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C40 City-Business Climate Alliance (CBCA) Barcelona Workshop Summary Report

Workshop Overview

On the 7th of November 2024, C40 held a global City-Business Climate Alliance (CBCA) Workshop at the Smart City Expo World Congress in Barcelona, Spain. We brought together climate and economic development leads from 17 cities, along with sustainability leaders from businesses and NGOs for a 1-day workshop on city-business climate collaboration.

Why is city-business climate collaboration important?

City governments directly control as little as 4% of citywide emissions. This means they must work beyond their direct powers by engaging, influencing and collaborating with private actors to achieve their climate goals.

Many businesses are also setting climate targets in response to growing climate risk, consumer demand for sustainable goods and services, employee or shareholder activism, and other pressures.

According to We Mean Business 14,710 business made serious climate targets in 2023.

Better collaboration between cities and businesses has enormous potential to reduce emissions and climate risk on a scale greater than they could manage alone, achieving better outcomes and bringing mutual benefits.

What is the CBCA Forum?

The CBCA Forum is a network for leading cities, or leaders of local business networks, to exchange ideas on how cities can use their formal and informal powers to influence, regulate and collaborate with the private sector to achieve ambitious climate actions. The network has over 30 city members worldwide and hosts regular meetings, webinars and workshops.



Above and Below: Participants engaging in the speed dating and world cafe activities at the CBCA workshop.



Workshop Participants

Cities

- Barcelona
- Bogota
- Buenos Aires
- Copenhagen
- Lisbon
- London
- Medellin
- Milan
- New York
- Oslo
- Quezon City
- Rio de Janeiro
- Rotterdam
- San Francisco
- Sao Paulo
- Stockholm
- Warsaw

Businesses + NGOs

- C40
- Carrier
- CDP
- CEMEX
- Engie
- Foretica
- Reckitt
- Sanitas



Key Themes

During the first workshop exercise, we discussed how city governments and businesses could better collaborate to address some of the main climate challenges cities said they are facing. The 5 challenges were:

How might we involve businesses in city climate action planning and policy-making processes?

The group discussed that it is difficult to know at which stage to engage businesses in policy-making processes and how to motivate them to engage. It is important to create transparency while also prioritising engagement from the most impacted and most powerful actors. Businesses may look at the same problem differently and engaging businesses at an early stage of policy design can help get buy-in and make the policy work better long term e.g. ensuring compliance with energy retrofit policies.

How might we build trust and develop strong governance structures for City-Business Climate Alliances?

The group discussed that it can take a long time to build genuine trust with businesses and other community stakeholders. They discussed the importance of working with existing chambers of commerce, following proper procurement rules and thinking of creative resourcing/funding models e.g. businesses provide in-kind resources.

How might we better engage and support small businesses in the climate transition?

The group discussed how SMEs have little spare time, money and power to dedicate to activities outside their main line of business. The group came up with a 4-step approach to supporting SMEs:

1. Communicate: clearly explain the problems, impact and what's in it for them
2. Collaborate: engage in dialogue, pool ideas from multiple businesses and co-create solutions
3. Compensate: award industry-leading progress and give fiscal incentives where possible
4. Compel: create policies and regulations that incentivise and reward sustainable solutions

How might we improve business resilience to climate disasters such as flooding and heatwaves?

The group discussed how heatwaves severely impact productivity, and that public services (transport, health and education) struggle to function during periods of extreme heat. They also discussed how despite major investments in flood resilience there are still many areas in cities that are vulnerable to floods. E.g. Rotterdam is below sea level and many big companies have offices or warehouses on the flood plains. The group agreed it would be important to involve companies (particularly developers and land owners) in developing city resilience plans. For example, London has been working with businesses on the [London Climate Resilience Review](#), and has also supported businesses to choose more sustainable building cooling systems.

How might we create local good green jobs and upskill the local workforce?

The group concurred that there are too many technical terms when it comes to evaluating green jobs, which can isolate those from non-academic backgrounds. There is also a significant skills gap to meet the demands of future work. The group suggested that cities could facilitate business-to-business exchanges to share learnings, create green job centres, or organise accelerators to help grow green businesses in line with the city's climate targets.

Examples of City-Business Climate Alliances

One of the main missions of the CBCA Programme is to support cities to create formal governance structures, networks or alliances which convene businesses to accelerate the transition to net zero and take action on climate resilience issues locally. During the workshop, we showcased 4 different models of City-Business Climate Alliances from across the globe, demonstrating how cities and businesses have built networks and alliances in different ways, depending on their climate ambitions, needs and resource availability.

BUENOS AIRES' CLIMATE BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Buenos Aires City-Business Climate Advisory Council, which was officially launched in 2022 with support from C40, brings together 12 companies, including Mercado Libre and Enel, to drive collaborative climate action. This partnership underscores the city's commitment to strengthen dialogue with national and international stakeholders, the private sector, and civil society in addressing climate challenges.

The City-Business Climate Alliance's primary goal is to create a platform for ongoing public-private dialogue and strategy, aligned with the city's 2050 climate action plan. This includes a working group of businesses focused on tackling urban heat. In 2024, the group has been developing a protocol to support outdoor workers during heatwaves, and identifying privately owned spaces to use as climate shelters. Next year, the group will be involved in co-creating the next City Climate Action Plan.

In support of its climate goals, Buenos Aires also collaborates with C40, UrbanShift, IDB, CAF, and GIZ to advance urban sustainability. Notable public-private projects include an AI initiative with Microsoft and the development of the Southern Buenos Aires Innovation Park, which fosters local talent and education.

THE "MORE SUSTAINABLE BARCELONA" NETWORK

Barcelona is committed to ambitious climate and water management goals as part of the European Mission "100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030." The city's primary climate objective is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2030, with an annual reduction of 15%.

To deliver these goals, Barcelona created the More Sustainable Barcelona network and support programme, which provides personalised guidance and technical support to residents and businesses. The programme has over 1000 active members, of which 210 are businesses. The support programme includes an introductory assessment to writing climate commitments, tailored advice, and practical resources on waste management, energy efficiency, and sustainable practices. The city also offers training and themed workshops e.g. on urban greening and nature-based solutions. Members of the network also get a 10% reduction on waste taxes and can get an additional 10% tax reduction for demonstrating waste prevention activities. e.g. zero plastics



above: Helena Barraco Nogues talks about how the More Sustainable Barcelona programme supports city stakeholders to connect and share knowledge.

In addition to financial support, Barcelona fosters collaboration through networking events like "Fem Xarxing" and engages citizens in environmental policy through the Advisory Citizen Council for Sustainability. Through these combined efforts, Barcelona is working toward its climate neutrality goals while enhancing the community's active role in sustainability.

HULL & HUMBER'S OH YES! NET ZERO CAMPAIGN

The Oh Yes! Net Zero campaign is Hull's ambitious drive to lead the UK's journey toward net zero emissions. The Humber region, which produces 37% of emissions among the UK's major industrial clusters, has both a high carbon footprint and a unique potential for impactful reduction. This is why Reckitt – whose brands include Dettol, Durex and Nurofen – funded and led the development of the “Oh Yes! Net Zero” programme to bring together businesses in support of the city's climate action plan in Reckitt's home city of Hull. Reckitt co-founded the initiative along with Hull City Council, University of Hull and Future Humber. The programme provides training and upskilling to local businesses and connects them with the city to exchange best practices.

One of their proudest achievements is the development of the Carbon Clinics. This is where an experienced organisation helps a less experienced organisation in its supply chain to calculate its carbon footprint co-create a Carbon Reduction Plan. In addition, they are helping to develop green skills for the future workforce by offering Oh Yes! Net Zero work placements for students and organising talks from local businesses around green skills and job opportunities.

If Hull maintains its average yearly GHG emissions reduction over the next 2 years it will have reduced its 2005 total by 60%. If it maintains this reduction year on year Hull will achieve Net Zero by 2039.



Above: Peter Edwards explains why Reckitt co-founded Oh Yes! Net Zero in Hull.

OSLO'S BUSINESS FOR CLIMATE NETWORK

Business for Climate is a dedicated network that strengthens collaboration between the City of Oslo and its business community, aiming to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and build climate resilience across the city. Launched in 2010 by Oslo's Governing Mayor, the initiative began with 20 founding business partners and has since grown as a space for businesses to commit to meaningful climate action by signing a Climate Contract.

Oslo's climate goals are ambitious: the city is targeting a 95% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030 (compared to 2009 levels) and aims to reach a 52% reduction by 2023. Looking ahead, Oslo is also focused on strengthening climate adaptation efforts to prepare for potential environmental impacts projected through 2100, and it has committed to reducing emissions tied to its economy that are generated outside the city by 2030.



Above: Ingunn Lie talks about the main purpose of Oslo's Business for Climate initiative, which is to challenge the status quo, co-create policies and influence markets and industries.

The network is managed by Oslo's Climate Agency and funded by the city, offering a structure of events and training that supports ongoing dialogue and action. All-network events keep members informed on Oslo's climate priorities, while a training series provides guidance on climate governance and EU regulations. Additionally, working groups allow businesses to collaborate on climate initiatives across particular industries, e.g. Energy Forum, Transportation Forum, Construction Forum and Circular Forum.

The impact of Business for Climate extends beyond individual organisations, as the network actively contributes to shaping Oslo's climate policies and budget. Through collaborative efforts, it seeks to influence markets and industries in Oslo to adopt more sustainable practices, supporting the city's broader climate goals and its vision of becoming a leader in urban sustainability.

Cities leading the climate innovation revolution

Cities, with their dense populations and diverse talent pools, are powerful hubs of innovation that can foster collaboration and the exchange of ideas. The proximity of businesses, startups, research institutions, investors and innovation networks in urban centres make cities ideal places for innovators to test and refine products in real-time. By nurturing these conditions and reducing barriers for smaller businesses, cities can catalyze local ecosystems to address urban climate challenges effectively. Here are just 3 examples of cities that are leading the climate innovation revolution:

NEW YORK CITY

New York City is fostering an ecosystem of climate-focused innovation and collaboration through multiple groundbreaking initiatives:

- **Climate Innovation Hub** at Brooklyn Army Terminal: This 112,000 square-foot, world-class climate-tech hub will serve as a launchpad for startups in climate technology, aiming to incubate 150 businesses over the next decade. The hub is expected to generate \$2.6 billion in economic impact and create 600 jobs. As part of [NYC's Green Economy Action Plan](#), the facility will support advanced manufacturing, prototyping, and pilot projects, leveraging city-owned assets to fuel local industry growth and export climate solutions.
- **New York Climate Exchange** on Governor's Island: Projected to open in 2029, this 400,000-square-foot campus will address the global climate crisis through research, education, and community programming. Led by Stony Brook University with private and public financial backing, the Exchange will host 600 post-secondary students, 4,500 K-12 students, 6,000 workforce trainees, and 250 researchers annually, contributing an estimated \$1 billion to NYC's economy.
- **Plant Powered Carbon Challenge**: This voluntary private-sector initiative encourages businesses in NYC to cut food-related carbon emissions by 25% by 2030. Participating companies, guided by the World Resource Institute's Coolfood calculator, submit action plans and track emissions yearly, reporting progress to the Mayor's Office of Food Policy.
- NYC is also rapidly expanding its EV charging network in collaboration with private companies, who operate and maintain charging hubs across the city, many on vacant city-owned land. Currently, 71% of New Yorkers live within 2.5 miles of a charging hub, with a goal of 95% by 2026. Thanks to federal grants, the city will grow its curbside charging program and establish the first U.S. EV truck charging hub at Hunts Point Food Distribution Center.
- NYC is also partnering with private entities to develop large-scale hydropower, solar, and wind energy projects on city land. The city will support these renewable efforts by purchasing Renewable Energy Credits, aiming to cut reliance on fossil fuels by over 50% and cover about 45% of today's peak summer demand.



Left: New York Climate Exchange on Governors Island

Right: Olivia Arnow explains NYC's various climate innovation programmes



SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco is tackling its post-pandemic downtown decline and the climate crisis by building an innovation ecosystem through the Yes San Francisco initiative. Launched in 2023 with support from partners like Citi, Deloitte, Salesforce, the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, the World Economic Forum, and over 20 organizations, this program aims to revitalize urban spaces, promote sustainability, and create a replicable model for other cities. In 2024, Yes SF launched an Urban Sustainability Challenge to attract scalable solutions for managing blue spaces, waste, urban greening, and AI-driven infrastructure improvements.

Through a comprehensive ecosystem of support, Yes SF offers local government assistance to innovators by reducing regulatory hurdles, aiding in pilot opportunities, and supporting local permitting and relocation. Participants gain access to a coworking space at Yes SF Headquarters, tailored business scaling programs, mentorship from the Citi Impact Fund, and networking and promotional opportunities. The initiative has already supported 35+ organizations, created 20 local jobs, and generated \$17 million for the local economy, all while fostering a people- and planet-focused economy that positions San Francisco as a leader in urban sustainability.



Above: Emily Abraham talks about how Yes SF aims to regenerate downtown San Francisco in a sustainable way.

SAO PAULO

Green Sampa is São Paulo's flagship public policy initiative designed to position the city as a leader in sustainability and green innovation. Gathering key national and international stakeholders working in the sectors of innovation, sustainability, and engaging businesses, Green Sampa aims to develop an ecosystem where sustainable solutions and green city advancements can thrive. This initiative works across ten pillars that align with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to address various environmental and urban challenges.

A core component of Green Sampa is its startup incubation and acceleration program, which provides a nurturing environment rather than direct funding alone. Each selected startup receives BRL 45,000 (approximately USD 9,000), with 25 startups supported per application cycle. Green Sampa issues two calls for applications per year, offering six-month support cycles that include workshops, masterclasses, business networking, and mentoring. Through active matchmaking, Green Sampa connects these startups with valuable stakeholders across industries, enhancing their capacity to drive impactful solutions in São Paulo and beyond.

In addition, São Paulo has converted an old hospital incinerator building into Hub Green Sampa, an innovation and co-working space. The Hub has 90 work stations, multiple meeting rooms, and offers a space for entrepreneurs from low-income households to access the internet, network with other founders and attend events.



Left: Maria Luiza Gedeon and Fernando Leme talk about how Green Sampa is inspiring a new generation of green entrepreneurs, particularly from low-income backgrounds.

Right: An image of the Green Sampa Hub in São Paulo - which the city converted from a hospital incinerator to a green entrepreneurial hub.



Key Takeaways

Many cities are already taking bold steps to engage, influence and collaborate with the private sector to deliver their climate action plans. Though there is a wide variation in cities' approaches to collaboration with businesses on climate, 6 key lessons emerged from the workshop:

1 Cities should **consult & collaborate** with businesses on climate policies

Private sector green solutions are advancing at a fast pace. Cities should make the most of business expertise by consulting them in the creation of their climate plans, sectoral policies, and investment strategies. Businesses can give constructive feedback on how policies will affect them, make suggestions on how to best implement policies, and act as advocates if a city faces backlash. By knowing the city government's ambitions, businesses can better predict and prepare for changes.

2 **Trust and predictability** are key to addressing complex climate problems

Building trust between city governments, businesses and other community stakeholders is essential to solving complex climate problems, but it isn't always simple. Cities are often wary of greenwashing and following tight engagement rules, while businesses want to know they are investing their time wisely and will see results quickly. Setting joint goals, organising regular engagement, and tracking progress are key to building trust long-term.

3 **Small businesses need help** to reduce emissions and prepare for climate risks

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make up 90% of business globally, employ 70% of the world's workforce and contribute over 50% of global GDP. Many small businesses are just 1 climate disaster away from closing down forever and face additional barriers to taking climate action including finance, skills, time, tools, resources and access to networks. Cities can play a vital role in convening SMEs with larger businesses to provide a space for learning and sharing tools and resources.



4

Cities can **accelerate climate innovation** in a variety of ways

Climate Innovation Hubs that cluster green businesses are popping up in many cities such as New York, San Francisco, Rotterdam and Sao Paulo. Cities can encourage a healthy climate entrepreneurship ecosystem by creating incubator/accelerator programmes, reducing regulatory hurdles, aiding in pilot opportunities, and supporting local permitting and relocation. They can also use city-owned land to create physical spaces that focus on climate entrepreneurship. Financial support such as subsidies, tax breaks or up-front investments will accelerate the growth of homegrown green businesses.

5

Many **businesses want to take place-based climate action - don't miss out!**

Many businesses have their own climate and social responsibility targets to meet and want to work with other local stakeholders to deliver on these. Cities - don't miss out on this - act as a convenor and work with them to set a clear vision for how your local area will transition to net zero. Businesses can offer their time, expertise and money to help make the communities in which they operate cleaner, greener and more resilient. e.g. Oh Yes Net Zero

6

City decarbonisation policies are already **influencing & shaping markets**

Bold city decarbonisation policies such as low-emission zones and zero-emission construction policies are already shaping local markets, giving an advantage to those cities where solutions are tested and then exported to other cities. Set a clear demand signal to the business community and they will respond with creative solutions.

Conclusion

There are many ways in which cities can work with businesses locally to reduce emissions and increase resilience to climate risks. By setting a clear ambition and simply starting a conversation, even cities with few resources can quickly galvanize support from the local business community for their climate action plans.

The CBCA Programme will continue to offer support to cities, promote brilliant ideas and share learnings so that more cities become greener, cleaner and economically stronger.



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