



Beyond funding: Can small projects be sustainable?

Workshop at International Congress on Conservation Biology (on-line), 14 December 2021 – *report and recommendations*

Introduction:

The theme of the 30th International Congress on Conservation Biology (ICCB) was “**The Future is Now: Sustaining biodiversity for today and tomorrow**”.

In this context, our team – which included Stuart Paterson, Henry Rees, and Leala Rosen (all at Conservation Leadership Programme), and Maaïke Manten (formerly with BirdLife International and Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund), designed a workshop that aimed at gaining a better understanding from both the donor and grantee perspectives, about expectations and possibilities to make small grant projects ‘sustainable’.

With limited time and money available to protect biodiversity, it is imperative that conservation projects are as sustainable as possible. However, for small grant projects (1-2 years, max USD 75k), this is not easy to achieve. Post-project *financial and institutional sustainability*¹ are particularly critical, and difficult - what happens after time/money runs out, and who will be responsible for making this happen?

Donors often ask questions about ‘sustainability’ in their application forms, but it is not always clear what they expect to read in response to this question. To find out more, we identified twelve small grant donors who ask questions on sustainability to their grant applicants, and sent them a short questionnaire with open-ended questions. We received responses from eleven donor representatives, which were analysed and are included in Annex 1.

We then organised a workshop during ICCB on 14 December 2021, to (1) generate informed understanding among donors and grantees, about how to define and deliver sustainable conservation action; and (2) come up with practical recommendations about project sustainability to be applied during project design and implementation. The original plan was to run this as a 90-minute in-person lunchtime workshop for about twenty people, including break-out groups and a panel discussion that would bring donors and small grant project implementers together. Unfortunately, we had to change the plan due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In the end, 30 participants working on projects in Gabon, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, Vietnam, UK, USA and Zimbabwe joined a 60-minute online workshop – which meant we had more participants than planned, but less time to discuss the issue. We also had to cancel the

¹ As much as ecological sustainability is equally (or even more) critical, we did not discuss this during the workshop (partly because all donors/participants are engaged in conservation projects, which are supposed to be environmentally sound anyway). Nevertheless, ecological sustainability is an issue that should always be considered during project design and implementation and can never be ‘assumed’ to be covered automatically.

panel discussion. A summary of what was discussed during this workshop is presented below, and recommendations about sustainability from the attendants are also included in Annex 1.

Sustainability: “Meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”

The donor perspective

To identify what donors think, the team looked at the application forms of various donors who provide small grant funding (up to USD 75,000 over 1-2 years). Most of them ask one or more questions about sustainability in their application forms; in some cases these questions are very specific, in other cases they are very general. We noted in the donors’ guidelines that sustainability is often among the criteria that will be considered by external reviewers (projects get points for their ‘sustainability’ when reviewers are ranking applications).

We then selected twelve donors who include questions about ‘sustainability’ in their application form / decision-making process, and sent them a set of questions about ‘what makes small grant projects sustainable’. In response to this questionnaire, we received detailed feedback from eleven donor representatives from nine different organisations.

The main donor recommendations / ‘success factors’ for sustainability distilled from this mini-survey are the following:

1. Project design – the concept of sustainability should be embedded in the *design* of your project. Your project can only be sustainable if it addresses the right problems, and provides the right solutions (doing the wrong thing in the wrong place is most definitely not sustainable!). This more ‘holistic’ approach to sustainability should also be reflected in your proposal: don’t only think/write about sustainability as an ‘afterthought’ e.g. when the question gets asked in the application form (usually at the end). Think about it when you define your stakeholders, your problems, your interventions, your budget etc.
2. Project implementation – project sustainability also very much depends on good project *implementation*. A project that is implemented well, together with your stakeholders, with regular monitoring and transparent communications, is more likely to be ‘owned’ by people who will want to sustain it. High-quality project results and products will more likely be used and replicated by others. All of this leads to the continued delivery of conservation action as a result of the original small grant project.
3. Financial sustainability : it really helps if you have:
 - secured co-financing (even if this is not required by the donor).
 - created new funding streams.
 - established the (continuation of) work by volunteers.
 - obtained long-term government funding/subsidies.
 - obtained support to maintain and update technology/equipment.
4. Institutional sustainability – it is important to:
 - be the right organisation to do this job - have a clear vision and mission that is in line with the project (to show that you are not just after the money).
 - make sure you have/create a good track record, as a reliable and credible organisation (doing good projects, delivering results, communicating results with stakeholders!)
 - have a longer-term plan for the organisation, and for the project – work towards longer-term impacts.
 - work with stakeholders, especially local communities (from the start!)

- find a 'champion' who is committed to keep the work going after the project ends.

The grantee perspective

Thirty people attended the on-line workshop on 14 December 2021. Following a short presentation about the concept of sustainability and the feedback from the donor survey, the attendants were invited to three break-out groups to discuss the following four topics:

Question 1: When do you start thinking about the sustainability of your project?

Answers: Start early. Ideally, this happens even before you write your proposal, when you are developing your project idea and your project design. You need to have a good idea of what the situation is like on the ground, and of what is feasible or not. Some people start thinking about this when they write their applications, and try to include components that could help sustain the project after the grant ends. Others only start thinking about this towards the end of the project, when you take stock of what has been done and consider any opportunities that have arisen during project implementation.

Question 2: What are the key/important areas of your project that you try to sustain, and what would you (need to) include in your project to make sure they will continue after the project ends?

We discussed 'success factors' and came up with the following list:

Project design

- Get as much information as possible – this may not be easy if you work in a remote area, but it is critical for good project design and sustainability.
- Start small, then build up from there and upscale/replicate.
- If you work on multiple projects, then try to include common threads/components in the various proposals (selected outputs, project purposes) that together can achieve a bigger and more sustainable outcome. This is like a puzzle – think of the bigger picture (long-term goal/impact) and then break it down into smaller bits that, combined, will deliver a longer-term impact
- This broader vision/mission/impact matters, and should be clear in each design/proposal – you may not be able to achieve this impact in each individual grant (it may be the beginning / part of it) but the link should be clear – it explains also why your project is important and that you have a proper plan.
- Local organisations have to think about long-term (10+ years) commitment to communities. They are not like an international organization that may dip in and out of a project area, without risk to their local reputation – local organisations are directly and continuously accountable to their local people. For local groups and communities, short-term interventions are not an option and they may need funding or another partner to help continue their work.
- Include 'citizen science' in your project design especially with regards to training, monitoring etc.

Project implementation

- Monitor your project and be flexible to adapt/change tack when you have to (NB donors should also allow this).
- Include appropriate messaging / narratives – reach 'hearts and minds' to create intrinsic motivation ('awareness' is a starting point, we really want people to *care*).
- It is important to consider human capacities with defined roles and responsibilities.

Financial sustainability:

- Diversify your funding, work with a variety of donors to ensure that components of the project can continue, even if some funding ends.
- Larger grants are often very competitive and take up a lot of resources (time); but being dependent on small grants can lead to cycle of always looking for funding to plug gaps.
- ‘Boundary spanning’: linking internal organisational resources (e.g. grants) with external resources (e.g. local people to come up with their own resources – this will also support local sustainability).
- Make sure that funding reaches the local people directly – empower people with providing resources (money, skills, tools) at their own place. Also ensure that local people are actively involved in projects and have defined roles and responsibilities.

Institutional sustainability:

- Try to ‘embed’ your project within the relevant government agency e.g. the Forest Department; engage them right from the start (including during design!)
- Build partnerships with experts to create expertise at institutional and local levels.
- Train local people (see also above) and apply appropriate technologies (e.g. robust / open-source devices) for long-term monitoring (both biodiversity monitoring and socio-economic monitoring) – this will be more (cost-)effective and sustainable.

Question 3: Do you have examples of projects/activities that were meant to be sustainable but were not sustained?

The following examples were shared and discussed:

- “The question about sustainability in the application form, by the donor, was very vague and it was not clear what was expected – this also led to misunderstandings within the organisation and ‘sustainability’ was not achieved.”
- “We didn’t do a proper risk assessment at the start of the project, and we didn’t think of unexpected events.”
- “We over-promised what we would deliver during our project, and how sustainable it would be, but we didn’t manage it all (e.g. setting up an organisation, foundation, sustainable financing mechanism etc all takes time!)”
- “We had capacity issues internally, and didn’t fill them.”
- “It can be hard to keep communities engaged if they don’t have incentives to do so – maybe we should always combine project activities with long-term behaviour change?”
- “External politics and geopolitics e.g. government is not always committed (even when funding is available); this goes from local level (sometimes it is hard to obtain permits from authorities) to international level (there is not always willingness to make the hard choices required to combat climate change).”
- “We may need to reconsider the whole context of nature conservation, including philosophical questions about the use, abuse and protection of nature by specific groups of people.”

Question 4: Do you have any recommendations to donors about (what they expect/ask for in terms of) project sustainability?

- Donors may want to reconsider their questions / expectations about sustainability for small grant projects that are only a few thousand dollars.

- They may also want to create a more even playing field during the application process, i.e. experienced grantees are competing with young / new organisations for the same funds, and international professional NGOs are in the same competition with local community groups – this makes it very difficult for new / small / less experienced organisations to become successful. This extends to even knowing what to write in response to sustainability questions in the application form, and different sustainability factors may apply to different types of organisations (e.g. existing funding base, location of the applicant, type of projects etc).
- Donors need to understand that long-term funding and/or unrestricted funding (or less restrictive funding) will allow people on the ground to have greater flexibility, to potentially have a bigger impact and more sustainability (this is also in the donor's interest!).
- Donors should stick with their own objectives for longer period of time, and not change their topics / themes/ geographical areas too often – this creates confusion and prevents longer-term impacts to be achieved (as funding is re-directed to other areas).
- Donors need to understand the importance – and financial need – of monitoring. It would really be helpful if donors would support monitoring as a stand-alone activity. They could also add a 'monitoring phase' to projects they fund, which could be 3-10 years of limited annual funding (after the implementation of the initial project) to help grantees to monitor project impact and ensure that project outputs are being maintained. This would help enormously with sustainability, at very little additional cost.
- It really helps when a donor shares the reasons for rejection with the applicant. This will help to improve further projects/proposals. Both donors and applicants should be willing to send/receive feedback.
- Donors need to 'trust' their applicants/grantees more i.e. trust that local organisations probably know more about local needs and solutions than the donor/external reviewers do (sometimes grantees are 'forced' to change their projects but this makes them worse / less sustainable instead of better).
- Donors should also contribute to sustainability of grants and grantees e.g. provide follow-up funding, ongoing support and capacity building, connect grantees with other donors, etc.

Overall conclusion:

Based on our findings, there is a disconnect between the expectation of some donors and grantees. Donors identified here wanted to see some evidence that small grant projects would be sustained after the project term was completed. Some grantees described their small grant projects as 'exploratory' with potential on-going results only being realised during project implementation or at completion of the project. For small or new organisations, or project implementing teams that are not affiliated with an organisation, the idea of sustaining results beyond the project end date may not be feasible.

Even though donors and grantees are in the same business of delivering conservation result (funding and implementation of conservation projects are two sides of the same coin), based on this workshop there still seems to be, on occasions, some level of perceived mutual lack of trust between these two groups. It would be good if we could create more understanding about the needs and desires of both donors and applicants/grantees, among all those who are involved in the grant-making process.

Bringing donors and grantees together in a 'safe place' for further discussions will be beneficial and we recommend that a follow-up event be organised based on these findings. In the interim period, this report will be shared with donors and workshop participants for additional comment and provision of any clarifications. We welcome the involvement, especially of the small grant donor community, in contributing to designing a follow-up workshop.

Annex 1

The table below combines the inputs from eleven small grant donor representatives and thirty workshop attendants from all-over the world, in response to the question: *how can we make small grants sustainable?* The table aims to provide a first basis of a 'taxonomy' of success factors and recommendations with regard to the sustainability of small grants - *for donors and recipients, by donors and recipients*. Some of these recommendations specifically refer to *financial* and *institutional sustainability*; others look at sustainability more 'holistically' and refer to success factors to consider during *project design* and *implementation*. A final set of recommendations has been included separately for donors.

Annex 1 – Success factors and recommendations for small grant sustainability

	Topic	Recommendations for applicants / grantees / recipients, by donors and recipients
Project design	<i>Do the right thing in the right place with the right people</i>	Do your research: make sure you have a clear knowledge of the context, based on actual previous or current initiatives (not only general points and statements). Take into consideration what has been done in the past in the area / for a species and what has been successful or unsuccessful/failed, and suggests actions that take these experiences in consideration. Undertake a ‘risk assessment’ to pre-empt risks, and build in resilience against possible (unexpected) shocks that may affect current proposed and future work.
		Design a project that is technically realistic and not too ambitious. Don’t include too many topics – it is better to have realistic ambitions and achieve your results, than have excessive ambitions and fail to meet them. Being successful will increase the credibility of the NGO toward other stakeholders (“nothing breeds success like success”), which will help you to plan in the long term and achieve your long-term impacts.
		Design your project to address the root cause(s) of the problem; do not only treat symptoms. First find out what the real problems are, then find out what is causing these problems, and then make sure your project will address the roots of these problems so the same problems will not happen again. Make sure you have a clear understanding of the problem, the context, the solutions and the approach that you are proposing to fix the problem.
		Develop a credible theory of change / logical framework / intervention strategy. You need a good recipe to make a good cake. In summary: make sure that (i) the project is scientifically sound and justified; (ii) the project is feasible; (iii) results are reachable; (iv) costs are reasonable; (v) the proponent and the organisation are competent; (vi) the project is a priority; (vii) essential partners are involved; (viii) impact is measurable and sustainable.
	<i>Work towards something ‘bigger’</i>	Think ahead. Think further than the individual grant. Think of a credible long-term vision for the proposed conservation goals, a vision that goes beyond the timeframe of the grant. Have a big picture in your mind that you are working towards (see also above).
		Be aware of existing plans, strategies, policies etc that your project can contribute to – that way your project will ‘automatically’ be part of something bigger.
		If you are engaged in an academic research project, make sure that the activities and outcomes deliver some conservation action and don’t just end up written up in a thesis. The application of new science is also part of sustainability.
	<i>Plan for the future</i>	Plan for the day after funding ends as the day that the level of work goes from 100 percent to 33 percent. Things will slow down – but make sure they do not stop.
		Develop scenarios about what will be happening for the different results, after the project ends. Anticipate the end of the project, and think for each result: what’s next if we are not here? – make this clear and ‘visible’ so you can properly prepare for this. Knowledge products: explain who will use them, how will they be used (e.g. through future management and zonation plans, land use planning procedures, NBSAP production...). Direct conservation measures: do they need to be repeated (yes/no), if yes when and by whom, and how to pay for that. This can also include replication by others, scaling-up in a next phase, etc.
		Make sure that the investment will not be wasted, no matter how good the idea it is.
	<i>The proposal – your</i>	Be specific; don’t explain random facts or use a lot of jargon and elaborate on known concepts to “satisfy donors”. No need to go to grand theories. Provide simple explanations and describe practical actions to achieve feasible results that will continue after the project ends. Most of the good and sustainable ideas/projects can be summarised in a few hundred words.

	<i>'sustainability section'</i>	Do not get stressed by the word 'sustainability'. Most donors will not expect your project to be 'sustainable' in the sense that it will be financially self-sustaining forever and ever. Most of the time, our projects are doing work that is a 'public good' that requires some form of subsidy: from a donor, from the national government that directs public revenue to the effort, or from voluntary commitment by the community or interested parties. Make it clear in your proposal that you have thought about what will happen the day after the funding ends, in that context. Explain this. Provide next steps and timings.
		Don't only think (and write) about sustainability in the sustainability section. All elements of the proposal need to be well thought out, specific, and coherent, with a view on sustainability (including the budget).
		Know your donors – know what they expect / what they want to see / read. E.g. 'impact' from a grantee perspective is often not equal to 'impact' from a donor perspective and this should be taken in consideration by any grantees applying to a donor. The same applies to 'sustainability' so do your research – and talk to your donor if you can.

	Topic	Recommendations for applicants / grantees / recipients, by donors and recipients
Project implementation	<i>Quality of implementation</i>	Implement the project properly as it was planned. Demonstrate reliability, transparency and carry out all activities at the highest possible quality. If the project is well implemented, the NGO will continue to build on it in the future, other stakeholders will use their results and build on their achievements as well. But if a project is conducted contrary to the plan without clear justification, then no one (including the implementing NGO itself!) will be comfortable to continue with it after it ends. 'Bad' implementation 'kills' sustainability, because it seeds doubt, frustration, and lack of appreciation among stakeholders.
		High-impact achievements will facilitate sustainability. E.g. a site, which has been worked at during project implementation, comes under some sort of recognition for being important for conservation/ protection, and this is supported by key stakeholders. Even at a local level, this can draw attention to the value (conservation) of activities being maintained and/or increased in the future. Similar for species being downlisted / use 'flagship species' that can be a symbol of identity to an area – this can help create local ownership that can last for a long time.
		Sustainability should be an integral part of the project from the beginning: make sure to apply best practices, work well with all stakeholders, and communicate about the project widely.
		Use project implementation to build your 'proof of concept' which will help you to move to bigger/longer-term donors.
		Make sure that financial benefits from the project are shared equitably amongst stakeholder groups and genders.
	<i>Monitoring and evaluation</i>	Apply rigorous monitoring and evaluation of your project, and communicate with your stakeholders (keep them involved at all times).
		Remain flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances, and apply smart adaptive management to solve any problem you may encounter during the project implementation (donors need to allow this).
If you need to change the plan, keep your donors informed so they can support you. Transparency to all stakeholders is key, including to your donors. Communicate with them as often as possible. Be honest.		

Type of sustainability	Topic	Recommendations for applicants / grantees / recipients, by donors and recipients
Financial sustainability	<i>Budget</i>	Make sure your budget is realistic, and don't over-promise. Budgets are limited so stick to what is possible – a balanced budget will be more helpful to achieve results and sustainability than a budget that is finished half-way the project.
		Consider open-source / low-cost but robust technology (hardware / software) to avoid escalating costs during/after project ends.
		Make sure that funding is directed to local people directly – empower people with providing resources (money, skills, tools) at their own place – this will make the project more cost-effective and sustainable.
		Develop a (basic) budget that shows how the NGO and/or the project activities will be funded AFTER the project ends e.g. self-funded by project partners/recipients, or by others. This is optional (donors don't ask for this, generally) but it can help you to think this through from the start, and then build in the right 'stepping stones' in your project to facilitate this transition.
	<i>Co-funding – other external donors</i>	Most donors consider the level of co-funding (before / during / after project) as a good indicator of the likely long-term chances the project will continue, so think about this and include this even if this is not a requirement.
		<p>Preferably identify a pipeline of potential external donors (international / national / local), which may include your 'current' donor(s) but should also include others. Make this is specific and not a general statement such as 'we will raise more funding'. You can include specific information in your proposal as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will target the following donors by Month X. 2. We will get to the point of public (government) revenue flows by . . . through (how)... 3. We will get to the point of secured community voluntary labour by... when (how). . . . 4. We will get to the point of secured equipment by... through (how)
		Develop a funding plan, that includes multiple income streams (donors, supporters, private sponsorships, income generation through activities, volunteers etc).
		Ask your donor(s) to help you identify/approach other donors. They can make introductions, write letters of support (if you have done a good job) etc.
	<i>Co-funding – other income streams</i>	Consider alternative funding streams that generate revenue such as eco-tourism, products for sale, smart systems, etc. You can also consider longer-term finance mechanisms like trust funds / revolving funds / village banking etc, but generally these things take a lot of time and relevant expertise and experience to become truly sustainable.
		Diversify your income streams; if you rely on income from eco-tourism only all your revenues can dry up fast due to – for instance - a pandemic. Or, if you rely on one big annual donor to support core costs you are also taking a risk of the donor not coming through one year because they suddenly diverted environmental funding.
		Consider partnering with an entity with sustainable income (e.g. government / parastatal) – if they are committed to keeping activities going (e.g. community activities), then this will help absorb shocks and keep things ticking over when times are difficult.
	<i>Co-funding – own contributions</i>	Consider what (free) contributions you and your organisation can make (oversight, advice, equipment, networks etc), as well as the target group / beneficiaries (land, labour, inputs, monitoring, management etc) – both during and after project implementation.

Type of sustainability	Topic	Recommendations for applicants / grantees / recipients, by donors and recipients
Institutional sustainability	<i>Your organisation</i>	Build and showcase a high-quality track record (relevant vision and mission, previous projects that have been implemented and delivered results, staff profiles etc) to show that you as applicant / NGO can do what you suggest/promise in your applications. This will make it easier for a donor to invest in your organisation.
		Have a longer-term plan for the project (impacts, goals) so it is clear the project is not a 'one-off' (in response to a call for proposals) but part of a wider ambition for the project area (geographically / thematically).
		Have a longer-term plan for the organisation including governance system, staff retention, administrative procedures/handbooks, business plans etc.
		It is very important to have the right project staff, with capacities, skills, motivation, reliability, passion and the willingness to go the extra mile when needed. Some organisations use a lot of consultants – this may be 'easier' as you can hire them for specific jobs, and let them go when you have no income - but it will not lead to institutional development (building up experience) or 'institutional memory' (i.e. retain knowledge about previous projects etc).
		Consider (be specific) how you will remain involved after the project ends (preferably as part of a longer-term plan). Will you keep promoting results, stay in touch with beneficiaries, continue to visit/monitor the project sites etc?
		Consider how the organisation will use purchased equipment after the project ends – will they continue to contribute to the project's (longer-term) goals?
		If you don't have one yet, you can set up your own organisation. This can be beneficial in terms of fund administration and it can give you organisational purpose, but it must be recognised that new organisations require additional resources and knowledge to be maintained. Similarly for offices – having (one or more) local offices may be helpful but they may be hard to sustain. A good resource for organisational develop is www.capacityforconservation.org
	<i>Your stakeholders - engagement</i>	Identify the main stakeholders involved in the planned project and apply suitable methods that ensure their full engagement – including in project design, implementation and decision-making. This is particularly true of projects involving communities. NB The definition of stakeholders is 'anybody who may have an interest in, who may be affected by, or who may have the ability to influence your project'.
		Plan to engage with national, regional or international data collection and conservation planning organisations. E.g. provide data from surveys to eBird, for example, or try to engage with the relevant Specialist Group to find out if there is an action plan for that species. This has the added benefit of raising the profile of the project/individual/organisation, and of getting connected to a wider conservation community.
		Stakeholders should also include those who have a mandate in the project area (local administration, traditional authorities, private land-owners, etc).
		Where needed, work with your stakeholders to achieve long term changes in behaviour and attitudes; awareness raising may be a beginning, but changing hearts and minds may require more targeted messaging and information-sharing.
	<i>Your stakeholders – embedding</i>	For a project to succeed the day after funding ends, it needs somebody (an entity, an individual, a group of people) to 'keep the project alive'. Make them a 'champion' for your project: this could be individual people who will be at the project site, regardless of

	<p>the project: the land-owner, the mayor, the park warden, the minister, the owner of the factory. They might do the actual work (i.e., maybe they do the ranger patrols), or their livelihoods may depend on the results of the project. These people need to believe in the project (and the big picture) to keep things going. ‘We will get to the point of sustainability when our NGO steps back and Organization X steps in.’ Again, that organization could be another NGO, a community group, a public agency. Work to recruit and prepare that replacement group, if you are leaving (though it is recommended that your NGO will also remain involved, as part of the bigger plan).</p>
	<p>Create policies or an appropriate governance system, if needed, to place the project under the control of stakeholders or appropriate government authority.</p>
	<p>Embed activities at local level: capacitate and empower local people [see also above] e.g. in long-term monitoring (both biodiversity monitoring and socio-economic monitoring) – this will be more (cost-)effective and sustainable.</p>
<i>Results</i>	<p>If your deliverables include conservation / income-generating activities: make sure practical results will be maintained (e.g. contract / MoU with a stakeholder who will continue eradication of invasive species) or sign conservation agreements with communities and include a local trusted entity in the agreement for monitoring and compliance.</p>
	<p>If your deliverables include awareness-raising/education activities: sign MoUs e.g. with schools, government departments etc.</p>
	<p>If your deliverables include plans/knowledge products: make sure that they will contribute to strategic documents / will influence future activities.</p>
	<p>Include the development of an exit and continuation plan, as a specific result of your project.</p>
<i>Capacity building</i>	<p>Build partnerships with experts to create expertise at institutional and local levels.</p>
	<p>Work as a team so that responsibilities are shared and there are opportunities to learn and grow. Demonstrate how the project will be sustained even if the leader moves on.</p>
	<p>Capacity building of team members is important, and also retaining knowledge within the team/organisations. Keep good records for project reporting but also for ‘institutional memory’ e.g. make a list of stakeholders and the contacts that have been made during a current project; note which aspect were particularly successful; which areas really need to be (re)addressed in future projects, etc.</p>
<i>Communication, networking</i>	<p>Share the results of your work with the conservation community, and with project stakeholders – make sure they are used by others (uptake by others is also part of your sustainability). Publish your results, speak about them in (on-line) conferences. If you have developed tools, methods etc: share share share! This will also enhance your ‘credibility rating’ for donors.</p>
	<p>Network and collaborate – this will help to learn from each other and may provide opportunities to replicate/scale up your work. Develop partnerships.</p>

	Topic	Recommendations for donors, by donors and recipients
Donors	<i>Expectations</i>	Donors have to be aware that, with small grants, sustainability (of the grantee/project results) is not easy / sometimes not possible. In most cases, the idea of a small grant project is to set the basis of an initiative / civil society organisation that will need other / complementary support in the future. Small grants can establish the foundations for delivering considerable contributions and in a long-term perspective, but they may not immediately be 'sustainable'.
		Often small grants projects are 'exploratory' in nature – e.g. physically conducting survey work or data collection, or embarking on a project without necessarily knowing what the best conservation methodology may be (because of a lack of knowledge at the start of the project) or what comes next for the conservation of the site / species. This may only become clearer as a result of the project, and could lead to larger, more sustainable projects later. Small grants are often at their most impactful with these 'dives into the dark unknown' - but this makes it hard to define 'sustainability' at the start of the project.
	<i>Support</i>	Small grants are often given to small organisations. This is sometimes risky, but donors should take this risk and manage it. It would help if donors would: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - offer technical support to the NGO on how to design / write a project: this is really important to achieve sustainable impacts. Also provide feedback when a proposal gets rejected - help grantees think through the concept of 'sustainability' as it is in the interest of both the donor and the grantee to get this right - use other donors that could support the same organisation / project now or later, as co-evaluators of a project proposal (so they can already see the development of the organisation) - when selecting proposals or funding: differentiate between international NGOs and local CSOs - follow up and support implementation (field visits, report reviews, direct contact). Provide technical advice where needed - invite organisations to trainings, exchange visits, experience sharing, sharing of lessons learned. Help with institutional development / strategies etc – to make organisations more sustainable
		Donors need to trust their grantees. They may know more about the local situation than the donor. Donors need to allow project implementers to adapt to changing circumstances, be flexible when needed (especially when grantees encounter unexpected problems) – this will help achieving sustainability.
		Donors can stay in touch with grantees, also after the project ends (this should go both ways). Share funding opportunities, keep inviting grantees to trainings, webinars, etc.
		Donors can be aware that the step to longer-term support is quite hard for many organizations to make. They can try to help by writing references or referring organisations to another donors / stakeholders that may be useful in terms of sustainability (e.g. government).
	<i>Type of funding</i>	Donors can consider longer-term funding / larger grants: this will reduce the time conservation practitioners need to spend on proposal writing and fundraising. It will also enhance sustainability if there is more time to achieve (usually slow) conservation outcomes, or to sustain longer-term monitoring.
		Donors can become more flexible and support more core/operational costs; don't be constrained to just support project costs.
		Donors can stick to the plan – don't change grant programme objectives (thematically / geographically) when the job is not yet done.
<i>Proposals (questions)</i>	Donors can be clearer about what they expect in the application form re: sustainability – ask better questions, indicate the level of detail required.	
	Donors can consider the difference between research projects, conservation projects, community projects etc when it comes to sustainability.	