Cities learning
for fair, clean
& democratic energy

mpOwer
exchange

Consortium of partners

mPOWER is run by a consortium composed of the University of Glasgow (UK), Platform (UK), Transnational Institute (Netherlands), Energy Cities (EU-wide), IPE (Croatia), University of the Basque Country (ES), and Carbon Co-op (UK).

Getting started

→ setting goals and learning objectives
→ getting to know each other
→ assessing group skills and knowledge
→ gathering learning tools
→ mapping networks, resources and potential partners

Learning together

→ exploring current issues and opportunities
→ testing out ideas
→ learning from and with each other
→ inviting additional expertise
→ exploring replicable models
→ reassessing goals and objectives
→ sharing learning locally - extending local networks

Moving on

→ creating local replication plans
→ starting and developing local models
→ celebrating success
→ sharing the story

Getting started

Apr 2019 - Sep 2019

Intro city study visit
Activity: 1 face-to-face meeting | Commitment: 2–3 days (+1 day travel)

Learning together

Jun 2019 - Mar 2020

Online group sessions
Commitment: 4 hours per month
over 6 month period

Individual support
Commitment: 1 hour per month
over 6 month period

Within your cities
Commitment: 2 hour per month
over 6 month period

Nov 2019 - Mar 2020

Leading city study visit
Activity: 1 face-to-face meeting
Commitment: 1–2 days
(+1 day travel)

Moving on

Jan 2020 - May 2020

Local replication plans
Commitment: 7 hours per month
over 3 month period

Sep 2020 - Dec 2020

Celebration events
Commitment: 1–2 days
(+1 day travel)

'We cannot solve our
problems with the same
thinking we used when we
created them.'
— Albert Einstein

Welcome to mPower exchange

The energy system is undergoing a period of huge change. Mass decentralisation of energy in the context of decarbonisation, new technological development and the need to address pressing social and environmental issues throw up questions, dilemmas and new opportunities. Two emerging agendas suggest that municipalities and you as leaders within them have a key role to play at this time of change.

As citizens are being required to make big changes in their lifestyles and behaviours, they are naturally beginning to question the legitimacy of the energy system actors involved and to ask for fairness in the allocation of the costs and benefits of the transition. As responsive, locally based institutions rooted in democratic accountability, municipalities are well placed to act as key intermediaries and delivery partners within the transition.

Secondly, the complexity and scale of the transition is beginning to point towards the need for an integrated, local approach to energy. Local actors and municipalities have long understood this dynamic, pushing successfully for the establishment of the 'Local Energy Community' in EU law. This provides the opportunity to harmonise elements of generation, distribution and energy services delivery within a bounded geographical area or region. Municipalities must continue to lead these discussions giving shape and definition at this crucial time as they become integrated into legislation and directives.

Many municipalities all over Europe have already shown immense initiative, creativity and innovation in tackling the challenges and tapping into the opportunities arising. At this moment cooperation and learning is essential if we are to create the robust models capable of delivering clean, fair and democratic energy.

mPower Exchange offers you the opportunity to work with a group of peers, with a common understanding of the challenges and opportunities, to collaborate in the strategising and hands-on delivery that will inform the next stage of the European energy transition.

Among peers you'll be able to connect more easily, trust more and crucially benefit faster from exposure to their thinking, problem solving, professional networks, best practice and innovative ideas. Tapping into the collective intelligence and wisdom of such a group can be extremely powerful, especially in a forum that provides a safe harbor — a place to test your thinking and ideas and to ask questions with supportive colleagues who are there to help and not to judge.

This handbook is a resource for you to use during the mPower Exchange programme. It holds background information about the programme, key logistics and most importantly space for you to note and collect your observations, reflections and action plans. It is deliberately set up in a flexible format so you can add sheets and change the order as you like.

We very much look forward to working with you,

Your mPower Team.

Roles, tasks & logistics
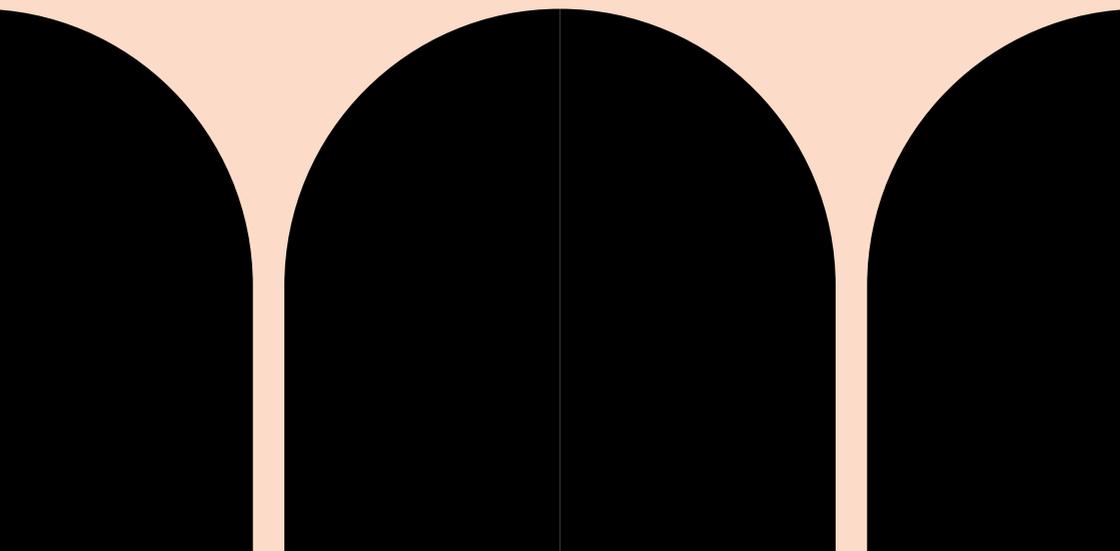
Learning formats

The mPower Exchange programme offers different formats for you to work in a group context within your peer learning group and as an individual, including with your respective networks. Throughout the programme you will meet as a group three times in person in different cities in Europe. The rest of the work will take place in online meetings and on the ground in your municipality.

Study visits
2 x study visits in a city leading in your energy theme. The primary purpose of the study visit is for the participants of each learning group to visit a city or a project that is engaged with energy transition topics that are of interest to the group in order to learn from their successes and pitfalls.

Depending on budget you can bring colleagues
to the 2nd study visit.

Within your cities

To make the most of new skills and insights for your city and tap into vital resource for the implementation of new projects it is important that learning is shared with your colleagues and peers within your workplace and networks from the outset. You will identify a 'local support team', a group of colleagues that you can share your new learning with, devise strategies for growing/strengthening your network of partners ready to help implement new projects. Your facilitator will encourage you to invite colleagues to the program where possible to help with this.

Online group sessions

6 x online group meetings (more possible, depending on need), offering a mix of Action Learning and expert witness sessions.

Action Learning sessions will provide participants with a space to talk through issues or opportunities, gain support and challenge from their peers, reflect and define a course of action. This technique has a proven track record in helping individuals and organisations face major challenges, create reflection time for new insights and map out action plans. Your facilitator will train you in the necessary techniques.

Action Learning sessions are for the main participant only.

Expert witness sessions will see 'witnesses' being invited to participate in some of the online meetings to share their experiences, knowledge and skills. A witness could be a peer learning group member, an mPower partner or someone from within the wider mPower network. Each expert witness session will feature a presentation followed by a Q&A.

You can bring colleagues to expert witness sessions.

Individual support

Bi-monthly one-to-one meetings with your facilitator will provide a regular opportunity for you to discuss your progress in regards to your goals and objectives. These meetings will allow you to update on how well the programme is meeting your personal learning objectives, address any issues or additional needs and discuss how your work on implementing your objectives within your municipality is progressing.

> The individual learning support can be accessed by more of your colleagues.

Replication plan support

The final goal of this exchange is to enable you to replicate, adapt or improve on what has been learnt. As each municipality has its own unique situation it is best to carry out a quick analysis to check if an activity is replicable. This can be done via a combination of self-analysis, discussion with your facilitator and of course asking your peers for advice. It will take place through a guided process towards the end of the mPower Exchange programme.

Celebration and sharing of best practice

To bring mPower Exchange to a close we will bring all of our peer learning group participants together for one final event. Here we'll share the learning of our peer learning groups, look for common conclusions and work towards developing a programme wide set of energy transition policies and best practice briefings. The event will take place towards the end of 2020.

Your responsibilities

As the main programme participant and active member of your peer learning group you are responsible for the following actions.

Getting started
- Completing an online benchmarking exercise
- Creating at least 3 personal learning objectives and 3 goals for your city
- Attending the first face-to-face meeting
- Completing one feedback form at the end of the first meeting
- Establishing a 'local support team'

Learning together
- Attending at least 6 online meetings
- Engaging in at least 4 bi-monthly one-to-one online meetings with your group facilitator
- Attending the second face-to-face meeting
- A willingness to share your experiences, skills and knowledge openly
- Tracking your own personal development through this workbook
- Completing one feedback form at the end of the second face-to-face meeting
- Feeding back your learning to your local support team
- Writing one blog post describing your experiences with mPower Exchange and impacts of the programme within your municipality
- Participating in at least one of our podcasts or videos

Moving on

· Working with your group facilitator to develop a local replication plan that will allow you to put your learning into practice
· Attending the celebration event
· Completing one online closing reflections form at the end of mPower Exchange

How to make the most out of mPower?

As the main person committing to mPower Exchange you will enjoy a lot of privileges of international travel, meeting like-minded individuals and learning new skills. Equally the programme comes with some time and energy commitment which might at times put a strain on you. It might be helpful to discuss this with your workplace supervisor to make sure that you have their full support, that your colleagues are fully informed and supportive and that sufficient time is put aside for you to be able to make the most out of mPower for your city or region.

Please make sure you attend online meetings from a quiet and private room with a good internet connection and allow yourself some time before and after the meetings to prepare and reflect. You can discuss any needs or difficulties with your group facilitator .

Your facilitator's responsibilities

Each peer learning group has a skilled facilitator from the mPower programme. They plan, guide and manage the peer group meetings to ensure that the group's objectives are effectively met, with clear thinking and full buy-in from all participants. The facilitator is not an expert or a teacher. Their role is instead to ensure that the overall programme runs smoothly and the peer to peer learning is effective.

They will
1. Organise the logistics and agenda for all meetings, including accommodation, study visits and expense claims.
2. Organise regular one-to-one meetings with each participant.
3. Guide the participants through the Action Learning method during sessions.
4. Organise any expert witness sessions requested by participants.
5. Support the development of replication plan.

Communications

As an mPower Exchange participant you will play a part in generating valuable experiences and knowledge for people and groups outside of the project. We encourage you to share these insights and highlights on social media to create a buzz around the mPower project and advocate for municipal power throughout Europe.

To show your support you could:

Sign up to the mPower newsletter:
municipalpower.org/subscribe

Follow and like mPower on social media:

Share your experiences in mPower Exchange by writing a blog, participating in a podcast or being interviewed for a video.

When posting about your mPower experience on social media please include @drive_mpower and/or #municipalpower so that we can re-post your message and boost its visibility.

Expense claims

mPower Exchange is an all expenses covered programme, where your travel, accommodation and catering requirements for the two face-to-face meetings will be covered as part of the project.

The only element of this that you will be required to book yourself is your travel to and from the face-to-face meeting.

You will be able to reclaim your expenses using the procedure below.

A few specific requirements to consider before booking your travel:
1. If your return travel cost will exceed €400 please let your peer learning facilitator know before booking.
2. We suggest that all participants use sustainable travel options to get to mPower Exchange meetings. Please contact your mPower peer learning facilitator if you would like to discuss options.

To reclaim your travel expenses please scan all your receipts and send to your peer learning facilitator along with the account name, IBACC, account number and sort code of the account that you'd like the money sent back to. If you require an invoice number to be attributed to the transaction please include in your email to your peer learning facilitator. All expense claims must be sent to your peer learning facilitator within two months of purchase for the claim to be valid.

Getting started

→ setting goals and learning objectives
→ getting to know each other
→ assessing group skills and knowledge
→ gathering learning tools
→ mapping networks, resources and potential partners

· Introduction to mPower Exchange
· Sharing histories
· Goals and objectives
· Skills, knowledge and capacities
· Creating shared understanding and objectives
· City network mapping
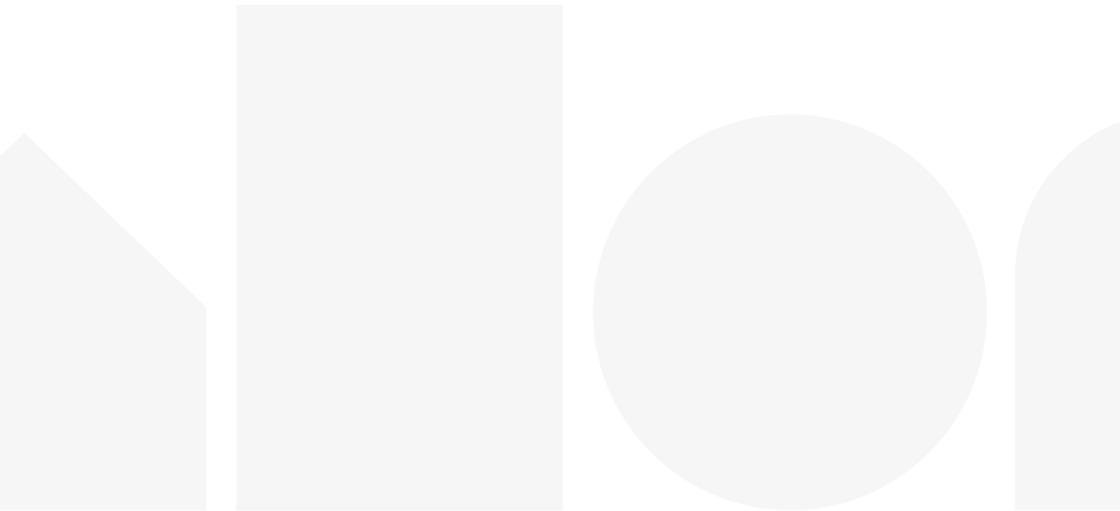· Learning log: Study visits and expert witness sessions

Introduction to mPower and mPower Exchange

Information about mPower and mPower Exchange are in this handbook.
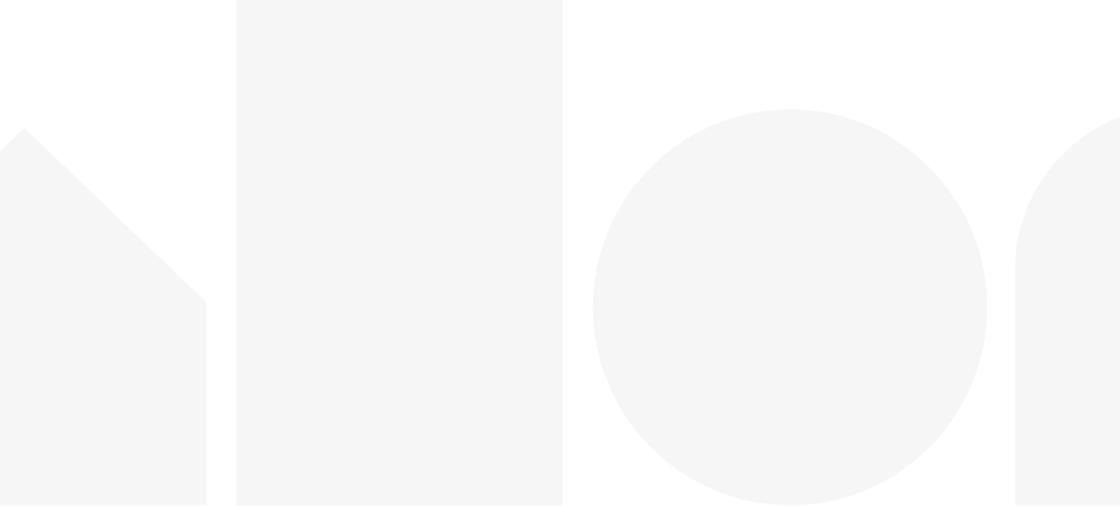
Sharing histories

In this session you will each give an introduction to your work, context, relevant projects and future aspirations.
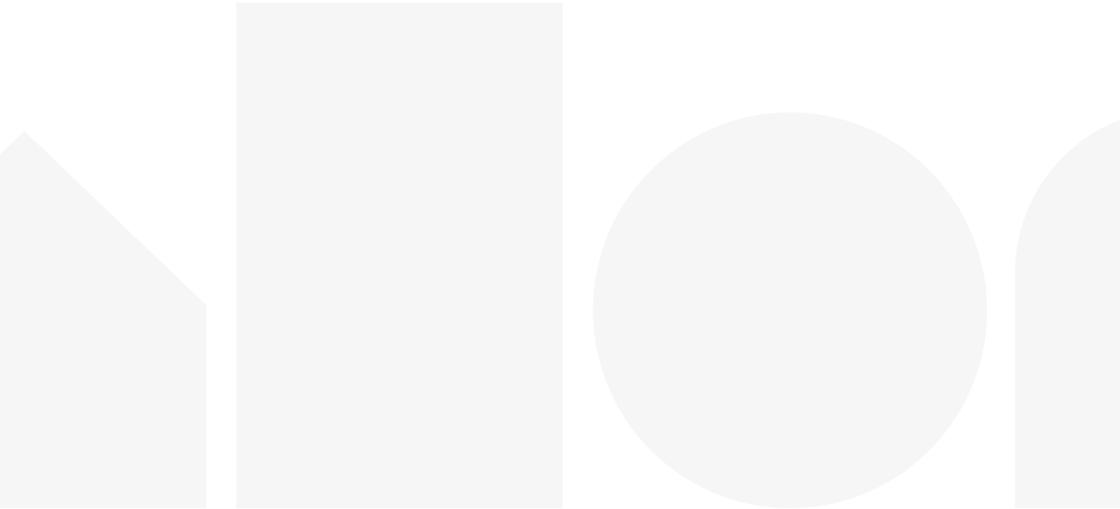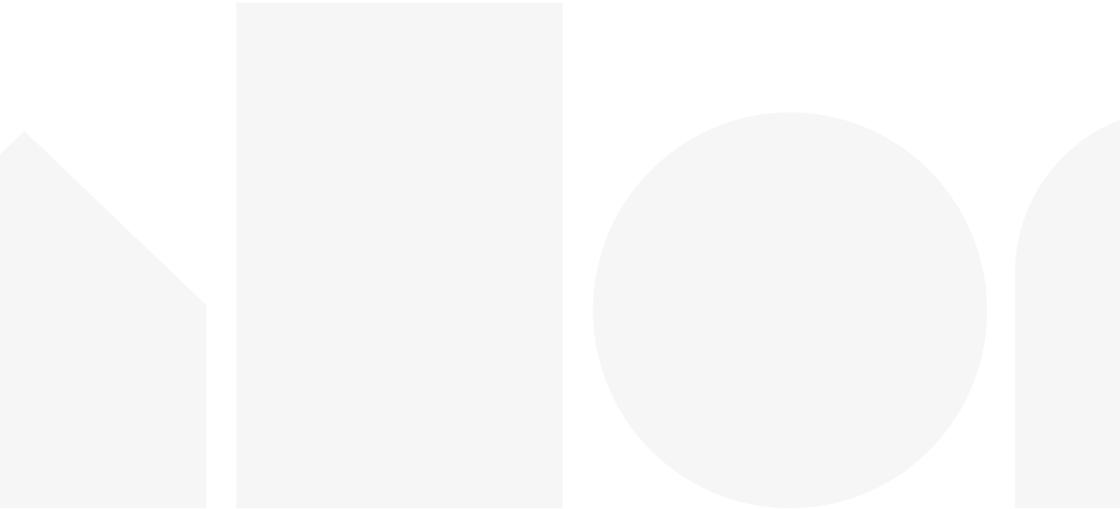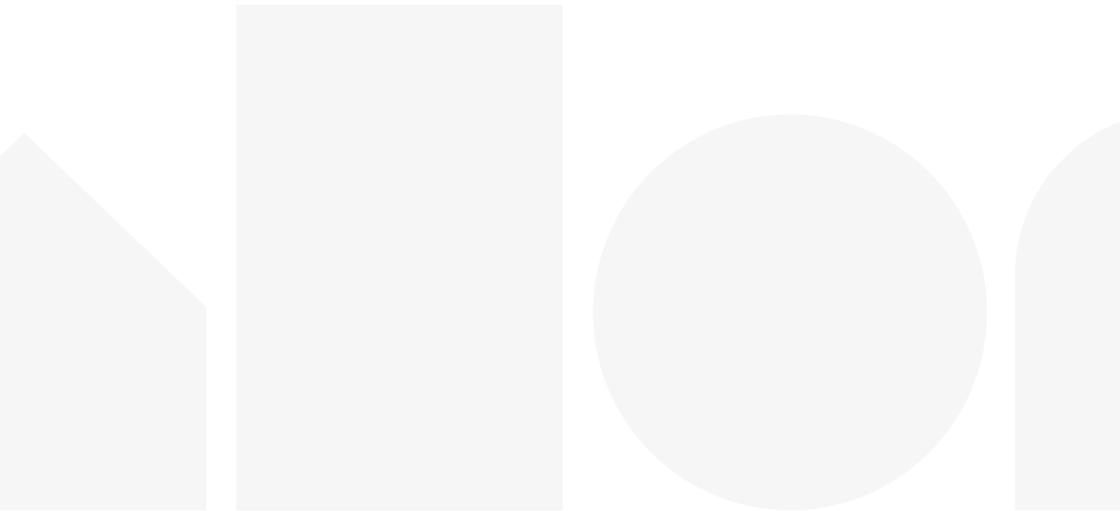
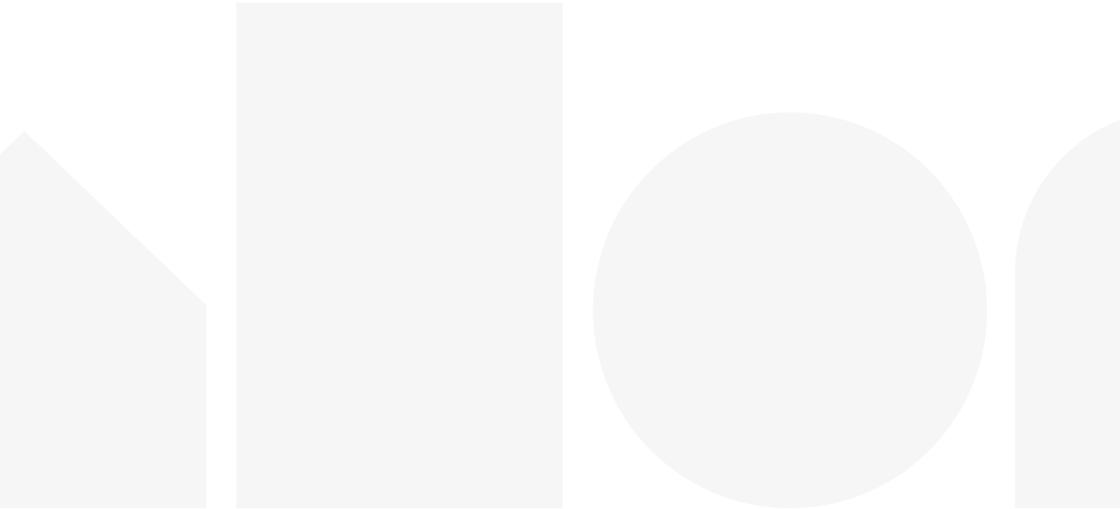City:

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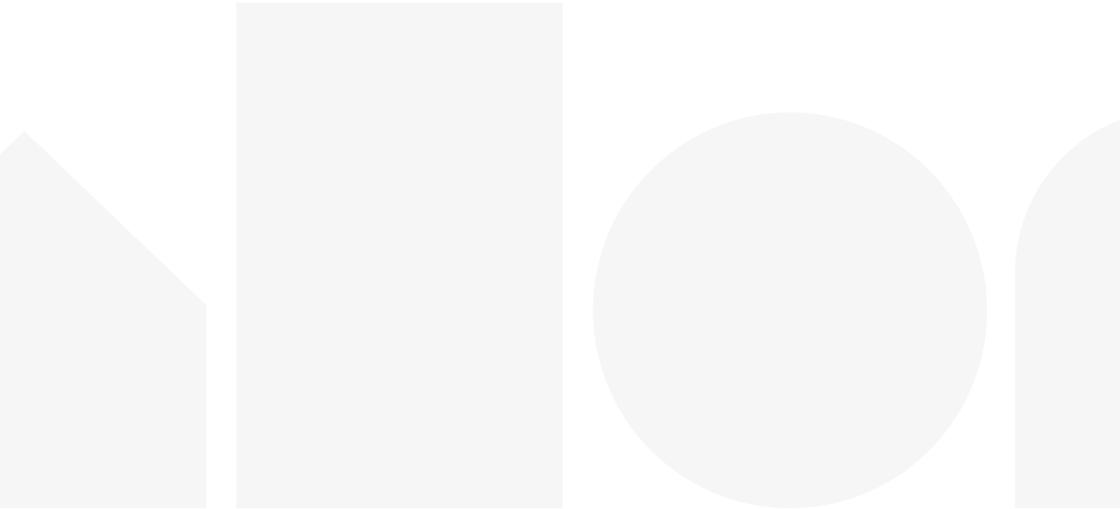
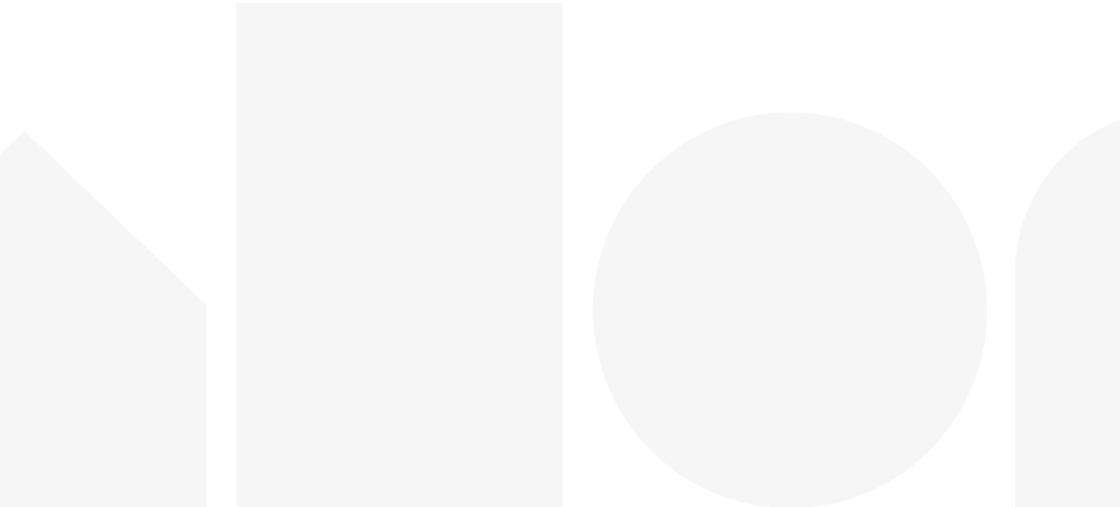City:
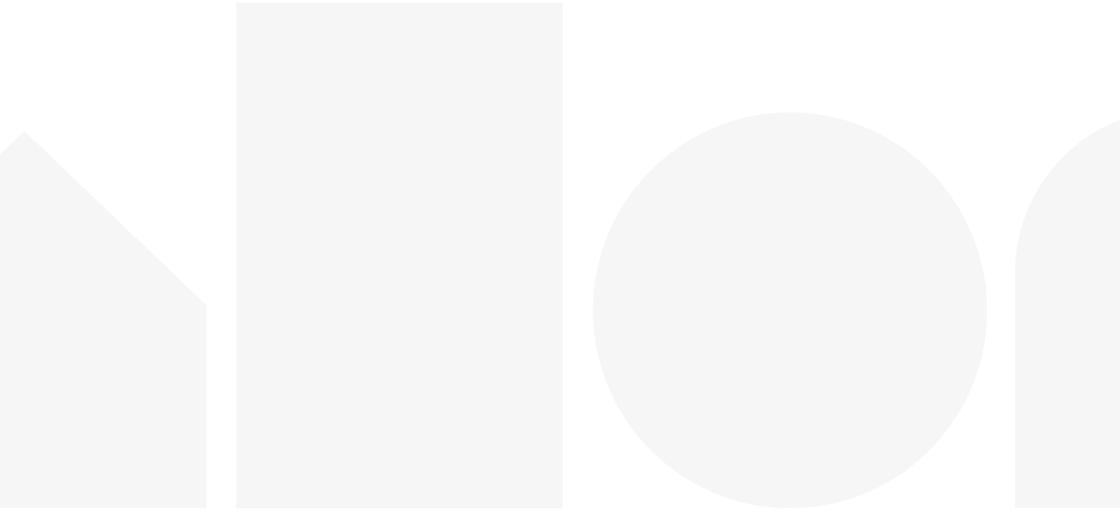
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Actions I'd like to take after this session:

Goals

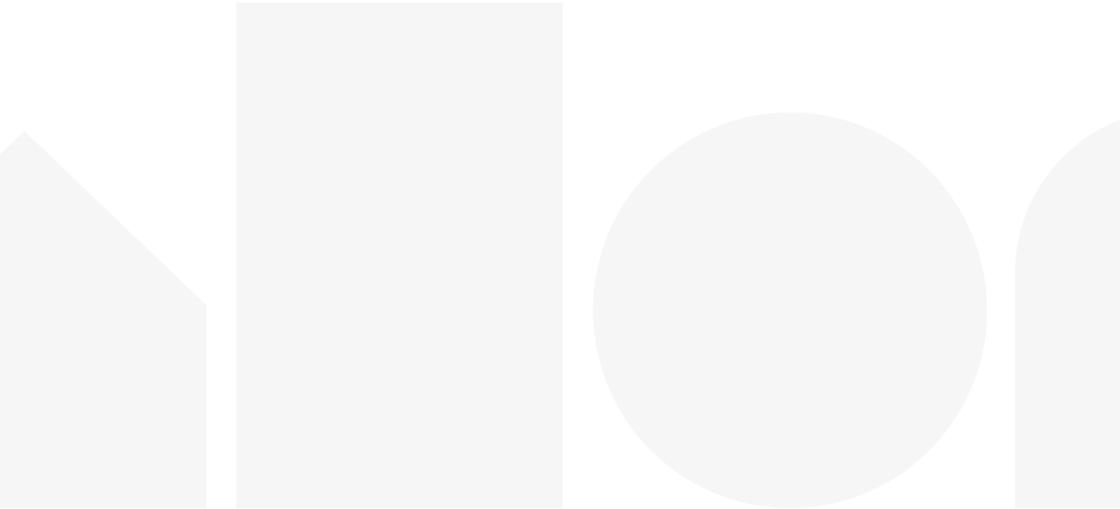Main goals for my municipality (maximum 3):

Learning Objectives

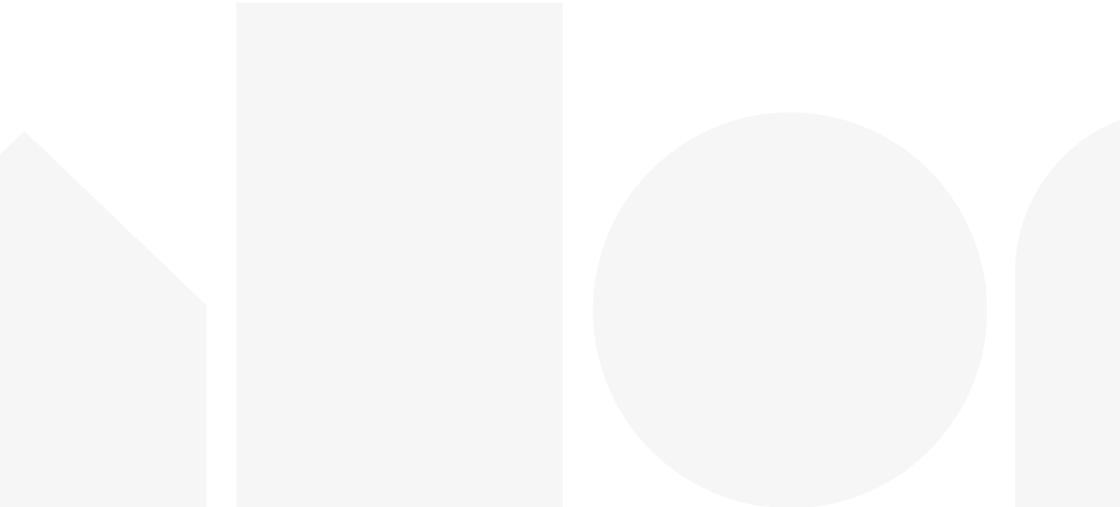For me, my team and my municipality:

How do we want to work together?

## Action Learning contract

Use the space below to write down the agreements your set have created and agreed on:

What skills, knowledge, capabilities & capacities are in the room?

This session follows on from the skills, knowledge and capacity survey you filled in. Which skills, knowledge, capacities and experiences in the group can support me in achieving my goals and learning objectives?
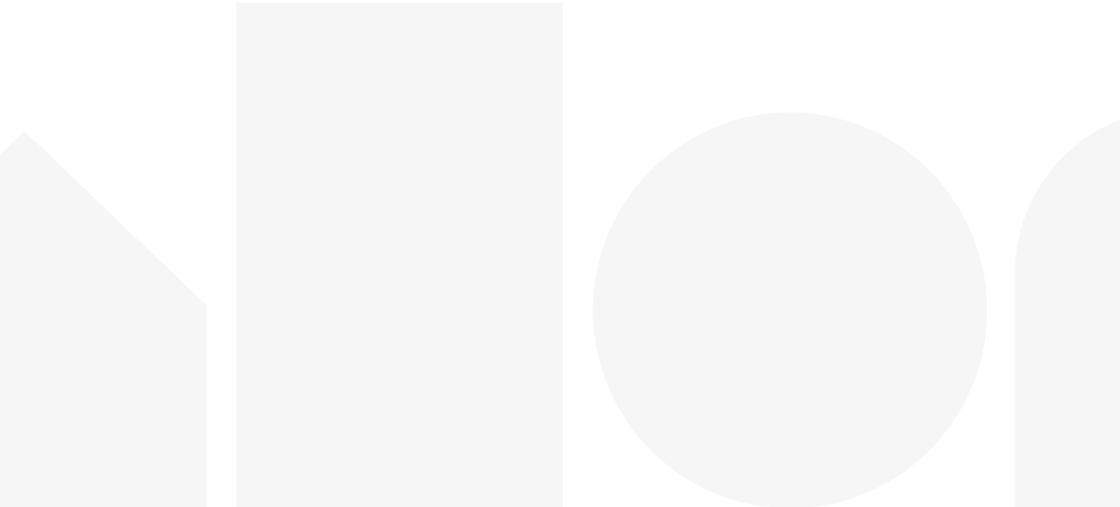
Creating shared understanding

During this session we will collaboratively map out the different elements of our energy theme and the challenges and opportunities in relation to each element.
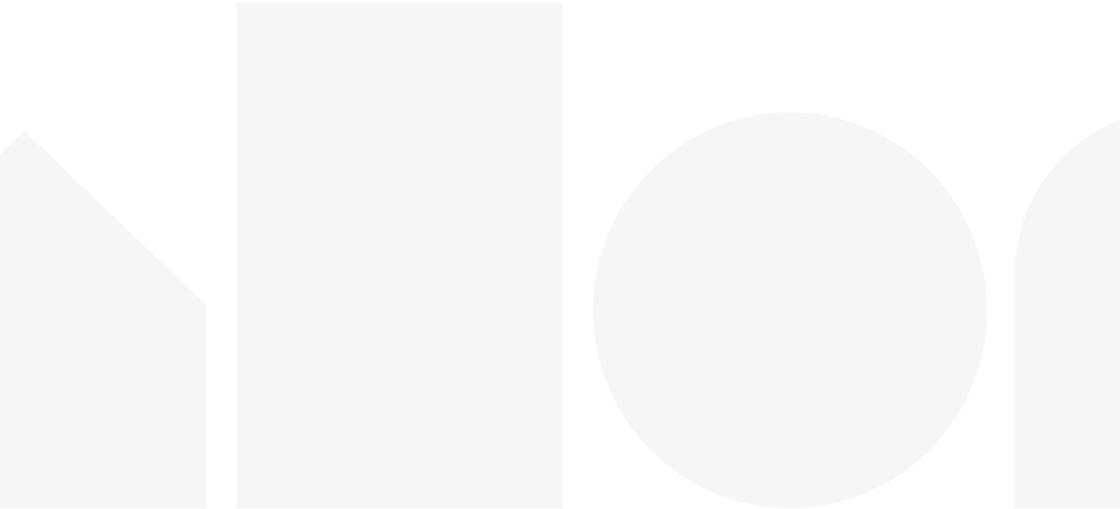
City network mapping

In this session we look at your local support networks and resources.
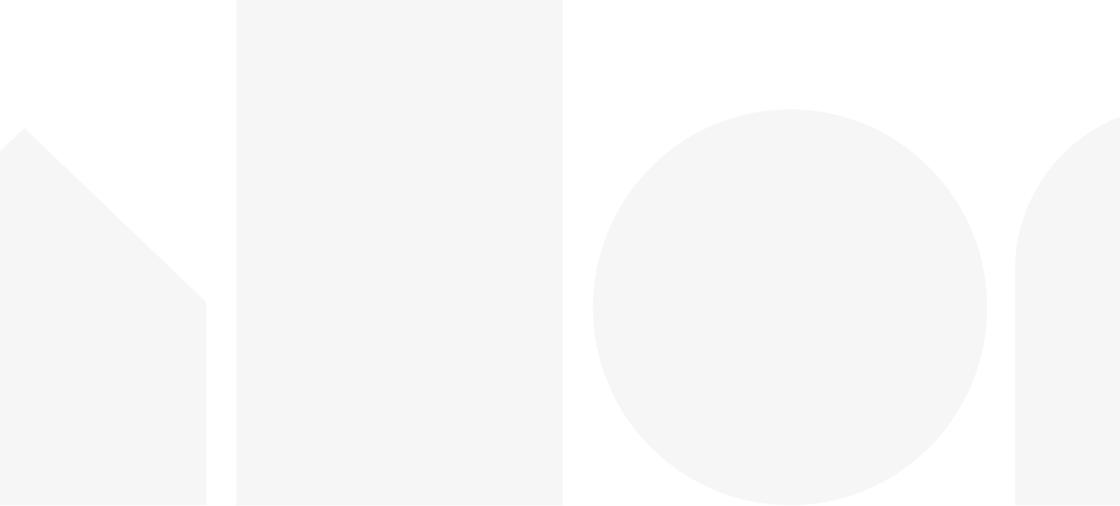
Learning together

→ exploring current issues and opportunities
→ testing out ideas
→ learning from and with each other
→ inviting additional expertise
→ exploring replicable models
→ reassessing goals and objectives
→ sharing learning locally - extending local networks

· Introduction to Action Learning
· Learning log: Action Learning sessions and one-to-one meetings
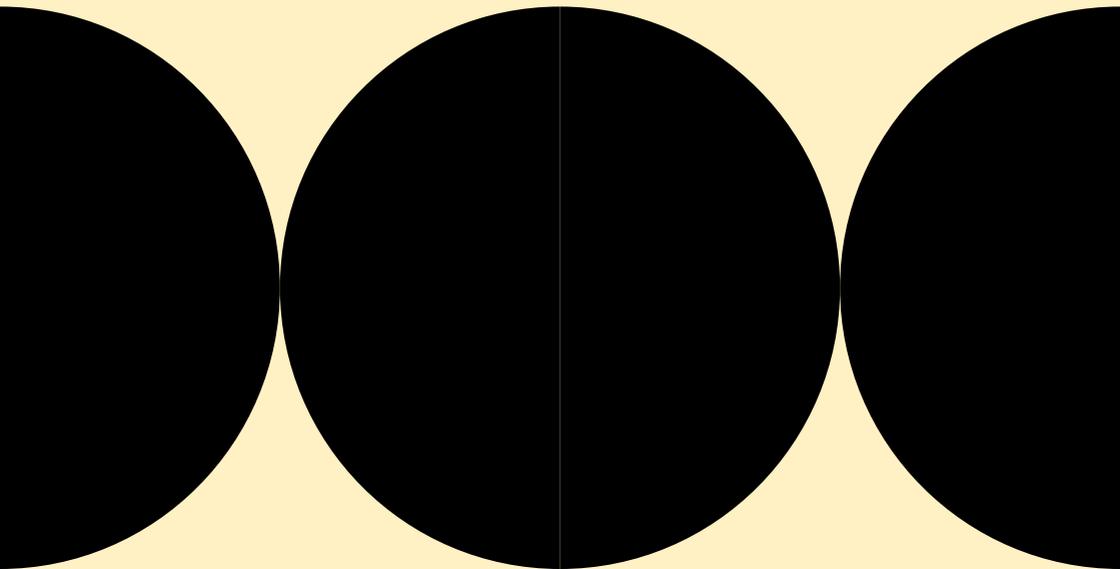
Introduction to Action Learning

'I recognise that people are more likely to develop
effectively if they have been helped to work out solutions
for themselves and then they own their solution. There
is no universal solution, only that which is appropriate to
the person holding the problem at the time.

...I have seen my own problems through the eyes of
others; sometimes I can see the solution for others but
not myself. The awareness of the problems of others
has enabled me to recognise how I could tackle my own
problems. It has enabled me to approach my issues more
objectively.'

— A Chief Executive of a County Council

How does it work?

A group of peers (a set) meet regularly over a period of time for challenging and supportive dialogue. The core process involves set members presenting live, current work issues, opportunities, ideas, challenges or dilemmas on which they can take action.

They receive support from their set members who through asking questions help them explore and understand the issue, shape desired outcomes, test out ideas and decide on a course of action.

At each meeting

- Every member reports briefly on what has been happening to them.
- Members decide between them who is going to present something to the group on that day.
- The presenter describes their situation/problem/challenge/dilemma/ proposal.
- Members ask questions designed to assist the presenter come to a deeper or different understanding and so to be open to new solutions and behaviour changes.
- Members assist the presenter to review options and decide on action.
- Members reflect back to the presenter on what they have heard and talk about their own individual learning.

At a future set meeting, the presenter reports on the action taken.

Periodically the set reflects on their group process and how they could improve their effectiveness. Once the set is competent and confident with the principles and protocols of Action Learning, the facilitator can introduce further tools for exploration, analysis and solution generation.

What does Action Learning offer?
· Support and challenge from peers
· The opportunity to learn from good practice and develop new ideas and different solutions
· Development of individual listening, diagnostic and collaborating skills
· Practice and receipt of feedback between peers
· A safe environment to explore strengths and weaknesses
· Problem solving time which gives the opportunity for personal learning and development and insight into how others achieve different solutions
· A group of people who are, for periods of time, mentors for each other

When is Action Learning useful?
· To face major challenges
· To test out new ways of working or new ideas
· To map out ways to deal with a new situation
· To create reflection time for learning
· In times of development and change, both organisational and individual

'This action learning set has saved my organisation tens of thousands of pounds. It is the most effective form of management development I have ever experienced.'

— Charlotte Jones, Director, Independent Theatre Council

Ground rules and contracting

As a member of an Action Learning set there are some simple ground rules to follow:

→   Commitment to attend the sessions
→   Confidentiality
→   Focus on presenter

Commitment
· You agree to attend at every meeting.
· If you decide to leave the set you should talk about your decision during a meeting.
· The set will agree the period of the contract and at the end of this period will review if it wishes to continue to meet.

Confidentiality
· What happens in the set stays in the set and must remain confidential. Do not discuss the content of set meetings, or the relationships between members outside the set.
· Some sets decide also to apply this rule to their own group so this would include discussions with other set members unless
   - the presenter asks for help, advice or support from another set member or
   - the presenter themselves initiates the discussion.

Focus on Presenter
· The presenter gets as much time as they need to present
· As the set you listen without interruption and with your whole attention
· You listen non-judgmentally
· Questions are designed for the presenter (i.e. not to make a point, not to show how good you are at asking insightful questions, but only if it is a question which you think is useful to the presenter)
· The space belongs to the presenter – so don't tell your own stories or give advice (unless specifically requested).
· The set gives the presenter a safe place to talk about feelings, admit need and ask for help.
· The presenter can always say that they don't want to answer a question

Questions

Why use open questions?
Open questions encourage exploration and reflection. They are useful because they keep the focus on the person who owns the issue and offer them individual freedom as to the way in which they answer. The result of a good open question is that it enables the presenter to listen to themselves talking. It provides an opportunity for them to reflect on their own viewpoint or mental processes, check on their perceptions or assumptions and gain new insights.

What are open questions?
· Open questions encourage dialogue rather than a yes/no answer.
· They start with What, When, Where, Why, Which, How and Who.
· They impose minimal structure and direction on the answer.

A few tips
· Aim to keep your questions short and simple.
· Ask one question, one person at a time. It allows the presenter to hear and comprehend the question.
· It is a useful check to ask yourself – am I asking this question in the most open way that is possible?
· Allow for silence, it allows for reflection time and to consider the question.
· Listen carefully to each other's questions and, if it is helpful, ask something which follows on from the previous train of questioning.
· Guard against being competitive in your questioning.
· You will learn to assess if the direction of questioning is helpful or needs changing.
· You can always ask the presenter if it is helpful for them to pursue a certain line of questioning.

Unhelpful questions
· Leading questions. Wouldn't you agree that…?'
· Advice disguised as a question. 'Have you thought about…?'
· Asking multiple questions at the same time. 'What would you like to have happen and who could support you with that?'.

Arriving round	· What has been going on for you since we last met? · If you presented the last time, what action did you take, and any impact? · Anything that is preoccupying you that you want to leave outside?
Bidding	· Members: "If I were to present today, I would present on...", and whether they would like to present · Group agrees who will present, and who will present first · Facilitator to ensure that it is not same presenters at each meeting
Presenting	· Facilitator encourages the presenter to speak for as long as they want · People listen without interruption · Allow silence as valuable reflection time for presenter
Questions	· Clarifying questions first, followed by open questions · Facilitator focused on presenter; are they comfortable, is it covering the areas they want, is it helping the presenter to formulate actions? · Facilitator to manage timekeeping
Action	· The presenter identifies action steps · Facilitator or a set member may record them if helpful
Reflections	· Facilitator and each set member offer reflections to the presenter – could include feedback, encouragement, things I noticed, and a comment on their own learning · Presenter listens to each person and speaks last · Facilitator invites presenter to reflect on the experience and/or what they are taking away
Process review	· The group reviews how they have worked together (not necessarily at every session)

Typical Action Learning questions:

What is your biggest difficulty or problem?	How do you feel about this situation?
Why did you approach the situation in the way you described?	Why did you approach the situation in the way you described?
What could you do differently?	What are you trying to achieve?
If you could only change one thing, what would it be?	What's the best possible outcome?
What will this look like?	What's the worst thing that might happen?
Where else might you look for allies?	How could you solve this problem?
What else is possible?	What could you start to do differently?
Who else would be most excited by this possibility?	When will you start?
What learning are you taking from this session?	How important is this to you?
What can you do about it?	Who could help?
How does the situation affect you?	What action are you going to take?

Moving on

→ starting and developing local models
→ celebrating success
→ sharing the story
→ creating local replication plans