



THE GATEWAY
Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian

VSGWL Stakeholder Survey Report 2025

CEO Introduction

I am pleased to introduce the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian Stakeholder Report for 2025. This year's findings are based on 22 responses to our annual stakeholder survey. This past year has been one of significant challenge, change, and opportunity for the third sector in West Lothian. Despite the pressures facing our communities, our organisations have continued to demonstrate exceptional resilience, innovation, and dedication to the people we serve.



The external environment has been particularly demanding. Ongoing financial constraints, rising service demand, increasing operational costs, and continued pressures on the workforce have placed many local third sector organisations under sustained strain. At the same time, the complexity of need across West Lothian has grown, with organisations being asked to do more — and to do it differently — often with fewer resources. These challenges make partnership working, clear communication, and strategic alignment more important than ever.

Against this backdrop, our engagement with West Lothian Council and the Integration Joint Board (IJB) has taken on renewed significance. Throughout the past few months, we have actively supported consultations and strategic planning processes, ensuring that the voices and experiences of the third sector are represented, valued, and embedded in local decision-making.

The willingness of both West Lothian Council and the Integration Joint Board (IJB) to engage collaboratively has been vital, and we remain committed to strengthening these relationships as we move forward. The importance of the sector in having a strong voice in these forums is crucial. Our colleagues across the sector help us to ensure we have a strong, united position in advocating for positive change and focussing on the needs of those at local level.

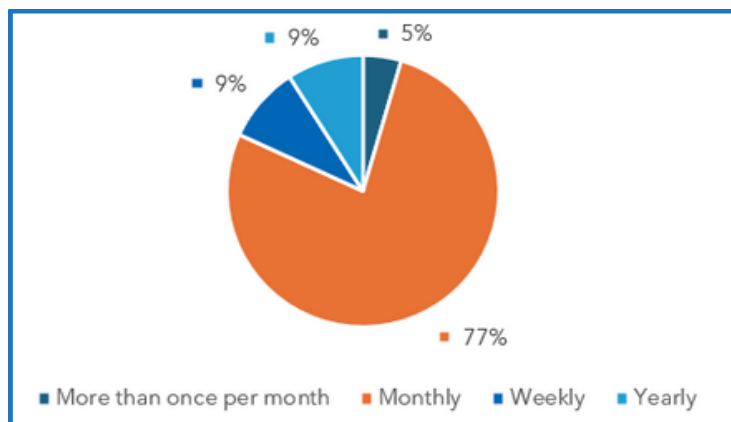
As we look ahead to 2026 and beyond, our priorities remain clear: to champion the third sector, to connect organisations and communities, and to build capacity so that local groups can continue to provide essential support. Our [VSGWL 5 Year Strategic Plan 2025-30](#) is designed to strengthen and support the Third Sector and Social enterprise community within West Lothian.

I extend my sincere thanks to our members, volunteers, partners, West Lothian Council, the IJB, and all those who have contributed to this year's progress. Your collaboration, insight and commitment ensure that the sector remains a powerful force for positive change across West Lothian.

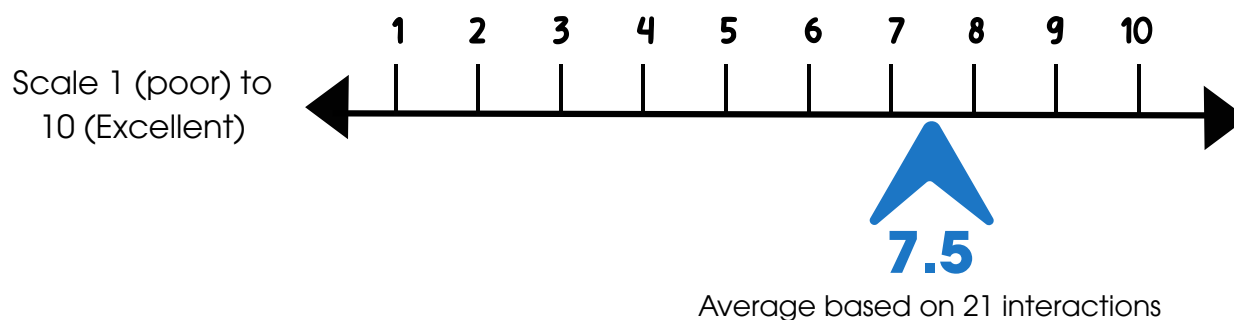


Alan McCloskey
Chief Executive Officer

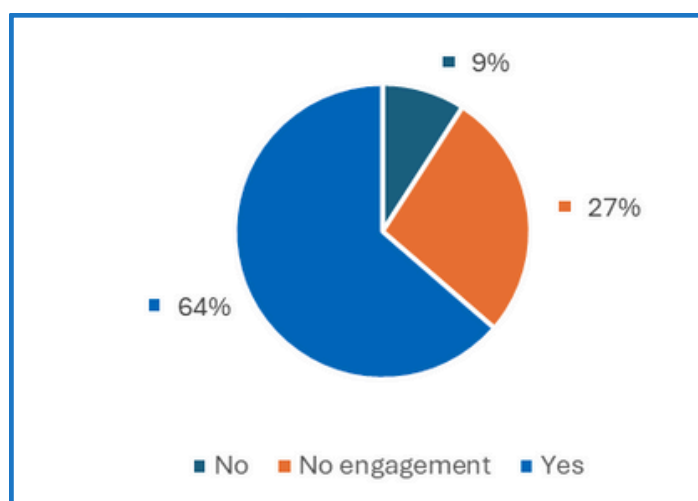
1. Over the last 12 months how often have you engaged with The Gateway?



2. How would you rate the services and support The Gateway has provided in last 12 months?



3. As a result of engaging with The Gateway, do you feel more connected with other organisations?



4. What would you like to see us do more of to support your organisation?



Offer workshops on topics such as Office 365 and how to use AI.



Provide more notice for upcoming events.



We would benefit from consultations on generating income beyond grant funding, as well as support with writing policies.



Support with ideas and approaches to help recruit volunteers.



Some way of linking organisations who need resources with organisations who have them. For example, vehicles that are unused at certain times of the day could be hired out at a reduced cost to support other organisations. Not sure if the Service Locator is the right tool for this



I think the organisation does great work. I am interested in the growing support for social enterprises.



Volunteering training and events for volunteers.



When information sessions are on if possible have more spaces available as they get sold out a lot or more than one day available for more opportunity. I know this is not always possible.



I think you're doing a great job- we haven't engaged too much as haven't had time or capacity, but look forward to developing this as we know how important these relationships are :)



Represent charities, the work they do and champion them. Actually advocate for them and do the role a good TSI should do, in particular with the Council.

Support the essential work the sector deliver - there is too much focus on supporting new and unestablished groups at the expense of long-standing organisations who provide critical support.

Recent decisions show a lack of real understanding in the sector and in West Lothian, some questionable awards in funding.

Feedback shared has indicated that VSG staff do not fight for charities, or advocate on their behalf in Council meetings when they should.



N/A - I already feel supported to deliver activities in West Lothian.

I am more than happy with the service provided and can reach out for help when we need it.



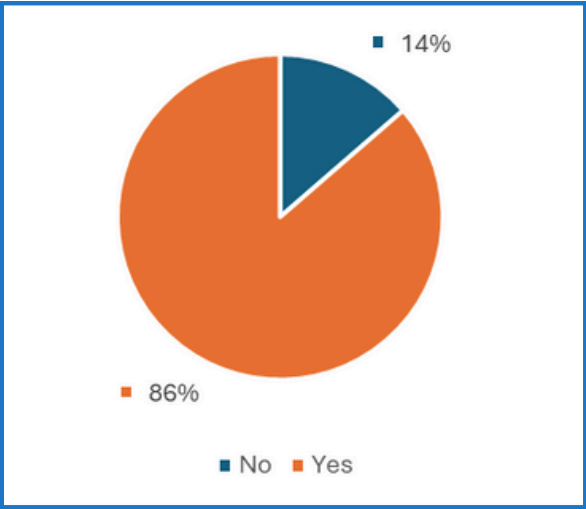
More face to face networking.



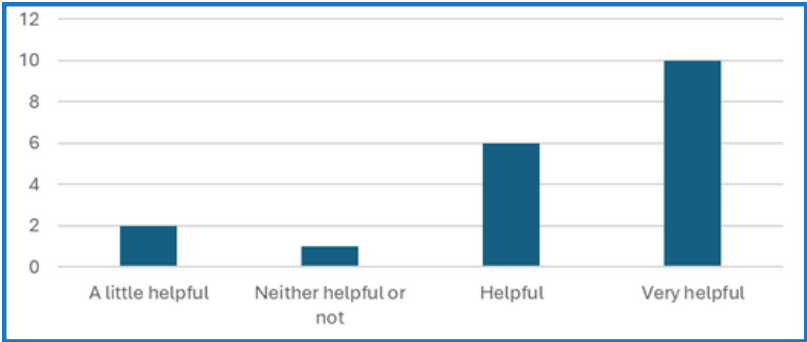
Your newsletter with funders/events needs to be timeous. You have to defend ALL organisations not agree with the Council when they propose top slicing budgets. You should be leading, not hesitating, campaigns against council cuts/closures to the 3rd sector. You should prepare "upstream" costs, including loss of community benefit, of the consequences of these proposed cut backs.

Challenge the Council to move to participatory budgets. A budget to encourage community empowerment and asset transfer, like most other Councils.

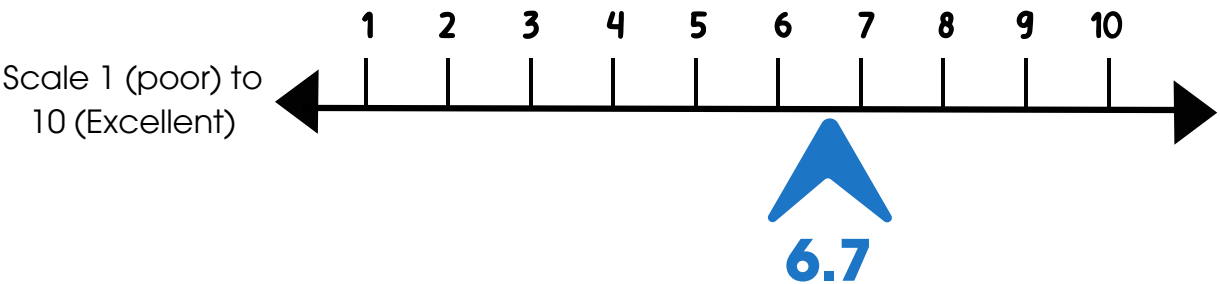
5. Thinking about the information you get from The Gateway, is it useful and relevant?



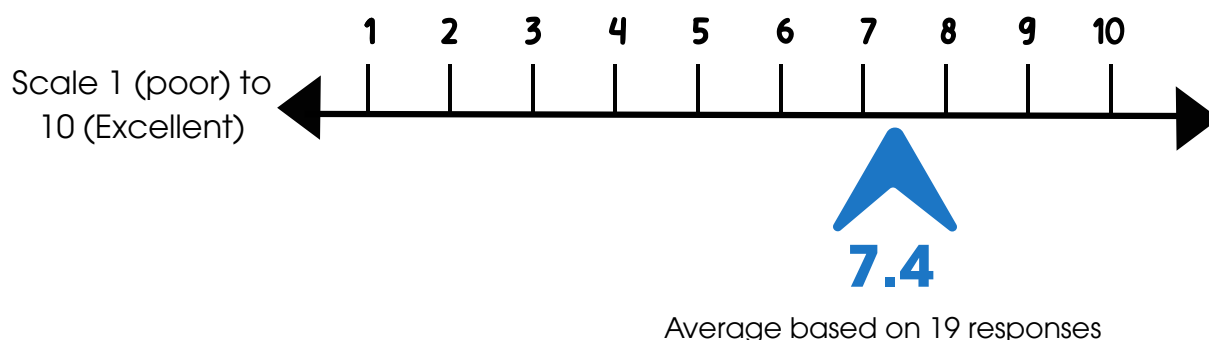
6. If you have used our services or worked with our team for support or an enquiry, how would you rate it?



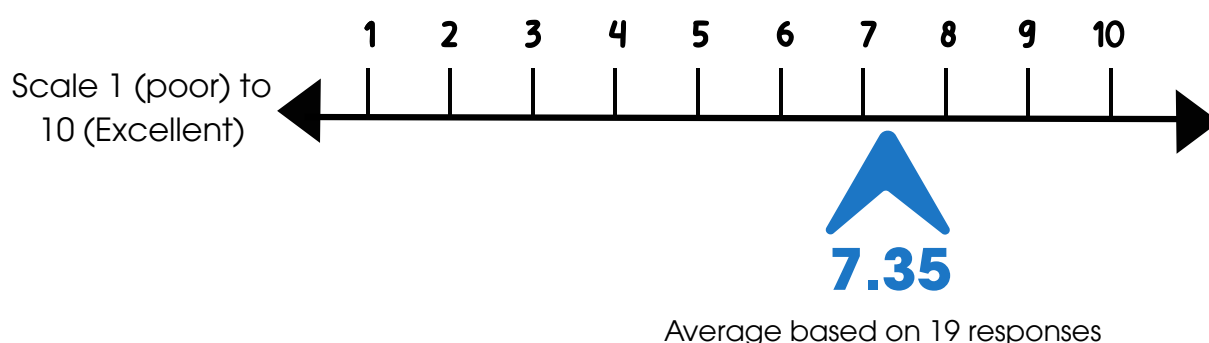
7. How effective is The Gateway at capturing your organisation's views and comments to represent the sector?



8. How useful is the content, templates and resources on our website?



9. How would you rate the updated Service Locator tool on our website?



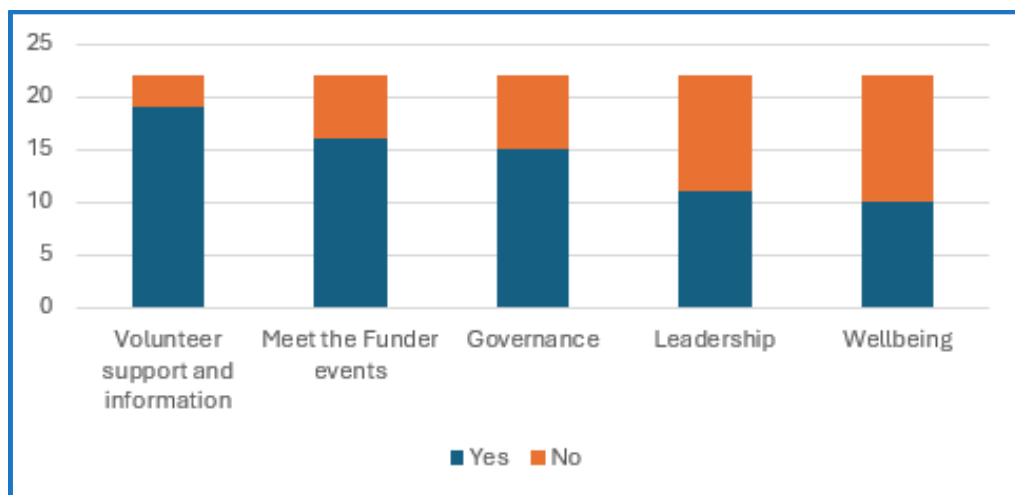
10. Is there anything different or additional you would like to see on our website?

More local news and opportunities highlighted

Possible list of general volunteers to be able to contact with possibility of being more specific volunteer.

Up to date information
Be more transparent about what is actually delivered by your team - still seems very low output for a large team

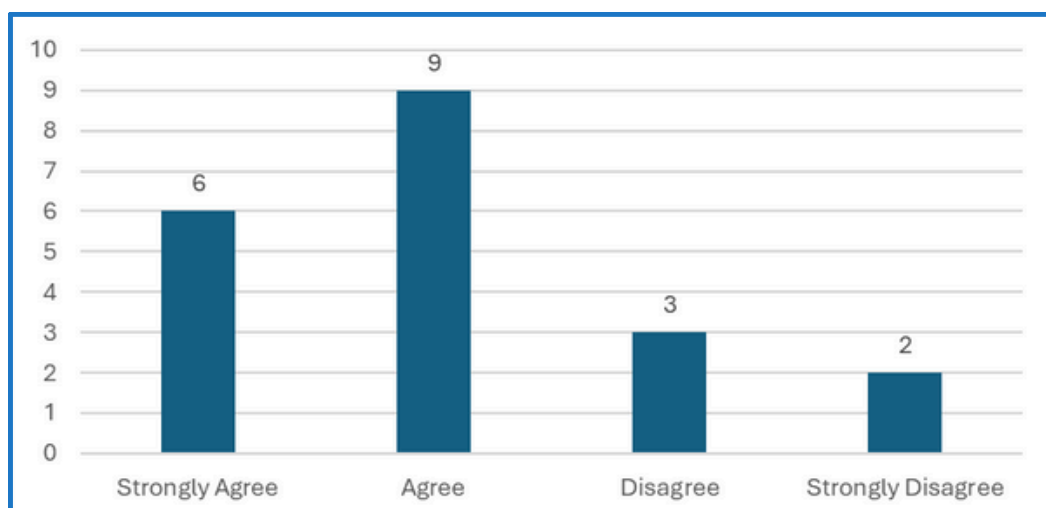
11. What events/training/awareness sessions do you think we should be hosting for the sector?



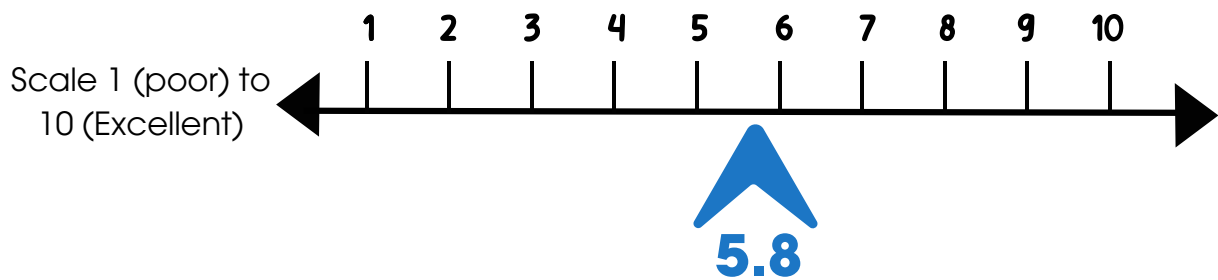
Other Suggestions

- Training for staff working with volunteers that have complex needs.
- Connecting groups and organisations
- Networking events

12. Does The Gateway do enough to support and promote volunteering?



13. How beneficial was the support from The Gateway to help you find volunteers?



Average based on 17 responses

14. How could we help you more with Governance support?

Templates and workshops on changes to legislation

Training for new/long term board members

Have examples of policies

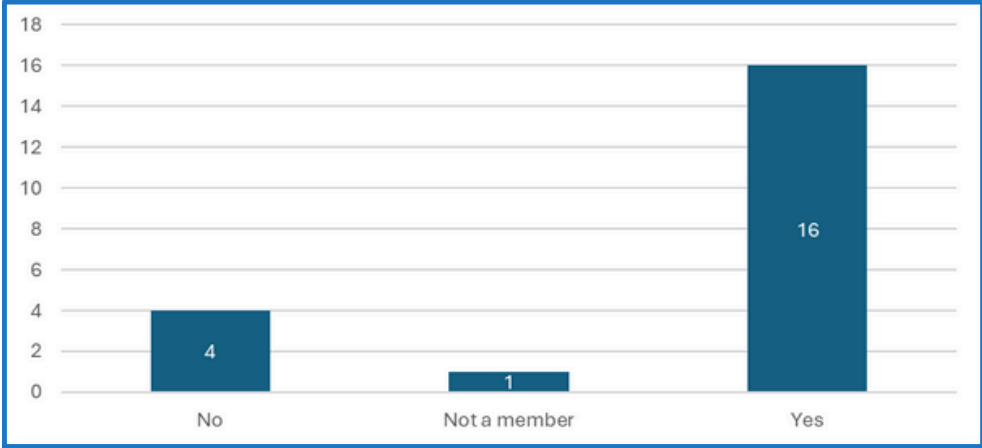
Probably short courses in person

**Support the development of individuals to be effective and supportive Trustees to charities that need to have Trustees that are active in their role.
Raise awareness of the importance of Trustees and skill sets needed (for some posts) but how important commitment, presence and willingness are.
Lead by example - set an example**

Organise free training, both during the day and in evening.

Training for Trustees, list of recommended policies to have and templates for same etc just so we know we have them all

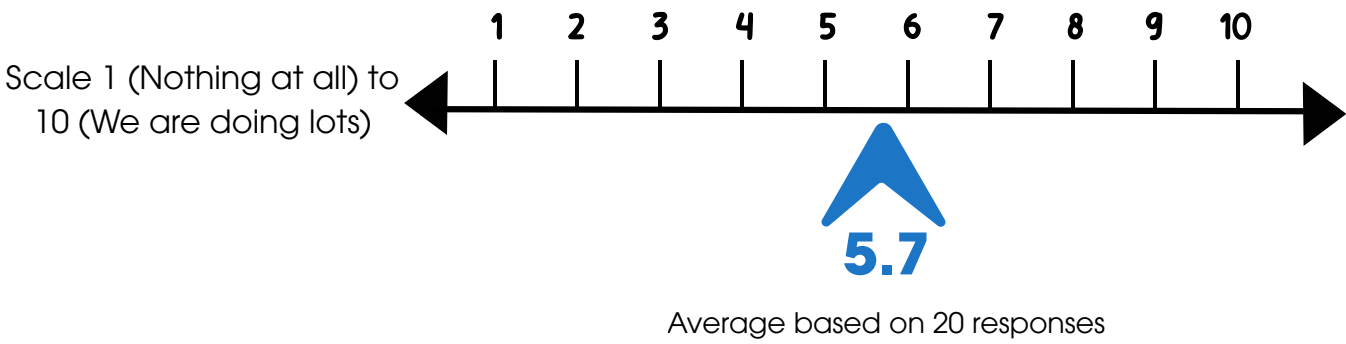
15. Do the benefits and services you receive from The Gateway make you feel valued as a member /stakeholder?



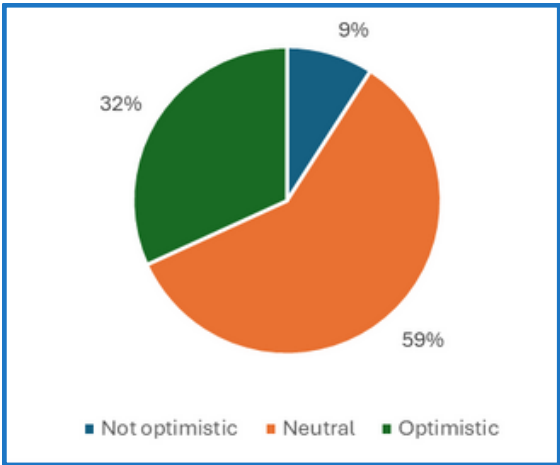
16. What is your biggest concern for your own organisation over the next 12 months?



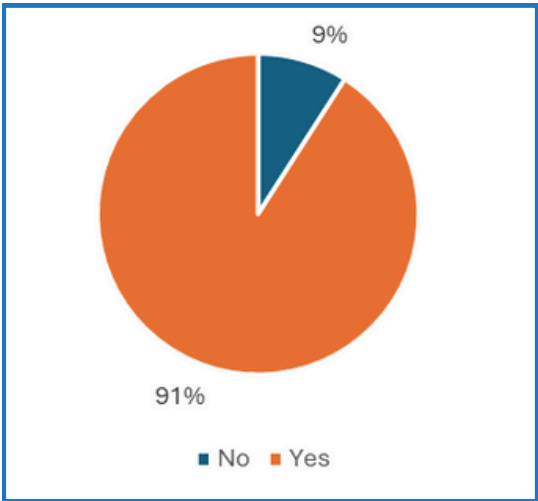
17. How much focus is your organisation dedicating towards Net Zero initiatives?



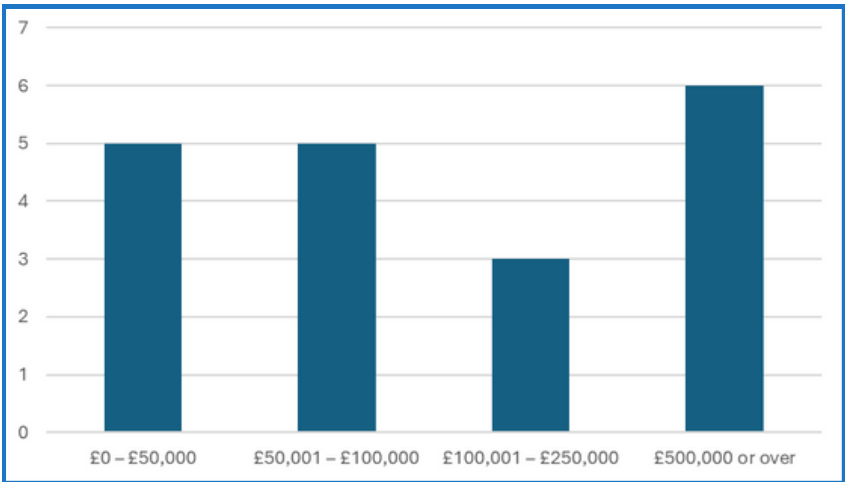
18. How optimistic do you feel about the future?



19. Are you a member of the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian?

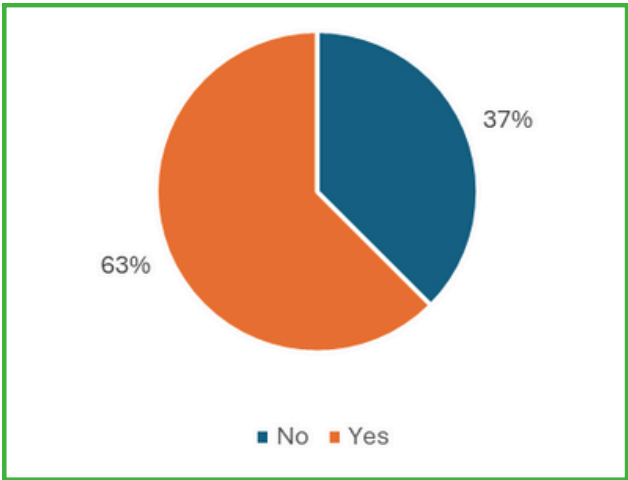


20. What is your organisation's income bracket?

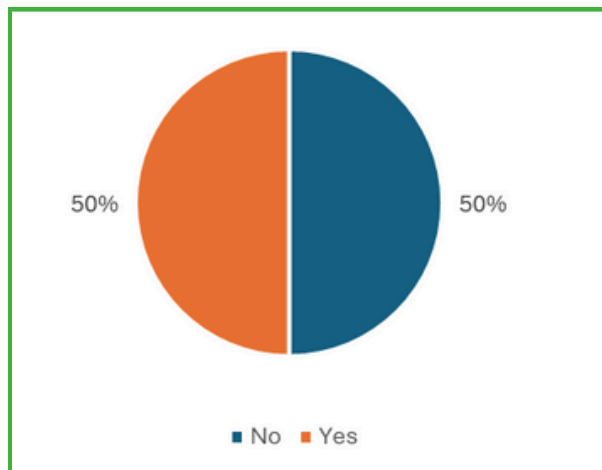


Social Enterprises

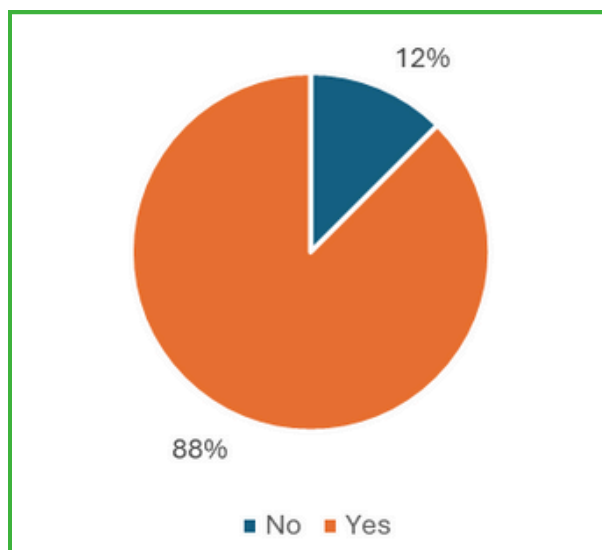
1. Did your Social Enterprise make a profit in the last financial year?



2. Is your social enterprise sustainable without additional grant funding?



3. Are you thinking of employing any new staff or expanding in the next 12 months?



4. What's your biggest challenge as a social enterprise?

Having our services valued by statutory sector



Lack of time



Balancing supporting vulnerable /volunteers who have complex needs with the pressures of trading.



Our SE is inherently linked to the parent charity in e.g. benefitting from finance and marketing support and the parent charity is heavily reliant on grant funding.

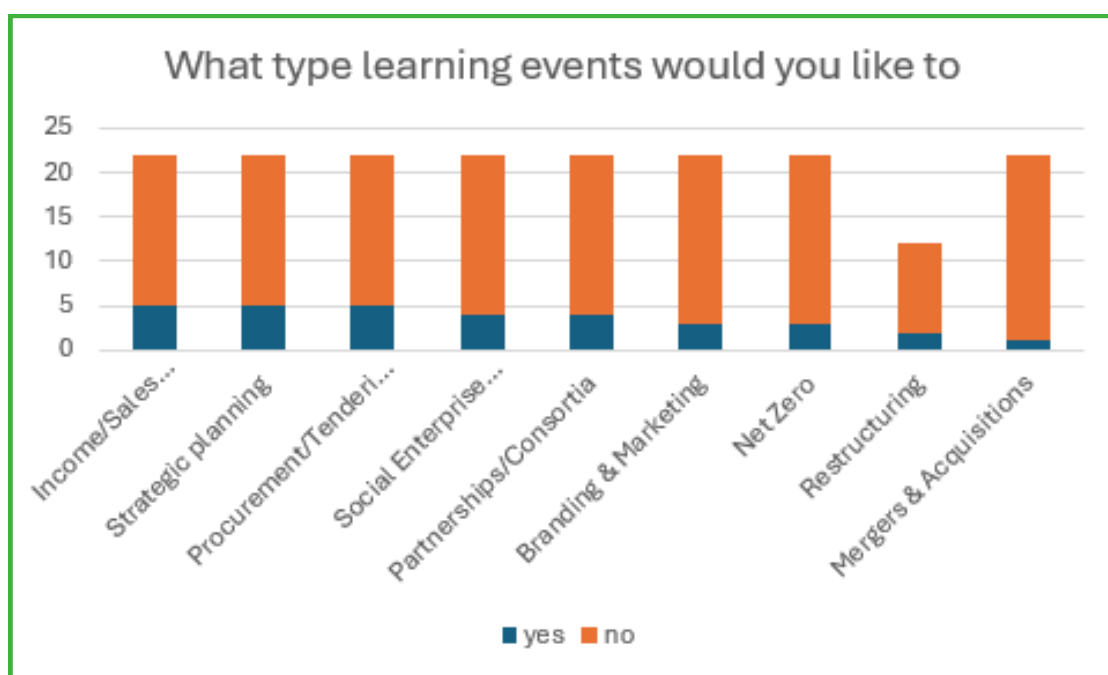


It is becoming increasingly difficult for us to recruit and retain SE staff.

Funding for events further out into West Lothian and starting paid employment further down the line for 3 staff members then looking to eventually employ our 3 volunteers



5. What type learning events would you like to see us host?





You Said

We Will



Offer workshops on topics like Office 365 and how to use AI.



We are investigating AI courses exclusively for the sector and promoting the productivity courses offered by Business Gateway.

Give more notice of upcoming events.



We completely understand that as much notice as possible is helpful. We have already extended the lead-in time for promoting our events and will look at extending this further. Members of VSGWL (free to join) receive advance notice of events and the opportunity to sign up early.

Help with ways to recruit volunteers.



Our development officers can help with ideas around comms or anything else to recruit volunteers.



You Said

We Will



We would benefit from a consultation on generating income beyond grant funding. We would also benefit from support with writing policies.



We have introduced one-to-one and drop-in funding sessions with our Development Officers. We have policy information, including templates, available on our website, and we signpost to additional resources where needed. We will work on promoting this more so people are aware of what's available.

I think the organisation does great work. I am interested in the growing support for social enterprises.



Thank you — we will continue to develop our support for Social Enterprises.

N/A – I already feel supported to deliver activities in West Lothian.



Thank you.



You Said

We Will



Some way of linking organisations who need resources with organisations who have them e.g. an organisation with vehicles only in use at certain times each day and could hire them out at a reduced cost to other organisations. Not sure if the Service Locator is the right tool for this.



Our Service Locator helps people discover and locate essential services across West Lothian.
Our Membership Development Officer may be able to help signpost or connect organisations looking to share resources. We'd be very happy to support this.

Volunteering training and events for volunteers.



We will take this on board and explore opportunities to work with organisations and partners to deliver more volunteer-focused sessions. We already run a number of these and they are very popular, so we understand the demand. However, specific training sessions can require a dedicated budget, which can be a challenge. We'll continue to look at how we can expand this where possible.



You Said

We Will



When information sessions are on, if possible have more spaces available as they get sold out a lot, or offer more than one date. I know this isn't always possible.



We've taken this on board. We can adjust the room capacity where appropriate, and we usually offer an online option if the in-person session sells out. We often receive cancellations for full events, and we operate a waiting list to give others the chance to attend.

More face-to-face networking.



We will continue to include networking opportunities at all our events and provide some dedicated networking sessions. In 2026, we plan to trial morning and evening networking options to see what works best for organisations.



You Said

Represent charities, the work they do, and champion them. Actually advocate for them and do the role a good TSI should do, particularly with the Council. Support the essential work the sector delivers – there is too much focus on supporting new and unestablished groups at the expense of long-standing organisations who provide critical support. Recent decisions show a lack of real understanding in the sector in West Lothian, with some questionable funding awards.



We Will



We have strengthened how we engage with West Lothian Council. The Third Sector now has a clearer voice in shaping policy through the Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels (PDSPs). We also meet with the Council through a dedicated working group involving representatives from across the sector, and we will continue to develop our consultation and advocacy activity there.

We believe all organisations — new and long-standing — deserve the same level of support. We maintain regular contact with established groups and provide assistance whenever needed. Many are already operating at a high level and may not require as much ongoing support, but every request we receive is treated equally and we always aim to offer the best help we can, regardless of the organisation's size or stage.



You Said

Your newsletter with funders/events needs to be timeous. You have to defend ALL organisations, not agree with the Council when they propose top-slicing budgets. You should be leading, not hesitating, campaigns against council cuts/closures to the third sector. You should prepare 'upstream' costs, including loss of community benefit, of the consequences of these proposed cutbacks. Challenge the Council to move to participatory budgets — a budget to encourage community empowerment and asset transfer, like most other Councils.



We Will



Our monthly newsletter is prepared and issued at the end of each month. We also send stand-alone newsletters when needed or when information is time-sensitive. We will continue to review this to ensure updates are as timely as possible. While we engage proactively with the Council on the impact of their decisions, we do not have the same level of resources to produce detailed cost-analysis work, much as we would like to. We continue to raise concerns and highlight implications wherever we can. The Third Sector Working Group is actively discussing with Council officers how Participatory Budgeting can be further developed locally. We are also working to influence how the Community Wealth Building agenda can better support local organisations and meet community needs.