Specialisation has been a feature of this evolution as local governments have created dedicated forums for specific issues or problems. This shift has been particularly noticeable with respect to environmental issues. The growth of international environmental governance structures over recent decades has spurred local governments to establish their own forums to follow, engage in, and benefit from international environmental efforts.

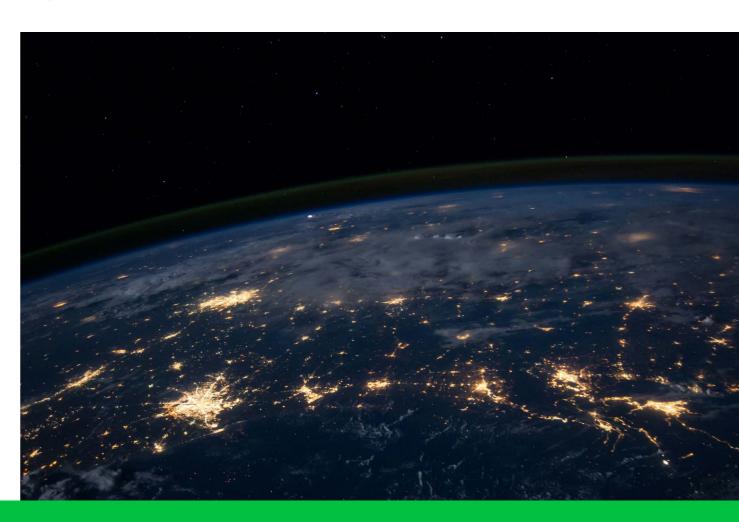## Emergence of sustainability and climate networks

A prime illustration of this trend is ICLEI – originally the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives. Established in 1990, ICLEI's creation was driven in large part by the global sustainability agenda that emerged in the 1980s and which led to the adoption of the three UN Rio Conventions in 1992. ICLEI's establishment reflected the need for a dedicated sustainability forum for local governments to ensure their voice was heard at the international level. It also provided a means for knowledge sharing and collective problem solving. ICLEI has since evolved considerably. Its membership has grown ten-fold (now sitting at over 2500 local and regional governments) and while it continues to cover the broad sustainability agenda, climate action has become one of its core areas of work.

2 COSLA: Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

In more recent years, ICLEI has been joined by other international local government networks with agendas dedicated solely to climate action, as the logic of specialisation continues to play out. C40 Cities, established in 2005, for example, is the leading climate network for the world's largest and most progressive global cities. Its nearly 100 members include London, Mexico City, Jakarta, Los Angeles, and Tokyo. The GCoM by contrast provides the broadest tent, with over 10,000 members ranging from small towns to the largest mega-cities. Exemplifying the specialisation theme, the Resilient Cities Network, set up in 2013, has a heavy focus on climate adaptation, while the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance is for the most ambitious municipalities who have committed to achieving Net Zero emissions.

Not wishing to be left behind, the major multi-issue local government networks, like UCLG at the international level, or the US Conference of Mayors at the national level, have also stepped up their climate engagement. A review of local government and municipal authorities accredited as official observers to the UNFCCC, for example, shows that national or regional local government associations dominate this constituency.[3]

3 https://www.cities-and-regions.org/about-the-lgma/

## Box 1. Understanding the international local government climate ecosystem

This report makes a distinction between in-country and international local government networks. In practice many of the international (and regional) networks can also have important national level offices or programmes. However, the key differentiator remains that international networks are defined by a membership that cuts across countries.

| Name | Membership | Number of members | Geographic scope | Subject scope |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ICLEI | Local and regional governments of any size | 2500 | International, regional and national | Sustainability generally but with significant climate work programme |
| GCoM | Municipalities of any size | 10,700 | International and regional | Climate and energy |
| C40 | Large, global cities only | 97 | International | Climate (covering many different aspects/ sectors) |
| UCLG | Local governments of any size | 240,000 towns and cities, 175 associations | International and regional | Multi-issue, including climate |
| Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance | Cities comitted to achieving carbon neutrality | 22 | International | Climate |
| Resilient Cities Network | Cities of any size | 100 | International | Concerned with resilience broadly, but heavy focus on climate |

Today, the ecosystem of international local government networks is an active one, as the selection above indicates. Add in city and climate programmes run by various non-profits (such as CDP or WWF) and the landscape begins to look crowded. Inevitably, there is overlap in membership, mandates and activities, reflecting the organic way in which the system has developed. Despite this, each network can claim to fill a particular niche or perform a certain function that sets it apart in some way. GCoM, for example, with its large membership, and support from the European Commission and Bloomberg Philanthropies, provides local government with the political mass to influence climate action at the international level. C40 specialises in servicing the climate needs of the world's major metropolises. ICLEI ensures climate is connected into the broader environmental and sustainability agenda. And UCLG connects with those parts of the global local government community that the others do not reach.

Increasingly, the networks have also recognised the need for and benefit of closer collaboration. GCoM, for example, is the product of a merger in 2016 between the US-based Compact of Mayors and the European-founded Covenant of Mayors. CDP and ICLEI meanwhile combined their emission reporting systems in 2019 so that cities have one streamlined platform to use. And in 2020, C40, GCoM, ICLEI and UCLG, along with CDP, WWF and World Resources Institute (WRI) established the 'Cities Race to Zero' campaign to coordinate their efforts in support of the COP26 Presidency and the High-Level Climate Champions.

Many of these networks also coordinate and cooperate on climate – and other global issues – through the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments.[4] Set up in 2013, this body provides a forum for joint advocacy work relating to global policy processes. C40, ICLEI, UCLG and GCoM are all members or partners of the Taskforce.

4 https://www.global-taskforce.org/

## From international to in-country networks

On the face of it then, local governments are well served by a plethora of high-profile climate networks dedicated to advancing their interests and connecting them with each other. At the international level this is certainly true, reflecting the fact that for most of the past 30 years securing ambitious global targets and governance structures has been a focus for national governments and by extension local government networks as well.

Today, however, the world has firmly entered a new and critical stage for addressing climate change. With a global framework for action in place through the Paris Agreement, long overdue implementation of ambitious climate action at the national, regional, and local level is now the priority. Crucially, this implementation is informed by the Paris Agreement's explicit acknowledgement of the role of all levels of government in addressing climate change.[5]

For local governments, this pivot to implementation means the need for an increasingly granular understanding of the policies, tools and financing available to them within their own jurisdictions and wider national boundaries. While international local government networks continue to provide valuable knowledge exchange and insights between countries, so-called in-country networks – the focus of this report – are becoming increasingly important to local governments.

## Why in-country networks matter

As the name suggests, in-country local government climate networks are dedicated forums for climate action that connect cities, towns, and other local authorities within a single country. The key attraction of such networks is that members share a common regulatory environment, being empowered and constrained by the same national policies and legislation. This means knowledge exchange, collective problem-solving and political advocacy can be very practical, focused on immediate real-world issues and with outcomes that impact directly on day-to-day operations.
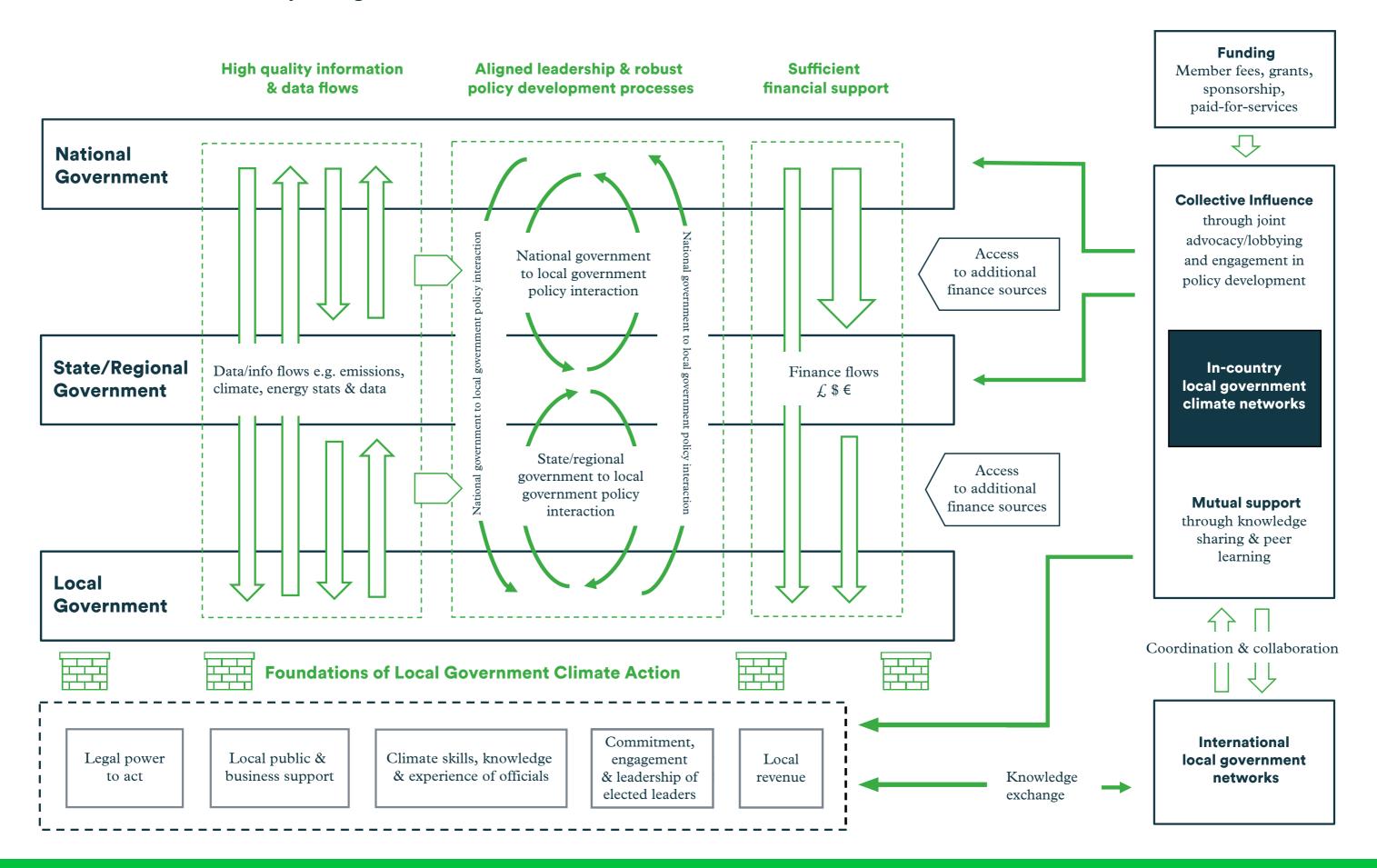
The benefits of in-country networks are not limited to their local government members, however. These networks also have an important role to play in the overall functioning of the multi-level governance system for climate action within a country. Put very simply, in-country networks make this system work better. As described in Figure 1 and Box 2 below, which set out an ideal multi-level governance model, in-country networks support the overall system for climate action. They do this in two ways, firstly, by strengthening the on-the-ground capacity of local governments through mutual support, and secondly, by improving the quality of policy making at national and sub-national level through collective advocacy and engagement.

The remainder of this report presents and analyses seven case studies of in-country local government climate networks from around the world. These case studies describe the central characteristics of each network and the challenges, barriers, and successes they have had. The model described in Figure 1 and Box 2 is used as a framework for subsequent analysis.



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5 See Paris Agreement preamble https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf

# Figure 1. Ideal multi-level government climate action model and the role of in-country local government networks



**High quality information & data flows**

**Aligned leadership & robust policy development processes**

**Sufficient financial support**

**National Government**

**State/Regional Government**

**Local Government**

Data/info flows e.g. emissions, climate, energy stats & data

National government to local government policy interaction

National government to local government policy interaction

National government to local government policy interaction

State/regional government to local government policy interaction

Finance flows £ $ €

Access to additional finance sources

Access to additional finance sources

**Foundations of Local Government Climate Action**

| Legal power to act | Local public & business support | Climate skills, knowledge & experience of officials | Commitment, engagement & leadership of elected leaders | Local revenue |

**Funding**
Member fees, grants, sponsorship, paid-for-services

**Collective Influence**
through joint advocacy/lobbying and engagement in policy development

**In-country local government climate networks**

**Mutual support**
through knowledge sharing & peer learning

Coordination & collaboration

**International local government networks**

Knowledge exchange

## Box 2. Description of multi-level government climate action model

Figure 1 describes an ideal and simplified model for effective multi-level government climate action. At the heart of the model are the three main levels of government: national, state/regional, and local. The model assumes a hierarchy of climate action responsibility and competencies, cascading down from the national level.

Cutting across these horizontal levels are three verticals representing the core processes that drive and underpin governmental climate action. At the centre is the policy development process. This is assumed to be linked to and underpinned by strong leadership at, and aligned across, each level of government. The policy process is defined as a collaborative, circular and ongoing process between the different levels of government. As indicated, it is assumed that local government engages in policy development processes at both national and state/regional level. The extent of local government engagement at the national level will vary depending on governmental structure in a country (e.g. federal versus unitary systems) and the size and capacity of local government entities (e.g. small provincial towns versus large global cities).

The quality of the policy development process is in turn determined by two parallel processes. On the left of the diagram there is a two-way flow of high quality and timely data between the different government levels. This provides the means for ensuring that decisions and policies are evidence-based. Good information flow also ensures that best practice is shared quickly, and effort is not duplicated. On the right, financial support, flowing primarily from national government, is assumed to be critical to resourcing effective climate action at the other government levels. This funding may flow directly to local levels and/or through state/regional structures. The model also recognises that access to financial institutions and markets may be another important source of financing for state/regional and local government. In some countries this may include bilateral grant funding and concessional financing.

With respect to the delivery of effective climate action at the local government level specifically, the model identifies five core pillars of necessary support. These are: the legal power to act; the commitment, engagement, and leadership of elected leaders; the skills, knowledge, and experience of government officials; the level of local revenue available for climate action; and the general support of the local community, including businesses.

Finally, the model describes the role of in-country and international local government networks in this system. The overarching aim of these networks is simply to make the system work better. In-country networks do this in two ways: firstly, by providing collective influence through joint high-level advocacy together with direct engagement in the policy processes at both national and state/regional levels; and secondly, by offering mutual support for members through knowledge sharing and peer-learning processes which strengthen the foundations for local government climate action. International networks feed more information into the system, providing local governments with additional perspectives, ideas, and lessons from other countries. Collaboration and coordination between in-country and international networks is considered an important feature, helping to optimise the functioning of the system, driven by mutual benefits and aims.

# Case Studies

## UK100

**"** UK100 was conceived at the time of the Paris climate change talks, as a "C40 for the UK". In the six years since our inception we have enabled local leaders to come together to speak with one voice about their ambition and commitment to act on climate change, engaging Government ministers and shaping national policy. Our members come together to learn from each other about what works for their communities as part of the drive to meet national Net Zero targets. But just as we advocate for and foster peer-to-peer learning between our members, we wanted to learn from and share our experiences with our global counterparts also striving to amplify the local voices for action.

That is why we commissioned this report and the findings speak volumes. In-country local leadership networks are filling an important gap: doing things that other institutions just don't do. I hope the findings of this report inspire others to establish such networks where they currently are missing so that local leaders everywhere can play their full role in achieving Net Zero and avoiding catastrophic climate change.
**Polly Billington, CEO, UK100**

Founded in 2015 following the Paris agreement, UK100 is the only network for highly ambitious UK locally-elected leaders committed to cleaner, more powerful communities. All 93 leaders in the network have committed to reaching Net Zero in their councils and communities by 2045. UK100's membership includes leaders from five parties across the political spectrum in the UK, and spans rural and urban authorities alike.

| UK100: At a glance | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Location | United Kingdom | Date established | 2015 |
| Members | Combined authorities, counties, cities, districts, boroughs and unitary authorities | Number of members | 93 |
| Network participants | Elected Council Leaders | Secretariat size | 15 |
| Government system | Constitutional Monarchy | Website | https://www.uk100.org |

## Background and context

In 2015 the Paris Agreement created international momentum for ambitious climate action, but in the UK, Government climate policy was inconsistent and insufficient to meet the scale of the transformation required. Some ambitious local authorities including London, Newcastle, Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool were trying to address the climate crisis but were encountering difficulties in this as there was little communication between local authorities about climate policies and little national guidance or support. Local leaders from different councils rarely met to discuss climate change and the issues surrounding it for local government, and the majority of them didn't feel confident in talking about climate issues with their constituents. Many local leaders were sceptical about assertions that there was strong support for climate action among their constituents and so were unwilling to take ambitious action on climate change.

UK100's Founder and Chief Executive Polly Billington utilised the momentum of the Paris Agreement to harness the appetite of local leaders to be part of something that was ambitious and successful.

The politics surrounding the London Mayoral Election also offered the chance to create a "moment" to mainstream climate issues and introduce the concept of 100% London (commiting to 100% clean energy). Research by IPPR underpinning this campaign recommended establishing a network of UK cities (a "C40 for the UK") based on the insight that London could not achieve Net Zero on its own. A commitment by more than 60 local leaders to shift to 100% clean energy was an opportunity to establish such a network. Polly knew that to widen this commitment across the country and to ensure that politicians kept to their promises she needed to create a cross-party network that would keep politicians accountable and bring politicians from different parties together to share experiences and policies. UK100 was created as a network that would create allies across the country committed to similar levels of ambition, encourage other councils to increase their ambitions and enable local leaders to work collectively.

UK100 has been working since 2016 to share best practice and policies from the most ambitious and active local leaders so that each authority doesn't need to reinvent the wheel. It brings together local leaders to collectively engage with national Government, advocating for greater devolved powers and finance to deliver Net Zero.

## Membership and operation

When UK100 launched in 2015, the Network was originally focused on Clean Air and Clean Energy and its original pledge was a commitment of 100% clean energy by 2050. The Network has expanded its work across all the major sectors which require decarbonising - including transport, energy, heat and homes and nature - and also focuses on how to finance the transition and what regulation and devolution of powers are required to enable local government to deliver Net Zero. With climate emergency declarations and the UK Government setting a Net Zero by 2050 target, many of UK100's members were doing far more than they originally signed up to and therefore a new pledge was launched in December 2020, designed to demonstrate the ambition and ability of democratically-elected local leaders to deliver Net Zero.

This Net Zero pledge is intended to create the conditions for stronger climate action at national level to help local authorities reach Net Zero faster. Net Zero Pledge members commit to the following:

- Set ambitious Net Zero targets for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of 2030 for council operations and 2045 for areawide emissions at the latest[6]
- Report emissions annually
- Limit the use of offsets in reaching their targets.

The pledge states that signatories "*will do everything within our power and influence to rapidly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.*" This recognises that local authorities do not necessarily have all the powers yet to reach their ambitious Net Zero targets. The pledge feeds into UK100's ongoing dialogue with national Government, and is one tool that advocates for Government policy changes that enable members to go further, faster.

The UK100 staff team is the secretariat of the network. The staff team has expanded considerably to 15 permanent members, who are responsible for running the operation of the organisation, managing the membership and communication between members, external communications, insight and research, political engagement and advocacy. UK100's Board is its governing body with Board members also being directors of the organisation. There are no other registered company members. The Board is supported by a sub-group of nominated Board members, which advises the main committee on management, finance and fundraising; and by UK100's CEO - Polly Billington - who, as a member of staff, is responsible for the day-to-day running of the organisation. The CEO reports to Board members through the Chair.

There is no membership fee for local authorities to join UK100. The costs of running UK100 are met through a combination of grants from funding bodies and financial support from the Business Supporter Network (see Box 4). Most funding is from grant giving foundations - 88%, corporate sponsors including our Business Supporters Network and APPG sponsors make up 8% of their funding.

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6 There is an exception on Net Zero target dates for counties and combined authorities due to their size, strategic scale, wide-ranging responsibilities and sometimes rural geography that means they have different powers and responsibilities. Combined authorities must commit to Net Zero council and areawide operations by 2045 and county councils to have Net Zero council operations by 2030 and Net Zero areawide emissions by 2050

## Key activities and services

Membership of UK100 supports local authorities to fulfil their commitments to tackling the climate emergency and delivering local Net Zero by:

- facilitating dialogue with national politicians and senior officials across Whitehall, amplifying the voices of local leaders via collective advocacy to national Government
- enabling knowledge sharing
- providing tailored insights, evidence and recommendations on the challenges and solutions to local Net Zero
- inviting members to inform and participate in research
- connecting members with world-leading business and industry to help them plan and implement out the solutions needed to reduce emissions in their local area
- demonstrating the collective ambition, commitment and ability of democratically-elected local leaders to deliver Net Zero.

The UK100 network meets twice a year to discuss its activities and advocacy. It also has issue-specific events, including meetings, webinars, roundtable discussions, summits and conferences, that members are encouraged to attend, which are aimed at different local authority roles (leaders, cabinet members, officers). These events are an opportunity for members to inform UK100's research and advocacy work. The Countryside Climate Network meets quarterly (see Box 3). Members are also able to connect peer-to-peer at events, including webinars, roundtable discussions and summits.

## Box 3. In Focus: Countryside Climate Network

UK100 established the Countryside Climate Network (CCN) in June 2020. The CCN is a subset of the network's membership which was set up to make sure voices from rural local authorities from across the political spectrum are represented in critical policy discussions and decisions about delivering UK Net Zero.

Launched with 21 members, the CCN has grown to 32 members who are working to achieve Net Zero and improve the resilience of their communities. Collectively they represent half of England's land area.

It is the first network of its kind globally - no other grouping of democratically-elected leaders in the world is focused on understanding and taking climate action from a solely rural perspective and as such it has valuable insight and lessons to share with local authorities tackling climate change outside the world's urban areas.

UK100 acts as the Secretariat to the CCN and is working to gain insight and build evidence to support members' journey to Net Zero and make sure that the rural context is fully understood by Government policy makers. The CCN is actively supporting rural local authorities in three ways:

1. **Information sharing and networking:** learning from each other, fostering innovation and accelerating action that works for rural communities
2. **Shared policy asks:** coordinating and amplifying their voices in the policy discussions
3. **Research and insights:** to guide action and give authorities the tools they need to progress.

From Cornwall to Essex, Lancaster to Hampshire, the CCN spans the country and politically the CCN is a truly cross-party, administratively diverse network. With a mixture of Districts, Counties and Unitary Authorities, some with additional powers via devolution, like Cornwall, but all united in aiming to use the powers available to them and their collective voice to influence the delivery of Net Zero.

UK100 also has a Business Supporter Network which connects its members with world-leading business and industry to help them understand particular solutions needed to reduce emissions in their local area, bringing the private and public sector together around their shared ambitions (see Box 4).

## Box 4. In Focus: UK100 Business Supporters Network

UK100's Business Supporters Network establishes partnerships to connect local leaders with businesses involved in Net Zero technologies and/or finance, to enable collaborative working to accelerate decarbonisation and smart energy solutions.

Business Supporters Network members often sponsor specific pieces of research or projects. UK100's current business supporters include Siemens, National Grid, Liberty Charge, the University of Birmingham and SSE Enterprise. Examples of engagement from founding Business Network Supporters Siemens and National Grid are provided below.

**Siemens**

Siemens is a valued and founding member of UK100's Business Supporters Network. As a focused technology company, with core digital, smart infrastructure and mobility business activities, the solutions it develops can facilitate the delivery of Net Zero at the local level.

By working collaboratively with the UK100 membership, action towards achieving the joint mission of decarbonisation and reducing pollution at scale can be accelerated and become more impactful. Through focused engagement, insight from different perspectives and thought leadership can be shared.

As one example of Siemen's engagement - in 2020, Siemens partnered with UK100 to work with the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to bring together financing from local authorities, private capital and government investment to create clean energy projects at significant commercial scale.

A survey of local authorities by UK100 and an extrapolation of local energy transition strategies developed by Siemens showed that there is a pipeline of over £100bn clean energy projects which could be rolled out with support from both public and private sector participants. This analysis called for the formation of a Net Zero Development Bank and in 2021 a UK Infrastructure Bank (UKIB), with a dual policy focus to tackle climate change and support regional and local economic growth was announced in the Government's Spring Budget.

**National Grid**

National Grid is a founding and valued member of UK100's Business Supporters Network. National Grid is supporting the decarbonisation of communities across the UK and the US, migrating to cleaner energy solutions across the board. Making the connections between local place-based solutions and the wider infrastructural considerations is something that UK100 can facilitate.

An example of this collaboration in action is the UK100-convened exclusive insight roundtable on the jobs and skills needed to design and implement regional energy plans across the UK, which National Grid sponsored and participated in. The discussion, held in June 2021, focused on better understanding the nature of the workforce that is needed to make the wholesale shift in the way our energy system operates.

Net Zero requires a switch to renewable generation and a balanced energy system which combines a mix of large-scale power generation with local decentralised energy systems. The dialogue that was fostered through this roundtable between local leaders played an important part in unpacking some of the fundamental challenges on the training, upskilling and jobs requirements to deliver Net Zero. Areas that need better understanding were identified and subsequently, UK100 is planning to develop a series of Policy Working Groups, including one on energy planning, to continue the important conversations that National Grid enabled.

## Achievements

UK100 hopes to achieve legislative change which increases the powers and access to finance of local government, both obliging and enabling all local authorities to transition to Net Zero, with significant emission cuts occurring in the next decade. UK100 works to achieve this by creating opportunities for local leaders to make their case to the UK Government, through its public communications strategy and political engagement - including working to increase support for a greater role for local government within Parliament by directly engaging with MPs, Ministers and Special Advisors and bringing local leaders, MPs and Ministers together.

Some of the organisation's key successes to date have been concerned with building this understanding between the local and national context. Three key examples are below.

UK100 produced a report[7] recommending that national Government should create local clean energy partnerships. Making the case for how this would help the development of local integrated clean energy projects helped build the case for the Local Energy Hubs that were then established across England - in Nottingham (Midlands), Tees Valley (Yorkshire, Humber and the North East), Liverpool (North West), Bristol (South West), and Peterborough (Greater South East).

UK100 ran a green finance workshop programme in five regions across the country in 2019, bringing together expertise from across the energy sector, policy, engineers, local leaders, developers and financiers, to hear and discuss barriers to unlocking place-based green investment. UK100 compiled the insights gained from these workshops into a report on 'Accelerating the rate of investment in Local Energy Projects'[8] with a set of actionable recommendations for the UK Government - including the proposal for a Net Zero Development Bank to provide development capital to kickstart long-term local energy projects, with initial public finance working to crowd-in private finance. This helped to lead to the establishment of the UKIB, and since its announcement, UK100 has been working with HM Treasury and the UKIB itself to ensure that the local advisory and finance functions which have been announced enable local authorities to overcome some of the current barriers they face in creating large-scale investable projects.

UK100's groundbreaking report 'Power Shift'[9] from May 2021, was the most comprehensive examination of the powers that local authorities have in the UK to address climate change. Its central recommendation was for the establishment of a National - Local Net Zero Delivery Framework to manage the relationships and processes that need to be navigated across levels of government in order to meet the Government's target. In October 2021 in the UK Government's greatly anticipated Net Zero Strategy[10], a Local Net Zero Forum was announced, directly referencing UK100's recommendation as a basis for this policy development.

## Barriers and challenges

Progress towards delivering Net Zero in the UK has not been rapid enough in the six years since UK100's inception. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic made it even more challenging for local authorities to deliver key services and as we slowly emerge from the crisis, there is a crucial need to ensure that climate action is prioritised and that local authorities are given the powers and financing they need to deliver.

## Looking ahead

The UK Government's newly-announced Local Net Zero Forum is welcomed, but there are a series of key elements that need to be included in order for it to address the challenges that UK100 members, and all local authorities across the UK face, and for it to be truly collaborative and fit for purpose. UK100 members stand ready to work with the Government to ensure it meets the tests of adequate financing and leadership.

> Cities like ours and networks like UK100 are moving ahead of their national governments. City leaders should welcome that role and the opportunity to secure a just transition to a more sustainable society; but governments must be ready to back the expertise, innovation and vision of their urban centres.
>
> **Cllr Susan Aitken, Leader, Glasgow City Council, Co-Chair UK100**

> Rural areas have different strengths and face different challenges to urban areas. The CCN helps by sharing ideas across different rural areas which are making progress on different issues. And it is absolutely vital in providing a clear voice to Government to highlight our unique challenges and opportunities on the pathway to Net Zero.
>
> **Cllr Richard Clewer, Leader, Wiltshire Council, Chair CCN**

7 https://www.uk100.org/sites/default/files/publications/UK100_Report_SEP04_Final.pdf
8 https://www.uk100.org/publications/accelerating-rate-investment-local-energy-projects
9 https://www.uk100.org/publications/power-shift
10 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1028157/net-zero-strategy.pdf

## RAMCC (Red Argentina de Municipios frente al Cambio Climático)

RAMCC - the Argentinian Network of Municipalities facing Climate Change – is a local government network of 227 towns and cities from across Argentina. Its members can be found in 19 of Argentina's 23 provinces and range from the country's largest municipalities to small country towns.

The membership covers a population of approximately 13 million or 30% of the total country. Founded in 2010, it was the first network of its kind in Latin America. As a network, RAMCC is committed to reducing emissions by 45% by 2030 and achieving climate neutrality by 2050.

| RAMCC: At a glance | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Location | Argentina | Date established | 2010 |
| Members | Cities and towns | Number of members | 227 |
| Network participants | Elected officials | Secretariat size | 28 |
| Government system | Federal | Website | https://www.ramcc.net |

## Background and context

The network was established largely through the efforts of its Executive Director, Ricardo Bertolino. A former environment undersecretary for the city of Rosario (pop. 1.7m), Bertolino identified the need for a local government climate network following conversations with various mayors across the country. These leaders understood that the climate was changing in their localities and were motivated to do something, but their cities and towns lacked the knowledge, skills and connections to take the action required. This situation was exacerbated by the lack of national and provincial policy frameworks and financing for climate action at the local level.

The establishment of RAMCC was also motivated by the belief that local government is essential to delivering successful climate action because municipal authorities understand the needs and opportunities of their territories best. From the beginning, RAMCC has therefore been very focused on practical municipal level action, rather than trying to influence national policy. Citizen participation and decentralisation of power and decision-making remain important priorities for the network.

Initially, the network developed through convening community groups and creating its own work methodology. Some inspiration was taken from similar local government groups in Europe, but it was not possible to translate these models entirely because of different national circumstances. Eventually, connections were made to leading international local government networks such as ICLEI, C40, and GCoM which provided access to best practice methodologies that the network has subsequently used. RAMCC is now the national coordinator for GCoM.

## Membership and operation

To join the network, municipalities must develop a Local Climate Action Plan (LCAP), which covers both mitigation and adaptation. These need to be updated periodically and municipalities need to report on progress to demonstrate political commitment and for transparency. Members are also required to collaborate in network projects, campaigns, meetings and exchange experiences and tools with others in the network. Compliance is monitored and municipalities that are not meeting their obligations are removed from the network.

RAMCC is governed by a 22-member council of mayors. Council members are elected at an annual assembly of members. The assembly also reviews the work of the network and agrees the programme of activities for the next 12 months. An executive secretariat, currently with a staff of 28, is responsible for programme delivery, training, communications, international relations and network administration.

Funding for the network comes mainly from project grants secured from international sources, such as contestable EU funds. Philanthropic organisations have also provided direct support, notably the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation of Germany. Municipalities pay a membership fee based on population size, but this is a relatively modest sum, which does not cover the operating costs of the secretariat. A corporate carbon-footprinting service run by the network, which supports and trains businesses in the preparation of their GHG inventories, also generates income, with half of its profits reinvested in local climate change projects.

To address some of the financial challenges facing municipalities, nine members set up the RAMCC Trust in 2018. Now with 24 members, this fund aims to mobilise local, national and international finance to execute joint projects. By collaborating, the members pool resources and leverage their networks to access levels of finance and deliver larger scale projects than any of them could achieve individually. The municipalities make annual contributions themselves and the trust is also able to invest some of its funds to generate additional income. To date, US$600,000 has been mobilised through the fund, with an estimated US$1.5 million expected to be mobilised for projects 2021.

## Key activities and services

RAMCC provides its members with a range of technical support, knowledge sharing and guidance, covering both mitigation and adaptation. Its work is structured around three core areas:

1. **Training and exchanges** (including virtual seminars, technical visits to cities and international exchanges)
2. **Practical implementation of climate action** (including elaboration of LCAPs and carbon footprinting, design and execution of joint projects, delivery of 'Green Jobs' and volunteering initiatives)
3. **Communication and dissemination of content and information** (through website, social media platforms, newsletters, emails and via partner alliances).

Municipality officials can access in-depth training courses and other information through a password protected virtual classroom via the RAMCC website. An interactive, online map, meanwhile, provides details and locations of green jobs across the network.

RAMCC seeks to align its local work with national and international frameworks. The coordinator role for GCoM and the development of LCAPs using standardised international methodologies exemplify this approach. This alignment is done to ensure that as climate action does become more connected across provincial, national and international levels, the work of RAMCC municipalities can easily integrate into broader structures, such as for national emissions reporting.

## Achievements

RAMCC can justifiably claim a range of achievements since its establishment. Most notable is the success it has had in growing its membership (and hence influence and impact), which has largely been organic and based on prospective municipalities observing the benefits of membership. Today, local government climate action has a national profile in Argentina because of RAMCC, while vital skills and information, such as carbon footprinting and GHG inventories, are now in place in many of the country's major economic centres. It has also introduced key tools and innovations to local government, such as LCAPs and the RAMCC Trust, and it has brought international best practice through its linkages with ICLEI, C40 and as the GCoM's national coordinator. The expertise that RAMCC has built has also spilled over into national policy circles as former secretariat staff have taken senior positions within key national ministries. Despite the network's primary focus on practical local action, RAMCC has nonetheless had a national impact.

## Barriers and challenges

According to secretariat staff, access to up-to-date, systematised information remains a challenge for the network. Without accurate and timely data, it is harder to make good decisions. Scarce national resources directed to local government for climate exasperates this problem.

Education and training, or rather the lack of it, is another barrier and challenge faced by RAMCC members. Municipalities are finding it hard to recruit staff with the climate skills and knowledge they need because universities are not providing technical training.

Finally, technology used in other countries to combat climate change is less accessible in Argentina. This is due to mainly to the lack of supporting ecosystems to properly operate some advanced technologies.

> **RAMCC permitió a nuestro municipio una integración nacional e internacional, más desde la cumbre de París 2015, entre otros, nos permitió participar proyecto de eficiencia energética, capacitando a través de la UNLP y Copenhague, a jóvenes de nuestra localidad y acceder a la realización de dicho proyecto en nuestro edificio municipal, además con energías renovables.. A través del Fideicomiso RAMCC por compra de luminarias logramos un municipio con alumbrado público con todas luces LED.. Estás son algunas de las muchas acciones que logramos a través de la RAMCC...El mayor beneficio la integración con municipios de nuestro pais, en la lucha frente al Cambio Climático, solo no habríamos alcanzado estos logros.**

RAMCC allowed our municipality a national and international integration, more since the 2015 Paris summit, among others, it allowed us to participate in an energy efficiency project, training through the UNLP and Copenhagen, young people from our locality and access to the realization of said project in our municipal building, also with renewable energies .. Through the RAMCC Trust for the purchase of lights we achieved a municipality with public lighting with all LED lights ... These are some of the many actions that we achieve through the RAMCC.. The greatest benefit is integration with municipalities of our country, in the fight against Climate Change, we alone would not have achieved these achievements.

> **La RAMCC ha influido a través e las gestiones locales de más de 250 municipios, que en cada provincia trabajamos en forma mancomunada y con metas comunes, más allá de las divisiones políticas, los resultados se dan en que cada vez son más los municipios que se suman, y se logra un impacto mayor en cada una de las acciones y con un método de mediciones comunes que hace visible los resultados numéricamente en cada zona , provincia y Nación.**

The RAMCC has influenced through the local administrations of more than 250 municipalities, that in each province we work jointly and with common goals, beyond political divisions, the results are given in that more and more municipalities are they add up, and a greater impact is achieved in each of the actions and with a common measurement method that makes the results visible numerically in each area, province and Nation.
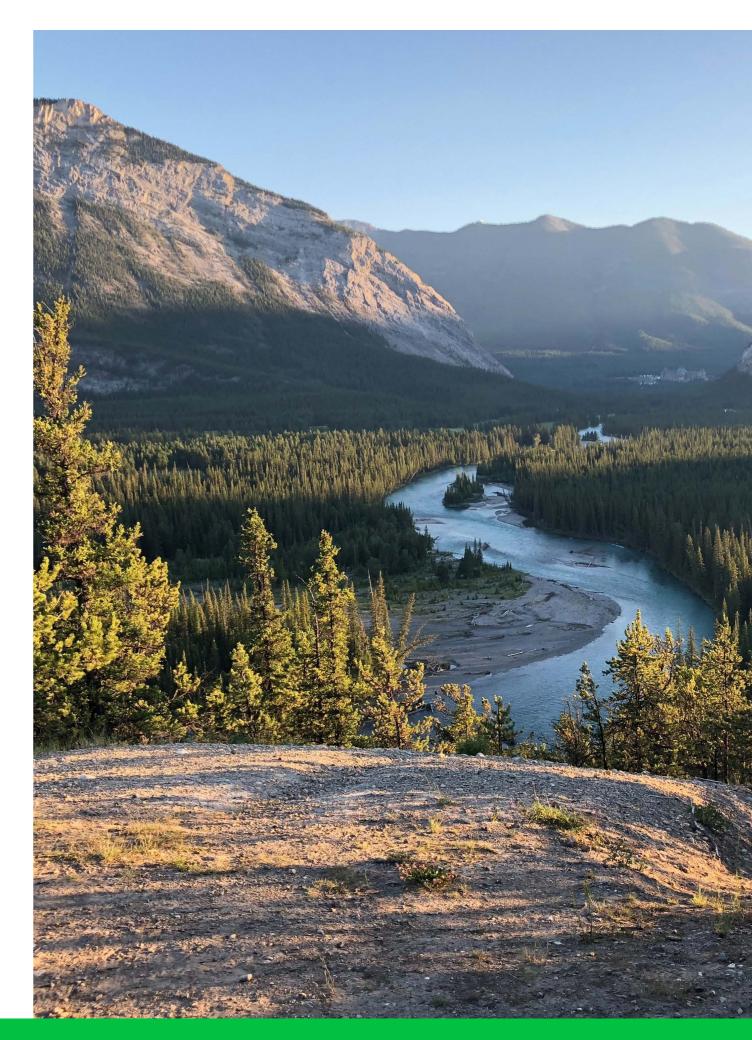
# Climate Caucus

Climate Caucus is a non-partisan Canadian network of, and for, elected local government officials. The stated aim of the network is to drive systems change in local communities to address climate change within 10 years. Members come from large cities to small towns across Canada and join the Caucus in an individual capacity. Climate and social justice is a key theme of the work and philosophy of the Caucus.

| Climate Caucus: At a glance | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Location | Canada | Date established | 2019 |
| Members | Elected officials | Number of members | +360 |
| Network participants | Mayors, councillors, regional directors | Secretariat size | 3 |
| Government system | Federal | Website | www.climatecaucus.ca |

## Background and context

Climate Caucus was established in 2019 following a meeting of elected local government officials at a conference of the Federation of Cities and Municipalities (FCM - Canada's primary local government association). Ric Longtenburg, the meeting organiser and one of the subsequent founders of Climate Caucus, had recently been elected to his local council in British Columbia on a climate platform.

Longtenburg had quickly realised he needed support from like-minded elected officials from other jurisdictions to exchange ideas and knowledge in order to deliver the climate action he had campaigned on. Moreover, the geographic challenges posed by Canada's immense size underlined the need for an effective online platform and community. The over attendance at the original FCM meeting demonstrated that this need and interest was widespread. Consequently, a formal summit in August 2019 officially established Climate Caucus.

The creation of the Caucus was not just a reflection of increasing numbers of climate-activist councillors across Canada. It can also be seen as a product of the constrained circumstances faced by many local authorities. While local governments enjoy a significant amount of autonomy under Canada's federal system, they are also dependent almost entirely on local revenue (primarily property taxes). They receive virtually no financial assistance from either provincial or national governments. In large municipalities this is not necessarily a problem, but for many small towns and rural communities scattered across Canada's vast territory, this means financial prioritisation on key services, with little remaining for climate action. Climate Caucus provides a means for members to help bridge this capacity gap by connecting elected officials with similar challenges and constraints.

## Membership and operation

Climate Caucus is a network for individual elected local government officials, rather than the local authorities they represent. (Members of the public can and do attend certain online events, however.) Other than being an elected local official, there are no additional criteria for joining.

Recognising the constraints faced by many, nothing is required of members in terms of commitment or time. The aim is simply to support people as best as possible. This approach means that the membership is quite diverse, ranging from the "climate curious" to those very committed to climate and social justice. Climate is, however, a political and partisan issue in Canada, so the membership also reflects this reality. In this regard, the Caucus offers an important community of support for members who come from councils where they may be the only climate advocate.

Governance of the network is provided by an eight-person board, which meets every two months. Board members are all elected local government officials, appointed through a formal nomination and election process conducted at the Caucus' AGM.

A two-person steering committee – also consisting of elected officials working on a voluntary basis – provides day-to-day management, working closely with a small secretariat of three (two full-time staff and one part-time).

Funding comes from a range of sources, including philanthropic foundations, provincial government funds and small private donations. Sponsorship has been accepted from businesses but such sources are carefully scrutinised to ensure alignment with the network's goals and values.

## Key activities and services

Climate Caucus' stated mission is "*One planet, ten years, no one left behind*". This means by 2030 the network aims to transform communities to function within planetary boundaries, to do this quickly to avoid catastrophic tipping points, and in a way that is just and equitable. Delivery of this mission is through three pillars of action: networking, knowledge sharing and lobbying/advocacy.

The focus of the Caucus' work is determined by the needs of the members, with the board and steering committee determining precisely what to focus on. Issues and sectors covered include buildings, nature-based solutions, waste and the circular economy. Social justice is a common theme that runs through all this work. Advocacy and lobbying at provincial and national level remains an important goal, but engagement to date has been limited mainly to open letters to Canadian leaders (including the Prime Minister) calling for a green-driven recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

Information and knowledge sharing is primarily through a fortnightly newsletter and regular recorded webinars. An electronic 'Councillors Handbook', described as a 'toolkit for elected leaders' provides practical tips, plans and strategies for implementing climate action at the local government level. A more intriguingly named 'Infiltration Manual', developed with the Youth Climate Lab, provides additional information and ideas for citizens on how to push for ambitious climate action at the municipal level.

With a small and busy secretariat team, partnerships are important in advancing the Caucus' work. For example, the Caucus has relationships with the Climate Action Network (CAN) Canada, the David Suzuki Foundation and the Climate Reality Project. These organisations provide the Caucus with access to broader networks,

information sources and ideas and insights. Regular contact is also maintained with the FCM to ensure the Caucus complements and builds on, rather than replicates, the Federation's own climate programme.
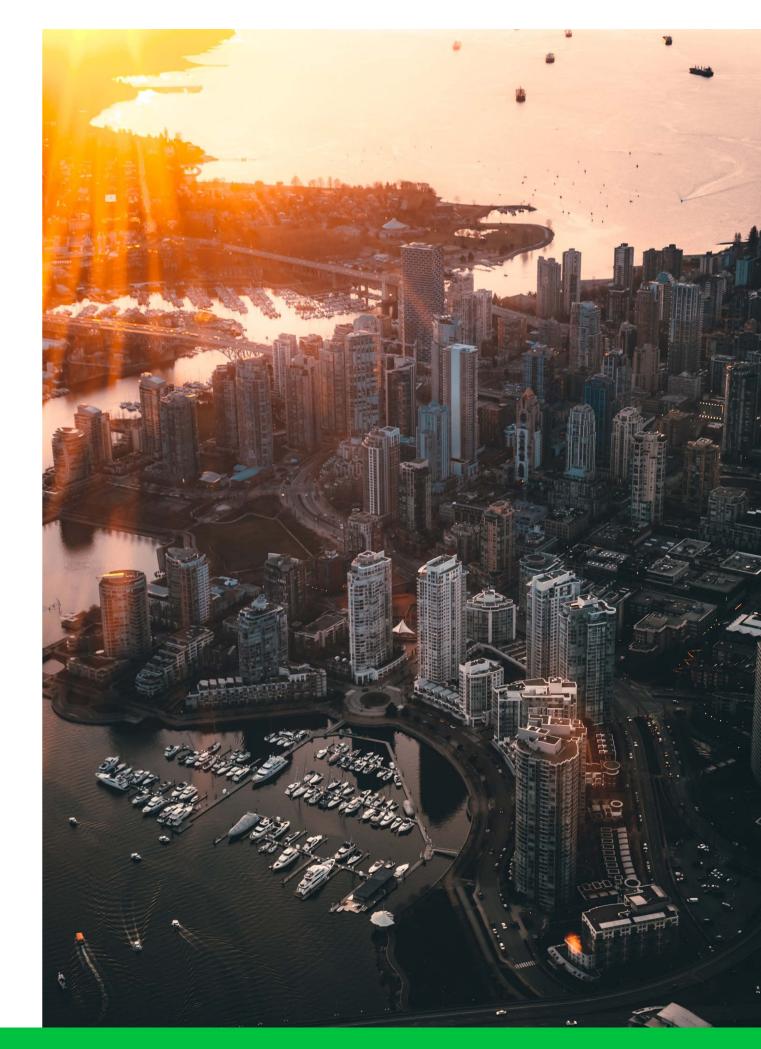
## Achievements

As a network founded just two years ago, Climate Caucus is still arguably in the start-up phase, making its impact hard to measure. In part, this is also because it is not easy connecting specific climate action in municipalities with the networking, knowledge sharing, and lobbying conducted by the Caucus. Despite this, the network has clearly identified and is successfully developing a previously untapped seam of climate activism. This is evidenced by its large and growing membership, and the attendance recorded through webinars and meetings. Its model of gentle support to busy and resource-constrained officials, appears to be filling a capacity gap, especially for small and rural local authorities. Building on this work in coming years will require overcoming a number of key challenges, however.

## Barriers and challenges

The key challenges facing the Climate Caucus are arguably resourcing and network management, with the former invariably impacting the latter.

Limited funding means that the secretariat, for example, has remained small and appears undersized for the network it serves. Reliance on a volunteer steering committee may also not be sustainable given the amount of time and effort required from its members. Delivery of the practical, on-the-ground action needed to achieve the Caucus' mission and vision by 2030 is also questionable if the local authorities that members belong to it cannot overcome the structural barriers that limit access to finance. No amount of networking or knowledge sharing can replace the basic need for finance to deliver concrete climate action. This underlines why the Caucus' advocacy and lobbying work at provincial and national level is likely to be so important.

The challenge of network management is largely a function of the broad and inclusive membership of the Caucus. Such a membership is an important and positive characteristic of the network but it can also result in competing interests and priorities that can be difficult to juggle. If left unresolved this could undermine member value and engagement. Additional funding to support a larger secretariat and to put in place more formal systems for network management would likely address this challenge, however.

# Climate Mayors

Climate Mayors is a peer-to-peer network of US mayors from 48 states, representing 74 million Americans – over a fifth of the total population. Its 470 members come from small towns and some of the US' largest cities, including Los Angeles and New York. It is a non-partisan initiative, with the objective of demonstrating local government climate leadership. It does this through meaningful action in local communities and by working to ensure federal climate policy empowers and supports municipal governments.

| Climate Mayors: At a glance | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Location | United States | Date established | 2014 |
| Members | Towns & cities | Number of members | 470 |
| Network participants | Mayors | Secretariat size | 1 |
| Government system | Federal | Website | www.climatemayors.org |

## Background and context

Climate Mayors was established in 2014 by the mayors of Los Angeles, Houston and Philadelphia with the support of the Clinton Global Initiative. Its founding purpose was to organise US cities in support of ambitious climate action ahead of COP21 in Paris in 2015, adding their voices to others from the non-state actor community.



Eric Garcetti, Mayor of Los Angeles
Credit: Nikki Ritcher Photography

In more recent years, its purpose and membership has expanded. This was initially driven by President Trump's decision to withdraw the US from the Paris Agreement, which saw membership grow rapidly from 80 members to over 200 in just a few months. Along with partners in the 'We Are Still In' campaign, Climate Mayors became a leadership platform that demonstrated US non-state actor commitment to the Paris treaty.

Today, the network is motivated by the need to ensure that federal policy supports municipal climate action, including by replacing outdated rules and regulations. And, as practical, on-the-ground action becomes ever more necessary, it is also a place for peer-to-peer learning. Mayors also face new challenges at the state level where attempts are being made to restrict climate action by cities.

These restrictions are being imposed by state legislatures and governors opposed to ambitious climate action.

Climate Mayors thus provides a unique forum for US cities of all sizes to organise themselves and leverage their combined political influence to oppose regressive climate action, champion ambition and share knowledge and experience.

## Membership and operation

Membership is open to any US mayor and by extension the city or town they represent. There are no binding commitments of membership, other than confirming support for the Paris Agreement. By joining, however, mayors indicate that they are taking actions to achieve an emissions target by developing a GHG inventory, setting near- and long-term targets and developing a Climate Action Plan aligned with the city's targets. There is no monitoring of these actions by the network, although many members will do this through other climate initiatives that they belong to such as C40 or GCoM. A 'Cities Climate Action Compendium', available on the Climate Mayors website, does provide a list of high level actions or commitments made by many of the cities.

Governance and leadership are provided primarily through an informal executive group consisting of the Chair and two co-Chairs, all of whom are elected mayors, and an Executive Director (notably, the only paid employee). A three-person advisory board, consisting of experienced local government sustainability directors, provides support to this group, while a 25-member steering committee gives overall direction to the network.

The current steering committee is notable for members with significant national profile and political influence, including Eric Garcetti and Bill de Blasio, the mayors of Los Angeles and New York.

The network is currently supported entirely by grant funding from Bloomberg Philanthropy. There are no membership fees.

## Key activities and services

As a peer-to-peer based network for mayors, the main regular activity of the network is quarterly calls. Previously, these involved individual mayors presenting their city's climate activities, challenges and successes followed by discussion. As the membership has grown, the format has been revised to focus on more in-depth federal policy discussions with federal officials.

The network has also penned open letters to federal legislators and leaders. Most recently these have focused on ensuring a green recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. The network employs a communications agency to ensure such outputs are on message and reaching their target audience. At a local level, communications staff in mayoral offices ensure network messaging is transmitted to and tailored for local audiences. Professional, high quality external communication is an essential function and objective of the network and its members.

Beyond knowledge sharing and policy advocacy, the principal project initiated by the network is the 'Climate Mayors Electric Vehicle Purchasing Collaborative' established in 2018.[11] The initiative leverages the collective buying power of the participating cities to accelerate the conversion of municipal vehicle fleets to EVs. It has proven to be a popular and effective project and a model that the network would like to replicate in other areas. The idea for the project emerged out of peer-to-peer discussions.

Climate Mayors does not have any formal partnerships with other organisations, but it does work closely with several to help deliver its objectives. Key partners in this regard are the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN), C40, America is All In and Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). Regular touch points are also maintained with ICLEI, GCoM, CDP, WRI and Rocky Mountains Institute (RMI). Similarly, contact is kept with the US Conference of Mayors (the main national local

11 For details see https://driveevfleets.org/

government association), which has a climate programme, but is not focused on leadership like Climate Mayors.

## Achievements

Climate Mayors positions itself very much as a high-level political network, leaving technical climate issues to other networks like C40 and ICLEI or think tanks like the WRI and RMI. Judged on this basis, the network's key achievement has arguably been keeping cities in the spotlight as climate leaders in the US over recent years. The explosion in membership in 2016/17 showed the need and demand for a dedicated local government leaders forum focused on promoting ambitious climate action. Without Climate Mayors this combined political power would likely have been diluted across less prominent or focused platforms.

As a network, Climate Mayors also claim an early, and not-insubstantial part, in putting and keeping a green-based COVID-19 recovery on the federal agenda. Indeed, the leading role cities had in combating the pandemic and the network's peer-to-peer approach to knowledge sharing, played an important role in helping many mayors connect the dots between health, the economy, equity and climate.

## Barriers and challenges

One of the biggest challenges facing the network is how to manage and organise its membership in a way that delivers concrete impact. The diversity of city/town sizes, varying priorities, and different levels of climate expertise and resources can make it challenging to find a common focus. This means collaboration may not be as fast or as nimble as it could be. Limited secretariat bandwidth complicates matters further. Measuring impact, particularly on policy, is another challenge as KPIs for government engagement are difficult to quantify. Outputs, such as letters, summits or meetings can be measured, but it is not as easy to draw a straight line between these activities and policy changes because of the influence of other factors and actors.

## Looking ahead

Climate Mayors is currently undertaking a major strategic review to address key organisational challenges, identify a clear programme of work, and ensure it remains fit-for-purpose as a network.



Public charging station for plug-in cars near Fisherman's Wharf, San Francisco
Credit: Mario Roberto Durán Ortiz

# ICLEI Japan

ICLEI Japan is one of only five dedicated national offices in the ICLEI global network that otherwise spans 125 countries. Established in 1993, it has a broad sustainability mandate. Its 21 members include many of the largest and most influential cities in the country, including Tokyo, Yokohama and Nagoya. While not strictly speaking a climate network, climate issues now account for up to 80% of its activities. ICLEI Japan operates within a highly developed multi-level government system where it is known for its local government climate expertise and as a champion for high ambition.

| ICLEI Japan: At a glance | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Location | Japan | Date established | 1993 |
| Members | Cities and towns | Number of members | 21 |
| Network participants | Elected mayors/ councillors and city/ town officials | Secretariat size | 3 full-time + contractors |
| Government system | Unitary | Website | http://japan.iclei.org/ |

## Background and context

Like the rest of the ICLEI network, ICLEI Japan was established to support local governments implement sustainable development ideas and to give them a collective voice, nationally and internationally. As climate has moved up sustainability agenda

over the last three decades, ICLEI Japan's engagement on the issue has also increased. This engagement has helped to shape, but has also been shaped by, Japan's approach to multi-level climate governance.

In many ways, Japan is a model for integrating local government into national climate efforts. Since 1998, for example, all prefectures (47 in total), as well as large cities, have been required by law to have climate mitigation plans. Connections between local authorities and the Ministry of Environment are also strong and have a long history. These are built on regular staff secondments between the different government levels and annual general surveys by central government of local government needs and priorities. They also reflect local government's expertise and early role leading environmental protection efforts in Japan. Strengthening connections further, the main local government associations also act as key connectors and coordination bodies within the system.

The benefit to local governments of this close integration was highlighted most recently by the appointment of local leaders (from governors to small town mayors) to the influential 'Net Zero' National Council. This body was established in 2020 and will play a central role in helping Japan meet its new 2050 Net Zero target.

Despite having such a well-developed multi-level governance system, the impact of local government climate action has arguably been mixed. Much of this can be traced to the ambition set at the national level for the past two decades. It also reflects the lack of control local governments have over key emission sources within their jurisdictions (e.g. transport and energy) which their mitigation plans nonetheless cover. Change is afoot, however.

The last two to three years has seen a significant shift in attitudes and ambition, driven by a combination of factors. The increase in severity of natural disasters has meant that climate change is now seen as a local rather than global problem. Leading local governments, particularly ICLEI Japan members, have also absorbed and understood the messages of the IPCC's 1.5°C report. And the national government has recognised the need to empower local government further, driven in part by ministerial exposure to international best practice. Last year, these shifts culminated in some 400 local governments, representing 87% of the population, adopting 2050 Net Zero targets. Through all this work, ICLEI Japan has been an important participant and voice of ambition.

## Membership and operation

Membership of ICLEI Japan mirrors that of the rest of the ICLEI network, with members required to commit to ICLEI's global principles and vision and pay an annual membership fee based on population and national per capita income. Members are served by a small secretariat of three full-time staff, supported as needed by contractors. The team is based in Tokyo and has access to the full resources of the broader ICLEI network (i.e. 400 staff, 2500 members, 125 country coverage).

Governance is provided by an eight-person board. Its members include the mayors of Kyoto and Yokohama and the Secretary General of the ICLEI World Secretariat. Its chair is a former Vice Minister for Global Environmental Affairs from the Ministry of Environment.

## Key activities and services

ICLEI Japan's key climate activities and services revolve around knowledge sharing, peer learning, policy advice and technical support. The network's primary focus is strengthening and maintaining capacity for local climate action (as opposed to influencing national-level action). It engages with new mayors, for example, to help ensure continuity of climate action across election cycles. It provides these leaders with public profile opportunities that help build personal commitment to and engagement in climate action. ICLEI Japan also helps facilitate engagement with the business sector for its members. Through formal agreements, ICLEI Japan provides a transparent platform for connecting local governments to companies providing climate-related goods and services. Demand for this service was driven from both sides: companies were seeking an open way to discuss solutions to expand renewable energy at the local level; and local authorities were eager to understand what leading companies were thinking and doing regarding climate change.

As the only international local government network working on climate with a physical presence in Japan (neither UCLG nor C40, for example, have offices in the country), ICLEI Japan is the 'go-to' network for local government climate expertise. In this role, it works closely with the main local government associations, who tend to be the main interlocutors with government, to raise their awareness and ambition and so help shape national policy. ICLEI Japan is also the local government lead for the JCI, the key national umbrella campaign for non-state actors that also includes businesses, NGOs, and other civil society actors.

## Achievements

ICLEI Japan's key climate achievements are closely related. First, it has successfully raised the climate ambition and capacity of its members to make them the vanguard of local government action in Japan. Evidence of this is the annual SDG ranking of cities[12] in which ICLEI members currently occupy six of the top 10 places. In turn, ICLEI Japan has leveraged this leadership and influence to advance its JCI work and its engagement with local government associations and other partners. Together with other non-state actors, these efforts helped to 'move the dial' on climate action in Japan in recent years, leading in no small way to the government's decision to adopt its 2050 Net Zero target.

## Barriers and challenges

After nearly 30 years of operating, ICLEI Japan as a network and organisation is well-established and respected. The key challenges it sees ahead relate mainly to the capacity of its members (and indeed local government generally) to deliver effective climate action. This is because many local governments feel they are taking on more responsibilities of all kinds without corresponding support from central government. With essential and core services prioritised, climate action may be at risk. Extra funding could be raised through local government green bonds but this type of financing has a mixed record in Japan and has not yet been widely adopted for climate purposes. The lack of resource means that local governments do not always have the skills and capacity they need to move ahead with climate action. Local renewable energy development is a case in point. Such projects require investment and procurement knowledge at the local level, which many towns and cities may lack.

## Looking ahead

The key opportunity that ICLEI Japan sees ahead is a proposal from the newly-formed Net Zero National Council to establish 100 'decarbonised areas' across Japan by 2030. These areas are not restricted by territorial boundaries so open the door for collaboration across local government authorities and with other stakeholders. The areas are intended to create a domino effect across Japan by demonstrating, at scale, how to move different parts of the economy to Net Zero. The expectation is that the first of these areas will be operating within the next five years.

12 Research is conducted by the Nikkei newspaper, one of Japan's leading publications
https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXZQOFB184KI0Y1A110C2000000/
https://www.nikkei.co.jp/nikkeiinfo/en/corporate/

❝

**To realise a decarbonized society, the role of cities as large energy consumers is important. Kyoto City has been leading Japan's efforts to tackle climate change as the birthplace of the Kyoto Protocol and through the adoption of the IPCC Kyoto Guideline, that supports the implementation of the Paris Agreement.**

**In collaboration with ICLEI Japan, we aim to decarbonize the world by deepening our links with cities around the world and enhancing each other's efforts.**

**Through its global activities, ICLEI Japan brings about a positive knock-on effect on the evolution of climate change measures in Japan as a whole. It raises the level of climate change measures not only in our city, but also of other member local governments, to the global standard.**

**Mayor Daisaku Kadokawa, Kyoto City**

# Cities Power Partnership



**CITIES POWER PARTNERSHIP**

**Cities Power Partnership (CPP) is a network of local government councils from across Australia. The purpose of the network is to give local governments the tools, connections, and momentum to take meaningful climate action. Created in 2018, with a focus on renewable energy, it now has over 140 members. These councils account for over half of Australia's population and represent more than 500 towns and cities. It is the largest local government climate network in the country and the only one that operates nationally.**

| CPP: At a glance | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Location | Australia | Date established | 2018 |
| Members | Cities and towns | Number of members | 140 councils, 500+ towns and cities |
| Network participants | Mayors, councillors, officers | Secretariat size | 5 |
| Government system | Federal | Website | https:// citiespowerpartnership. org.au/ |

## Background and context

CPP was established in 2018 as an initiative of the Climate Council, Australia's leading climate change communications non-profit organisation. Aware of the importance of local government in tackling climate change – particularly in Australia given the federal government's limited climate efforts – the Council

understood the need to raise ambition of, and provide support for, local councils. Consultation with council authorities confirmed this need and the appetite for the initiative. A grant was subsequently secured from ARENA (the federally-funded Australian Renewable Energy Agency) to underwrite the initiative for three years.

## Membership and operation

The CPP is non-partisan and membership is open to any local council, including cities, towns, and rural shires. The barriers to entry are deliberately kept low to encourage membership and ensure councils can join no matter where they are on the climate action spectrum.

To become a CPP member, councils must choose five actions from a list of pledges (determined by the Climate Council's panel of experts) that they commit to achieve. These pledges cover actions relating to renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable transport, and collaborative actions. Examples include installing solar panels on council buildings, rolling out energy efficient public lighting, and lobbying state and local government on climate, energy, and transport policy. Councils are required to report annually on progress towards their goals and when a pledge is achieved to select a new one. There is no set time frame for achieving pledges. The network is supported by a small, five-person secretariat employed by the Climate Council. The secretariat's work is focused on connecting, convening and communication activities of the network, reflecting the Climate Council's core competency. Technical and policy support for councils is provided through peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing, as well as through expert partners from the Climate Council's wider network across Australia.

Governance of the CPP reflects its hybrid organisational structure. As both a network of local government authorities and a programme of the Climate Council, its work is shaped and managed jointly. An advisory panel compromising local government leaders and experts on climate and energy guides the work of the network, but there is no formal voting structure for determining network activities. Instead, the feedback received through the annual reporting survey and discussions with local government stakeholders very much shapes the content and direction of the work programme.

The Climate Council provides further strategic input and oversight through its expert Councillors who are some of Australia's leading authorities on climate science, policy, clean energy, and green business.

## Key activities and services

The primary activities of the CPP are centred around knowledge sharing and the public communication of local government climate actions and views. These activities are the basis for the CPP's theory of change. The CPP believes greater climate action can be achieved in Australia if more local councils communicate what they are doing so that such actions become normalised with peers and in their communities (given that climate change remains a divisive issue in Australian politics, this is no small thing). Knowledge sharing then accelerates wider adoption and greater ambition by lowering the transaction costs (in terms of time and effort) for other councils that are yet to implement climate plans or for those seeking to improve on existing efforts.

The main knowledge sharing outputs include webinars, monthly newsletters, networking events, expert training, and a biennial national conference. An online, members-only 'Knowledge Hub' provides a forum for free and frank discussions between councils and an easily accessible site for documents and other relevant information.

Communication outputs are focused mainly on celebrating the successes of member councils in taking climate action. Representative council leaders act as spokespeople for the CPP, commenting on state and federal policy as it affects local government. As a non-partisan network, these public statements are non-political.

Being a CPP member also provides access to a free, basic version of a commercial energy management software tool used by many local councils in Australia. This version was developed especially for CPP as part of the ARENA funding grant to ensure that all councils could start to measure and monitor their energy use and emissions. To date, membership uptake is around 40%.

In delivering its programme of work and supporting councils, the CPP works with a variety of partners. As noted, the Climate Council's broader network provides access to a range of experts. The CPP also works closely with state and national local government associations. In recent years, these bodies have significantly expanded their climate work and it is through engagement with them that the CPP seeks to influence state and federal climate and energy policy.

## Achievements

For the CPP secretariat, the main achievement of the network to date has been its success in raising the profile of local government climate action and giving local leaders a voice in the media. Prior to its establishment, councils had been hesitant to speak publicly about climate, both to the media and their own communities. This has now changed and local governments are now much more prominent in public discussions.

Membership growth is another notable achievement for the CPP team. This has occurred without a deliberate recruitment strategy, highlighting both the latent demand that existed for a network like CPP and the value it has provided to councils. On a more practical level, the CPP has helped to initiate a number of on-the-ground actions, such as the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) government's bulk purchase of electric cars for its public fleet. And an early CPP initiative helped to inspire a regional buddy network of local councils in rural New South Wales (NSW).

## Barriers and challenges

Funding is the key challenge facing the CPP. With a focus on keeping entry barriers low, there are no membership fees for the councils (although they do have to cover their own engagement costs). This means the running costs of the network (principally secretariat costs) are covered by grant funding. The Climate Council has committed to supporting the CPP when the current ARENA grant expires but as a non-profit itself, new funding sources will ultimately be needed to maintain the CPP's work in the long run.

Funding aside, the CPP has two other key challenges. The first is how to engage more conservative councils and communities. To drive change at scale, the CPP recognises it needs to work with a more diverse network and raise ambition across the board, not simply 'preach to the choir'. The second challenge is improving collaboration with other local government networks. Although the CPP is the leading local government climate network and the only national one in Australia, it is seeking to work with others (e.g., ICLEI, GCoM) so that the 'climate journey' for councils is as simple and streamlined as possible.

## Looking ahead

Growing the network remains a key goal for the CPP. The aspiration is to have half of all councils in Australia signed up. There is also a desire to create more tangible impacts. The recent success of 46 councils in the state of Victoria collaborating on a renewable power purchase agreement (PPA) is seen as an initiative to replicate elsewhere. A focus on specific geographies is also likely to be a feature of future work. Supporting councils in the Hunter Valley region in NSW, an important coal mining area, is seen as a priority as renewable power displaces coal from Australia's grid. Similar expansion of work in Queensland, another important mining state, is also underway.

**"** **Participating in the Cities Power Partnership, combined with being on-track to reach our 2020 target has raised councillor and staff awareness of important emissions reduction projects. Ongoing support through the program is incredibly vital to maintaining Council's momentum and meaningful action on climate.**
Cairns Regional Council, Queensland

**"** **The Cities Power Partnership provides Onkaparinga, and all other member councils, with an opportunity to share knowledge, better understand the impacts of climate change, and develop effective strategies in response. The program also provides a visible and credible platform to demonstrate the work we're doing to alleviate the risks of climate change in our region.**
City of Onkaparinga, South Australia

# Climate Alliance

Climate Alliance is the original local government climate network. Established in 1990 by a small group of municipalities from Germany, Austria and Switzerland, it predates the UN climate treaty system and many national climate bodies. Today it has over 1800 members spread across 27 European countries. Members range from small rural towns, to national capitals. Since its foundation, Climate Alliance has been defined in part by its work with indigenous communities in the Amazon, reflecting its guiding philosophy that local action must align with global needs. It was the first local government network to require its members to set firm emission reduction targets.

| Climate Alliance: At a glance | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Location | Europe | Date established | 1990 |
| Members | Cities and towns | Number of members | 1800 |
| Network participants | Mayors, councillors, officers | Secretariat size | ~60 |
| Government system | Federal | Website | www.climatealliance.org |

*Note: As a pan-Europe network, Climate Alliance does not obviously fit the definition of an in-country network. However, as it operates a number of national offices, and because the EU effectively provides a common policy environment for Alliance members, it is treated here as an in-country network.*

## Background and context

Climate Alliance owes its establishment to a small number of far-sighted local politicians in Germany, Austria and Switzerland as well as some partner NGOs. Some of these leaders were concerned by the early scientific evidence of climate change, while others were alarmed by the related threat of tropical deforestation, particularly in the Amazon. Their meeting of minds and overlapping interests established the *"think global, act local"* philosophy and the work programme with indigenous groups, both of which remain at the core of Climate Alliance's identity today.

The German-speaking origins of the Alliance and its subsequent early expansion into Austria and Switzerland can be traced in part to the federal governance systems in these countries. Unlike more centralised European states, such as France and the UK, local authorities in Germany, Austria and Switzerland have long had considerable autonomy over their local economies. This has given them the ability to implement climate action largely independent of their national governments. From the beginning, this power has enabled Climate Alliance to pursue and focus on very practical action and explains why its membership is concentrated in Europe's federalised states.

## Membership and operation

Membership of the Alliance is open to any European local authority. Admission first requires the council of a town or city to formally pass a resolution to join the Alliance and adhere to its objectives (including achieving emission reduction targets). A request for membership is then sent to the Alliance's secretariat or national coordination office before a vote is taken by the executive board. Indigenous groups can also become Alliance members, while states and provinces from federal states, as well as NGOs, can join as associated members.

Reflecting its large membership, Climate Alliance is served by a sixty-person plus secretariat. Most staff are located in the Alliance's head office in Frankfurt, with responsibility for coordinating network activities, carrying out projects, communications and governance. A ten-person team runs the network's EU policy work from Brussels. National coordination offices are operated independently by affiliated partner NGOs, coordinating network projects and other activities in their respective countries.

Climate Alliance is supported by membership fees based on population size and capped at €15,000. Most funding however comes from contestable EU and national government funds, which support the majority of the Alliance's activities. Philanthropic grants and corporate sponsorship are a growing source of income, albeit from a low base.

Governance is provided by an Executive Board that provides overall direction for the Alliance, working closely with the secretariat. The Board's thirteen members come from municipalities across Europe. They are elected by the membership for a two-year term at the Alliance's annual General Assembly. The Board also includes a representative of COICA,[13] the Alliance's indigenous partner organisation.

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13 Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazonica

## Key activities and services

Climate Alliance operates an extensive programme of work. Its practical, on-the-ground activities are delivered through various projects, often in partnership consortiums. Areas covered have included deep building retrofits, nature-based solutions in urban ecosystems, sustainable energy financing, e-mobility, public procurement and climate justice. The tools and methods developed from such projects are listed on the Alliance's website. These include a range of publicly accessible apps, such as for optimising the size of solar PV systems, or calculating the economic feasibility of renewable energy investment.

The Alliance also runs dedicated working groups on topics such as policy, adaptation and financing (with buildings soon to be added). These provide members with structured discussion, knowledge sharing and engagement opportunities on these issues at EU, national and local level. Various awareness raising campaigns meanwhile help members communicate climate action to local communities. Examples include initiatives to promote city cycling and low impact lifestyles.

Engagement with indigenous partners is obviously another major aspect of the Alliance's work. Cooperation with COICA on a political level is particularly important to help promote their interests and voices internationally. The Alliance also manages funds to support various projects in the Amazon basin, organises delegation tours and supervises partnerships between cities.

Another key role the Alliance plays is as the coordinating body for the European Covenant of Mayors, the European Commission's initiative for engaging with local governments on climate and a core part of the GCoM. In this role, the Alliance has helped to shape EU climate and energy policy as it applies to local authorities for almost a decade. It also provides technical support and practical guidance to European local authorities that are covenant members. Building off this role, the Alliance has also been part of a consortium managing regional Covenant of Mayor programmes in Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa and Japan.

## Achievements

The Alliance's main achievements fall into two broad categories. The first relates to its successes as an effective network serving and meeting the needs of its members. Evidence of this is the growth of the Alliance across Europe over three decades and the fact that cities have often retained membership even when under tight budgetary pressures.

Successfully developing the infrastructure to support such a large membership base is seen as an important operational achievement. The Alliance is also proud of the broad range of projects it has run over the years for its members. The strength and success of much of this work stems from the systematic approach the Alliance helped to pioneer. This approach has three parts to it:

**1.** democratic political decision making (e.g. a council decision)
**2.** setting of concrete targets
**3.** monitoring and reporting mechanisms to ensure accountability.

The Alliance supports members in this process by providing material and developing campaigns for them to adopt. One example of the latter is the Alliance's highly successful City Cycling campaign[14] that has helped to drive changes in city transport policies.

The second category covers those successes where the Alliance has played a role in creating external change in concert with other actors (e.g. changes in policy at the national, EU and international level). While success in these areas has many parents, the Alliance has nonetheless been an important voice for local governments, engaging governments and officials on issues ranging from the UN's climate negotiations, the formulation of the SDGs, and the development of the European Covenant of Members (and subsequently GCoM). In all these areas, the profile and voice of local government has been strengthened. The Alliance believes that this political recognition has translated very clearly into funding opportunities. In recent years, the number of city-focused programmes and funding streams at EU and national level has increased, for example. In Germany, the National Climate Initiative has dedicated funding for local governments and a programme to support climate protection managers for cities.[15]

14 https://www.city-cycling.org/home
15 https://www.klimaschutz.de/en

## Barriers and challenges

The perennial challenge the Alliance sees for itself is maintaining its relevance and value to members. This is complicated by the fact that there are more city-focused climate initiatives than there were 10 years ago. Managing relationships with partners and other networks to maximise value to local governments and minimise duplication of efforts is therefore a key objective.

## Looking ahead

In an ideal world, if all climate objectives were closely to being achieved, Climate Alliance's goal over the coming decade would be to put itself out of business. In reality, it sees its main objective as continuing to serve its members, maintaining its role as an important actor influencing policy and climate action across Europe. It also wants to see more cooperation among networks and also improve climate action cooperation within cities and towns themselves. Guiding all this work will be Climate Alliance's principles for climate action. The Alliance believes that to be effective and deliver a just transition, climate action must be fair, nature-based, local, resource saving and diverse. Normalising and embedding these principles among the membership and beyond is seen as a key task and priority for the Alliance.

> Since its founding in 1990, Climate Alliance has supported local authorities in undertaking concrete climate action while providing them with the right opportunities for exchange. This opens up countless novel courses of action to protect our climate and adapt to unavoidable changes - an absolute must for future-oriented urban development.
>
> **Holger Matthäus, Senator for Buildings and Environment, City of Rostock (Germany)**

> Climate Alliance and its members are on the right track to achieving a post fossil economy and society in which climate change mitigation and adaptation form part of local sustainable development.
>
> **Karl-Ludwig Schibel, Climate Alliance founding member and Climate Alliance Italy National Coordinator**

> Climate Alliance actively supports us in many projects, playing a key role in the development of our climate protection and energy efficiency concept as well as our concept for adapting to climate change – a reliable and competent partner.
>
> **Hans-Joachim Kosubek, Former Mayor (2013 - 2021), City of Worms (Germany)**

# Analysis

**The case studies presented in this report can only provide a snapshot of local government climate action and ambition around the world. Nonetheless, a number of themes do emerge that provide insights into the role and benefits that in-country networks can and do play in combating climate change.**

## Multi-level climate governance is flawed in case study countries and in-country networks are filling the gaps.

Compared to the ideal multi-level climate governance model presented in Figure 1, few (if any) of the case study countries have systems in place to properly connect with and support local government climate action. Indeed, all of the networks profiled in this report can be seen as both a symptom of, and a reaction to imperfect multi-level governance at the national level.

The lack of sufficient financial support from national and/or state governments is the most commonly cited problem and point of failure in climate governance systems. The experience of Climate Caucus members provides the starkest example of the problems faced, but access to climate finance was raised by all networks in interviews. RAMCC's establishment of its own trust fund is a clear and innovative response to the challenge, while Climate Alliance's finance working group provides another illustration of how in-country networks are supporting their members to unlock and access additional funds.

UK100's work calling for a Net Zero Development Bank led to the establishment of the UKIB and the role it will play in facilitating the financing of local authority energy projects was affirmed in the UK Government's Net Zero strategy. This advocacy could be crucial for UK local authorities to see their ambitious plans for action come to fruition.

Filling gaps in knowledge, information and data flows is another clear function of in-country networks. RAMCC is an exemplar here. Its Low Carbon Action Plans,

for example, effectively introduced carbon accounting into Argentina at the local government level. But all the other networks also act as conduits of information that their members might not otherwise receive. CPP in Australia, for example, uses its knowledge hub to provide members with information that supports them in achieving their pledges. And Climate Caucus' regular group calls keep its busy members up to speed on information that is relevant to them.

Some of the networks have also stepped into national policy processes to fill gaps in governance structures. Climate Mayors' engagement with US federal legislators, for example, reflects the fact many cities did not feel their voices and climate ambition were being heard in Washington. This engagement has assumed added importance because of the dysfunctional climate governance now playing out in some US states, where efforts are being made to thwart city and town climate leadership. UK100's approach of working with democratically-elected Leaders enables collective advocacy which represents a powerful and compelling voice on specific, discrete issues that can be taken forward by the Government.

Revealingly, even in situations where strong institutional arrangements do exist for integrating local government views in climate policy processes, flaws can still exist. The EU's European Covenant of Mayors, which Climate Alliance plays a key role in, illustrates this point well. The Covenant itself is a model for good multi-level governance, but its membership reveals an interesting truth about climate governance at the national level across Europe. According to Climate Alliance, the majority of Covenant members are located in countries where the power and autonomy of local governments are often limited. Membership of the Covenant provides these authorities access to EU decision making processes. Indirectly, this allows them to have some influence on climate policy within their own countries that they may not otherwise have the opportunity to engage in.

Finally, there is the experience of ICLEI Japan to highlight. In some ways, it is the exception that proves the rule about flawed multi-level climate governance structures and their consequences. As noted earlier, Japan has a high degree of integration already between different levels of government. In this more supportive environment, local authorities have clearly not felt the need for a dedicated, climate-only network to advance their goals. Instead, ICLEI Japan (with a mandate much wider than just climate) has stepped in where needed, working within existing structures and with partners, to successfully advance local government climate needs and ambitions.

## National circumstances have a major influence on network focus and design

While there are similarities between networks, each has been shaped by its national circumstances. CPP's decision to minimise barriers to membership, for example, can be seen as an implicit acknowledgement of the polarised state of climate debate and action in Australia. Asking councils to commit to say a Net Zero target would not have been realistic in this environment. Instead, the network has prioritised confidence building through feasible and practical actions in order to create the basis for more ambitious efforts later.

Climate Mayors, meanwhile, has focused on political leadership and national policy because, unlike much of the rest of the world, climate action remains a politically divisive issue in the US. The well-developed ecosystem of organisations providing technical support to local government in the US (such as C40, USDN or WRI) also means that Climate Mayors does not need to be an all-purpose network.

By contrast, RAMCC, as the pioneer of local government climate action in Argentina, has by necessity developed a comprehensive programme of work and services. Similarly, Climate Alliance, has been shaped by being a leader in the field, with a programme of work that is both broad and deep. It has also been influenced by the federal structure of the countries in which it originated, focusing on practical on-the-ground implementation of climate action because its membership has generally always had the necessary powers to act.

## Networks are leaders in climate ambition in their countries but implementation varies

All case study networks have climate goals that are at least as, and generally more, ambitious than their national governments. However, ambition and implementation does vary, reflecting national circumstances and network dynamics.

UK100 and Climate Alliance lead the field in terms of ambition. UK100 with its Net Zero pledge commits members to achieving Net Zero across councils and communities by 2045, ahead of the UK Government target. Climate Alliance also requires all members to individually commit to an emission target. This is currently a 10% cut every five years, but the Alliance is revising its ambition to align (at a minimum) with the EU's new 2030 and 2050 targets.

As a network, RAMCC has the goal of reducing emissions 45% by 2030, but does not require its members to set the same target in their LACPs. Climate Mayors only asks that its members support the goals of the Paris Agreement (although some will have firm targets through membership of other initiatives such as C40). CPP does include emission reduction targets as a voluntary pledge option, but the target set is at the discretion of each council. And Climate Caucus, as a network for individual local government members rather than councils, is not set up to function as an implementation or monitoring body. However, many Caucus members will have campaigned for election on the basis of driving ambitious climate action in their communities.

## Leadership is a key factor in network establishment and success

Strong leadership is a factor that is evident in the establishment and success of nearly all the networks profiled. UK100, Climate Alliance, RAMCC, Climate Mayors and Climate Caucus, all owe their existence in some way to the vision and ambition of individuals or groups of individuals. Once established, these networks have subsequently grown because of other leaders at the town and city level. These individuals recognised the value the networks offered and consequently invested time and effort to convince their colleagues and councils to support membership.

The establishment of CPP offers an insightful variation on this point of leadership. It owes its creation not to local government leaders, but rather to a campaigning NGO and its advisers. Once set up, however, the network's success has been driven by the enthusiasm of the local government members and peer-to-peer interaction. The key point here is that sometimes an external catalyst is needed to unleash a latent demand.

This is also demonstrated by the UK100's CCN. The network was established by acknowledging and then working to fill a particular void - that climate mitigation is not just an urban issue. In fact rural areas face distinct challenges in addressing climate change and they have a significant role to play in delivering Net Zero.

The CCN is world-leading in this respect. The network's leaders value the insight into solutions and the opportunity to work in collaboration. Through the CCN's success, they are able to amplify their collective voices in a way that wouldn't be possible alone.

## Networks share common features but are also innovating in interesting and different ways

All the networks follow a largely standard model of organisation. Activities tend to revolve around common themes of knowledge sharing, peer learning, technical support and profiling of members' activities. 'Knowledge Hubs', newsletters, events and webinars provide the means for connecting members. Governance and management are also broadly similar with executive and advisory boards of one kind or another working closely with a secretariat team. Differences are mainly a function of available resources, secretariat size, and depth of institutional structures.

While there may be a common format, the networks are also innovating in interesting and different ways. RAMCC has its trust fund, but also an interactive online green jobs map, a virtual classroom for training local government staff, and a sideline in GHG reporting for corporates. Climate Alliance's renewables investment calculator and other free apps provide its members with practical tools for dealing with common problems. CPP has its free energy management software and also runs an annual national award programme to publicly celebrate the achievements of its members (Climate Alliance has a similar initiative). Climate Caucus' partnership with the Youth Climate Lab has produced a valuable tool for citizen participation in local climate action. Climate Mayors has its EV procurement programme. ICLEI Japan's MoUs with business and UK100's Business Supporters' Network both provide transparent connections between local government and green sector companies.

## Collaboration with other networks and like-minded partners is important to achieving goals

Collaboration is a key feature of all the networks. In the case of Climate Alliance and ICLEI Japan this is exemplified by their respective roles in the European Covenant of Mayors and the JCI. This collaboration has allowed them to achieve goals (such as helping convince Japan's government to adopt its Net Zero target), that they could not have achieved individually. Meanwhile, CPP's collaborative engagement with state and national local government associations has provided the means to input into federal climate policy in Australia. In a similar vein, both Climate Caucus and Climate Mayors maintain contact with their national local government bodies to avoid duplication of effort and ensure alignment of action. And RAMCC has made the most of international connections, notably by assuming the role of national coordinator for GCoM.

## Longevity provides depth of institutional structures, but youth is no barrier to driving change

Two of the networks – ICLEI Japan and Climate Alliance – are characterised in part by their longevity, having both been established in the early 1990s. Consequently, they have strong institutional structures in place and well-established networks that extend across government and other sectors. Both networks have also evolved in response to changing external circumstances, although there is also much continuity.
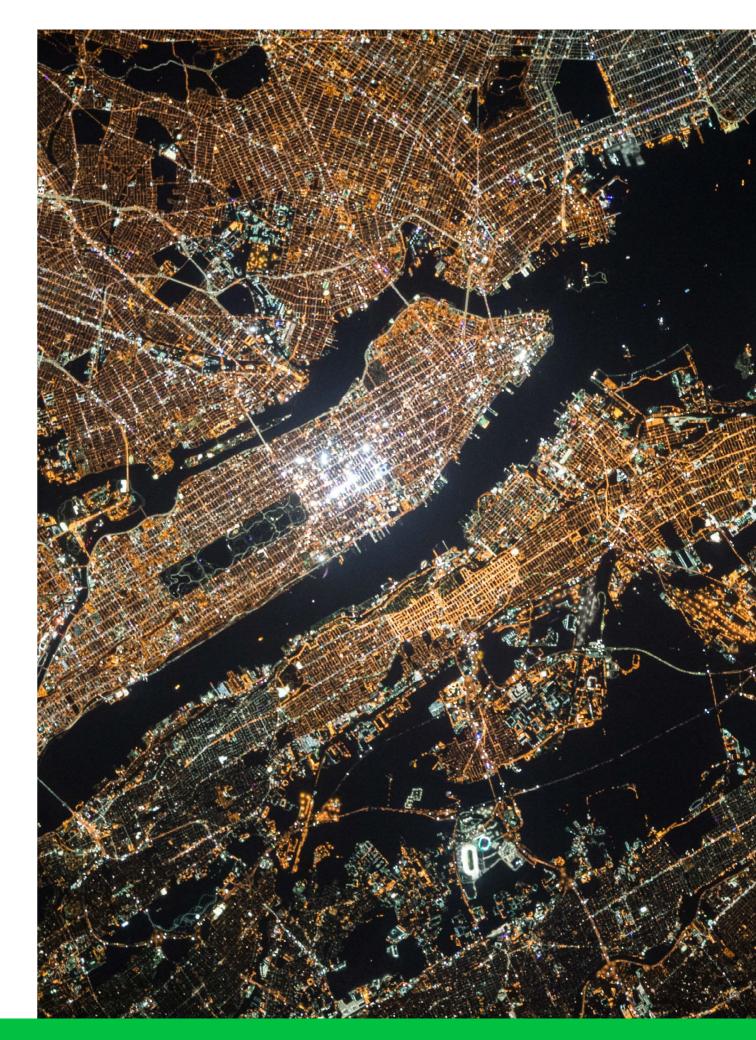
In the case of ICLEI Japan, its early structures and operating model developed to deliver local sustainability goals have proven resilient and adaptable to the network's increasing work on climate. The peer learning model has not changed greatly over the years. To remain on top of the ever-evolving climate agenda, it has partnered with other organisations and experts in the field, and also maintained effective relations with the national government. With regards to Climate Alliance, it has retained its focus on servicing the very local needs of its members. This has evolved, however, from simple information sharing and knowledge development to much more concrete and practical action over the years. Similarly, the Alliance's global perspective has remained consistent, but has expanded beyond its work with Amazonian partners, to broader work through other initiatives, notably GCoM. But youth is also no barrier to driving change as evidenced by the success of UK100, RAMCC, Climate Caucus, CPP and Climate Mayors. Two of these networks are only 2-3 years old, but the significant growth of all of them underlines the demand for their services and the success (at least so far) of their operating models. The emergence of new networks also provides a source of innovation and forces incumbents to remain sharp. As Climate Alliance observed 'staying relevant' for its members was one of the key challenges it faced as a network.

## However, managing large networks is a challenge and well-resourced secretariats make a difference

Managing large and growing memberships – otherwise cited as an indicator of success in nearly all the case studies – is one of the most common challenges facing the networks.

This problem is most acute for those networks with small secretariats and broad membership, such as Climate Mayors, Climate Caucus and to a lesser extent CPP. The diversity of members in terms of climate awareness, financial resources and commitment levels imposes constraints on network action. It also leads to heavy workloads for small secretariats which are unlikely to be sustainable in the long run. RAMCC is arguably in a better position with a relatively well-sized secretariat. But its staff numbers also flex depending on project funding levels, which is not conducive to developing institutional knowledge or long-term in-house capacity. Climate Alliance with its institutional strengths, aligned membership and distribution of workload across national coordination offices has had longer to develop a more sustainable model for managing member needs. However, its strategic concern about 'staying relevant' underlines that good member management is a very dynamic process.

Finally, ICLEI Japan offers a possible alternative model to effective member engagement. It has focused on a small but ambitious and economically significant membership (just 21 prefectures, cities and towns) whose influence is then leveraged to support and move larger, mainstream networks.

# Conclusion and recommendations

**The in-country networks profiled in this report highlight three critical points for global climate action.**

The first is that local governments are rapidly increasing their climate ambition, with action moving from a vanguard to the mainstream in many countries. This shift is being driven by increasing climate impacts at the local level, an appreciation of the opportunities arising from decarbonisation, the realisation that national targets and strategies are ultimately delivered by local action, and the long-held principle of local governments that they are best placed to devise and deliver solutions for the communities they serve.

The second point is that this action is taking place within flawed multi-level governance structures where the needs and priorities of local government are not being adequately served or even recognised. The cost of this is significant, hindering the full potential for climate action at the local level.

The final point is that in-country networks, as platforms for mutual support, knowledge sharing and collective action, can be seen as a reaction to this dysfunction. As the case studies in this report have illustrated, in-country networks are helping their members become climate leaders despite the structural challenges they face. However, such networks are not a substitute for a properly functioning multi-level climate governance structure. Their role should be to help optimise the system, not compensate for its flaws.

These points are essential for national governments to understand as they convene in Glasgow for COP26 and take decisions that will determine whether the world achieves the climate goals it needs to by the end of the decade. Through local governments and in-country networks they have willing and increasingly able partners who have the potential to drive rapid and transformative place-based climate action if the right policy, finance and data environments are created.

At present, in-country networks are helping local governments deliver practical and meaningful climate action in their communities. From developing low carbon action plans and emission inventories to sharing knowledge and experience on investing in local renewable energy systems, the in-country networks showcased in this report have helped to make their members climate leaders. However, such networks are not a substitute for a properly functioning multi-level climate governance structure, but rather a key component of them that makes them work better.

As governments and ministers prepare for negotiations in Glasgow, the following recommendations are offered to help them create the outcomes and impacts their local communities want and need:

- To deliver the transformative climate action needed by the end of this decade, national governments need to overhaul multi-level climate governance structures within their countries to fully empower local government action. The model presented in Figure 1 of this report provides a template to follow
- National governments should work with in-country local government climate networks to undertake this restructuring given the experience and insights they have acquired. Where such networks don't exist, their establishment should be encouraged or local programmes of international networks like ICLEI or GCoM should be strengthened
- The funding community, particularly government and philanthropic bodies, should direct more support to the secretariats of in-country networks in recognition of the vital role they play in the functioning of these networks
- The networks themselves should establish mechanisms for connecting and sharing their experiences in order to improve their operational efficiency and effectiveness as much as to share climate-related knowledge and information
- In-country networks were found to be notably absent or nascent in much of Asia and Africa. More research could be conducted to further map in-country network activities around the world; particularly in these regions
- Support should be offered for the establishment of such networks, especially in Asia and Africa (the continent most affected by climate change according to the UNFCCC), to facilitate climate adaptation and mitigation responses which connect the national to the local as we continue to move through this crucial decade for the climate.

# Annex 1 - List of networks identified globally

| Network | Country/Region | Continent |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| **Global networks** | | |
| 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) | | Global |
| C40 | | Global |
| Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance (CNCA) | | Global |
| Global Covenant of Mayors (GCoM) | | Global |
| Global Resilient Cities Network (GRCN) | | Global |
| ICLEI (and ICLEI regional focal point offices) | | Global |
| United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) | | Global |
| | | |
| **Regional networks** | | |
| Accionando Redes para la estabilidad Climática | South America | South America |
| Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN) | Asia | Asia |
| Ciudades Capitales de las Americas frente al Cambio Climático Secretariado (CC35) | South America | South America |
| Climate Alliance/KlimaBuendnis | Europe | Global |
| Covenant of Mayors for Sub-Saharan Africa (CoM-SSA) | Sub-Saharan Africa | Africa |
| United Cities and Local Governments - Middle East and West Asia (UCLG-MEWA) | Middle East | Middle East |

| Network | Country/Region | Continent |
|---|---|---|
| **In-country networks** | | |
| Alliance Pour la Qualité de l'Air | France | Europe |
| Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) | Palestine | Middle East |
| **Alliance of Peaking Pioneer Cities (APPC)** | China | Asia |
| Bureau Technique des Villes Libanaises, also known as Cités Unies Liban (BTVL) | Lebanon | Middle East |
| **Climate Caucus** | Canada | North America |
| **Climate Council's Cities Power Partnership (CPP)** | Australia | Oceania |
| **Climate Emergency Australia** | Australia | Oceania |
| Consorcio de Gobiernos Provinciales del Ecuador | Ecuador | South America |
| **DK2020** | Denmark | Europe |
| Japan Climate Initiative (JCI) | Japan | Asia |
| **Korean Local Governments' Action Alliance for Carbon-Neutrality** | South Korea | Asia |
| Mancumunidad Surena (MASUR) | Guatemala | South America |
| **Mayors Network for Climate Solidarity** | Poland | Europe |
| Mobility and Transport Coalition | Côte d'Ivoire | Africa |
| North East Clean Energy Council (NECEC) | USA | North America |
| Palestinian City Managers Network (PCMN) | Palestine | Middle East |
| Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities (RALGA) | Rwanda | Africa |
| **Argentinian Network of Municipalities Facing Climate Change / Red Argentina de Municipios frente al Cambio Climático (RAMCC)** | Argentina | South America |
| **Red Chilena de Municipios ante el Cambio Climático (RedMuniCC)** | Chile | South America |
| Scottish Cities Alliance (SCA) | Scotland | Europe |
| Sustainable Councils Networks | Australia | Oceania |
| **UK100** | UK | Europe |
| **UK100 Countryside Climate Network** | UK | Europe |
| Union of Municipalities of Turkey (UMT) | Turkey | Middle East |
| **US Climate Mayors** | USA | North America |

**Bold** denotes network focused exclusively on climate action

# Annex 2 - List of contributors

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# Annex 3 - The Scottish Cities Alliance

**Annex 3 - The Scottish Cities Alliance: an economic development network mainstreaming climate action**

Although this report focuses on local government networks dedicated to climate change issues, other, more cross-sector based networks are also demonstrating how to mainstream climate action. The Scottish Cities Alliance (SCA) is a case in point.

The SCA is a collaboration between Scotland's seven officially designated cities (Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness, Perth and Stirling) in partnership with the Scottish Government. Established in 2011, its primary aim is to promote economic development through attracting capital investment into a broad range of sectors, from the creative industries to aerospace and life sciences.

Underpinning much of this work is the SCA's 'Transition to Net Zero Carbon Action Plan'.[16] Developed with the Scottish Government and various national agencies (such as Transport Scotland and Skills Development Scotland) it recognises that climate change is one of the 'grand challenges' facing Scottish cities.[17] The plan details short, medium and long-term opportunities for cities to meet Scotland's 2045 carbon reduction targets while maximising economic and social well-being.

The SCA is now turning this plan into reality. One important way it is doing this is through establishing a mechanism for peer-learning and knowledge exchange. The system is being developed for both elected representatives and city officials and has two parts to it.

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16 https://scottishcities.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Transition-to-Net-Zero-Carbon-Action-Plan.pdf
17 The Scottish Cities Outlook Report, 2019
https://scottishcities.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Scottish-Cities-Outlook.pdf

The first is a knowledge hub and online forum, primarily for city officers. To ensure accessibility, security and integration with existing systems, the SCA is using Microsoft Teams for this platform. The intention is that officials will be able to upload materials and quickly connect with colleagues across departments and cities in real-time to help each other learn and solve shared challenges.

The second part is focused on helping elected members improve their climate knowledge and understanding. This is seen as a critical goal for delivering the action plan since it will ensure councillors can make informed, climate-safe decisions about investments and actions, confident in their climate knowledge. The SCA has teamed up with a number of organisations to deliver the necessary training. They are using material provided by the Carbon Literacy Project,[18] an award-winning UK-based non-profit, and the expertise of the Improvement Service[19] and Keep Scotland Beautiful[20] to provide in-person workshop-based training. The aim is to train all 358 elected members of the SCA within a year.

The SCA's efforts exemplify how local governments can integrate climate action into their general decision-making processes and why this is so important to broader goals. It also shows that bold action does not require a dedicated climate network to catalyse change. Finally, the SCA's work illustrates again the inherent value of local in-country networks in connecting authorities facing the same challenges and operating under the same constraints.

18 https://carbonliteracy.com/
19 https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/
20 https://www.keepscotlandbeautiful.org/