

Community Climate Action

Insights Report



Bristol Climate &
Nature Partnership

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Introduction

This insights report aims to provide a detailed reflection on ACH's Introduction to Green Employment Course and Green Growth Accelerator Project (GGAP), **which focuses on sustainable business support and provision**, as part of the Community Climate Action (CCA) programme Community Climate Action Project coordinated by Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership, funded by the National Lottery's Climate Action Fund. The Community Climate Action project is a city-wide initiative aiming to put communities generally left out of the climate conversation at the heart of climate action.

We are one of five core partners running projects to involve Bristol's communities in achieving the city's goal of net zero carbon by 2030. The aim of ACH's project is to empower and mobilise refugees and migrant residents for climate action, specifically in the movement towards a green economy. These communities are often excluded from the climate discussion, are often the most affected by the issue and contribute the least to the crisis.

This report outlines the aims, objectives, and methods of each of the projects. It first examines the conditions before the courses, including participants' awareness of sustainability, involvement in the green sector, and past sustainable behaviours. The report then analyses the changes after course completion and evaluates whether the courses met their goals. It identifies barriers to participation and discusses enablers to overcome these challenges. Finally, the report provides recommendations for the future use of these courses and for wider stakeholders, including government and community groups.

Methodology

To inform these insights report we have used a mix of qualitative data from online surveys, online and in-person focus groups, observational studies and reflections from tutors on the course and a business consultant supporting entrepreneur businesses to assess the impact.



Introduction to Green employment



Support offered

The Introduction to Green Employment course aimed to support and equip refugees and migrants with the language, concepts and knowledge of pathways into green jobs with roles focused on or related to sustainability and environmentalism utilised within the UK.

By improving access to these opportunities and engaging individuals new to the sector as well as those with prior experience, the project aimed to help participants secure roles or training opportunities in the growing environmental sector, diversifying the workforce and ensuring these communities aren't left behind in the transition to a greener economy.

This was achieved by including employability support such as CV and cover letter writing and job search support. The course has been coproduced and codesigned with lived experience throughout to ensure its relevance to our community.

At the end of each class learners on the course have been given a questionnaire to track and assess feedback. Feedback is then incorporated for the next cohort to ensure the course is relevant, meaningful and up to date.

Around **70** clients participated in online and/ or in-person sessions across 6 cohorts.

- Objectives included: Partnering with local employers committed to **sustainable initiatives** to tailor and provide training and opportunities relevant to the local market, facilitate networking with industry professionals, and provide practical skills.
- Free online Moodle courses participants can continue to access after completing the course.
- Weekly in-person sessions at City Farm over a five-week period, covering topics such as climate change, green industries, transferable skills, and the UK employment process.
- Wider employability support such as CV writing and career advice.
- Use of a variety of learning methods such as interactive and auditory activities to ensure accessibility.





Before

Clients entered the course with varying levels of awareness and understanding of sustainability and other green sector-related concepts. This was therefore considered when tailoring and teaching the course. As the course evolved so did its content to adapt to the changing market and client needs to ensure the co-design and lived experience was imbedded throughout.

- Some had general understanding of climate change and sustainability, largely shaped by advertisements and rhetorics like 'going green'. This demonstrates the importance of awareness campaigns in engaging marginalised communities in the environmental sector.
- Some of those with prior knowledge joined the course as they recognised the green sector as an evolving job market with growing employment opportunities, whilst others felt motivated by Bristol's reputation as a leading green city, highlighting the impact of citywide initiatives.
- Other clients had limited knowledge and understanding of green sector-related concepts, largely due to cultural differences and a lack of climate education in their home countries.
- Some clients joined the course for its employability aspect and a way to gain more knowledge on the job sector while also improving their vocabulary.



After

- An improved understanding of sustainability and climate change was reported by participants after the course, particularly in the Bristol context. Key areas included understanding the ways Bristol puts environmental protection into action, requirements to meet net zero targets, and connections to local organisations.
- **Clients reported a change in their daily behaviours due to understanding of their environmental impacts.** Key behaviour changes were ones with low cost, such as taking public transport, cycling, properly managing and sorting waste, and taking shorter and colder showers. Clients also reported new behaviours such as growing their own food and using natural resources as materials. Overall, clients felt more disciplined in sustainable behaviour after the course.
- Clients had stronger connections and networking opportunities such as volunteering placements, external speakers, and practical experience, making them feel **more confident to approach organisations independently once connections were already established.** They felt they would not have had the same response rate without these connections that helped them to bridge power dynamics and motivated them to be involved in the green sector.
- Clients emphasised the project leader as an incredibly valuable key facilitator for making sector specific connections. This demonstrates **the significance of individualised support** and network connections.



Barriers

- **Difficult employment criteria** is a key systemic barrier for refugees and migrants entering the green sector. For example, many courses that facilitate this entry require you live in the UK for 3 to 5 years, and there is often no eligibility for funded opportunities if you are a refugee or migrant. As a result, clients felt marginalised and were prevented from utilising their skills of accessing the sector – a cyclical barrier. This has wider detrimental impacts as refugees and migrants are a huge resource potential in the development of a greener economy.
- **Lack of/ insufficient communication between and within organisations** was also a significant barrier as there were limited established frameworks, relationships, or referral mechanisms to support clients in overcoming these systemic barriers. Lack of effective communication within and between organisations made it harder for clients to connect with employment opportunities.
- **Unawareness of the opportunities and jobs and services from within green sector** many clients during our classes were completely unaware of services and support organisations available to them when accessing local employment opportunities. Some clients had no recourse to public funds so were unable to access careers advice with the council and had to rely on specialised and targeted courses like the Introduction to Green Employment course to direct them to websites supporting their interest.
- **The need for employability support** despite wanting roles within the sector and applying to them many clients we're not aware UK CV, Cover Letter or job application etiquette e.g. not including a photo and marital status in your CV, how to write about a career break or knowing how to structure a cover letter.

Enablers and recommendations for integration and support

Introduction to Green Employment

What can community and training providers organisations do:

- Strengthen networks and referral systems: Build connections between relevant green sector organisations to clearly define eligibility criteria, improve referral systems, and ensure individuals are directed to the appropriate opportunities. A comprehensive list of these connections should be accessible via a website or brochure.
- Ongoing communication and support: Offer regular course updates and continuous mentoring to maintain engagement and provide long-term support across organisations.

What can employers do:

- Work placements, certifications and career advancement: Provide work placements and recognised certifications (course as an official certification) to enhance job market access, gain industry connections, and increase CV value.
- Create business open days: This enables individuals to get a sense of what it is like to work in that specific place, this supports the demystification of the sector and makes it more tangible overall beyond an idea.
- Transparency at the centre of engagement: employers and training providers who want to engage with diverse communities should outline the job criteria and eligibility information clearly, so individuals are aware of them early on particularly around security clearance and residency. Some individuals are being referred to opportunities they cannot access as their length of residency in the UK has not been long enough. Providing this early on would allow individuals to focus on other opportunities.

- Ensure that job descriptions are accessible and considers experience outside of the UK. We had many individuals who had conservation, construction and engineering experience who wanted to access employment opportunities within the sector but without experience these individuals were often disregarded.
- More business and organisational buy-in. More business = more opportunities for communities to create formalised partnerships with sustainable business so that they could be referral partners after the course ends. This would support and should incorporate more hands-on training, workshops, and site visits to build practical skills.
- Create more volunteering opportunities for individual participation through creating formal partnerships. Many clients found this a valuable route to gain experience and build new networks while also gaining UK based and real-world experience to support their integration within the labour market. Even better if there is an intention retain volunteers for paid opportunities after!
- More work must be done to bridge the gap between sustainable provision and communities. Individuals felt a lot more empowered, integrated and confident in their decision-making when they know what was on offer from sustainable organisations.
- Ensure community organisations are kept in the loop with opportunities within the sector to better signpost individuals. One client stating that support signposting them to relevant courses after the Green Employment course has opened new opportunities. Similarly, during on the of the classes where we invite guest speakers Many conversations were had within the green employment sector.



What can policy makers do:

- Improved accessibility: Reform employment criteria to make government standards more inclusive for refugees and migrants. These groups represent a significant, underutilized talent pool that can contribute valuable skills if barriers like eligibility restrictions are removed. There are organisations such as TENT who can support with codesigning and shaping what this can look like.
- Raising awareness and clear communication: Local councils and business support organisations should implement clear, accessible, and targeted communication strategies to make sure people from ethnic minorities and refugee backgrounds are aware of the resources available to them. This could include translated materials, dedicated outreach programs, and local community workshops.
- Beyond this, approach training providers who are already supporting demographic communities to provide personalised, tailored support and opportunities. Support organisations who are supporting diverse communities to access sustainability courses which are accredited or offer them sustainability courses which they can tailor for their communities e.g. retrofit.

What can training providers do:

- Creating a more tailored approach with the support and engagement of trusted sustainable businesses to provide more meaningful participation routes for individuals: One of the ways our course could have been better improved is if we could have provided even more support to encourage more personalisation and career support for individuals. For example, we often had a mixed abilities class where some individuals had high levels of understanding of the green sector while others did not. This meant tailoring the course to fit everybody's abilities was tough to balance at times. Some individuals requested for more support around identifying sectors and organisations that they are passionate about and to be connected with them for participation opportunities.

- More measures could be put in place to ensure that training provided is in simple accessible language or including definitions in posters and including
- Add: *'we encourage individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds to engage in this training.'* In the blurb to get a diversified community within training. Anxiousness around mainstream training is common individuals raised concerns during discussions that their level of English would be judged, and they'd feel nervous to ask the facilitator to repeat themselves to get more clarity
- Location flexibility and tailored learning: Whilst clients enjoyed the City Farm location, offer diverse learning experience through new locations and practical workshops, catering to various learning styles. This allows clients to pursue personal interests/ passions related to climate change and individualise frameworks to achieve goals. It also helps clients build a more diverse network of connections across various organisations, expanding employment opportunities.
- Consider options for fast-track routes particularly for skilled individuals who have experience in similar fields from their home countries. Recognise their skills and potential without having to jump even more hurdles. Many clients asked about other training upskilling opportunities which don't require you to have lived in the UK for three years e.g. retrofit training.
- Use diverse imagery in the comms and marketing of training. Clients mentioned the same about training how they sometimes would not join or sign up if they felt that they would be the minority during the training.





Green Growth Accelerator Programme

Support offered

In our initial research we found that around 20 - 25% of refugees were described as seeing self-employment or small enterprise development as their chosen route for economic engagement. As we transition to a greener economy we wanted to ensure that our clients felt empowered to make choices were not only the best for their businesses but for the planet as a whole.

Our Green Growth Accelerator Programme provided free business support aimed to help refugee and migrant-led businesses and enterprises to become more sustainable but integrating eco-friendly practices into their launch and/ or development. As sustainability increasingly becomes an expectation for small businesses, the programme aimed to engage refugee and migrant business owners on key aspects of the sector, sustainable business practices, ethical sourcing, and environmental responsibility while advocating for inclusivity within the green business sector to ensure they are involved in climate discussions in the transition to a greener economy. When initially signing up for business support at ACH clients will go through a business assessment called Intergrass, part of this assessment focuses on the sustainability aspect of their business and will support the development of their sustainability goals. This is then reviewed as the business develops throughout the year.

- To date there have been 97 businesses supported with 40 of those businesses active today.
- Objectives included:
- Personalised one-to-one support to assess needs, harness individual skills and create actionable plans.

- Capacity building by educating learners on sustainability terminology using clear, accessible language e.g., topics such as net-zero, harm of single-use plastics and reducing food waste.
- Supporting clients to understand prevalent cultural attitudes with the goal to facilitate greater integration and understanding of Bristol/ UK communities.
- Partnering with local markets and vendors to facilitate accessibility of refugee and migrant businesses to sustainable spaces, e.g., waiving market participation fees.

Before

Clients similarly had varying knowledge and understanding of sustainability prior to the course which was considered when tailoring support

- On the whole, clients had limited understanding, often just associating sustainability with long-lasting or reusable items – shaped by direct translation from other languages. This was reflected in behaviours such as using plastic bags, which are considered sustainable in some cultures due to reusability, but as harmful in the UK as they do not decompose. This underscores the importance of recognising varying interpretations of sustainability when providing business support, aligning understanding with UK contexts.
- Many businesses were less environmentally friendly before receiving support. For example, many used large amounts of single-use plastics due to their affordability and accessibility, unaware of the environmental impact or the preferences of their customers.
- A few businesses were naturally environmentally friendly due to cultural practices. For example, catering businesses reusing extra food for family meals, reducing food waste, and craft businesses using sustainable materials with minimal to no packaging. This highlights the value of representing diverse voices and practices into climate conversations.
- A few businesses already intentionally incorporated sustainability due to prior knowledge, while others had knowledge and were interested in the area but did not know how to get involved.

After

- Clients felt more confident as business owners, largely due to support and encouragement from ACH staff. They emphasised the importance **of one-to-one support and collaborative processes that made them feel empowered and cared for.**
- Clients felt more confident and established in their community connections, strengthening their relationships with customers through improved understanding of local culture and norms, allowing them to culturally integrate more. They felt like they were “part of something” so they “don’t feel alone”.
- Clients felt more confident in basic business skills such as managing finances, posting packages, and developing social media. They were provided with real, valuable feedback that helped their business to improve.
- Clients generally understood more about sustainability, climate change, and carbon footprints, with understandings of sustainability broadening to include notions of equality and diversity. As a result, many want to now encapsulate these within their business. There was also increased recognition of sustainability as a business selling point as it made their business/ products more appealing, took advantage of customer demand, and increased customer satisfaction.
- However, some clients felt they needed more information on sustainability and how to practically implement it, for example, beyond sustainable packaging.
- Becoming sustainable created new business opportunities as changes have wider benefits.

Barriers

- **Integration is often at the forefront of their minds** initially clients are more concerned with integration when starting up a business before wanting to jump into sustainability. First businesses must get used to the different systems of operating for example, learning about tax and sending post and creating invoices.

- The financial cost of becoming sustainable was a fundamental barrier for businesses, and in some cases negatively impacted their development. For example, many markets do not allow single use plastics. This is significant as sustainable packaging is more expensive, and some businesses were still using single use plastics in their transition to sustainability so could not participate in the markets, therefore restricting their business opportunities. This higher cost of sustainable materials also drives product costs, therefore potentially driving away customers. The potential detrimental impacts of becoming more sustainable on these businesses must therefore be acknowledged. Sustainability may also be less practical or less suitable, for example practicality of sustainable packaging, therefore creating further challenges for business owners. For example, there were clients operating craft businesses who wanted to reduce their plastic however customers mentioned the need to plastic packaging to avoid their crafts from being damaged when wet.
- Becoming sustainable creates an added responsibility for business owners. This was highlighted as a significant challenge, especially once clients were no longer receiving business support from ACH.
- Clients at the beginning of their business journey explain it was “too early” for them to consider sustainability in addition to other challenges. This demonstrates sustainability may not be a priority for clients when developing their business.
- Competition with established businesses. Clients expressed a struggle for their business to emerge, especially when introducing culturally new products. This was expressed as a significant barrier for integrating businesses into local cultures/ contexts.
- Difficulty initially accessing/ finding business support. Whilst ACH provides support, clients highlighted a difficulty in initially finding/ connecting with this support.
- Language barriers were identified as a major issue for accessibility and must therefore be a core area for support. Clients said many others like themselves have a passion and drive for business and/ or sustainability but do not have the time or ability to communicate and interact with organisations or those who may help them. These barriers often create a lack of confidence, therefore overcoming them is crucial in making people feel seen and welcomed.

Enablers and recommendations for integration and support

Green Growth Accelerator Programme

What can community and business support organisations do:

- Increased connections with industry: Organise more webinars, discussions, and training sessions etc. led by established companies with sustainability expertise. This could include practical advice on sourcing sustainable suppliers. This will also allow clients to have a better, practical understanding of the market, its requirements, cultural contexts, and the application of sustainable business in Bristol.
- Create community-based projects that help businesses connect with local sustainability goals, fostering collaboration and creating a sense of shared responsibility within the local business ecosystem.
- Refugee Support organisations can support business support organisations through a 'Train the Trainer' scheme. Mainstream business support organisations can learn how to tailor their sustainability business support for language learners. E.g. interpreters for workshops specifically aimed for those with lower-level English. Refugee support organisations can be trained on how to take out jargon, easy to follow resources, translated resources.

What can councils, local authorities and funders do:

- Targeted grants: Introduce grants that specifically support ethnic minorities and migrants, helping them develop new skills and improve their businesses. Also ensure sustainability consultancy services are accessible and affordable to small businesses, enabling them to implement green practices without financial strain.

- Council support and community engagement: Ensure the council publishes clear, accessible materials outlining how it supports ethnic minorities and refugees, promoting a sense of trust and inclusion. Raise awareness through targeted campaigns, particularly in schools, to establish a greater sense of community understanding and relationship.
- Wider structural barriers: Ensure services are accessible despite challenges like childcare responsibilities and provide financial support to help businesses overcome the initial costs and instability, especially considering the high cost of living and potential penalties in the tax and benefits system.
- Financial Incentives: Introduce tax breaks or financial incentives specifically designed for new businesses, particularly for individuals who are transitioning from benefits into entrepreneurship to support them engaging in sustainability. Reevaluate the tax structure to ensure it doesn't penalize new business owners or individuals with low incomes. There should be incentives for growth rather than taxes.
- Support businesses in becoming more environmentally sustainable by offering workshops, grants, or incentives that encourage green practices.
- Ensure inclusivity is purposefully thought throughout the process of engagement: Many of the individuals we support want to participate within the sustainability movement but often feel 'it's not made for me'. One client mentioned that they would be more inclined to apply for Green Business grants to support their business going greener if the grant outline and description included something as simple as 'we welcome applications from people with minority ethnic backgrounds.'
- Individuals raised concerns during discussions that their level of English would be judged and they'd feel nervous to ask the facilitator to repeat themselves to get more clarity. More measures could be put in place to ensure that training provided is in simple accessible language or include in the training blurb 'we encourage individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds to engage in this training.' To get a diversified community within training of learning about grants of how to make their business more sustainable

- Councils providing opportunities for businesses to become more sustainable should: provide language assistance to ensure that non-English speakers or those with limited proficiency can access support and communicate their ideas and be able to support them and make recommendations on tangible ways to become more sustainable.
- This could include hiring staff who speak multiple languages and can provide tailored assistance. Community groups could support individuals to become community champions who can help disseminate sustainable opportunities to different communities.
- Use of language like 'green' are inaccessible clients mentioned that they saw the poster for our course and didn't know what it meant. This terminology is not only new for us in the UK and Europe but for many newly arrived individuals and clients who first language is not English may not understand that this word encompasses a whole sector of work and opportunity. Only individuals and communities 'in the know' were more clued into what the word green encompassed. Other clients were encouraged to sign up to the course by our team and agreed to partake once we explained further what it was about.

What can ALL (community organisations, business support organisations and councils) do:

- Overcoming barriers and empowering communities: address language barriers by ensuring clear communication and support, allowing businesses to engage with organisations effectively e.g. markets. Foster a sense of empowerment and confidence by providing advice tailored to the unique needs of ethnic minorities and migrants, helping them understand market demands, cultural considerations, and sustainable practices in the UK. The role of ACH in providing personalised support -such as dedicated time, appointments, and tailored resources - was highlighted as crucial in this. Diverse insights and individualized help make businesses feel more welcome and supported.

- Practical sustainability information and awareness: Provide accessible and practical resources (e.g., digital booklets, Instagram posts, or webpages) with practical sustainability tips for small businesses. Increase clarity on what 'green jobs' are and the benefits of involvement to make the courses more accessible to prospective clients.
- Awareness of rights and regulations: Offer clear information on industry regulations e.g., hygiene standards for catering, and available support services like those from ACH. Improve the visibility of services like those offered by ACH. Emphasize the conditions under which support is provided to reduce hesitations about seeking help, particularly regarding concerns over losing benefits or resources.
- Coproduction of services with community groups with lived experience at the centre, councils and training providers: for community organisations to work with local councils and government bodies to ensure that policies, opportunities of engagement and services cater to the needs of ethnic minorities, refugees, and individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. This would support them with understanding the barriers of the clients we support. Engagement should go beyond a tick box event. For example, there are opportunities that our clients would like to engage with where if small changes were made, they would be able to access





Conclusion:

Overall, the project was successful in engaging refugee and migrants in sustainability with all clients learning new terminology to support their sustainability journey, 30% accessing training or volunteering within the sector and businesses considering sustainability in their immediate or longer-term plans.

The need for tailored support, clearer communication, and a more inclusive approach to business support is evident.

The importance of community connection and networks to facilitate integration into the sector for both entrepreneurs and individuals trying to access the green sector was also a string factor in the success of this project.

The need for supporting organisations who were willing to offer opportunities to our clients to try out their sustainable products or trying new career opportunities was beneficial for the personal, professional and integrational development of individuals.

Additionally, financial incentives and long-term sustainable support that is accessible and inclusive are essential for helping individuals thrive as entrepreneurs. By addressing these barriers and implementing the recommendations, local councils, organisations like ACH, and the government can play a key role in empowering individuals to succeed in business and contribute to the wider community.

Specifically, long-term sustainable support that is accessible and inclusive.





**Community
Climate Action**
Let's make change in Bristol

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 Bristol Climate &
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