Examining the Governance Capacity of Place-Based Charities in Scotland

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Contributions

All work included is my own and in no way reflects views of Scotland's Regeneration Forum (SURF) or the University of Edinburgh.

Abstract

Background: Through the Community Empowerment Act, the Scottish government is calling on communities to play a role in public service delivery, operating on the assumption that greater involvement will lead to tailored outcomes. This deliberative policy approach has been adopted to address Scotland's stark health inequalities. Research indicates that more privileged communities tend to have more resources, knowledge, and actors to engage in such processes and, as such, may benefit more than deprived communities.

Objectives: Determine how Scottish place-based charities perceive their governance capacity and what they consider key assets and hinderances to meeting their organisational goals to gain insight on the CEAs ability to reduce inequalities.

Methods: A mixed methods approach was used relying on a survey (*n*=35) and 11 semi-structured interviews.

Results: Charities perceived their governance to be adequate, linking their challenges to government policy and processes including complex funding application; however, this represents a disconnect between internal and external governance which cannot be made.

Conclusion: The CEA will not lead to a meaningful reduction of inequalities due to the broader context of austerity, limited knowledge of public administration and staff capacity of charities.

Key Words – Governance Capacity, Public Service Delivery, Inequality

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1 Introduction

Sometimes referred to as the "sick man" of Europe, Scotland has the lowest life expectancy in Western Europe (Miall et al., 2022). As the difference in life expectancy between the most and least deprived reaches 10.2 years for women and 13.5 for men in 2018-2020, Scotland's health inequalities are expected to continue to widen (Miall et al., 2022, p. 16). Public services, including healthcare, social care, criminal justice and education, follow the inverse care law with more services available in privileged areas, limiting access to care in deprived areas (Miall et al., 2022). In response to these worsening inequalities, the Scottish government has adopted a deliberative policymaking approach wherein communities are encouraged to engage in policy creation and service delivery in the hopes that services will be better tailored to local issues, reducing inequalities and empowering communities (Bua & Escobar, 2018; Elliott et al., 2018). This initiative resulted in the Community Empowerment Act (CEA) that was approved in 2015; made up of 11 parts, it aims to facilitate community participation in policymaking through access to consultations and publicly owned buildings to increase service provision and ultimately, reduce health inequalities (Fischer & McKee, 2017; Markantoni et al., 2018; Scottish Government, 2017).

For the CEA to reduce health inequalities, communities must be willing to engage and its provisions must be accessible to all communities, even those with little knowledge of public administration (Tabner, 2018). However, the CEA does not consider the potential added burden or root causes for vast inequalities, including years of public services cuts due to austerity measures (Markantoni et al., 2018; A. Steiner et al., 2023; Wells, 2018). Like other deliberative policy processes, the CEA relies on the pluralistic assumption of equal participation, wherein increasing representation leads to more effective policies (Bua & Escobar, 2018; Elliott et al., 2018; Myant & Urquhart, n.d.). By failing to consider how power imbalances between the government and communities may impact engagement, the CEA may not be able to drive change as effectively as other deliberative processes (Turnhout et al., 2020).

In addition to driving meaningful engagement, those made responsible for service provision through the CEA must be able to manage the added responsibility. Therefore, this paper investigates the ability for place-based Scottish charities to meet their organisational purpose through an exploration of their governance-capacity which is defined as the ability to mobilize actors, resources, and knowledge to drive changes internally or externally to effectively achieve

stated goals, within the broader policy environment (Arts & Goverde, 2006; van Popering-Verkerk et al., 2022). Place-based charities are used to gain an understanding of the CEAs success because they were identified by the government as key partners with an insight into community needs, and their mandate through the Scottish Charity regulator, OSCR, to provide a public benefit (OSCR, n.d.). Thus, this paper seeks to answer the following research question: How do Scottish place-based charities perceive their governance capacity, and how might this effect the CEA's ability to mitigate inequalities? Relying on a mixed-method approach, the key objectives are:

1. Utilizing a literature review to identify the value of governance capacity for meaningful engagement in policymaking by charities in reducing health inequalities
2. Determine how Scottish place-based charities perceive their levels of governance capacity by administering a survey
3. Identify what Scottish place-based charities view as drivers or hinderances to their governance capacity utilising semi-structured interviews

This research is undertaken in collaboration with Scotland's Regeneration Forum (SURF), a not-for-profit working with place-based charities in Scotland promoting community regeneration. Using knowledge from their members, SURF acts as a channel for information to the government and is involved in consultations and policy proposals (SURF, n.d.).

2 Literature Review

To understand how promoting place-charities to deliver public services will impact health, literature will be reviewed on health and community, health inequalities in Scotland, and the CEA.

2.1 Health and Community

Health is influenced by pathways including upstream factors such social structures and, downstream factors like behaviours (Graham, 2007). Social structures and systems influence access to education, employment opportunities, and subsequent income levels, as well as risk factors for poor health, including obesity, smoking rates, and alcoholism (Graham, 2007). These varying influences are illustrated in Dalhgreen and Whitehead's model of the Social Determinants of Health (SDH) (*Figure 1*). Nestled in the middle of the model are social and community networks, which includes social capital, defined as the social relationships including trust, norms, reciprocity and mutual aid, "that facilitate collective action for mutual benefit" (Aldrich & Meyer, 2014; Kawachi, 1999, p. 121). Communities with high levels of social capital tend to have better health outcomes (Kawachi, 1999). Therefore, improving health outcomes and addressing inequalities requires changes on all levels of the social determinants model.

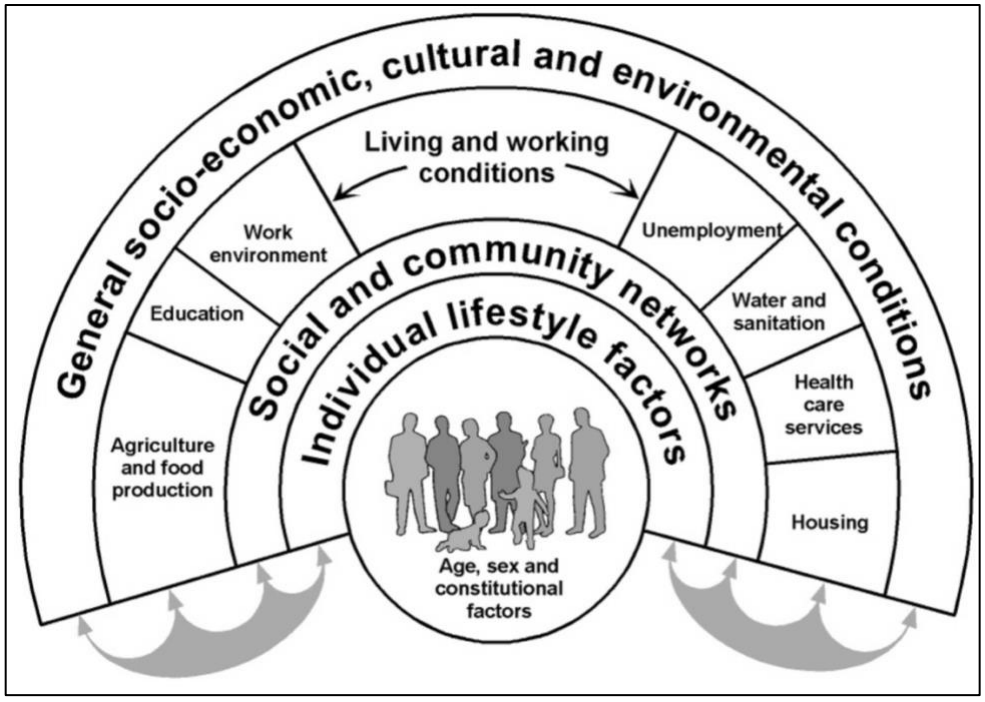

Figure 1 - Social Determinants of Health (Graham, 2007)

Given the role of social and community networks in health outcomes, incentivizing community engagement to strengthen networks and tackle health inequalities has been used alongside various public health interventions (Laverack, 2006; Popay, 2010; Wallerstein, 1993). Community engagement improves health through four main pathways: First, communities become more aware of offered services, which may increase uptake – leading to a preventative rather than reactive approach to health (Popay, 2010; Scottish Public Service Commission, 2011). Second, community members' self-efficacy increases as they are involved in the governance and guardianship of services, tailoring them to community needs (Laverack, 2006; Popay, 2010). Third, levels of social capital rise as individuals work together, increasing trust and reciprocity within the community (Laverack, 2006; Popay, 2010). Fourth, through engagement, communities may begin to shift pre-existing power structures, taking control of their "social, material and political environments" (Popay, 2010, p. 186; Rifkin, 2003). Although none of these pathways directly influence health, they impact service delivery, peoples' environment, and social capital which all indirectly impact population health, and the community and social networks layer of the SDH model (Popay, 2010). However, lack of support and the inability to meet community goals may lead to a deterioration of social capital, service use, and ultimately health (Popay, 2010). Research has found that those in the middle-class tend to benefit disproportionately from community engagement initiatives due to previous experience and relative power in communities (Elliott et al., 2018; A. Steiner et al., 2023). As such, for community engagement to reduce inequalities, it must be well-managed and supported for benefits to be equally distributed.

2.2 Scotland and Health Inequalities

Since the 1900s life expectancy in Scotland has increased, however, between 2012-2014 improvements stalled (Miall et al., 2022). This plateau masked a decline in life expectancy for the most deprived populations in Scotland, with the absolute gap between the most and least deprived women increasing from 8.6 years in 2013-2015 to 10.2 years in 2018-2020, and for men from 12.2 years to 13.5 years over the same periods (Miall et al., 2022). Those in the most deprived decile develop chronic illness 10 to 15 years earlier than in the least deprived decile, while having lower educational attainment and income which impact health in various ways, thus, requiring comprehensive interventions to target inequalities (Wyper et al., 2021). Although deprivation does not follow the urban-rural divide, rural communities have fewer available service, transport links and employment opportunities. Inequalities are widening due to population change, including

migration in and out of rural areas by the elderly and the youth respectively (Levin & Leyland, 2006; A. A. Steiner & Farmer, 2018). Moreover, this migration is degrading social capital, leading to increased levels of isolation and loneliness (Kelly et al., 2019; A. A. Steiner & Farmer, 2018).

Like other countries, Scotland is faced with the inverse care law whereby services are inversely correlated with need; healthier and wealthier neighbourhoods have access to more services than less healthy and poorer neighbourhoods (Mercer et al., 2023). Limited access to care and compounding inequalities in deprived areas has created complex healthcare needs, requiring specialized care (Mercer et al., 2023). Moreover, one's social and economic conditions impact on health mandates that public services beyond healthcare must be equally available to reduce growing inequalities. By ensuring adequate access to all public services, a preventative approach is prioritized, which addresses health through its social determinants (Graham, 2007; Scottish Public Service Commission, 2011). Pertinently, a 2011 Scottish Report, Christie Commission, estimated that 40% of public service spending could have been averted if a preventative approach was adopted (Scottish Public Service Commission, 2011). The report also states that "public services are most effective, and provide best value for money, when users have a pivotal role in designing and evaluating them" (Scottish Public Service Commission, 2011, p. 35). Recognizing the growing inequalities and the potential for community engagement to help close the gap in health inequalities, the Scottish government implemented the CEA.

2.3 What is the Community Empowerment Act?

Created in 2015, the CEA responds to the Christie Commissions call for greater community involvement and co-production in public service delivery (A. Steiner et al., 2023). Specifically, the Christie Commission noted the public service system was "fragmented, complex and opaque" limiting the potential for collaboration while being "unresponsive" to community needs and dominated by "short-termism," inhibiting preventative approaches (Scottish Public Service Commission, 2011, p. X). As such, the CEA's goals include utilizing creative methods for service delivery, increasing transparency, building community and trust, increasing levels of participation, engagement, and communities' power in decision making (Markantoni et al., 2018; Revell & Dinnie, 2020; A. Steiner et al., 2023). These goals align with understandings of how community engagement, illustrated above impact health outcomes including, increasing knowledge,

governance and guardianship, as well as social capital by giving communities more control over their resources (Laverack, 2006; Popay, 2010).

The CEA has several key assumptions which may limit its ability to translate community engagement to a reduction in health inequalities across Scotland. First, it assumes communities already have a desire, and ability, to be involved in service delivery (Fischer & McKee, 2017; Tabner, 2018). By making community groups responsible for service delivery, the CEA has been seen as a way to shift responsibility away from the government and, onto communities, depoliticizing inequality, while failing to address root causes, such as government policies including austerity (Elliott et al., 2018; Mackenzie et al., 2020; Tabner, 2018). Pertinently, increasing community engagement requires additional funding, irrespective of the initiative, which contradicts austerity politics (Bua & Escobar, 2018). Moreover, the CEA relies on proactive collaboration of community groups. For example, Part 3, Participation Requests enables community groups to "enter into dialogue with public authorities" on local issues identified by the government (Scottish Government, 2017). However, communities must apply, requiring knowledge of public administration which is concentrated in more prosperous neighbourhoods, and can be rejected if the government does not believe they would bring valuable contributions which are in line with how the government has defined the problem (Scottish Government, 2017; A. Steiner et al., 2023). As such, the government retains agenda setting power and requires communities to align their goals with the government to collaborate (Elliott et al., 2018; Tabner, 2018). Although Participation Requests could lead to improved service provision through community engagement, the CEA does not have measures in place to support groups unable to navigate public administration obstacles.

Second, by assuming that increasing engagement with communities, the CEA would lead to outcomes which are universally representative of communities, the CEA ignores the reality of lower civic engagement in more deprived areas and does not adequately account for how this may impact inequalities, specifically that middle class individuals may be disproportionately advantaged (Adamson, 2010; Albert & Passmore, 2008; Elliott et al., 2018; Revell & Dinnie, 2020; A. Steiner et al., 2023). Opportunities are more likely to be taken up by wealthier and healthier communities, exacerbating inequalities in health outcomes and access to services (Revell & Dinnie, 2020; A. Steiner et al., 2023). Moreover, these communities may be able to skew policy outcomes

in their favour as they benefit from better networks with political elites, have more time to engage in additional voluntary work, have more knowledge of public administration, and power in negotiations (Elliott et al., 2018; A. A. Steiner & Farmer, 2018). Pertinently, the groups the CEA engages with are community led, ranging from small charities with employees to those with only volunteers (Scottish Government, 2017). In both cases, those with more knowledge and a broader network will be better prepared to leverage the government initiative in their favour. A 2018 report found that engagement with communities tends to rely on "certain groups and individuals rather than a cross-section" of the community which may replicate power inequalities (Weakley & Escobar, 2018, p. 1). The lack of diversity limits the usefulness of engagement to policymakers and may diminish impact, especially considering the goal of tailored services to reduce inequalities.

To ensure benefits are reaped equally throughout Scotland, attention must be paid to the ability of pre-existing charities to engage with the CEA and their communities more broadly. As such, the ability for charities to govern must be contextualized within the current policy environment, acknowledging that success can be facilitated or constrained. Given the CEAs goals, and the high levels of inequalities in Scotland, it is essential to understand whether or not the CEA has the potential to exacerbate, rather than reduce, inequalities.

3 Theoretical Framework

For the CEA to reduce inequalities across Scotland, all communities and charities need to be able to benefit equally and ensure the sustainability of their organizations. Scholars have argued that strong governance capacity is essential for organisations to achieve their goals and be efficient in the long run (Elliott et al., 2018; Ramesh et al., 2016; A. Steiner et al., 2023; Tabner, 2018). Moreover, Neilssen (2002) argues that public services are increasingly reliant on the community and less on the state due to assumptions about efficiency – addressing problems through mutual cooperation is more efficient than through a centralized government. To assess the validity of this claim, the governance capacity of charities must be understood and defined (Nelissen, 2002). Governance is defined as the ability to make and enforce rules and deliver services (Fukuyama, 2013). Its capacity, or ability to achieve desired policy outcomes, will be explored below.

Van Popering-Verkerk (2022) understands governance capacity as the interactions between actors and their collective ability to meet their goals. As such, governance capacity revolves around collective action and coordination. An organisation's governance capacity is determined by its relationships with other actors in their network. Therefore, an organisation and a network both have governance capacity which are different but entangled, either reinforcing or diminishing each other (van Popering-Verkerk et al., 2022). Understanding how an organisation fits into its network is key to the resilience and ultimate success of an organisation. Governance capacity is, therefore, always in flux, dependent on the broader political environment.

Ramesh *et al.* (2016) conceptualizes governance capacity as the ability of people or organisations to achieve their policy functions and goals. It relies on three elements: first, on organisational capacity which includes all assets and resources that enable the success of policy goals (Ramesh et al. 2016). Second, on systemic capacity which is more abstract and refers to trust and regulation between organizations and political actors. Third, political capacity refers to the active participation of key stakeholders to gain and maintain political support. All three elements must be present for charities to have effective governance capacity; however, it is shaped by the broader political context which can enable charities to be successful or hamper them.

Similarly, Arts and Goverde (2006) build on the role of the broader political context by incorporating the importance of adequate resources to organisations pursuing their goals, including financial security, the knowledge and overarching coherence between goals and resource use.

Ultimately, they define successful governance capacity as an organisations ability to diminish or solve societal problems. This is aided by an organisation's "capacity to govern" which entails sufficient resources, external policy spaces which promote action, and a dominant policy discourse which supports organisations in meeting their goals (Arts & Goverde, 2006). Pertinently, congruence in policy discourse remains in flux as governments and politicians' priorities shift over time.

For the purpose of this research, governance capacity of an organisation will be defined as *the ability to mobilize actors, resources, and knowledge to drive changes internally or externally to effectively achieve stated goals, within the broader policy environment (See Figure 2).*

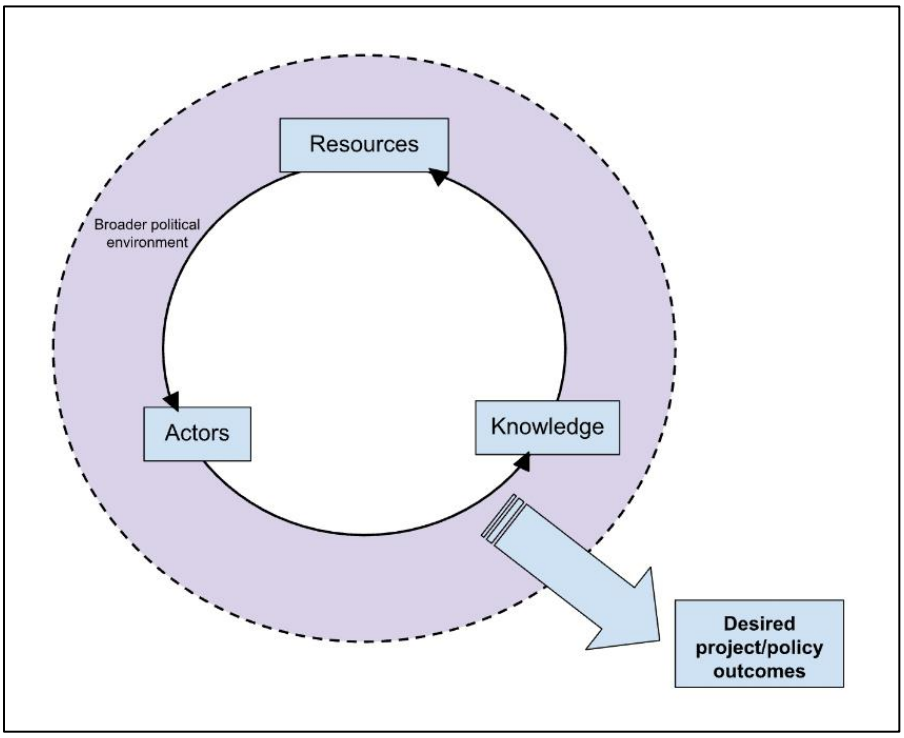

Figure 2 - Framework for Governance Capacity

All three elements – actors, resources, and knowledge mutually reinforce each other. If resources are increased without a change to the number of employees or an increase in knowledge, the organisation's governance capacity will not increase. If, however, a charity receives additional funding to hire another staff member who brings a wealth of experience in Scottish public administration, the organizations governance capacity would increase. A charity's governance capacity is also influenced by the external political environment, which either amplifies a charities

governance capacity or diminishes it, through the presence, or absence, of supportive and comprehensive policy components.

The framework presented in *Figure 2* will be used as a guide throughout this research to gain a better understanding of charities perceived governance capacity. It is assumed that low governance capacity limits the ability to successfully carry out projects, as such, limiting the number of services made available to communities. Given the CEA goal to involve charities in service delivery, governance capacity is central to a charity's ability to do so.

4 Methodology

4.1 Epistemological Framework

This research relies on a mixed methods approach, utilizing quantitative and qualitative methodologies to understand the perceived governance capacity of place-based charities in Scotland (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Common in mixed methods, the pragmatist framework operates under the assumption that methods should align with project goals, not with the widely used approaches in the field (Bishop, 2015; Gobo, 2023; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Therefore, a survey was disseminated to understand if perceived governance capacity reflected findings in the literature. This was supplemented by interviews to provide in-depth, contextualized understandings of the challenges organisations faced (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The quantitative and qualitative methods were carried out simultaneously and findings were related or compared afterwards, prior to interpretation (*see Figure 3*) (Bishop, 2015). Therefore, the strengths of each method are emphasized, diminishing the impacts of their weaknesses and bias; with the qualitative data providing contextual insights to supplement the quantitative findings (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

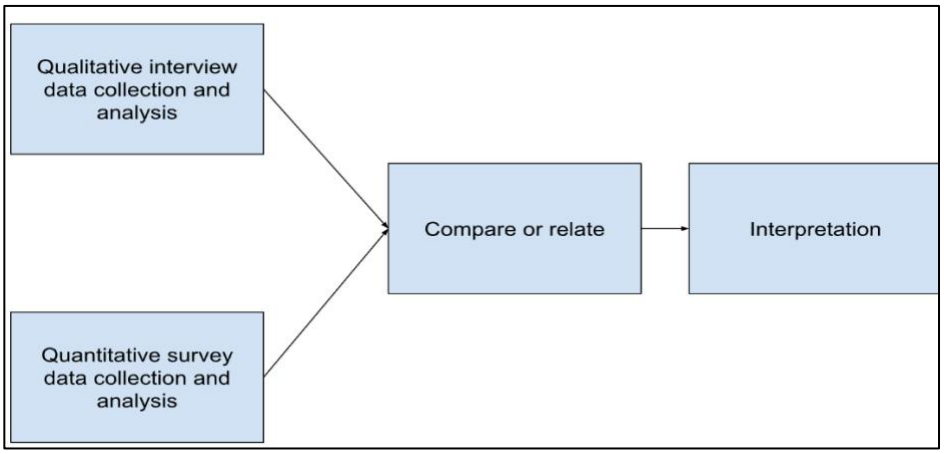

Figure 3- Convergent Parallel Model of Mixed Methods (Bishop, 2015)

4.2 Data Collection and Analysis

4.2.1 Survey

With the aim of gauging charities perceived governance capacity, a multiple-choice question survey was developed (See Appendix I). Using a survey allowed for more responses, permitting the findings to be generalized, moreover, within the context of mixed-methods research, it allows for more tailored interview questions. Survey questions were linked to the four sections of the governance capacity framework – actors, knowledge, resources or the broader political environment – ensuring responses were directly tied to theory without using complicated language, making it more accessible. Existing surveys on governance capacity such as Ramesh *et al.*'s (2016) was unsuited for this research as it was too lengthy and tailored to management. However, question 18 was taken from Ramesh *et al.* (2016) for its ability to cover the difficulty of driving changes internally and externally, allowing for conclusions to be drawn on organisations ability to navigate the broader political environment. The remainder of the questions were informed by literature on effective governance capacity, and include topics like meeting goals (Rifkin, 2003; van Popering-Verkerk et al., 2022), ability to navigate public administration (Arts and Goverde, 2006; Tabner, 2018), and employee retention and engagement (Ramesh et al., 2016). The survey was reviewed with SURF staff members to ensure clarity and incorporate advice from those working in the Scottish charity landscape.

The survey took between 10 to 15 minutes and was administered through Qualtrics to ensure data encryption and protection. Prior to accessing survey questions, all participants were presented with a participation information sheet (Appendix II) and consent form (Appendix III). If participants did not give consent, they were redirected to the end of the survey and were unable to complete it.

SURF disseminated the survey twice via email to their network of over 300 organisations to widen reach, thus relying on convenience sampling (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). Findings may be subject to over or under representation, as charities with greater capacity may respond more readily than others (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

A total of 35 responses were recorded and analysed. Descriptive statistical analysis, using Excel, identified key themes. Charities location was used as a basis for comparison due to the

patterning of health inequalities and access to public services – with those residing outside of the Middle Belt suffering from a reduced access to services (Miall et al., 2022; NRS, 2022).

4.2.2 Interviews

In total, 11 semi-structured interviews were carried out throughout June 2024. Participants were recruited by opting in at the end of the survey and leaving their email. Participants were then emailed to confirm a time and place, and were provided with the participation information sheet (Appendix IV) and consent form (Appendix V) which were to be signed and returned via email. Interviews lasted between 35 and 60 minutes. Participants in Edinburgh and Glasgow were given the option to meet in-person or online, two of which opted to meet in-person. The remaining nine interviews were completed on MS Teams.

Region	Number of Interviewees
Highlands and Islands	3
Glasgow and Strathclyde	5
Edinburgh and Lothians	3
Total	11

Table 1- Geographic Spread of Interviewees

Verbal consent was received at the beginning of each interview and the right to withdrawal was stated at the beginning and end of each interview. All interviews were recorded and transcribed using MS Word. Both recordings and transcripts were uploaded to the University of Edinburgh OneDrive server to protect data and participants. All participants were anonymised, and recordings were deleted once transcription was complete.

A semi-structured interview format was selected to provide flexibility and reduce the power dynamic between the researcher and the participants (Kallio et al., 2016). The interview guide was supplemented by specific probing questions based on survey responses, asking participants to expand on certain responses (See Appendix VI). For example, if a participant had indicated they ‘somewhat’ met their purpose, they were asked to identify what they perceived to be current roadblocks. The interviews also asked several questions about what participants would

like to see from the government looking forward which highlighted current grievances and what they perceived to be their root causes. Questions were developed independently, and not in collaboration with SURF. Linking survey and interview questions ensured in-depth findings that are unachievable when using one method.

Thematic analysis was used to identity and analyse patterns in the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interviews were analysed on the NVivo 14 software. A semantic deductive approach was used to understand how identified patterns fit into existing literature on governance capacity and charities in Scotland; and to avoid conclusions based on the assumptions participants make when responding which would entail a latent approach. A total of 25 codes emerged from the literature (Appendix VII) and were used during the analysis which resulted in nine themes (see *Table 2*).

Link to GC Framework	Themes	Codes included in the themes	Theme Definition
Actors	Sufficient Actors	Adequate Staff	Organisations expressing the view that they have enough staff members to carry out required tasks, and roles are clearly assigned with specific tasks well delegated.
		Clear Roles	
	Inability to Obtain Sufficient Actors	Volunteer Fatigue	Not having enough staff members to carry out roles effectively, and an inability to increase staff or volunteer numbers, effecting their ability to meet organisational objectives.
		Inadequate Staff	
		Unclear Roles	
		Recruitment Challenges	
Resources	Adequate Financing	Adequate Financing	Organisation received adequate financing to hire staff members, meet their

			objectives and, if desired, expand.
	Inadequate Financing	Inadequate Financing	Expressing lack of finances to hire required staff members or meet stated goals.
Knowledge	Clear Objectives	Clear objectives	Being able to clearly express the goal of the organisation and plans to maintain future operations.
		Succession	
	Expert Knowledge	Expert Knowledge	Having an individual(s) involved with the organisation who possess knowledge on a topic which goes beyond scope of the charity, but has proven key in achieving success, or is helpful for specific periodic tasks, such as grant writing.
Broader Political Environment	Regulatory Burden	Regulatory Burden	Feeling burdened by regulatory and funding processes - taking up too much time and/or staff capacity.
		Bureaucracy	
	Frustration With the Government	Austerity	Feeling frustrated with government (in)action, leading organisations to feel unsupported by the
		Lack of political support	

		Lack of community support	government through funding or operating in silos.
		Siloed	
	Facilitating Political Environment	Political support	Aspects mentioned by interviewees as positively contributing to their ability to meet their goals and have their work valued.
		Collaboration	
		Trust building	
		Community support	
		Multi-year funding	

Table 2 - Themes and Definitions

Codes were grouped into a theme if they evoked similar messages, for example, ‘adequate staff’ and ‘clear roles’ were combined into the theme ‘Sufficient Actors’ because both are required for organisations to achieve their objectives. The four codes in ‘inability to obtain sufficient actors’ all represent aspects which render it challenging for organisations to obtain adequate staff levels.

Sentences were designated a code based on how it helped or hampered an organisation. For example, “[a board member] is an HR specialist, so we would invite them back in if we had a problem” could be coded as ‘sufficient actors’ or ‘expert knowledge’, however it was coded as ‘expert knowledge’ because expertise in HR is not a requirement for small charities but nonetheless proved helpful for this organisation (Participant 3). Alternatively, “we have the staff, but the staff are only employed because of the grants” was coded as ‘adequate financing’ and not ‘sufficient actors’ because it relates directly to the ability to hire based on grant approval and does not speak to the organizations ability to meet its purpose (Participant 3).

4.3 Ethics

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Edinburgh’s School of Social and Political Science ethical review board. Consent forms were completed before survey responses and interviews, and verbal consent was obtained at the start of each interview. All transcripts and recordings have been destroyed in line with the GDPR regulations.

4.4 Limitations

This study has several limitations in the data collection and analysis stages. First, interviewing chief executives or board members will lead to different, potentially more optimistic, results than interviewing junior staff members, volunteers, or beneficiaries. In addition, it is likely that the results contain a level of bias given who was willing to be surveyed and interviewed as this requires time not all members of charities may have. Moreover, the short time scale of the research project constrained how many survey responses and interviews were completed potentially impacting reliability of results. The dissemination of the survey through SURF also limits which charities received an invitation to participate. A more conscious effort to snowball from SURF's network could have been utilized to reduce this risk.

Regarding data analysis, thematic analysis is susceptible to researcher bias, which could be reduced if multiple researchers were involved in the coding process. However, using the interview data to support findings from the quantitative survey limits bias during analysis through triangulation (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

As an international postgraduate researcher from the University of Edinburgh, I am an outsider to the research as I do not benefit from charities, nor am I impacted by policy changes explored. As such, I am limited in my ability to relate to participants. Working with SURF, who supports community regeneration, and remains sceptical of the ability of the CEA to reduce unequal service delivery, influenced the research focus.

5 Results

5.1 Survey

Results from the descriptive statistical analysis will be discussed in the following three sections: key findings, challenges and opportunities, and finally, succession planning.

5.1.1 Key Findings

In total, the survey had 35 responses, 54.2% came from the Glasgow and Strathclyde and Edinburgh and Lothian regions. The overrepresentation of these regions can be attributed to the concentration of SURF's membership and Scotland's population along the middle belt with nearly 1 in 5 people living in Greater Glasgow (NRS, 2022).

Region	*n*
Aberdeen and Northeast	0
Highlands and Islands	8
Tayside, Central and Fife	4
Edinburgh and Lothians	7
Glasgow and Strathclyde	12
Scotland South	2
Unspecified (Scotland)	2
Total	35

Table 3 - Geographic Distribution of Survey Responses

Of the 35 responses, 11 are chief executives, 15 are board members, and four are managers. Five respondents occupied other roles within their organisations. Most respondents are from small charities with 45.7% having to 1 to 5 employees (*see Table 4*).

Number of Employees	*n*	%
1 to 5	16	45.7
5 to 10	9	25.7
10 to 15	2	5.7
15+	8	22.9

Table 4 - Organisation Size

The majority of employees remained at their organisations for 1-5 years (62.9%, n=22), with only 34.3% (n=12) staying for 5+ years. Larger organisations have more employees who stay for 5+ years compared to smaller organisations, whereas smaller organisations have more employees who remain for 1 to 5 years (*see Table 5*).

		Number of Employees			
		1 to 5	5 to 10	10 to 15	15+
Time at Organisation	Less than 1 year	1 (6.3%)	/	/	/
	1-5 years	11 (68.8%)	6 (66.7%)	2 (100%)	3 (37.5%)
	5+ years	3 (33.3%)	3 (33.3%)	/	5 (62.5)

Table 5 - Number of Employees Compared to Length at an Organisation

Of the respondents who answered this question, 68.6% work full-time, while, said 31.4% said most employees work for the organization on a part-time basis. Six of the eight survey respondents from the Highlands and Islands worked part-time compared one of nine in the Glasgow and Strathclyde region (*see Table 6*).

	Most work another part-time job	**Primary occupation**
Aberdeen and Northeast	0	0
Highlands and Islands	6	2
Tayside, Central and Fife	2	2
Edinburgh and Lothians	1	6
Glasgow and Strathclyde	1	8
Scotland South	2	1
Unspecified (Scotland)	0	2
Total	**11**	**22**

Table 6 - Geographic Location Compared to Type of Occupation

5.1.2 Exploring Challenges and Opportunities

Questions on what charities perceive to be their assets and barriers to meeting their goals were used as a proxy to identify facilitators and hinderances to governance capacity. The most common barrier is *financial constraints*, selected by 26 of 35 respondents (*see Table 7*).

What do you perceive to be key **barriers** to meeting your organisations stated purpose? Select all that apply		
Aspect	***n***	**%**
Financial constraints	26	74.3
Inadequate personnel	12	34.3
Limited time to implement projects	11	31.4
Lack of political support	9	25.7
Lack of support from the community	5	14.3
Unclear roles in the organisations	3	8.6
Unclear objectives	3	8.6
Cumbersome procedures	2	5.7
Other	7	20

Table 7 - Key Barriers to Meeting Objectives

Of those who selected *financial constraints*, 8 selected *inadequate personnel* and *limited time to implement new projects*. Four respondents selected all three. Of the 9 who identified *lack of political support*, 7 also selected financial constraints. The 7 'other' barriers added by respondents include two mentions of limited volunteer time, short-term funding cycles, declining/aging populations, volunteer fall-out in the aftermath of COVID-19, the inability to meet the extent of local needs, and finally, a lack of skills among board members. Interestingly, only 5 identified *lack of support from the community* as a barrier, however, 28 respondents selected *support from the community* as an asset (*see Table 8*).

What do you perceive to be key **assets** to meeting your organisations stated purpose? Select all that apply		
Aspect	***n***	**%**
Adequate financing	20	57.1
Adequate staff capacity	25	71.4
Sufficient time to implement projects	12	34.3
Political support	13	37.1
Support from the community	28	80
Well defined roles in the organisations	18	51.4
Clear objectives	25	71.4
Knowledge on administrative procedures	12	34.3
Other	3	8.6

Table 8 - Key Assets to Meeting Objectives

C*lear objectives* was selected as an asset by 25 respondents, however, *unclear objectives* was only seen as a barrier by three respondents. Moreover, 20 respondents indicated that a*dequate financing* is key to meeting their goals.

Effective governance capacity entails leveraging resources, actors, and knowledge to operate smoothly in the current political environment, driving changes internally or externally to meet organisational goals; therefore, the difficulty of six scenarios was assessed. The majority of scenarios were deemed ‘moderately easy’, with 66 responses (*see Table 9*).

How difficult would you rate preforming these tasks within your organisation?						
	Driving changes within the organisation	Mobilizing resources to get things done	Coordinating work in the organisation	Building public support for projects	Collaborating with other organisations	Gathering stakeholder input
Extremely difficult	2	1	0	3	0	1
Moderately difficult	5	9	3	4	4	3
Slightly difficult	7	10	2	4	4	7
Neither easy nor difficult	5	2	8	7	4	3
Slightly easy	5	3	2	6	8	7
Moderately easy	9	9	18	9	9	12
Extremely easy	2	1	2	1	6	2
N/A	0	0	0	1	0	1

Table 9 - Assessing the Difficulty of Specific Tasks in an Organisation

Coordinating work in the organisation was deemed 'moderately easy' by 18 respondents, making it the option with the most responses. Of the 18, half (n = 9) perceived *driving change in the organisation* or *collaborating with other organisations* to be 'moderately easy', potentially indicating that maintaining day-to-day operations is easier than attempting to expand their work or change the direction of the organisation.

Although not many respondents selected 'extremely easy' (n = 14), it is notable that 10 of the 14 responses came from organisations in Glasgow and Strathclyde or Edinburgh and Lothians. *Collaborating with other organisations* had the most 'extremely easy' responses with six, five of those organisations predominantly have full-time employees, suggesting staff capacity may facilitate external collaboration.

Next, only 4 respondents selected 'definitely yes' when asked if they felt supported by political leaders or funders, meanwhile, 8 selected 'definitely not' (*See Table 10)*.

Do you feel that political leaders/funders provide enough support for you to carry out your tasks?	n
Definitely not	8
Probably not	7
Might or might not be	6
Probably yes	9
Definitely yes	4

Table 10 - Perceived Support from Political Leaders and Funders

All respondents who definitely feel supported by political leaders/funders also indicated they met their purpose, in contrast, only half of the respondents who said they 'definitely do not' feel supported met their purpose. Furthermore, 77% (9 out of 11) who indicated they 'probably yes' got enough support met their purpose contrasted with 42% of respondents who indicated they 'probably did not' get enough support. This indicates that a supportive political environment has an impact on an organisations ability to meet its purpose.

5.1.3 Succession Planning

The survey assessed the extent to which organisations considered the long-term sustainability of their work through questions regarding recruitment, evaluation and monitoring, and documented succession plans, as reducing inequalities through service provision must be maintained in the long-term.

Recruiting new employees was deemed 'extremely easy' by one respondent, whereas 10 indicated it was 'neither easy not difficult'. Eight found it 'somewhat easy'; all of whom are from the Scottish central belt. The three respondents who deemed it "extremely difficult" are all from the Highlands and Islands. They also identified *inadequate personnel* and *financial constraints* as barriers to success indicating there may be additional challenges for organisations in these regions.

Of the 35 respondents, 29 indicated they had an evaluation and monitoring system in place, two indicated they were unsure, while four said their organisation did not evaluate nor monitor their process. The timings of evaluations varied, with 12 conducting them quarterly, five doing it monthly, seven yearly, and an additional seven who do not do it at a set time.

When asked if they had a documented long-term plan, 21 respondents indicated they had a clear plan, while seven said they had a vague plan, and three said they had no documented plan. However, only 12 individuals indicated that there was documentation on how to carry out their role within the organisation, while 17 said there was vague documentation, and six said there was no documentation.

5.2 Interviews

Results from the thematic analysis of the interviews are discussed in four sections, actors, resources, knowledge and broader political environment, in line with the governance capacity framework used throughout this paper.

5.2.1 Actors

Sufficient Actors

Of the 11 interviews, eight expressed that they had sufficient staff members to carry out their required tasks, meet their goals, and effectively delegate tasks. For example:

> *"We have an executive office team who support the board members and they will make sure that we also comply with the regulators requirements for all the form filling that has to be done and deal with data protection, freedom of information, all those kinds of things. So, there's a team of four people that that deal with that and then we've got the company secretariat"* (Participant 1).

The importance of clear task division was echoed by Participant 5 who stated that "having both of those responsibilities [grant writing and following policy developments] on one person would be too much, I think having the separation is really important". Highlighting the importance of being able to hire staff to effectively delegate responsibility.

Having enough staff members was not seen as a given with Participant 8 expressing that they have "been very fortunate at [Organisation X]" and have "managed to successfully recruit". Recruitment was presented as particularly successful if local community members were involved in the process given the place-based nature of the charities. One participant illustrated the advantage:

> *"We recruited three new young board members in May, all three of them are current participants…that's really important to our makeup because those young people, they see things from a different angle, not just as young people, but also as people who have experienced our programs and understand the needs and requirements of our client base."* (Participant, 5).

Having enough staff members, clearly delegated tasks, and local participation was attributed to meeting organisational goals.

Inability to Obtain Sufficient Actors

Being unable to recruit enough staff members was articulated by nine interviewees and attributed to declining populations, volunteer fatigue, and limited funding to hire staff. Organisations in the Highlands and Islands especially struggled with declining populations, as exemplified by Participant 1, who explained that the "number of young people is diminishing" as they leave communities permanently. Participant 10 provided a different perspective on recruitment challenges in the Highlands and Islands highlighting that "there are almost as many holiday homes as there are dwellings all year round," limiting the available housing for potential employees.

Organisations struggled to recruit sufficient volunteers due to the burden of responsibility and workload. Pertinently, "[the board] relies on people being willing to volunteer, and there is a lot of effort" required to attend meetings well-prepared, and in some cases take on workload due to limited staff capacity (Participant 8). Difficulties recruiting volunteers was exacerbated in remote areas due to the high number of charities and the fact that "people tend to be sitting on a number of committees" leading to "volunteer fatigue" (Participant 1).

Several interviewees linked financial constraints to the inability to hire additional staff. Getting access to project funding is easier than "core funding for your finance and admin support" making it more challenging to onboard new staff members (Participant 3). Moreover, limited funding meant that Participant 7's charity was unable to hire a manager for two years, forcing volunteer board members to write grant applications despite their lack of expertise. Participant 5 echoed challenges surrounding expertise mentioning that:

> *"When you're being realistic with the salaries that you're paying experience and expertise is never going to be the level that it maybe would be in other sectors because you're not paying the same the same level"*

Small charities operating with limited financing do not have the resources to increase salaries, making it difficult to attract more experience candidates.

5.2.2 Resources

Adequate Financing

Five interviewees expressed that they had enough funding to meet their goals. Participant 4 mentioned that adequate financing has allowed them "to extend [core activity] a bit more" with the advantage that if "finances suddenly turned" their core services would remain. Participant 9 admitted that "relative to what [they've] seen with other organizations, [they're] doing alright" financially, indicating that being able to expand is uncommon. No participant presented financial stability as a norm or a long-term guarantee.

Inadequate Financing

A total of eight interviewees highlighted that limited finances hampered their ability to meet their goals and was associated to the broader political environment. When asked if they were able to meet their goals in light of limited funding, Participant 8 stated that:

> *"To an extent, probably…governmental policies impinge on that, so the reduction in grant rates means that as an organization, we haven't built any new houses because it's too expensive."*

Similarly, Participant 3 highlighted that certain aspects of work had been reduced explaining that "[they've] not had the funding more recently to get so involved in the Community Action" despite doing so in the past. This was attributed by another interviewee to the increasing interorganisational competition paired with a decline in financing, leaving organizations with inadequate funds and unable to meet goals which are "absolutely funding dependent" (Participant 5).

5.2.3 Knowledge

Clear Objectives

All 11 interviews discussed the value of clearly defined objectives when evaluating progress, allowing them to identify where improvements could be made. For example:

> *"I was looking at our aims and objectives the other day…just to review and say right "are we?" and I would have to say that we are definitely achieving what we set out" (Participant 2)*

Similarly, when asked about evaluations, Participant 6 highlighted how clear objectives allow them to track progress on multiple streams of their work,

> "*The work that we've done on historically building new homes, and thinking about moves to net zero, and helping out with, sort of, place making activities in those communities and you know lobbying that that type of thing I think we've done not just a good job but probably an excellent job."*

How objectives are set varies across organisations, however requirements for funding applications influence how organisations set their goals with one participant explaining that long-term priorities and goals are centred around how "[they] can secure funding into the future based on the principles" their organisation works toward (Participant 3).

Although setting objectives facilitated monitoring processes, it did not translate to meeting the goals of their respective organisations, with Participant 7 stating that "[their] purpose is huge…to develop the community is really quite huge unending projects". Similarly, Participant 1 that "we've been able to achieve it. I don't think we've completed it." Despite being unable to complete their overarching aims, organisations expressed that having clear objectives facilitated evaluation and tracking processes.

Organisations in the Highlands and Islands stressed the importance of goal-setting due to their recruitment challenges and declining populations. All three respondents highlighted their proactiveness to attract new board members. For example, Participant 11 stated: "We've been proactive in approaching people before an AGM and OK, would you be willing to stand?". Meanwhile, Participant 2 explained that they needed to step back from the board to "make sure

someone younger was coming through and taking on a bit more of the responsibility". Explicit efforts to ensure the longevity of the organisations were made, however, developing concrete succession plans was less common and met with some resistance. Participant 8 explained that to counter the decline in qualified individuals in the community, they were "looking at setting up some traineeships because…it's difficult to recruit in the sector, so we thought, well, let's try and train up some of our own people." However, they also stated that you

> *"can have the best succession plan in in the world, and then it just falls apartment. When I first started at [Organisation Y] they had their succession plan in place for their governing body…that person was moved into that role, and this would happen…and then tragic series of events happened…all the things that were meant to happen couldn't happen" (Participant 8)*

Organisations did not see the same value in succession planning as they did for goal setting, expressing that too many variables influenced the ability for succession plans to materialise.

Expert Knowledge

Nine interviews highlighted the value of having at least one individual involved with the charity, on a temporary or permanent basis, who has expert knowledge on a topic beyond the scope of the organisation, but which have proven key to its success. For example, Participant 2 explained that a community member is "an ex-building consultant and from when the contractor came on board in 2018" he was present to ensure construction was done as requested to prevent delays. Similarly, Participant 3 highlighted that someone affiliated to the organisation was an "HR specialist, so [they] would invite them back in if we had a problem". In these two cases, individuals were temporarily involved but provided key knowledge to ensure the charity could maintain operations.

Alternatively, participants highlighted the added benefit of having a permanent staff member with expert knowledge. Participant 2 emphasized that they "are very very fortunate…we have a tremendous manager in [*name*]" who comes from a background of "being very successful in business and she's passing that on to us". The benefit of having expertise on the board was laid out by Participant 5, who explained that their board has "expertise in HR, fundraising, business development, all of which are crucial to what we do." Given the place-based nature of the charities,

being from the community was also presented as having an expertise, "[we] also have a lecturer from Glasgow University, a Community Development lecturer, so people are either local or they are well versed in the field of community work, community development" (Participant 3).

5.2.4 Broader Political Environment

Regulatory Burden

Ten interviewees described lengthy funding applications as a burden, especially when applying for government funding which was described as having more bureaucracy without significantly more funding than other options. For example, when discussing the Creative Scotland grant application process, a respondent explained that:

> "*Like I say, I can completely understand why, but in comparison to these other funders who are giving the same kind of level of funding…it's a lot of work and it's a lot of team capacity that it takes and especially for a small charity, especially when it's the same level of reporting, no matter what size your organization is." (Participant 5)*

Participant 7 explained that in addition to funding applications, "[the government] want reports every six months or a year…and then you need to think about the staff and how the outcomes will be achieved that these funders would like to see…[it's] quite a bureaucratic operation" (Participant 7). Adding on, "the funders, they all have their various specific outcomes" which ultimately influence the direction of the work that is undertaken (Participant 7). The lengthy process paired with specific outcomes was understood as a burden, directing organisations work, rather than as a guiding tool.

Moreover, short-term funding cycles means that "you'll end up in a position where you by the time you've even got [some funding] secured, you'll be into the next cycle of applying for more because it's on a yearly basis" (Participant 9). As a result, organizations who rely primarily on volunteers expressed that "when you're doing that in a voluntary capacity and developing proposals and as volunteers, then it becomes a bit tricky and it disincentivizes you to apply" for the board (Participant 11).

Frustration with the Government

All interviewees expressed some level of frustration with the government, regarding the lack of support, particularly for smaller organisations, and the mismatch between government rhetoric and action.

The lack of support for smaller organisations, especially in rural areas, is illustrated by Participant 10 who expressed that they "would like to be able to talk with [the government], with what we realize our community needs…we don't feel that it's well supported." Furthermore, Participant 2, who is involved with both a community group (the topic of our interview) and a larger group with more financial means, noted that the "Scottish Government is prepared to work and collaborate with" the larger group whereas support for the community group was less pronounced (Participant 2). Alternatively, Participant 11 felt that the government was unaware of their limited staff capacity, therefore, collaborating with government would be welcome in some instances, but the government did not cater to their needs:

> *"sometimes we get invited to contribute to things and ask for support and 'do we want this?'...the difficulty is when you're a voluntary organization, it means…we have to dedicate time to that process" (Participant 11).*

As a result, organizations turn down collaboration due to the required staff capacity, not because they do not see its benefits.

Meanwhile, the government has expressed support for increasing collaboration, however, Participant 9 stated that they "haven't seen much evidence of them doing that". Participant 1 indicated that "the government will tell you that we should all be working together and partnership working. But when you actually try and work with government, they are phenomenally siloed". The lack of collaboration was related to limited financing by Participant 6 who explained that:

> *"There's an acceptance that there's not much that that the collective parties can do to just magic up money right now, but maybe a frustration that there's been not enough thought given to more creative ways of dealing with that" such as "grant making arrangements whereby collaboration is genuinely encouraged." (Participant 6)*

This was echoed by Participant 4 who stated that “warm words are nice, but some practical action would better”, reflecting a sense of frustration with government due to a mismatch between discourse and action.

Facilitating Political Environment

Ten interviewees mentioned that support from the community, financial safeguards provided by multi-year funding, and support from local politicians have aided their ability to succeed.

Having support from the community has been essential to the success of organizations, especially in rural areas that depend on patrons frequenting their associated cafés for example. Participant 2 stated that they “overachieved in the ambitions [they] set out back in 2014, [they] never saw that the other the hub would be used and the way it's being used and how it affects the village life” with other community groups frequenting their space.

Having access to multi-year funding gives organisations temporary breaks from demanding applications and allows them to plan ahead. Organisations recognise the benefits with one Participant 5 stating “[they] have been very fortunate to have multiyear funds” as it has permitted more concrete business planning, especially in contrast to single-year funding provided by the government.

Finally, support from local politicians was discussed as essential, especially at the beginning of projects. Participant 7 stated that “the local governments been very supportive. They give us lots of in smaller grants and they've shown a lot of interest in us”. Similarly, Participant 10 explained that they were “well supported by the two local councillors” at the beginning of the project which led to the charity being established. In both cases, the interviewees expressed that support from local government had waned as the projects went on yet emphasized its importance in the beginning.

5.3 Conclusion

Overall, organizations seem to perceive their governance to be adequate, linking the majority of their challenges to government policy and limited funding which impacts their ability to hire staff or complete projects. However, the governance capacity framework indicates that the organisations success is intrinsically linked to the political environment, thus, their governance

capacity may be less robust. Moreover, several assets such as expert knowledge were highlighted by participants but are not present in all communities, nor is their presence linked to government policies, limiting the potential for communities missing such assets to acquire them.

6 Discussion

Findings from the survey and interviews are contextualized in three overarching sections: first, broadly within CEA literature; next in light of the persisting health inequalities in Scotland; and finally, considering how the CEA fits into the broader political landscape.

6.1 Contextualizing Results in CEA Literature

Overall, findings from the survey and interviews align with previous conclusions on the ability for the CEA to propel meaningful change in that the success is limited in increasing community empowerment and driving policy development. In this study, success is understood as charities having sufficient governance capacity to steer the direction of their work, collaborate if desired, and as per government policy, engage in policymaking with the goal of reducing inequalities. As such, organisations must have sufficient resources, actors, and knowledge to drive change in the policy environment. There is a consensus that governance capacity is a prerequisite for organisational success, however, findings from the survey and interviews indicated that such capacity is lacking (Elliott et al., 2018; Popay, 2010; A. Steiner et al., 2023; Tabner, 2018). The high number of respondents who point to financial constraints, 26 out of 35 survey respondents, and subsequent inadequate staffing, point to trends that restrain capacity and the overall ability to deliver projects. Given the Scottish government's intention for the CEA, to promote organisations' active role in service delivery to diminish inequalities and the limited capacity of these proposed partners, the government should carefully consider the extent to which organisations will be able to address inequalities (Scottish Government, 2017). Pertinently, Participant 4 stated that "if the national government are serious about the voluntary sector, you know, being a core delivery of services, they need to give them some secure funding" to support volunteers who are filling the gaps left by the public sector. The inability of the government to ensure consistent funding while simultaneously wanting organisations to be actively involved in service delivery points to the tension between community empowerment initiatives – which, regardless of their size, require some level of funding – and the broader policy environment of austerity politics (Bua & Escobar, 2018; Elliott et al., 2018). The knock-on effects of insufficient funding on the ability to recruit staff and fulfil objectives, limits organisations governance capacity – albeit the impact is more pronounced in groups who are in more remote and disadvantaged locations.

Section 5 of the CEA allows communities to request and buy currently unused public buildings and repurpose them (Scottish Government, 2017). Asset transfers have been used in other community empowerment initiatives and are justified on the premise that access to and control over a community space increases empowerment within a community (Fischer & McKee, 2017; Popay, 2010). Three interviewees benefited from asset transfers; however, it did not translate to an increase in community empowerment or the ability to manage community life. For example, Participant 7 benefited from an asset transfer; however, maintaining day-to-day operations has been a challenge due to the inability to hire a manager and the absence of external support. The lack of continuous support for groups that benefit from asset transfers jeopardises their ability to be successful in the long term and highlights the inability for community ownership to translate to a "community benefit" (Aiken et al., 2016, p. 1682). Results from the survey indicated that those who felt supported by political leaders were more likely to feel they had met their organisation's purpose than those who did not feel supported. In addition to the lack of support, Participant 7 stated that "[the government] should trust the trustees much more" with funding. Theories of community empowerment mention trust as a key benefit; however, Participant 7 illustrates findings from the literature that trust between stakeholders does not emerge naturally, but rather requires a rethinking of the relationship between the state and civil society (Albert & Passmore, 2008; Davies & Mackie, 2019; IVAR, 2018; Rifkin, 2003). Notably, the Christie Commission, the precursor to the CEA, acknowledged that effective collaboration would "require a fundamental overhaul" of the relationships "between ordinary people and the institutions that hold power" (Scottish Public Service Commission, 2011, p. 35). Deliberative policymaking scholars argue that *who* holds power must shift, allowing communities to set the agenda and drive change without aligning themselves with preconceived ideas held by the government; however, experiences shared by participants indicate this has not happened (Bua & Escobar, 2018; Turnhout et al., 2020). Therefore, enabling communities to thrive in the aftermath of asset transfers requires government support and trust, which demands a shift in the relationship between the government and civil society.

Given the financial constraints, the respondents identified receiving additional funding as a key way for the government to be more supportive. Although various funding options are made available by the government, several respondents pointed to the lengthy application process, which requires extensive monitoring and evaluation, and initial checks. These procedures and the

resources required to address the bureaucratic obstacles were not deemed equal to the amount of funding received, especially in comparison to other available funders, highlighting the risk of having complex policy components in deliberative procedures (Adamson, 2010; Albert & Passmore, 2008). Pertinently, Participant 11 explained that despite being eligible for a government funding, they opted to use their limited profits to install solar panels because the "funding procedures take time…it's cumbersome, and as volunteers" they did not have the time. In this case, receiving government assistance was refused on the basis of cumbersome procedures, not because the group did not view the initiative as important or beneficial. Alternatively, Participant 5 mentioned they are "beginning to look at sort of diversifying [their] income streams" by turning to private funders. Therefore, the government risks disincentivizing engagement, making it more challenging for them to rely on charities. Considering the goal of the CEA to limit inequalities and allow for all communities to actively take part in policymaking, procedures should be simplified to incentivise engagement and allow organisation to focus their energy on delivering services and not on bureaucratic paperwork.

6.2 Impact on Health Inequalities

Improving access to public services was seen by the government as a mechanism to tackle health inequality. The CEA highlights an intervention which addresses multiple points of the SDH model such as the social and community networks by working with charities in all sectors, not only health. However, existing policy provisions, specifically the CEA, have not facilitated action by organisations to a level sufficient to meet their goals or expand current operations, limiting the potential for comprehensive inequality reduction. Despite this, several advantages should still be discussed. First, rural residents in Scotland, compared to urban populations, are more prone to social isolation and loneliness, a public health concern due to its impact on mental and physical wellbeing (Kelly et al., 2019). Pertinently, two interviewees from rural Scotland benefited from asset transfers which ensured that the only public building in their communities remained opened to all. As a result, communities have common space which has the potential to ease loneliness by fostering connection, reciprocity, and trust, key elements of social capital that also have the potential to improve mental wellbeing (IVAR, 2018; Kawachi, 1999). Participants recognised the added value of the community spaces noting that without the asset transfer their community would be left "with no access to any facility that would improve health and wellbeing going forward." Beyond socializing, the community hub hosts "NHS stretching chair aerobics class[es]" that

“started off with five or ten folk, it's now up to towards 30” participants. Therefore, health is promoted through at least two pathways, physical movement and socializing for the elderly in that community. However, their ability to offer chair aerobic classes is because a community member was a healthcare professional and not due to government support or programs. Other interviewees had fewer positive experiences, with one explaining that their recruitment challenges were made more complex by the lack of available housing, as most homes were being sold as vacation homes. Therefore, community centres have the potential to serve as spaces for socialization in increasingly lonely communities, however, there remain obstacles which are unaddressed in the CEA.

Second, when CEA initiatives are successful, they help reduce inequalities and promote health, a report by Public Health Scotland (PHS) therefore suggests, that the PHS should be proactively involved (Davies & Mackie, 2019). The report concludes that for programs that align with PHS’s goals, they could act as a supporting actor (Davies & Mackie, 2019). Receiving support from PHS may be welcome by certain organisations as it addresses one of the key roadblocks to success which is the lack of continuous support from the government; while also enabling improved control over assets (Aiken et al., 2016). By engaging with PHS, rural Scottish communities with high levels of poor health could reap large benefits through an increased presence of the healthcare professionals by engaging at the intersection of health and community. Moreover, from PHS’s perspective, acting as a support, rather than the lead on such initiatives would require less time and staff capacity which is already limited (Miall et al., 2022). As findings from the survey and interviews highlight, engaging with the government is often not experienced as collaboration, but rather organisations adapting to government demands and cumbersome bureaucratic requirements leading to frustration. If PHS engages more actively with organisations, their role as a supporting broker, rather than a government affiliate taking over initiatives, would be key. Pertinently, Davies and Mackie (2019) mention that PHS should encourage participation and collaboration, and facilitate development where possible, instead of driving initiatives themselves. However, there remained some confusion as to who could apply for Participation Requests or Asset Transfers, parts 3 and 5 of the CEA respectively, indicating that the abundant policy components act as a barrier to PHS’s involvement. The need for additional support was mentioned by multiple participants and would allow organisations to fulfil their purpose with greater ease, contributing to increased access to services, ultimately aiding the government in their ambition to reduce health inequalities.

Initiatives supported by the CEA, target the social and community network aspect of SDH, however, they do not target the socioeconomic, cultural and environmental conditions or power distributions (Graham, 2007). Per SDH theory, health is impacted by variables on all levels, therefore, Mackenzie et al., (2020) argue that without making changes on all levels, meaningful improvements to health cannot be achieved. As a result, policies have to address the intersection of housing, employment, access to care, the relationship between the state and individuals, alongside community empowerment initiatives for entrenched inequalities to be addressed. The need for intersectional policymaking stems from the persisting inequalities which have emerged and been maintained in the current policy environment (Mackenzie et al., 2020). Pertinently, Participant 10 explained that irrespective of funding, their organisation would struggle to recruit due to the growing number of vacation homes in their area and would like to see the government take action on housing policy – although they did not detail what changes they would like to see. While this example does not speak to a reconfiguration of political structures and relationships, it highlights an understanding from participants that their success is linked to policies that extend beyond the health sector. Moreover, it suggests that for community empowerment initiatives to be successful in providing more services, the government must operate under the assumption that the current systems and relationships will continue reproducing inequalities. Findings from the survey and interviews also emphasize the barrier of complex bureaucratic processes to access funding for organisations and communities without expert knowledge. By failing to address these road-blocks, the government is not facilitating engagement in policymaking for the most deprived communities. Therefore, considering how the CEA fits into the broader political environment is key to understanding why efforts have not been made to mitigate power asymmetries and bureaucratic demands.

6.3 The CEA, Power, and Deliberative Policymaking

The CEA fits into a broader move towards more participatory and deliberative policymaking where citizens play an active role in creating solutions for persisting social problems (Markantoni et al., 2018; A. Steiner et al., 2023). Such processes blend consultation and research, and should ultimately result in a transfer of power from the state to the citizens (Myant & Urquhart, n.d.; A. Steiner et al., 2023). In addition, broader participation in decision making is said to result

in more effective policymaking since those affected by legislation are given a platform to highlight their lived experiences (Bua & Escobar, 2018). Pertinently, according to the Scottish government, the CEA is meant to help communities "do more for themselves and have more say in decisions that affect them" (Scottish Government, 2017). Meanwhile, research indicates that there must be demand and a willingness to take on additional responsibility, such as dedicating time to consultations and sharing experiences, for deliberative processes with stakeholders to be successful (Adamson, 2010; Albert & Passmore, 2008). However, findings from the interviews highlight that organisations often do not have the capacity to take on more responsibility due to limited financing or staff capacity. Furthermore, Participant 8 stated that "it's just moving the problem" away from the government and onto the charities. Evidently, organisations do not always experience engaging with the government as collaboration. Frustration expressed by interviewees reflects the ongoing tension between the CEA, austerity, and the current relationship between the state and organisations which is preventing a meaningful increase in service availability which prevents substantive reductions in inequalities.

Despite this, the government maintains that communities are prepared to engage in deliberative processes, stating that the "people of Scotland have a desire to work collaboratively, therefore the "government needs to help communities to work together and release that potential to create a more prosperous and fairer Scotland" (Scottish Government, 2017). Beyond engagement, the government is encouraging collaboration with them and between local organisations. Collaboration with the government was partially dismissed by Participant 11 who emphasized the complex bureaucratic procedures that often disincentivised collaboration. Several participants expressed that by simplifying procedures the government would be taking concrete steps to facilitate collaboration. Beyond this, organisations struggled to use the government as an example of collaboration. Pertinently, Participant 1 stated that "when you actually try and work with government, they are phenomenally siloed…if you want everybody to work together, you need to set the example" – exemplifying the frustration of organisations. As such, the CEA has not facilitated engagement as put forward by the government, limiting the positive outcomes. By failing to change how they engage with organisations, the government maintains the status quo, a common shortcoming of noncomprehensive deliberative policy attempts (Adamson, 2010; Tabner, 2018). Scholars suggest that making engagement and collaboration a policy priority and implementing changes to simplify engagement procedures could reduce the chance of ineffective

deliberative processes (Painter et al., 2011). Overall, calls for collaboration without adequate internal government policy changes showcase a mismatch between rhetoric and policy delivery.

In addition to the lack of genuine collaboration, the extent to which organisations are able to influence the direction of programs is limited, potentially constraining their ability to promote the most efficient initiatives. The lack of flexibility in agenda setting was highlighted by Participant 9 who mentioned they "are funded on condition that we do XYZ and so it's not entirely up to us" how we set the agenda. Even as organisations receive more responsibility for service delivery, their power in decision making forums remains limited, frustrating organisations. Research from community engagement initiatives in Wales shows that a failure to redistribute power in agenda setting also culminated in frustration for the added responsibility which was unaccompanied by added trust (Adamson, 2010). Moreover, Participation Requests are only granted if the government perceives the involvement of the community group as an added benefit to the direction of the project, as a result, the government retains control over the agenda (Scottish Government, 2017). Participant 3 explained that the "Scottish Government would like to think it makes it sound quite good" but "it takes a lot of effort to put together a participation request for example, you need to get your evidence together, you need to work quite hard and I think it's the more, stronger, better organized, articulate middle class groups that are gonna benefit from that sort of thing." Not only do Participation Requests feel inaccessible, but the lack of support to help organisations will result in groups with more knowledge succeeding more than others, reinforcing inequalities (Elliott et al., 2018). Therefore, an increase of services through participation requests, for example, need to be contextualized, considering the deprivation level of the beneficiaries to understand if it will lead to a reduction in inequalities. Findings from the survey and interview suggest worse off groups will struggle to take advantage of such schemes due to limited financing, staff capacity, and knowledge.

The failure to reconceptualize power distribution through the CEA can be conceptualized as an extension of state power presented through the lens of engagement with civil society. Meanwhile, the CEA also assumes that communities are able to overcome barriers that governments have faced while trying to increase services, without considering the cause of the shortage, which is often attributed to the reduction of state support over multiple years (Albert & Passmore, 2008; Fischer & McKee, 2017). In order to ensure the CEA, and other deliberative

processes enable effective participation, efforts must be made towards devolution, transferring power from the state to organisations (Painter et al., 2011; Revell & Dinnie, 2020; Steiner & Farmer, 2018). Considering the number of elected representatives per capita, Scotland has one of the most centralized governments in Europe and it has limited fiscal autonomy, relying heavily on the government of the United Kingdom (UK) (Revell & Dinnie, 2020). By failing to transfer power from the Scottish government to local organisations, organisations continue to tailor their agendas to government funding applications inhibiting meaningful engagement, while still being expected to deliver adequate services regardless of the community's capacity (Fischer & McKee, 2017; Turnhout et al., 2020). Although deliberative processes that promote community empowerment have gained popularity in the UK and abroad, how these new policies are implemented influences their ability to alter how engagement with the state occurs and the potential for long-term impacts. Although some communities have benefited from the CEA, this has not occurred in a uniform manner, with more knowledgeable and well-connected communities succeeding more than others, limiting the CEAs ability to reduce inequalities.

7 Conclusion

Addressing Scotland's health inequalities requires a holistic approach that considers the influence of social determinants on all levels. The CEA's reliance on communities to increase service delivery addresses such inequalities beyond health policy; however, it does not go far enough in supporting community groups to effectively deliver services. Complex bureaucratic processes, limited funding, and increasing competition have made it challenging for charities to be successful. The CEA assumes community groups are willing and able to provide more services without contextualising inequalities sufficiently, failing to recognise the unequal distribution of knowledge, actors, and resources that impact the extent to which charities can meet their objectives. Although the government states the CEA is to "[help] communities to do more for themselves," complex bureaucratic processes and funding requirements mean that the government retains agenda-setting power. Meaningful deliberative processes require power redistribution, which the CEA has been unable to achieve, jeopardising its success. Despite this, participants perceive their governance capacity to be adequate, linking their challenges to the broader political environment; however, their success and broader environment are intrinsically linked and cannot be separated. As a result, the current iteration of the CEA is unlikely to lead to a reduction in inequalities.

7.1 Future Research

In order to draw comprehensive conclusions on the number of available services, future quantitative research could be carried out. In addition, interviewing members of the Scottish government and community members not involved in charities would provide a more holistic image of the goals and impact of the CEA.

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9 Appendices

Appendix I – Survey Questions

Examining Governance Capacity of Place-Based Charities in Scotland

1. Where is your organisation located? Ex: Midlothian

_____

2. What is your role in the organisation?

- ○ Chief Executive (1)
- ○ Board Member (2)
- ○ Other, please specify (3) _____

3. How many people are employed at your organisation?

- ○ 1-5 (1)
- ○ 5-10 (2)
- ○ 10-15 (3)
- ○ 15+ (4)

4. On average, how long are people employed at your organisation?

- ○ Less than 1 year (1)
- ○ 1-5 years (2)
- ○ 5 years or more (3)
- ○ Not sure (4)

---

5. Do employees typically have another job or is this their primary occupation?

- ○ Most work another full-time job (1)
- ○ Most work another part-time job (2)
- ○ This is their primary occupation (3)
- ○ Other, please specify (4) _____

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6. On average, what is the age of your employees?

- ○ 18 or younger (1)
- ○ 18-25 (2)
- ○ 26-35 (3)
- ○ 36-45 (4)
- ○ 46 or older (5)
- ○ Not sure (6)

---

7. How many trustees does your organisation have?

- ○ 3-5 (1)
- ○ 5-8 (2)
- ○ 8 or more (3)

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8. On average, how long do trustees stay in your organisation?

- ○ 1-3 years (1)
- ○ 3-6 years (2)
- ○ 6 years or more (3)
- ○ Not sure (4)

---

9. How easy or difficult do you find recruiting new employees to work in your charity?

- ○ Extremely difficult (1)
- ○ Somewhat difficult (2)
- ○ Neither easy nor difficult (3)
- ○ Somewhat easy (4)
- ○ Extremely easy (5)
- ○ Not sure (6)

Page Break

10. Thinking about your organisations stated purpose, to what extent are you able to meet it.

- ○ No (1)
- ○ Somewhat (2)
- ○ Yes (3)

11. What do you perceive to be key barriers to meeting your organisations stated purpose? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Inadequate personnel (1)
- ☐ Unclear roles within your organisation (2)
- ☐ Cumbersome procedures (3)
- ☐ Unclear objectives (4)
- ☐ Financial constraints (5)
- ☐ Lack of political support (6)
- ☐ Lack of support from the community (7)
- ☐ Limited time to implement new projects (8)
- ☐ Other, please specify (9) _____

12. What do you perceive to be key assets to meeting your organisations stated purpose? Please select all that apply.

- [ ] Adequate staff capacity (1)
- [ ] Well defined roles in your organisation (2)
- [ ] Knowledge on administrative procedures (3)
- [ ] Clear objectives (4)
- [ ] Adequate financing (5)
- [ ] Political support (6)
- [ ] Support from the community (7)
- [ ] Sufficient time to implement projects (8)
- [ ] Other, please specify (9) _____

13. Do you think the community is aware of your work?

- ○ Definitely not (1)
- ○ Probably not (2)
- ○ Might or might not (3)
- ○ Probably yes (4)
- ○ Definitely yes (5)

14. Do you feel that your work is appreciated by the community at large?

- ○ Definitely not (1)
- ○ Probably not (2)
- ○ Might or might not (3)
- ○ Probably yes (4)
- ○ Definitely yes (5)

---

15. Do you feel the community trusts you to carry out your tasks?

- ○ Definitely not (1)
- ○ Probably not (2)
- ○ Might or might not (3)
- ○ Probably yes (4)
- ○ Definitely yes (5)

---

16. Do you feel political leaders and/or funders trust you to carry out your tasks?

- ☐ Definitely not (1)
- ☐ Probably not (2)
- ☐ Might or might not (3)
- ☐ Probably yes (4)
- ☐ Definitely yes (5)
- ☐ Additional comments (6)

_____

17. Do you feel political leaders and/or funders provide enough support for you to carry out your tasks?

- ☐ Definitely not (1)
- ☐ Probably not (2)
- ☐ Might or might not (3)
- ☐ Probably yes (4)
- ☐ Definitely yes (5)
- ☐ Additional comments (6)

_____

18. How difficult would you rate performing these tasks within your organisation?

	Extremely difficult (1)	Moderately difficult (2)	Slightly difficult (3)	Neither easy nor difficult (4)	Slightly easy (5)	Moderately easy (6)	Extremely easy (7)	N/A (8)
Driving changes within the organisation (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Mobilizing resources to get things done (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Coordinating work in the organisation (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Building public support for projects (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Collaborating with other organisations (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Gathering stakeholder input (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

19. Does your organisation engage in evaluation and monitoring processes?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)
- ☐ Not sure (3)

Skip To: Q17 If Does your organisation engage in evaluation and monitoring processes? = Yes
Skip To: Q17 If Does your organisation engage in evaluation and monitoring processes? = No

20. How often does your organisation evaluate its progress?

- ○ Montlhy (1)
- ○ Quarterly (2)
- ○ Yearly (3)
- ○ Other, please specify (4) _____

Page Break

21. Does your organisation have an official long-term plan?

- ○ No (1)
- ○ Unsure (2)
- ○ Yes, but it's vague (3)
- ○ Yes, it is clear (4)

22. If you stepped down from your role tomorrow, would there be documented information on what your role entails and how to effectively carry it out?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ Somewhat (2)
- ○ No (3)
- ○ Unsure (4)

---

23. What time of day do you usually host your board meetings?

- ○ Early morning (1)
- ○ Midday (2)
- ○ Afternoon (3)
- ○ Evenings (4)
- ○ It varies (5)

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24. How often do you hold board meetings?

- ○ Monthly (1)
- ○ Bi-monthly (2)
- ○ Quarterly (3)
- ○ Other, please specific (4) _____

---

25. Are board meetings well attended by trustees?

- ○ A majority attend (1)
- ○ A minority attend (2)
- ○ It varies (3)

End of Block: Main Body

Start of Block: Interview Request

As a part of this research, I am seeking to complete follow-up interviews. Interviews will last between 30-60 minutes, and take place online or in person. Participating is completely voluntary. Would you be willing to be interviewed as a part of this research?

- ○ No (1)
- ○ Yes, please leave your email below and you will be contacted via email in the coming weeks. (2) _____

End of Block: Interview Request

Appendix II – Survey Participation Information Sheet

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
School of Social and Political Science

SURF

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Project title

Examining the Governance Capacity of Place-Based Charities in Scotland

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research project, participating in voluntary and before you decide whether or not do take part, it is important to understand why the research is being carried out and what it demands from you. Please feel free to ask any questions if something is not clear.

What is the purpose of the project?

The purpose of this project is to understand how place-based charities perceive their governance capacity in the context of the Scottish Governments Community empowerment Act and push for community participation. Specifically, we are interested in the governance capacity of charities and their ability to achieve their stated goals in the short and long-term. To do so, this research will rely on survey responses and semi-structured interviews with members working for charities. Both survey and interview responses will be analysed to tease out key themes and draw conclusions on what charities feel is preventing them or helping them succeed. Interviews will take place throughout the month of June and a final write up will be completed early August 2024.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a member of SURF and our research is interested in small charities experiences around the country. The survey has been sent to all SURF members and a maximum of 15 interviews will be carried out on a voluntary basis – if you are interested in being interviewed there will be option to leave contact details at the end of the survey.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign an informed consent form which lays out how your data will be stored, who will have access to it and for how long. If you take part, you reserve the right to withdrawal without providing a reason until **July 16th**.

What does taking part involve?

You will be asked to fill out a survey which should take between 10-15 minutes. This survey will ask questions about your organization, its purpose, the ability to meet its stated goals, and ability to navigate Scottish public administration. All names or other identifying features will be removed and results will be anonymized in the final write-up.

Are there any possible risks or disadvantages in taking part?

There are no significant risks anticipated from participation in this research project.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

By sharing your experiences with us, you will be helping Irene Lavergne, SURF and the University of Edinburgh to better understand place-based charities governance capacity.

Will I be reimbursed for any expenses or for my time?

No.

What If I Want To Withdraw From The Project?

Agreeing to participate in this project does not oblige you to remain in the study or to have any further obligations to the research project or team. If at any stage you no longer want to be part of the study, you can withdraw from the project by contacting Irene Lavergne by emailing s2074412@ed.ac.uk . *You can withdraw from the project until* ***July 16th, 2024****.*

If you withdraw from the project all the information and data collected from you, to date, will be destroyed and your name removed from all the project files.

How Will My Data Be Looked After during the project?

All your data will be processed and stored in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) along with the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). The project will be also be guided by and adhere to the University of Edinburgh's data protection guidance and regulations, see http://www.recordsmanagement.ed.ac.uk/InfoStaff/DPstaff/DataProtectionGuidance.htm

All personal details, including contact details, addresses, phone numbers etc, will be kept strictly confidential within the research team, stored on password-protected and encrypted devices and/or University secure servers, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation, and the latest University of Edinburgh data security protocols.

Electronic project data will be uploaded as soon as possible to a secure University of Edinburgh server and stored there for the duration of the project, only accessible to the project team.

What will happen to my data after the end of the project?

At the end of the project, SURF will retain access to survey responses for potential use in future projects unless you object in the consent form.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you wish to take part in this research, please complete the survey linked in the email below.

What will happen with the results of the research project?

The results from this research will be used in a student dissertation for the Master's program Global Health Policy to be handed in to the University of Edinburgh and SURF. A blog post will also be written and published on https://surf.scot/

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is being conducted by an MSc student, Irene Lavergne in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Edinburgh in collaboration with Scotland's Regeneration Forum – SURF, by one researcher.

Who has approved this project?

This research project has been approved through the ethical review process in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Edinburgh.

Contact for Further Information

If you have any further questions about this project, please contact my academic supervisor, Emily Adrion by emailing emily.adrion@ed.ac.uk in the first instance.

If you have any concerns about the way in which the project has been conducted, or you wish to make a complaint, you can contact the Deputy Director of Research (Ethics and Integrity) in the School of Social and Political Sciences:

Deputy Director of Research (Ethics and Integrity)

School of Social and Political Sciences

University of Edinburgh

Edinburgh EH8 8LN
e-mail: ethics-ssps@ed.ac.uk

For general information about how the University of Edinburgh looks after research data go to: https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/privacy-notice-research

If you have any queries about how the project data is managed, you can contact the University Data Protection Officer, Dr Rena Gertz, at dpo@ed.ac.uk. See https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/about/data-protection-officer

Thank you

Thank you for taking time to read this Participant Information Sheet.

Date

April 8th, 2024

Appendix III – Survey Consent Form

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
School of Social and Political Science

SURF
Scotland's Regeneration Forum

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Examining Governance Capacity of Place-Based Charities in Scotland

Please initial each box

If you are happy to participate in the research, please initial each box as appropriate (leave blank any box for which you prefer not to give consent) and then sign this form on the third and final page:

1.	The researcher has given me my own copy of the Participant Information Sheet, and I have had the opportunity to read and consider the information.	☐
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask any further questions and have had these questions answered to my satisfaction.	☐
3.	I understand that participating in the research involves completing one survey which should take a maximum of 15 minutes to complete.	☐
4.	I have been given information about how my data will be stored and used during and after the end of the research, and I have read and understood this.	☐

5.	I understand that my words may be quoted in an MSc dissertation and a blog post to be handed into the University of Edinburgh and SURF.	☐
6.	I am happy to identified using a description e.g.: Board Member 1 • Yes	☐
OR	• I would not like to be identified	☐
7.	Please choose one of the following two options: • I agree for the data I provide to be retained by the research team in secure storage for the duration of the research project.	☐
OR	• I agree for the data I provide to be retained by SURF in secure storage for their future use on similar and related projects	☐
8.	I agree that members of the project team can re-contact me at a future date should they wish to follow up on this research.	☐
9.	I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the project later, and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part *(and this will be without any impact on any related services I am using).* I have read and understood the Participation Information Sheet about the implications of withdrawing at different points during the life of the project.	☐
10.	I understand I can ask for specific quotes or statements not to be used (or to be redacted from the data) if I wish.	☐

11.	I understand that if I want to withdraw from the project, I can contact Irene Lavergne by emailing s2074412@ed.ac.uk who will discuss with me how existing data will be managed, as outlined in the Participant Information Sheet.	☐

I agree to take part in this research project

Name of research participant	Date	Signature

Name of researcher recording consent	Date	Signature

INFORMED CONSENT FORM TEMPLATE

Prepared by SSPS DDREI; last reviewed December 2019

Appendix IV – Interview Participation Information Sheet

THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
School of Social and Political Science

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET TEMPLATE

Project title

Examining the Governance Capacity of Place-Based Charities in Scotland

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research project, participating is voluntary and before you decide whether or not do take part, it is important to understand why the research is being carried out and what it demands from you. Please feel free to ask any questions if something is not clear.

What is the purpose of the project?

The purpose of this project is to understand how place-based charities perceive their governance capacity in the context of the Scottish Governments Community empowerment Act and push for community participation. Specifically, we are interested in the governance capacity of charities and their ability to achieve their stated goals in the short and long-term. To do so, this research will rely on survey responses and semi-structured interviews with members working for charities. Both survey and interview responses will be analysed to tease out key themes and draw conclusions on what charities feel is preventing them or helping them succeed. Interviews will take place throughout the month of June and a final write up will be completed early August 2024.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a member of SURF and our research is interested in small charities experiences around the country. You have completed the survey and have chosen to partake in a follow up interview.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign an informed consent form which lays out how your data will be stored, who will have access to it and for how long. If you take part, you reserve the right to withdrawal without providing a reason until **July 16th**.

What does taking part involve?

You will be interviewed either in person or online for 30-60 minutes. The interview will cover similar themes as the survey which include ability to navigate Scottish public administration and whether or not you feel able to meet your organizations stated objectives – if not, why not. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Are there any possible risks or disadvantages in taking part? (where relevant)

There are no significant risks anticipated from participation in this research project.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

By sharing your experiences with us, you will be helping Irene Lavergne, SURF and the University of Edinburgh to better understand place-based charities governance capacity.

Will I be reimbursed for any expenses or for my time?

No.

What If I Want To Withdraw From The Project?

Agreeing to participate in this project does not oblige you to remain in the study or to have any further obligations to the research project or team. If at any stage you no longer want to be part of the study, you can withdraw from the project by contacting Irene Lavergne by emailing s2074412@ed.ac.uk . *You can withdraw from the project until* ***July 16th, 2024****.*

How Will My Data Be Looked After during the project?

All your data will be processed and stored in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) along with the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). The project will be also be guided by and adhere to the University of Edinburgh's data protection guidance and regulations, see http://www.recordsmanagement.ed.ac.uk/InfoStaff/DPstaff/DataProtectionGuidance.htm

All personal details, including contact details, addresses, phone numbers etc, will be kept strictly confidential within the research team, stored on password-protected and encrypted devices and/or University secure servers, in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation, and the latest University of Edinburgh data security protocols.

Electronic project data will be uploaded as soon as possible to a secure University of Edinburgh server and stored there for the duration of the project, only accessible to the project team.

What will happen to my data after the end of the project?

At the end of the project, all interview data including recordings and transcriptions will be deleted.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you wish to be interviewed, you can leave your contact details at the end of the survey. Irene Lavergne will reach out by email (using the email: s2074412@ed.ac.uk) to schedule an interview in the coming weeks.

What will happen with the results of the research project?

The results from this research will be used in a student dissertation for the Master's program Global Health Policy to be handed in to the University of Edinburgh and SURF. A blog post will also be written and published on https://surf.scot/

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is being conducted by Irene Lavergne, an MSc student in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Edinburgh in collaboration with Scotland's Regeneration Forum – SURF.

Who has approved this project?

This research project has been approved through the ethical review process in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Edinburgh.

Contact for Further Information

If you have any further questions about this project, please contact my academic supervisor, Emily Adrion by emailing emily.adrion@ed.ac.uk in the first instance.

If you have any concerns about the way in which the project has been conducted, or you wish to make a complaint, you can contact the Deputy Director of Research (Ethics and Integrity) in the School of Social and Political Sciences:

Deputy Director of Research (Ethics and Integrity)

School of Social and Political Sciences

University of Edinburgh

Edinburgh EH8 8LN
e-mail: ethics-ssps@ed.ac.uk

For general information about how the University of Edinburgh looks after research data go to: https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/privacy-notice-research

If you have any queries about how the project data is managed, you can contact the University Data Protection Officer, Dr Rena Gertz, at dpo@ed.ac.uk. See https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/about/data-protection-officer

Thank you

Thank you for taking time to read this Participant Information Sheet.

Date

April 8th, 2024

Appendix V – Interview Consent Form

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
School of Social and Political Science

SURF
Scotland's Regeneration Forum

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Examining Governance Capacity of Place-Based Charities in Scotland

Please initial each box

If you are happy to participate in the research, please initial each box as appropriate (leave blank any box for which you prefer not to give consent) and then sign this form at the end:

1.	The researcher has given me my own copy of the Participant Information Sheet, and I have had the opportunity to read and consider the information.	☐
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask any further questions and have had these questions answered to my satisfaction.	☐
3.	I understand that participating in the research involves one 30-60 minute interview in an agreed location or online.	☐
4.	I have been given information about how my data will be stored and used during and after the end of the research, and I have read and understood this.	☐

5.	I understand that my words may be quoted in an MSc dissertation to be submitted to The University of Edinburgh and SURF Scotland, as a well as blog post to be posted on SURF's website.	☐
6.	I am happy to be identified with a number or descriptor e.g.: Board Member 1	☐
7.	I understand that the research team will be audio recording, then transcribing the interview for analysis for the project: *Examining Governance Capacity of Place-Based Charities in Scotland*	☐
8.	Please choose one of the following two options: • I agree for the data I provide to be retained by the research team in secure storage for the duration of the research project.	☐
OR	• I agree for the data I provide to be retained by the research team in secure storage for their future use on similar and related projects.	☐
9.	I agree that members of the project team can re-contact me at a future date should they wish to follow up on this research.	☐
10.	I agree that other researchers can contact me at a future date should they wish to follow up on this research.	☐
11.	I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the project later, and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part *(and this will be without any impact on any related services I am using).* I have read and understood the Participation Information Sheet about the implications of withdrawing at different points during the life of the project.	☐

12.	I understand I can ask for specific quotes or statements not to be used (or to be redacted from the data) if I wish.	☐
13.	I understand that if I want to withdraw from the project, I can contact Irene Lavergne by emailing s2074412@ed.ac.uk , who will discuss with me how existing data will be managed, as outlined in the Participant Information Sheet.	☐

I agree to take part in this research project

Name of research participant	Date	Signature

Name of researcher recording consent	Date	Signature

INFORMED CONSENT FORM TEMPLATE

Prepared by SSPS DDREI; last reviewed December 2019

Appendix VI – Interview Guide

For this project I am interested in charities governance. Could I ask what your charity does?

I have defined governance using three key pillars, resources, actors and knowledge. All three have are mutually reinforcing and all are needed for a well-functioning charity, especially in the long term.

Resources

1. What kind of resources (financial vs physical) does your charity need to be successful?
    a. Have you been able to access them? If not, are there things you need but cannot access?
    b. Have you faced barriers trying to access resources? If so, what were they?
        i. Could be that you didn't know how to get them or they were too expensive?

Actors

1. Do employed staff members in your charity occupy specific roles?
    a. How were these roles chosen (not how did you recruit people, but how did you decide that a position was needed)?

Knowledge

1. Is there an individual in your charity who's primary focus following policy related developments?
    a. *If yes* – does this help your organization navigate Scottish PA?
    b. *If no* – how does your organization stay up to date on policy changes relevant to small/medium sized charities? (including schemes that could be financially relevant?)

Ability to meet goals/policy objectives

1. What is your organizations purpose?
    a. If your organization met its purpose what would that look like to you?
2. Does your charity evaluate its goals?
    a. What does your evaluation process entail?

3. Does your organization have a succession plan?
    a. *If yes* – What type of information/provision does it entail?
        i. What is the purpose of your succession plan?
4. How does your organization choose its priorities for the short and long term?
    a. Priorities à projects that are invested in/where time is spent
    b. Probing – is it linked to financial capabilities, the ability/knowledge of current employees, or to the long term mission of your charity?

Broader political environment

1. In your view, does the Scottish government (local or national) provide enough support for small charities to be successful in meeting their stated goals?
    a. *If yes* – what about their policies/way they function makes you feel supported?
    b. *If no* – why not?
        i. *ALL* – what more could the government do to support you/other small/medium sized charities.

Finally, is there anything else you would like to add that was not covered in today's interview or the survey you completed priority to the interview about your charity?

Appendix VII – Codebook

KEY
Actors
Resources
Knowledge
Broader Political Environment

Code	Definition	Source(s)
Adequate staff capacity	Having enough staff members to carry out the organisations desired tasks	Ramesh et al., 2016
Inadequate staff capacity	Not having enough staff members to carry out desired tasks	
Clear roles within each organization	Roles within the organisations are clear, with responsibilities distributed along clear lines	
Unclear roles within the organization	Roles are not clear divided it is not clear who is responsible for what	
Clear objectives	The organisation has clearly laid out objectives for their charity and projects.	
Unclear objectives	No clear goals are set for the organisation, the goals are too broad.	
Adequate financing	Having enough financial resources to carry out projects and hire the required number of staff members.	
Inadequate financing	Not having enough money to hire adequate staff members or carry out projects as intended	
Political support	Receiving support from local or national politicians in the form of financial donations and/or by promoting your project and highlighting its need	

Lack of political support	Not receiving financial support and/or being disregarded or dismissed by local or national politicians	
Community support	Receiving support from your community. They see the value or the work and volunteer where/when needed	
Lack of community support	Not receiving support from the community. You do not manage to attract volunteers to help achieve your goals	
Collaboration	Referring to groups working together in the community and/*or* working alongside government to achieve stated objectives	Elliott et al., 2018; Tabner, 2018
Bureaucracy	Paper works and administrative tasks required to benefit from government programs	Elliott et al., 2018
Regulatory burden	Referring to high levels of regulation which imped on an organisations ability to meet goals either by requiring large amount of staff capacity and/or restricting how money can be spent	Elliott et al., 2018
Expert Knowledge	Having an individual (or group of individuals) involved in a charity who possess key knowledge that will help the charity achieve its goals. This could be previous experience in business to having knowledge on construction if your organisation is rebuilding something. Any type of knowledge acquired through previous on concurring jobs which is valuable to the organisation. Can sometimes include things one would usually pay for, such as grant officer/writer.	Steiner and Farmer, 2018; Revell and Dinnie, 2020; Fischer and McKee, 2017; Tabner, 2018
Recruitment challenges	Experiencing difficulty recruiting staff or board members due to the unwillingness of community members or the lack of people (aging or migrated out of the town)	Steiner and Farmer, 2018

Succession	Having laid out a succession plan for the future which includes clear organisational roles, how to run operations and/or how to apply for financing.	Fischer and McKee, 2017
Trust Building	Making an effort to gain and build the trust with the community. Trust is important in community led initiatives because it can increase support for projects and reduce scepticism community members may have.	Steiner et al., 2023
Volunteer fatigue	Individuals are less unwilling to participate, or reduce their participation, due to other work or no longer wanting to be involved. In CEA literature this often appears in small rural communities where fewer people have more responsibility to ensure organisations function.	Steiner and Farmer, 2018; Fischer and McKee, 2017
Frustration with government	Often in relation to a mismatch between what the government says and what they do.	Elliott et al., 2018
Support from the government	Feeling that local or national government support your organisation and goals.	Markantoni et al., 2018
Austerity	Referring to years of government policy which cut expenditure on public services.	Tabner, 2018; Elliott et al., 2018
Siloed	Referring to government programs and/or funding as well as the lack of collaboration between organisations working in the same place or doing similar things across the country. By not engaging, knowledge sharing does not occur as easily.	Elliott et al., 2018; Markantoni et al., 2018
Multi-year Funding	Having access too and expressing a desire for multi-year funding, usually 3-5 years, rather than single-year funding.	Markantoni et al., 2018