



# **Go For It Fund Impact Evaluation**

**June 2020**



**GO FOR IT**  
Funding Change in Church and Community

## Authors

Janet Biggar Research and Pauline Radcliffe Consultancy

## Design

Laurabelle Design and Illustration • [www.laurabelle.co.uk](http://www.laurabelle.co.uk)

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All photos in this report are from *Go For It*-funded projects. More information on the *Go For It* Fund can be found here: <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/go-for-it>



# Contents

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 About the Fund .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Scope .....	8
Ways of Working.....	8
<b>2 Detailed Findings .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Numbers, Types and Value of Grants Awarded .....	9
Project Funding Criteria Selected .....	10
Number and Types of Beneficiaries .....	10
Impact on Beneficiaries .....	12
Impact on the Churches .....	13
Innovative Projects .....	14
Developing New Ecclesial/Christian Communities and Models of Ministry .....	14
The Power of Partnerships .....	16
Perceptions of the Church .....	18
Awards Recognition For Projects .....	19
What Did <i>Go For It</i> Add to the Value of Projects? .....	20
Overcoming Challenges .....	22
Being a Relational Funder .....	23
Value of Training and Sharing Practice .....	23
<b>3 What the Church Can Learn from <i>Go For It</i> .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>4 Conclusions .....</b>	<b>26</b>

**Appendix 1** - Methodology

**Appendix 2** - Logic Model

**Appendix 3** - Grantholder Survey Results

# Executive Summary

Go For It Fund  
Impact Evaluation

## INTRODUCTION

The Church of Scotland's *Go For It* Fund, launched in 2012, was designed to encourage creative ways of working which develop the life and mission of the local church and are transformative for both communities and congregations. It aimed to achieve this through community engagement and good partnership working. *Go For It* provided 'first funding' to help new ideas grow and bear fruit, supported by a relational approach to the role of funder. This report examines the impacts of that funding and of the approach taken by the Fund.



## THE IMPACT OF FUNDING

### **Range and Depth**

*Go For It* allocated just over £7million in the form of 377 grants to 237 organisations.

Funded projects have reported reaching 152,856 people, engaging 3,152 volunteers and employing 429 staff between 2012 and 2019.

The programme funded a ‘spectacularly diverse’ range of activities and supported some projects throughout their lifecycle from concept to maturity.

The projects were highly valued and relevant, with 92% of survey respondents indicating that their project did or was expected to continue after the end of the grant.

### **Lives Transformed**

Projects addressed local community needs across Scotland and other places where there are Church of Scotland churches, delivering improvements in mental health, financial health, support for addiction, social isolation and many more areas. Lives were transformed through the projects and several had their work recognised through national and local awards.

### **Renewed Sense of Purpose**

Congregations found a new sense of purpose describing themselves as ‘more active’, ‘outward-looking’ and ‘beginning to understand the importance of closer bonds with the community’. Often this stemmed from wider and more daily use of the church buildings which generated a ‘buzz’.

In many cases this contributed to increased acceptance and tolerance and a more compassionate parish church. The majority (89%) of grantholders responding to the survey believed that their church was more outward looking as a result of their *Go For It*-funded project.

Some grantholders believed the perception of their church in the local community had changed and that church was no longer seen as ‘just for Sunday’.

### **Engaging with Younger People**

*Go For It* has funded many youth and ‘Messy Church’-type projects. Bringing more young people into the church congregation was cited by 40% of grantholders responding to the survey as a key achievement. There was some evidence that funded projects had helped to address apprehension about crossing the threshold of a church for some young families.

### **More People Engaged in the Life the Church has to Offer**

‘Creating new ecclesial communities’ was selected by 31% of projects as a project aim on their funding application form. However, 45% of grantholder survey respondents agreed that they were developing a new ecclesial community and 74% that they were exploring a new or different model of mission (communicating the good news of the Gospel).



## MAIN IMPACTS OF THE FUND FOR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY



Figure i: Key areas of impact for church and community

The process of better understanding the needs of local communities helped congregations discover ‘how needing God manifests itself in our locality’ bringing ‘life in all its fullness’ to people through focusing on their health and wellbeing.

### ***Benefit of Partnerships***

Partnerships between churches and local community groups or organisations were viewed as ‘win-win’, bringing benefits to both. Relationships with well-established Christian organisations such as Scripture Union were also strengthened.

Community partners reported that the support both local people and their own staff or volunteers had experienced through these faith-based projects was transformative.

### ***Increased Recognition and Value***

Churches were valued by other agencies working locally (including statutory, business and Third Sector) as respected providers of support within their communities, rather than solely as places for Sunday worship.

The Church more widely has achieved a higher profile nationally. MPs and MSPs have been encouraged to engage with projects in their constituencies, with 50–60 project visits by individual parliamentarians taking place across Scotland, often developing new relationships.

### ***Tackling Poverty and Social Injustice***

Through this funding programme the Church has demonstrated its connectedness and response to social injustice within communities, reaching some of the most vulnerable and isolated groups in society with support, practical help and connection. Of the 377 projects awarded *Go For It* grants, 56% included the criterion ‘Tackling poverty and social injustice’.



## KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF GO FOR IT

Go For It funding was regarded by the organisations and congregations that benefited as having distinct characteristics. These are described in Figure ii.



Figure ii: Distinct characteristics of the Fund

## THE IMPACT OF THE RELATIONAL APPROACH TAKEN BY THE FUND

Well over half (58%) of grantholders responding to the survey said that they would not have been likely to get their project off the ground without the support to develop their idea, to articulate their aims and to develop a strong funding proposal. Many would not have been able to attract funding from any other source to take their faith-based approaches.

The rigour of the application process and ongoing reporting, coupled with support through training courses and from the staff team, were acknowledged by most as helping projects to be in a better position to attract ongoing funding from other sources.

Grantholders responding to the survey indicated that the training and support offered by the *Go For It* team and partners helped them to achieve their goals more effectively (77%).

Projects that received *Go For It* grants grew in confidence, in their ability to develop and deliver impactful projects and to attract ongoing funding or to become sustainable.

*Go For It* successfully provided a relational approach to funding and provided valued opportunities to learn and to share learning with other projects.

## WHAT THE CHURCH CAN LEARN FROM GO FOR IT

- Local churches can successfully create a balance between Word and social action to benefit their communities and congregations
- Through taking social action, local churches can come closer to the heart of their communities
- Churches can do more to learn from one another's experiences and problem-solving approaches
- The Church would benefit from more prominent national reporting on the achievements of local church projects
- Projects in their early stages tend to develop organically and may move away from initial outline budgets and indicators, requiring a flexible approach to funding to achieve maximum impact

**"Resourcing local churches to share in Word and action the Gospel in their neighbourhoods".**

*Church of Scotland stakeholder describing the Fund's purpose*





# THE REPORT



# 1 About the Fund

## SCOPE

The *Go For It* Fund was launched in 2012 and brought together three previous Church of Scotland funds (Parish Development Fund, Emerging Ministries Fund and Priority Areas Staffing Fund) with the initial aim of streamlining Church of Scotland funding processes, enabling more effective access to funding for church projects, and improving governance and coordination.

As the Fund developed it aimed to encourage creative ways of working which develop the life and mission of the local church and are transformative for both communities and congregations. Community engagement and good partnership working were encouraged and *Go For It* provided 'first funding' to help new ideas grow and bear fruit, supported by a relational approach to the role of funder.

The Fund was open to either by Church of Scotland churches or not-for-profit organisations working in close partnership with a Church of Scotland congregation.

## WAYS OF WORKING

*Go For It* was a new approach to Church funding which:

- aimed to be relational
- helped projects to learn and grow, through support to develop an idea
- supported applicants in building strong proposals for funding
- provided a training programme to support key elements of developing project ideas and of project delivery

As well as direct support from the *Go For It* team, training courses and annual conferences were offered, bringing projects together to share their learning and identify good practice. In addition, a wealth of resources was made available online.



# 2 Detailed Findings

## NUMBERS, TYPES AND VALUE OF GRANTS AWARDED

Go For It provided seven main types of grant, which supported potential projects from initial needs-based scoping, through development phases to longer term delivery and maturity. The value of grants and number of projects benefitting is shown in Figure 1 below.

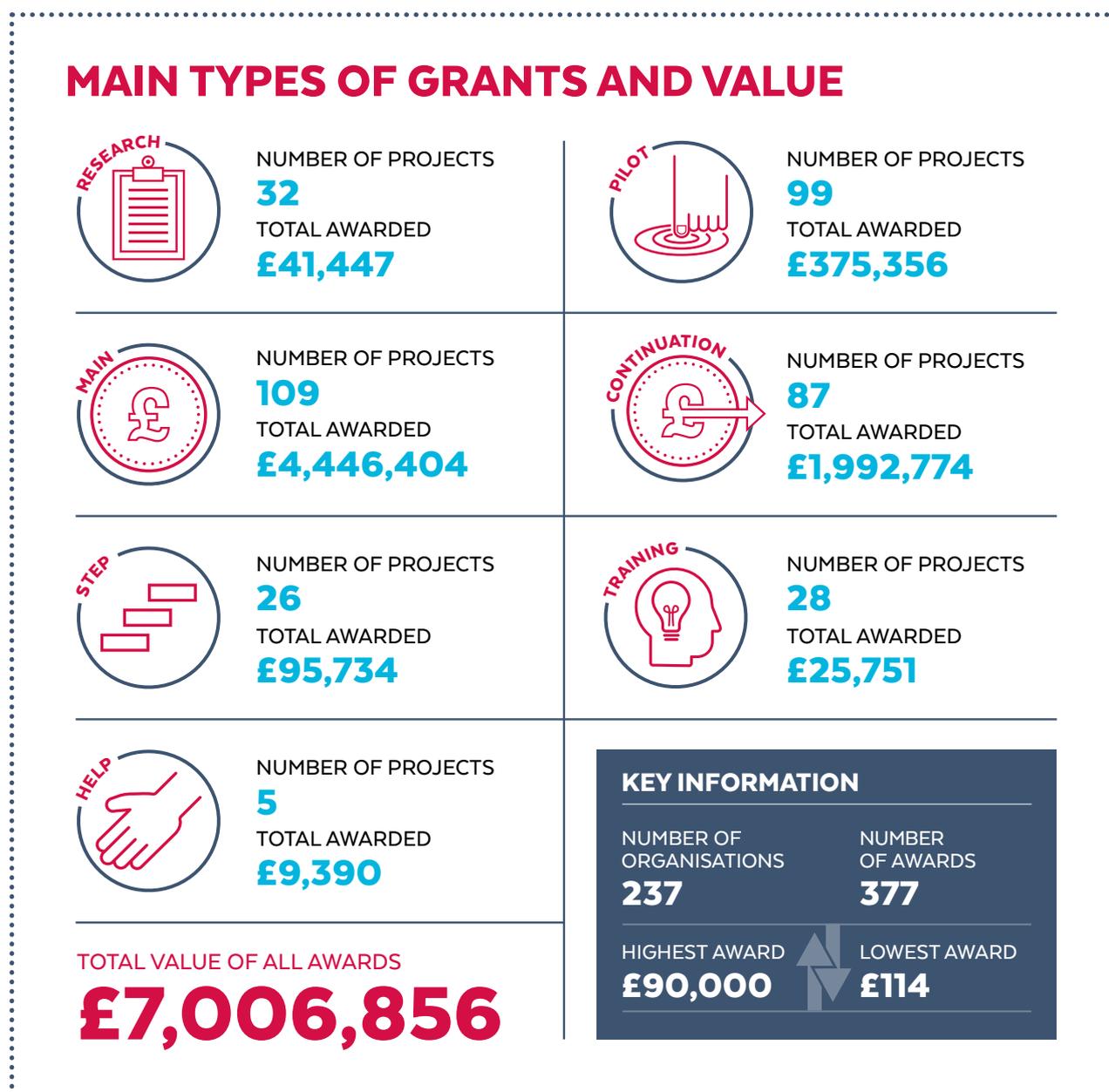


Figure 1: Value and type of grants awarded

## PROJECT FUNDING CRITERIA SELECTED

To be considered for *Go For It* funding, project proposals had to show that they would benefit the local church and/or community and demonstrate a commitment to good partnership working.

Projects had to fulfil *two or more* of the following five criteria:

- A. Meeting identified needs or strengthening assets in the community**
- B. Nurturing Christian faith within and beyond the Church**
- C. Tackling poverty and/or social injustice**
- D. Developing new ecclesial/Christian communities**
- E. Creating work which is genuinely innovative and shares good practice with others**

As Figure 2 shows, the five criteria all featured significantly across the funded projects. Ninety-five percent of projects included criterion A as one of the two or more they aimed to meet.

## NUMBER AND TYPES OF BENEFICIARIES

Over the seven and a half years of project funding to date<sup>1</sup> some 152,856<sup>2</sup> people were reached through the projects delivered across Scotland and other places where the Church has a presence. A total of 3,152 people participated in volunteering for the projects (an average of 5 volunteers per project in any one year) and 429<sup>3</sup> staff were employed.

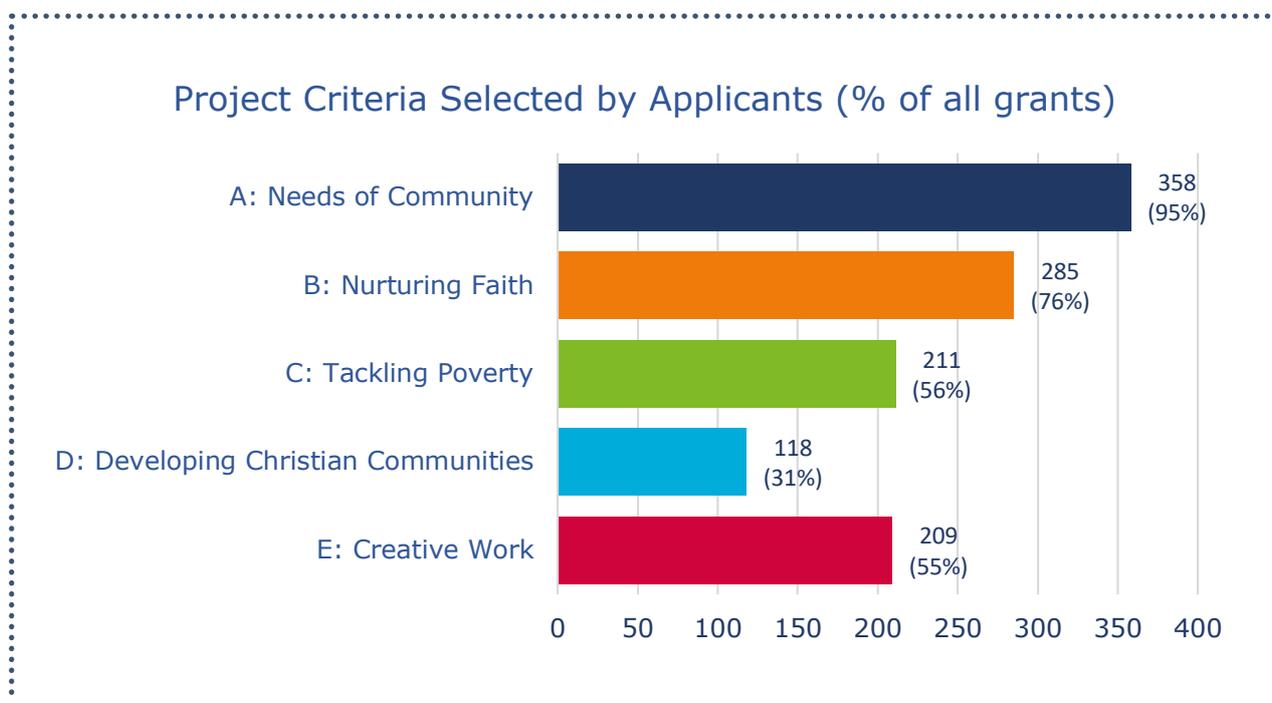


Figure 2: Project criteria selected by applicants

1. The funds allocated to projects in 2019 will continue to fund those until 2023  
 2. Based on self-reporting of the highest number reached in one year of each project

3. This is self-reported, and it is not clear whether all these staff were employed through *Go For It* Funding. Two projects reporting over 100 staff were removed from this calculation (they were reporting existing staff in other agencies' services).

## MAIN TYPES OF BENEFICIARY

		Number of projects	% of all project awards
 <b>By Age</b>	Children under 10	180	48
	Young people	185	49
	Families	196	52
	Older aged adults	179	48

		Number of projects	% of all project awards
 <b>By Equalities Monitoring</b>	LGBT people	86	23
	Carers	135	36
	Minority ethnic people	117	31
	People with mental health issues	167	44
	People with learning difficulties	151	40
	People with physical disabilities	129	34
	People with sensory impairment	55	15

		Number of projects	% of all project awards
 <b>By Faith Group</b>	Congregation members	217	58
	People across Christian denominations	216	57
	People of other faiths	147	39
	People of no faith	219	58

Figure 3: Groups and communities that grantholders stated would benefit from the funding: a total of 237 organisations via 377 awards made over 7 years

## IMPACT ON BENEFICIARIES

It is clear that lives were transformed for those benefiting from project interventions. Transformation was described in terms of, for example, reduced crime rates in a community, enabling employment for those far from the labour market, successful recovery from addictions and finding faith through the love and support shown by the church.

“

**“Who are our beneficiaries? The beneficiary is Christ’s church... Theologically people have lots of understanding of what it means to be ‘Christ’s church’ but its roots are in our charitable purpose and the church’s relationship to its local community. Benefits are both to congregation and those it serves (lonely, vulnerable, homeless, isolated)”**

*Grantholder*



### BENEFITS CITED BY GRANTHOLDERS INCLUDED:

- access to advice on debt, benefits and other financial issues
- help with access to food
- volunteering opportunities
- family and parenting support
- support with mental health
- support for drug and alcohol concerns
- reduced isolation
- peer support
- belonging and welcome
- improved community connection
- communicating the Gospel’s messages in more creative ways
- confidence
- intergenerational interaction
- access to physical activity
- opportunities to contribute to community initiatives

Several grantholders were able to give examples of their project helping individuals to become debt free and increase their ability to seek and secure employment. Significantly, many highlighted the impact on individuals’ self-worth, through involvement in projects improving personal confidence in their ability to contribute positively to their local community, using personal skills and knowledge (sometimes called ‘social capital’).

Many grantholders described how people in the community, after receiving support from their project, had then become volunteers in some capacity within their projects, providing a valued role and sense of worth and belonging for some who had previously experienced rejection and isolation.



**“There’s a sense of community and a growing sense of their own humanity - they are not labelled or identified by the things they’ve done wrong but celebrated for who they are and what they can achieve”.**

*Grantholder*

## IMPACT ON THE CHURCHES

### *Renewed Sense of Purpose Via Engagement with Local Community*

Congregations were as much beneficiaries themselves as the marginalised and vulnerable people the projects served. The projects’ impact on congregational life was described as significant by most grantholders, largely achieved by increased connection with and understanding of the local community and its needs. This often resulted in a renewed sense of purpose and value for the congregation.

Figure 4 shows grantholders’ views on the impacts for their congregation of receiving *Go For It* funding.

Grantholders identified notable differences in their congregation’s understanding of and

engagement with local communities. They described them as ‘more active’, ‘outward-looking’ and ‘beginning to understand the importance of closer bonds with the community’. Often this stemmed from wider and more daily use of the church buildings which generated a ‘buzz’.



**“The effect of being able to be engaged with the community is essential to who we are as a church. The project has had a huge impact in that a lot of the congregation are engaged in volunteering and also with what goes on in the project”.**

*Grantholder*

In many cases, congregation members took an active part in the project, volunteering their time and developing their understanding of the issues the project was seeking to address. This contributed to increased acceptance and tolerance within the parish church. One grantholder described this as ‘transformational’ for the congregation.

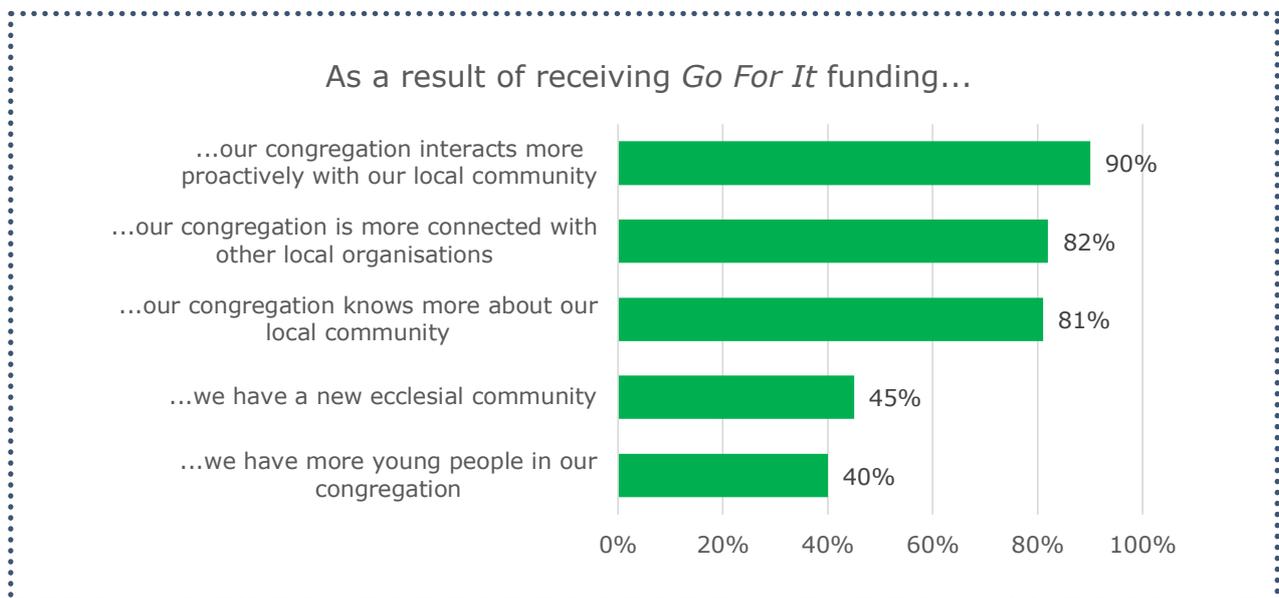


Figure 4: Percentage of grantholders agreeing with statements on impacts of receiving *Go For It* Funding (from online survey)



**“People in the congregation now know and have relationships with people they wouldn’t have done before. They are more informed and more compassionate to others especially those facing challenges... more open and understanding and fully informed of the needs and challenges in the community”.**

*Grantholder*

Some congregations contributed financially to projects through donations, indicating the value they placed on the projects.

### ***Perception of Churches by their Local Communities***

Some 89% of grantholders said they believed that, as a result of receiving *Go For It* Funding, their community viewed their church as more outward looking. Some grantholders believed the image of the church in their local community had changed and that church is no longer ‘just for Sunday’: as one put it ‘it’s not churchianity, it’s Christianity’.

### ***Church Engaging with Young People***

Bringing more young people into the church congregation was thought to be a key achievement by 40% of grantholder survey respondents. This may have been the result of *Go For It* funding many Messy Church and other initiatives serving young families. A few grantholders believed that a small number of younger people and families had come to faith through their project and several believed that involvement in their project had ‘got people over the fear’ of coming to church so that more were attending special services.

## **INNOVATIVE PROJECTS**

Creativity and innovation, one of the five key criteria of the *Go For It* Fund, could be seen in projects which used previously established models in their own context (such as the

Steeple Project which used the Parish Nursing model for the first time in Scotland). Similarly, bringing key disciplines together in one project (for example, health, community development and social work) and taking an holistic approach to the beneficiary community generated new ways of working and supporting people.

It should be noted that some Church of Scotland stakeholders felt that innovation was a subjective term and therefore difficult to be definitive about: what was new for some projects might be established practice in other parts of the country or for other congregations in a different context.

## **DEVELOPING NEW ECCLESIAL /CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES AND MODELS OF MINISTRY**

### ***New Ecclesial/Christian Communities***

Although the criterion relating to creating new ecclesial communities was selected by only 31% of projects on their original application form, 45% of grantholder survey respondents agreed that they were developing a new ecclesial community as a result of their project and 74% said they were exploring a new or different model of mission (new ways of communicating the good news of the Gospel).

There was a perception amongst both Church of Scotland stakeholders and grantholders that the *Go For It* Fund had worked hard to nurture new ways of demonstrating the Gospel in different places and forms.

Encouraging the process of understanding the needs of communities (often made possible through the Research and Pilot grants) and taking time to listen to wider community needs, was thought to have helped congregations discover ‘how needing God manifests itself in our locality’.

One grantholder described this in terms of their church finding ‘new ways of understanding mission’, bringing ‘life in all its fullness’ to people through focusing on their health and wellbeing.



**“This wasn’t one of our criteria but it is one of the things we hope to do. Accessing a church building is too difficult for some people but they still have spiritual needs and need to develop their faith. We are now establishing a Yurt Church - reflective outdoor church, which is more inclusive for families with members with disabilities who would struggle in a church building.”**

*Grantholder*

The introduction of ‘Messy Church’ into congregational life was a key new form of ecclesial community identified for children and families, with one project (the Madoch Centre) developing the idea still further to involve young people in physical activity through ‘Sweaty Church’!

### ***New Models of Ministry***

Most importantly, *Go For It* has helped congregations to realise that every member is involved in ministry and demonstrated that effective mission and ministry can be carried out by congregational members, volunteers and paid project workers.

Encouraging a movement away from the Minister having sole leadership responsibility for a congregation’s mission and growth was regarded by Church of Scotland representatives as essential as the Church implements its Radical Action Plan and structural reforms. Some grantholders thought that, where a project model had been found to be effective in growing community engagement and interaction with their local church over a sustained period of time, this should now be considered for core ministry funding, rather than time-limited competitive project-based finance.



## THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

### Mutual Benefit

Go For It encouraged projects to develop partnerships.



**“The Church has undergone a shift [from] seeing itself as hub of society - to a partner amongst a number (schools, health, youth work, councils, etc.) The Church as the ‘Body of Christ’ - is just one of the organs”.**

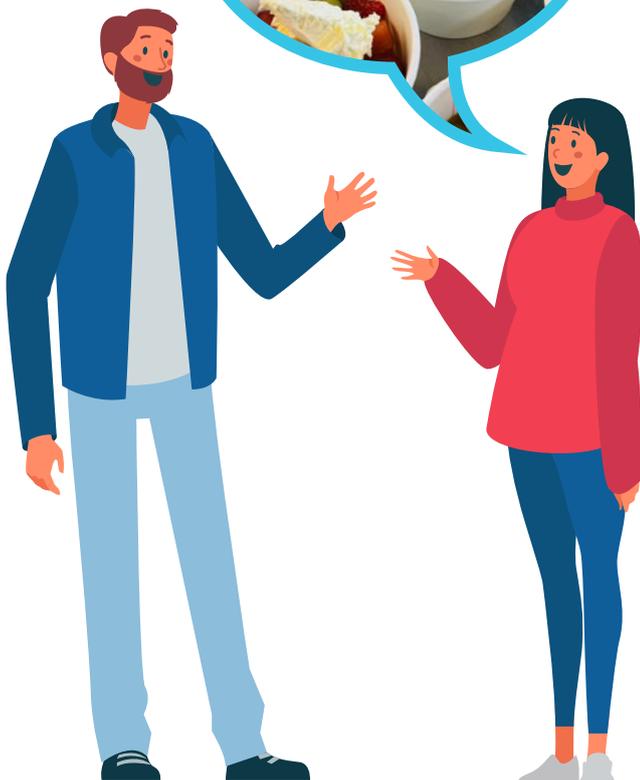
*Church of Scotland Stakeholder*

Through the development of their Go For It project many grantholders had established or grown partnerships with other organisations locally (and in some cases nationally), see Figure 5. These included:

- other churches (of the same or different denominations)
- faith groups
- charities
- statutory health, education and social services
- education providers
- other Third Sector services

In some cases, this also included local businesses with social responsibility policies (through volunteers).

We spoke to some of the partners identified by grantholders. They confirmed that working with a project that had attracted Church of Scotland funding lent ‘weight’ and ‘credibility’ giving them confidence in the partnership they had developed.



## EXAMPLES OF GO FOR IT PROJECT PARTNERS

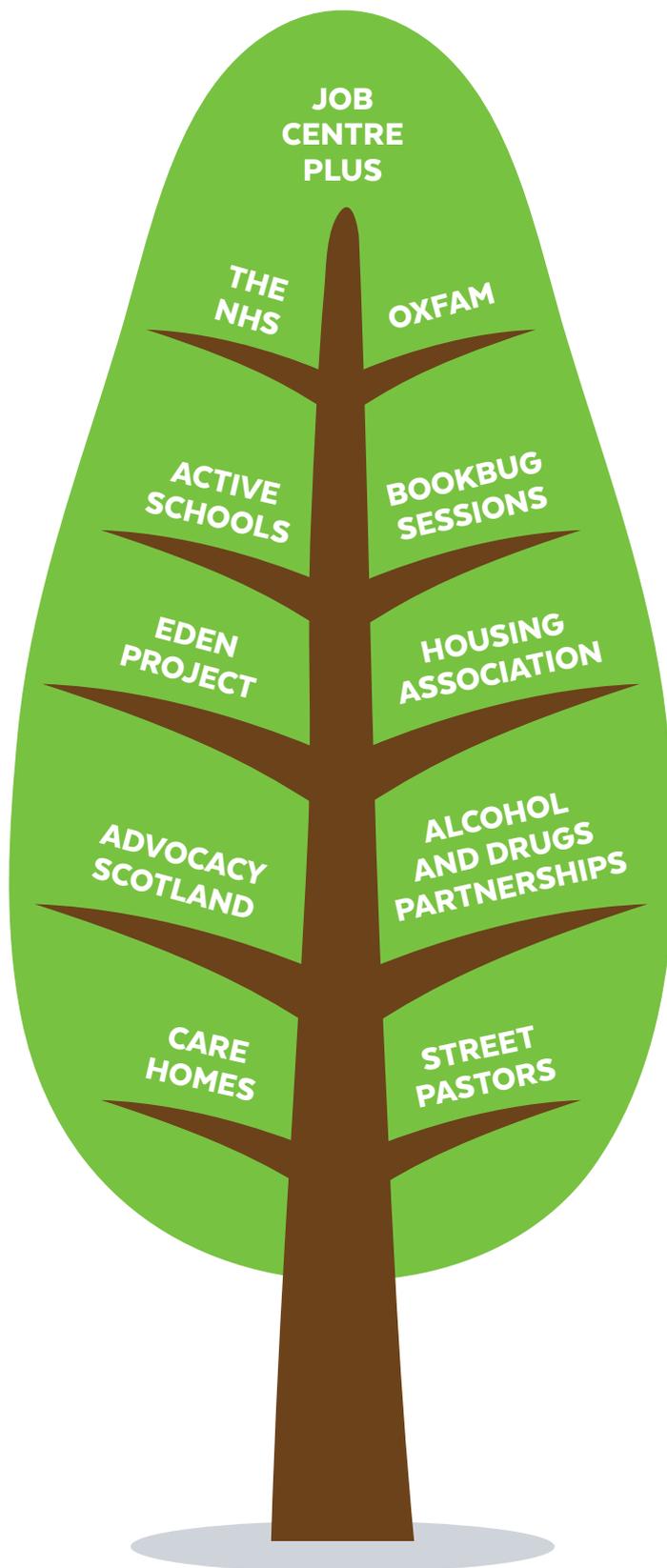


Figure 5: Some of the partners Go For It projects have worked with

Partnerships were viewed as ‘win-win’, bringing benefits to both organisations. For example a partnership between the Dramakirk project in Hamilton and the local Business Improvement District (BID) brought benefits to both. The production value of the drama productions was improved, and church was brought to the community. This was achieved by providing events that the whole community could engage in outwith the walls of the church. These benefitted the local community and businesses. This partnership has grown, and the BID now contributes financially and supports Dramakirk with promotional activities.

### **Transformatory Support**

Partners working with significantly marginalised groups reported that the support that both their clients and the support workers themselves had experienced through faith-based projects was transformatory. One partner, from an agency that works with gypsy travelling people, described how engagement and participation with a funded project’s activities had helped greatly with integration efforts:



**“A lot of places we go, there are a lot of discriminatory attitudes from statutory services. The gypsy traveller community always feel really welcome at the project. This is important for people who face a lot of rejection... They loved doing something within a wider community to celebrate and share their culture. As a worker having the project’s support has also been really important and... enhanced our connections”.**

*Local Project Partner*

## PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHURCH

### Perceptions of Partners

Partners' involvement in projects has impacted on their perceptions of the Church as delivering quality projects/services with no 'agenda' or necessarily coming across as faith-based in a way that they believed might put secular partners off.



**“By coming out into the community like this, it’s just so positive for the Church of Scotland and shows people that it’s not just pensioners who go to church. They’re showing a side that churches are relevant and not just something your granny does”.**

*Local Project Partner*

### Perceptions of Wider Society

As well as changing local community perceptions of churches, some projects had influenced mindsets about what church 'looks like' for other agencies working in the area – such as statutory and Third Sector partners. With church buildings being used throughout the week for a variety of activities, the church was now seen as a respected provider of support in their area rather than a place for Sunday worship only.



**“You can’t underestimate how the church has been influenced by the work in the community. We are recognised in our county as being a place that responds in a practical way to the challenging situation that we have here.”**

*Grantholder*

At a national level, the Church's role as a grant-maker is important. Through this role, the Church has demonstrated to wider society

its connectedness and response to social injustice within communities. Engagement with secular forums, such as the national Scotland Funders' Forum has been significant and has enhanced matched funding opportunities, whilst relationships with well-established Christian organisations such as Scripture Union, have been strengthened.

### Perceptions of the Political System

At parliamentary level, the work of the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office has been significantly enhanced through communicating the stories of projects:



**“Go For It-funded work complements a lot of the work and messages we are trying to get across. We are talking about how the church is part of the life of the community”.**

*Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office*

MPs and MSPs have been encouraged to engage with projects in their area, with 50-60 project visits by individual parliamentarians taking place across Scotland, often developing new relationships. Civil servants supporting government across policy areas were regarded as harder to engage with, often having a lack of religious literacy or understanding of the Church in the community. Again, *Go For It* projects have helped communicate the relevance of the Church's work to the priorities of government in tackling social injustice, leading to an increase in the number of enquiries received about the Church's work.



## AWARDS RECOGNITION FOR PROJECTS

Projects, their volunteers, participants and leaders have been nominated for several high-profile national award schemes. These highlighted the work of the Church in the community, currently sharply brought into focus through its impact as a third sector partner in addressing need during the Coronavirus pandemic.

“

**“The role of the faith-based sector is very important and with foodbanks and care in the communities playing a key role during the [Coronavirus] crisis... supporting community-based action around social injustice”.**

*Chief Executive, Youthlink Scotland*

Go For It-funded projects which focused on work with marginalised young people have been nominated for or have won National Youth Awards – in 2020 Arran Youth Foundations and St Paul’s Youth Forum – showcasing the work of the Church and faith-based projects to a wide audience.

Often both local and national recognition has been achieved through the Christian witness of individual project leaders over time: in 2019 Barbara Macfarlane, an elder at the Steeple Church in Dundee, was awarded the Fellowship of the Queen’s Nursing Institute of Scotland in recognition of the exceptional care she has given to some of the city’s most vulnerable citizens.

**“Barbara... said her strong Christian faith had been a factor in her decision to train as a parish nurse... Her aim in starting the parish nursing project was to reach out with loving kindness and practical support”.**

*Dundee Courier,  
12th December 2019*



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## WHAT DID GO FOR IT ADD TO THE VALUE OF PROJECTS?

### Getting Things Going

Grantholders confirmed that without the funding they would:

- not have been able to get their project off the ground (over half (58%) of grantholders answering the survey said that, without *Go For It* funding, their project would not have been likely to happen)
- have had to delay their project
- have only managed to deliver a more restricted version of the project. The original objective of becoming the 'first funder' was clearly delivered and strengthened further by the *Go For It* team's engagement with other funders through the Scotland Funders' Forum

### Reaching More People

Several grantholders explained that *Go For It* Funding had allowed them to reach more beneficiaries than would have been possible otherwise. *Go For It* had also made it possible for their project to develop or continue, supporting or sustaining work that might otherwise not have been possible.

Most grantholders said that a distinctive feature of the Fund was that it provided a funding pathway of up to 7 years. This allowed projects to 'bed down', evolve and provide ongoing support to their target beneficiaries.

### Assisting Project Longevity

Almost all (92%) of grantholders responding to the survey said their project either has already or will in the future continue after their grant ends. Some were actively planning for the end of their *Go For It* funding by looking for or obtaining funding from other sources, often supported by resources and advice from the *Go For It* team.

The Church is seen as a respected funder and grantholders believed its support through *Go For It* Funding helped their projects to attract match funding from other sources.

A few whose funding had ended were 'in limbo,' 'paused' or 'digging into reserves' to carry on as best they could. Some were now able to sustain their project.

Over half (55%) of survey respondents stated that they would or did require further funding to continue once their *Go For It* funding ended; 18% had achieved sustainability through means such as forming partnerships, reducing or scaling down their project, establishing a separate charity or social enterprise or building on a one-off *Go For It*-funded asset (e.g. equipment).



**“We were very thankful of the funding to employ a paid Administrator who during this contract had set up our records and procedures whereby we could pass on to one of our volunteers”.**

*Grantholder*

### Increasing Fundraising Skills

Some found the experience of going through the application process and being funded and supported by *Go For It* left them in a better position to attract ongoing funding from other sources. This was often due to an increased knowledge, awareness and confidence in applying for funding, combined with the credibility or leverage they felt that having successfully attracted *Go For It* funding brought. Seventy-nine percent of grantholders responding to the survey said that as a result of receiving *Go For It* funding, their congregation was more confident about applying for other funding.

### **Nurturing Projects with Potential**

Although *Go For It* funding was deliberately focussed on local rather than national projects, its investment did allow for some projects to aspire to becoming national in scope. For example, during their Main Grant, the 10 Must Know Bible Stories project created a set of resources for religious education in the primary schools local to the church.

The potential of these resources was clear and *Go For It* staff negotiated what could be funded within the remit of a Continuation Grant while, in parallel, the project developed a partnership with Christian Values in Education Scotland which offered the opportunity to take this forward on a national level, training trainers and developing a now well-recognised and acclaimed national curricular resource.

**“We have built up a relationship with other funders who are match funding so it is easier to find half the funding rather than the whole fund. Being funded has definitely opened other funds’ doors”.**

*Grantholder*

“

**“... if a project becomes successful and could be rolled out in other areas - it’s about how to take good practice and adapt and implement more widely”.**

*National Partner*

**“The *Go For It* belief in the project has helped a lot - also the structure and understanding of what funders are looking for because it’s laid out so clearly”.**

*Grantholder*

**“The reporting was helpful in that when going to other funders we have the whole basis of evidence and life stories. This has helped with compiling subsequent applications”.**

*Grantholder*



## OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Like all Third Sector projects, the challenges of limited funding, limited capacity/resource and reliance on voluntary input were constant and difficult for *Go For It* projects. Most faced the additional challenge of having limited access to funding sources because of the faith-based nature of their work. The *Go For It* Fund provided some relief in these respects by:

- Overtly aiming to fund faith-based projects and recognising a Christian value base, with a willingness to fund a 'combination of community work with an element of Christian mission': most had found identifying sources of funding willing to do this (particularly in relation to core/operational funding) very difficult. One commented '[*Go For It*] were happy for us to do mission with the money, so we could fill in the application without having to spin it.'
- The provision of core funding and longer-term funding, unlike many other sources, was viewed as helpful to enable longer term planning and bedding in for projects.
- Providing a range of funding tailored to different stages of a project, from initial concept and identification of need, right through to support to plan for sustainability.



**“The progression from research right through and then to partly putting your own money in and eventually we will need to self-fund. That gradual build-up is very important and different from a lot of other funding streams”.**

*Grantholder*

- Being willing to fund a 'spectacularly diverse' 'broad' range of activity and also supporting projects throughout a lifecycle from concept to maturity.
- Maintaining a challenging but supportive requirement to define project objectives and report on activities.



**“Some funders are quite loose in their accountability. [*Go For It*] makes you feel genuinely accountable and makes you keep sharp, which is helpful”.**

*Grantholder*



## BEING A RELATIONAL FUNDER



**“They are tremendously helpful: with getting funding, running the project, and all this also helps us (not just our beneficiaries) with the feeling of isolation in rural communities... it’s empowering”.**

*Grantholder*

The support provided by the *Go For It* team was highly valued and experienced by most to be very helpful, particularly through the application stages where the forms could be found to be ‘challenging’ and more detailed than those of comparable funders. Most felt that the *Go For It* team were ‘cheering you on’ with expertise amongst the *Go For It* staff and committee members being offered ‘to help projects to be as good as they can be’. Personal, informal and helpful support in completing applications was provided by people who were genuinely interested in their project. This approach for many was empowering and helped them to be more reflective and refined in their applications with impacts on the quality of the project they felt they then delivered: ‘it catalysed the project to become what it needed to be’.



**“It’s evidence driven - that’s been a strength - they’ve been looking for evidence. They are very keen to make sure the objectives have been realistic and evidence of being able to meet and demonstrate that having impact on the beneficiaries and the things applied for. They’ve been quite rigorous... incisive about wanting people to be able to clearly define what they want to achieve... that’s valuable”.**

*Grantholder*

## VALUE OF TRAINING AND SHARING PRACTICE

### Training

One of the deliberate interventions of the *Go For It* programme was to offer and encourage participation in a range of training and support activities both before and during the development and delivery of the projects funded. This ‘added value’ was designed to support projects and their volunteers and paid workers to run an effective project and to encourage shared learning.



**“A tool for congregations to do what they were called to do, money was the vehicle and the training that went with it was crucial, upskilling a whole generation of church people”.**

*Church of Scotland stakeholder*

In total over 2,500 delegates attended events organised by *Go For It* between 2012 and 2019. Figure 6 shows the variety of sessions and numbers attending in 2019.



Figure 6: Variety of training and development sessions arranged (2019)<sup>4</sup>

4. A total of 160 organisations were represented across these events.

## Roadshows and Learning

The opportunities to come together and share experience and good practice during regular regional roadshows were universally endorsed by those who had been involved; they were described as ‘extremely valuable’, ‘beneficial’, ‘interesting’, ‘engaging’, ‘inspiring’ and ‘mutually supportive’.

Examples of practical benefits brought to projects included:

- One grantholder explained that through the training, she linked up with Evaluation Support Scotland then went back to them when about to launch the project and discovered from them that she could get a grant from the Robertson Trust.
- Some project leads reported that the training they had attended helped them to become more knowledgeable about how funders think, contributing to their confidence in applying for funding from other sources.



**“By using information gained from Go For It training courses, we have been able to identify a number of funders that we have or will approach to help with future funding. We have gained expertise in clarifying what funders are looking for in applications from attending these training courses, and how to complete reports to the standard funders are looking for at the end of their funding cycle”.**

*Grantholder*

Over three quarters of grantholders responding to the survey (77%) agreed that training and support offered by the Go For It team and partners helped them to achieve their goals more effectively. Only 10% answered ‘not at all’ to this question.



**“Networking and being able to see what other projects have tried and share experience and ideas has made [our community development worker] come back and suggest things and open up and broaden [out] what she does. She’s been able to extend herself and work with other groups and develop a lot of intergenerational stuff. I see her growing and getting more confidence”.**

*Grantholder*

## Social Media

Using social media to share learning and project successes also proved beneficial and was another key activity for the Go For It team, highlighting:

- training opportunities
- project stories (most popular on Twitter)
- funding sources
- wider Church news stories (most popular on Facebook)

On Facebook, the announcement of the Go For It Fund reached 2,071 people, whilst the Youth Moderator’s visit to projects in 2019 recorded 1,157 reaches. Facebook remains the most used social media tool by church groups and funded projects, most of which have their own Facebook pages. Top tweets on projects included shared resources from the 10 Must Know Bible Stories project and information on the London-based projects Glass Door and Borderline (working with homeless Scots).

Some Church of Scotland stakeholders felt it was important for the Church to improve its communication of the positive impact of church work within their communities more widely, through better use of social media and ‘bite sized’ information communicated through mainstream media channels.

# 3 What the Church Can Learn from Go For It



**“There can be a lack of realism about the work that a church does (with for example marginalised young people) and what this will bring about for the church: it’s not necessarily going to bring those people into the church. But is your purpose about loving these young people or is it about saving an institution? It’s about loving because that’s what Jesus does.”**

*Church of Scotland stakeholder*

## **A BALANCE OF WORD AND SOCIAL ACTION IS BENEFICIAL**

Overall, most respondents agreed on the need to continue to take a broad interpretation of what ‘*growing the body of Christ*’ means. This happens best when there is a balance of activities which interpret the Gospel through both Word and social action.

## **LOCAL CHURCHES CAN COME CLOSER TO THEIR COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOCIAL ACTION**

Some projects delivered Christ’s message to individuals and neighbourhoods facing hardship and exclusion and made a significant difference to those people’s lives. However, some had few, if any, links to their local sponsoring church congregation and engagement was limited. In future, the Church should redouble efforts to ensure that congregational activity is also nurtured through community projects and that mission is directed towards the needs of local communities.

## **CHURCHES HAVE A LOT TO LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER**

Communication to support and develop shared learning between projects has been a significant part of the *Go For It* team’s work. However, there could be further improvement to the ways in which learning and evidence of ‘what works’ is shared across the Church and its partner agencies.

## **THERE IS VALUABLE WIDER LEARNING**

The Church could improve communication of the relevance of its ministry in 21st century Scotland through more comprehensive telling of project stories to wider external stakeholders.

## **A FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO FUNDING IS NEEDED**

Projects in their early stages tend to develop organically and may move away from initial outline budgets and indicators. The Church can learn from this in its future approach to funding new models of ministry, acknowledging the levels of risk that it is necessary to take with resources in order to make change happen.



# 4 Conclusions

The *Go For It* Fund supported 237 organisations with over £7m of funding to develop and deliver projects that:

- Addressed local community needs, delivering improvements in mental health, financial health, support for addiction, reduction in isolation and many more impacts
- Reached some of the most vulnerable and isolated groups in society with support, practical help and connection
- Improved congregational knowledge and understanding of their local communities
- Improved engagement between congregations and their local communities
- Helped to raise the profile of the Church amongst national, political, statutory and Third Sector audiences
- Developed partnerships between congregations and church-linked organisations and a wide range of other organisations

*Go For It* successfully provided a relational approach to funding. Funded projects and organisations grew in confidence to develop and to deliver better projects, to attract funding from additional sources and to plan future activities. They benefitted from a supportive funder that accepted and encouraged faith-based approaches and provided opportunities to learn and to share learning with other projects. Many would not have been able to achieve the impact they did without the *Go For It* funding.





# APPENDICES



# Appendix 1 - Methodology

This evaluation was commissioned in the spring of 2020 as the *Go For It* Fund was closing in order to reflect on learning about the impacts and effectiveness of the Fund and to inform the development of any future funding programmes.

The evaluation aims were to assess:

1. What in summary are the range of impacts through the fund, in relation to:
  - Congregations
  - Project beneficiaries
  - Project partners
  - Local communities
  - The wider Church of Scotland.
2. How have projects made that impact – what worked well?
3. What were some of the key challenges within the projects, including how projects overcame or mitigated them?
4. How have the different elements of the Fund worked together to achieve impact?
5. In what ways have projects enabled changes in perceptions about the Church?
6. What have been the unexpected outcomes and impacts as a result of the projects?

In order to achieve these aims, the following methodology was adopted:

- Discovery session with the *Go For It* team, using an appreciative enquiry approach to explore rationale, Church of Scotland perceptions of impacts and successes and to develop a logic model that would inform the focus of the evaluation
- Development of a logic model (see Appendix 2) and evaluation framework to guide the focus of the evaluation tools
- Analysis of monitoring data provided by the Church of Scotland
- Survey of grantholders (118 responses received)
- Telephone interviews with 6 Church of Scotland representatives with national level roles
- Telephone interviews with 20 grantholders selected to represent a cross section of types of project, location, types of grant and criteria
- Telephone interviews with 4 unsuccessful applicants for *Go For It* Funding
- Telephone interviews with 3 local and 1 national external project partners/stakeholders

# Appendix 2 - Logic Model

This logic model was developed and refined during the workshop session with the current *Go For It* team and used to guide the development of an evaluation framework and the evaluation tools.

## SITUATION

Need to transform Church and community life through:

- **Main driver** - At top down/national level – consolidate 3 disparate funds and improve governance and co-ordination.
- **At bottom up/local level** – need for Church to reach out, welcome in and improve relevance
- **Missional impetus** – desire to increase confidence and capacity of local congregations to make the Gospel real and relevant to their communities – with the aims of improving engagement

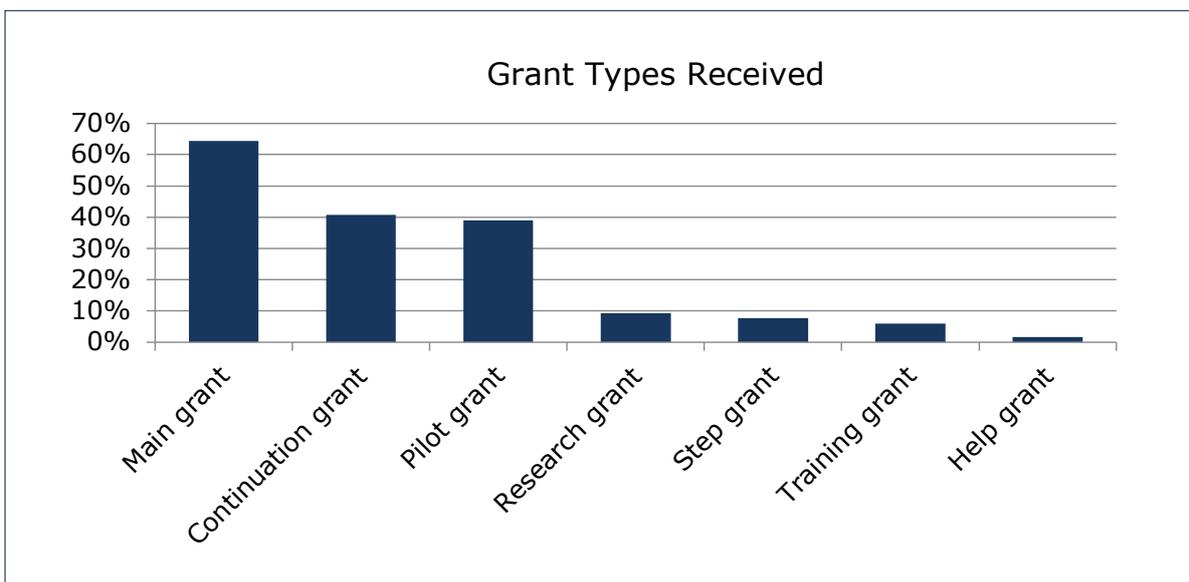
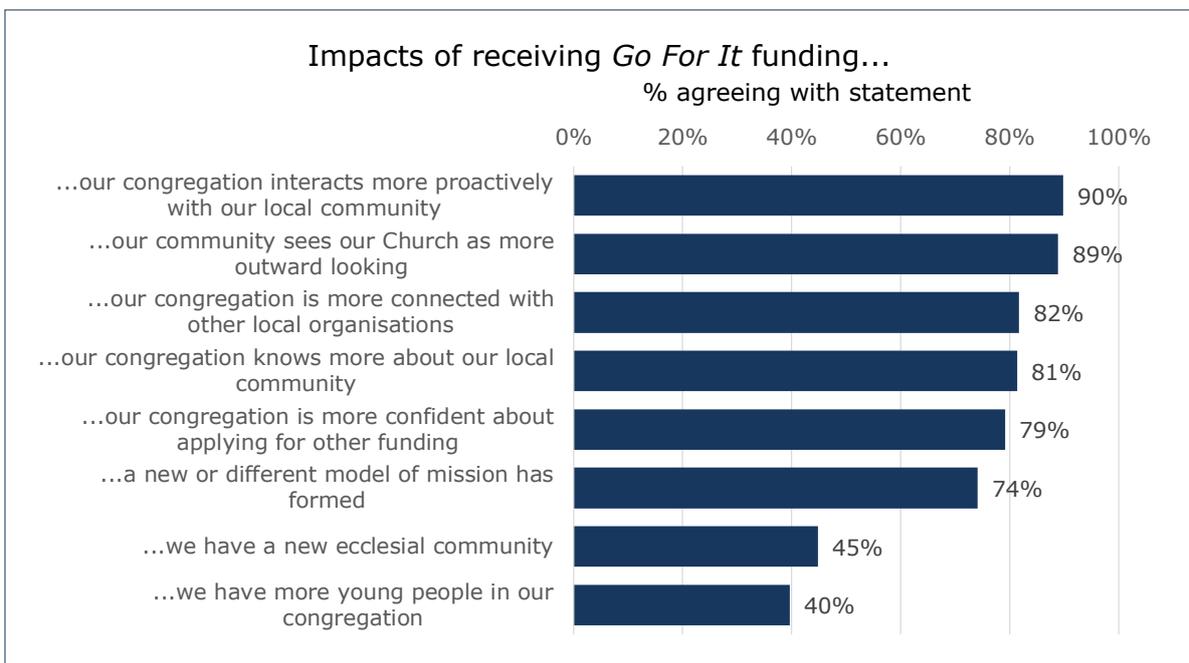
## GOALS

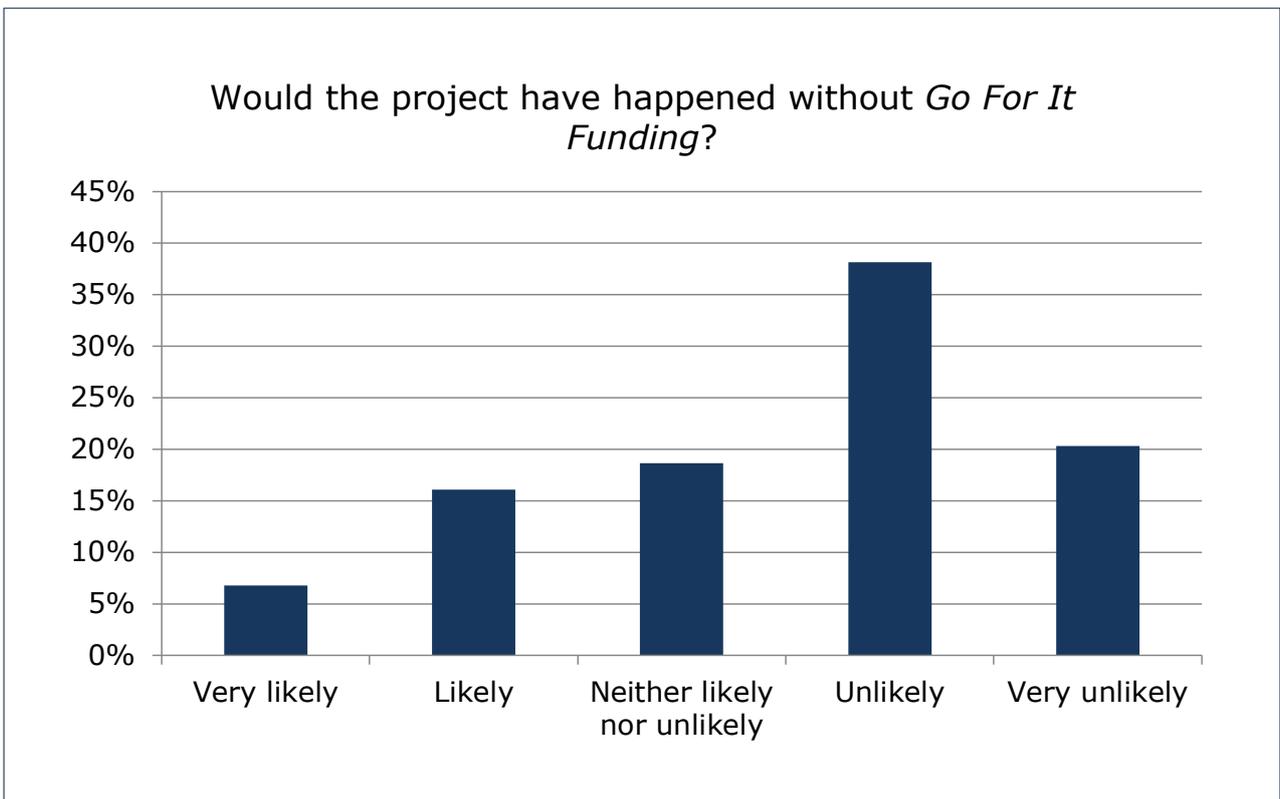
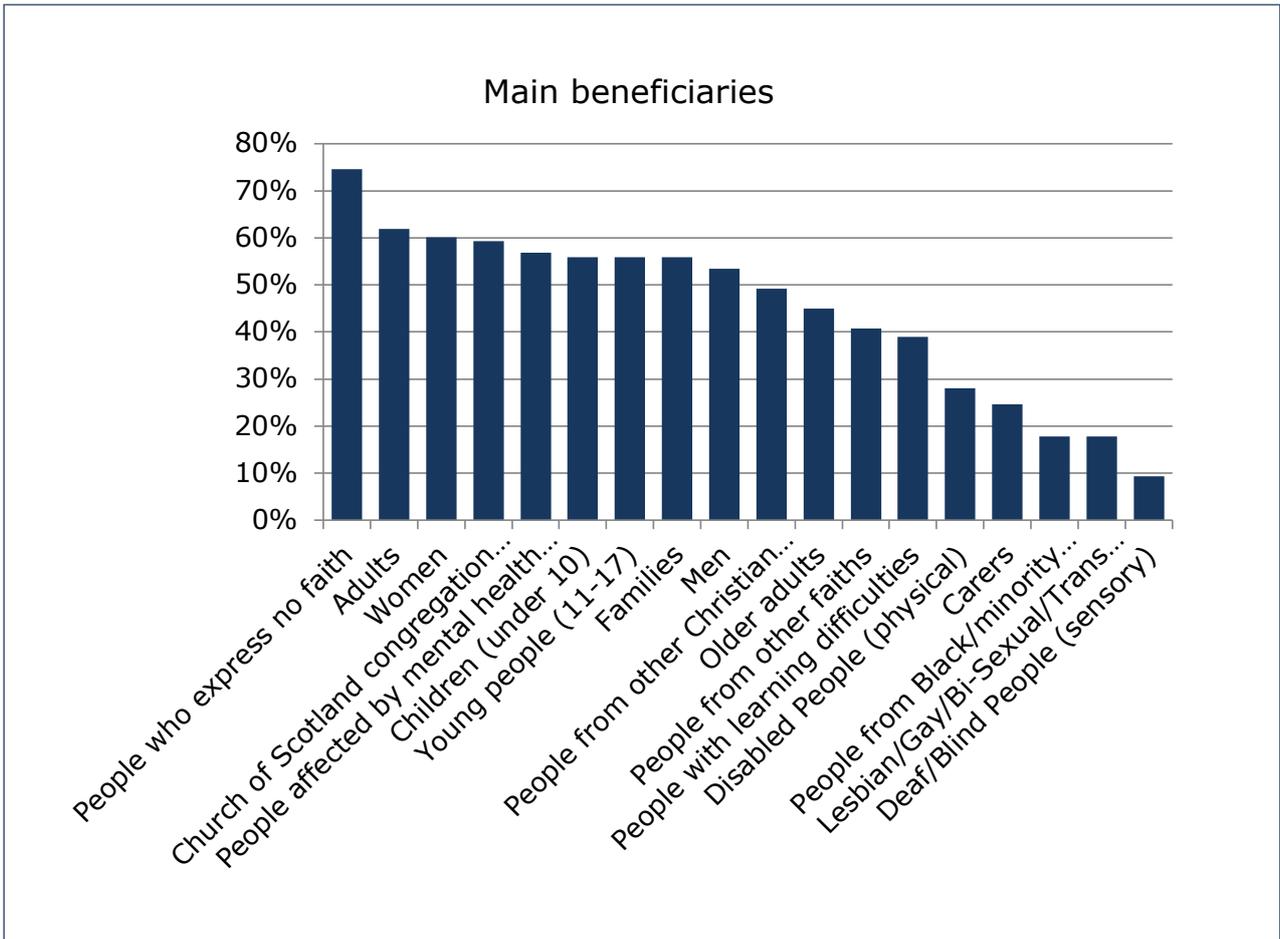
- Good partnership working at Fund level (e.g. refugee support, Faith in Community Scotland, Evaluation Support Scotland, Church without Walls)
- Nurture and grow parish level communities where there is good partnership working and engagement
- Lead applicant church or church-related programme
- To be a first funder which makes otherwise impossible projects possible
- Co-training/learning

Inputs	Outputs		Outcomes -- Impact	
	Activities	Participation	Intended	Additional
<p>£7m</p> <p>2.9 staff</p> <p>Committee of volunteers</p> <p>Volunteer time (1 day per week)</p> <p>IT support and development</p> <p>Input from the communications team</p> <p>Parish Church profiles</p>	<p>Development of the shape of the Fund</p> <p>Launch/promotion event</p> <p>Understanding training needs</p> <p>Development of training resources</p> <p>Provision of support and training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support capacity to apply</li> <li>• support to identify other funding sources</li> <li>• support on ethics of potential funding sources</li> <li>• support on community engagement</li> <li>• skills training (recruiting and managing volunteers, mission, leadership, youth ministry, social media, GDPR etc.)</li> </ul> <p>Training grant and signposting for external training</p> <p>Annual conference</p> <p>Committee – training session and induction day</p> <p>Sharing learning at community/project level</p>	<p>Co-production approaches to building capacity to apply, implement, gather evidence, evaluate and report</p> <p>Congregations</p> <p>Church based charities</p> <p>Communities</p> <p>Vulnerable people (youth, older, isolated, homelessness/risk of, foodbank users)</p> <p>Wider community groups such as bereavement support, cancer support. Etc.</p> <p>Other funders – Church now on radar and presence at funders forum</p> <p>Scottish Parliament – improved profile through community awards, national youth worker awards, etc</p>	<p>Mindset – congregations proactive in communities (individual congregations and nationally)</p> <p>Congregations more knowledgeable about their communities and needs</p> <p>Perceptions of Church (outward looking rather than inward focused)</p> <p>Demonstrating Church interacting with communities</p> <p>New ecclesial communities and models of mission</p> <p>At Church level – enablement, education and improved innovation/creativity</p> <p>Tangible –e.g. addressing mental health and poverty through: a community garden, food/clothing provision, CAP (Christians Against Poverty) centres – UK level franchise model, resources/training for teachers led to a national Bible Society project, alternative models of ministry</p>	<p>Mindset - vulnerable people perceiving themselves as an asset</p> <p>Raised Church profile (national non-church organisations e.g. homelessness interest etc.</p> <p>Respect from schools, NHS, local authorities, foodbanks</p> <p>Mainstreaming/sustainability – through increased confidence – some have developed into social enterprises</p> <p>Confidence to pursue other funding sources</p> <p>Younger congregations where engagement with Fund? (some qualified evidence) – increased attractiveness, increased involvement from young people</p> <p>Scope for wider training internally (within 121)</p> <p>Challenging Church thinking on tackling poverty (it’s wider than just the priority areas)</p> <p>Increase in/wider interpretation of ministry models taking place – lay leadership/pastoral roles</p> <p>Scottish Parliament – improved profile through community awards, national youth worker awards, etc</p>

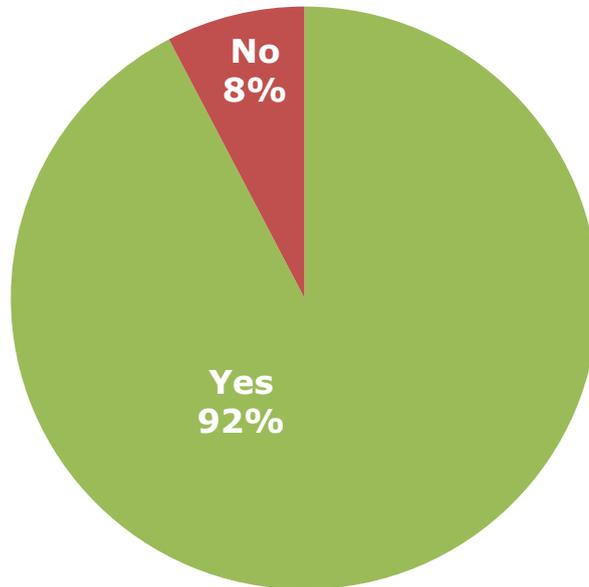
# Appendix 3 - Grantholder Survey Results

118 grantholders responded to the online survey. Their responses are summarised in the following charts.

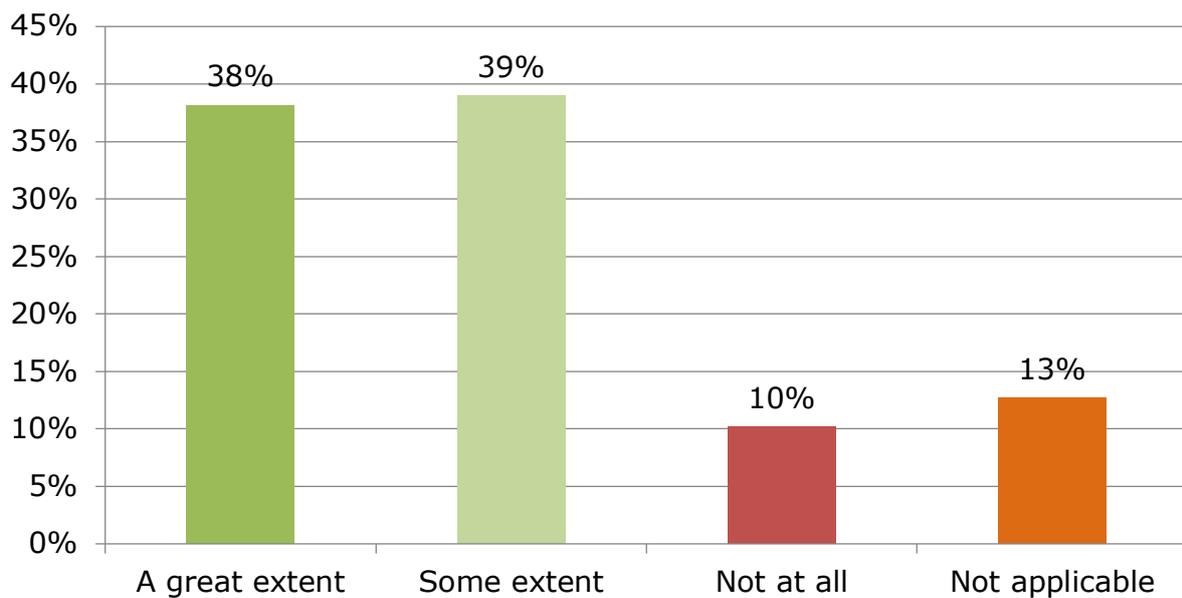




### Did/will the project continue/d after *Go For It Funding*?



### Extent to which *Go For It* training and support helped projects achieve goals more effectively?





**GO FOR IT**

Funding Change in Church and Community