

Guidance

<p>Title:</p> <p>Champions for change</p>							
<p>Keywords: spatial plan, climate change; national; local; local authority; international; regional; change; change programme; change issues; meaningful change; change initiatives; partnership; communication; communication technique; champion; champions; champions for change; leadership potential; barriers; contextual factors; passion; awareness; agency; association; 3As for Change; motivation; sustained motivation; leadership; cool-headedness; informal champions; formal champions; informal, visible champions; informal, less visible champions; change management; ecosystem of champions; network of champions; 4As</p>							
<p>Audience: Organisations of any size operating at local, regional, national or international levels, including: Spatial Planners, Politicians, Technical Experts, Community Groups, Policy Developers, Decision-Makers, NGOs, Public Bodies, Private Companies, and many more. Any organisation or partnership intending to develop meaningful actions on climate change, especially in partnership with others.</p>							
<p>Messages in the ESPACE strategy to which the guidance applies:</p>	1.	2.	3.X	4.X	5.	6.	7.
	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.X	13.X	14.
<p>Sentences linking the guidance to relevant strategy messages:</p> <p>3. The <i>Champions for Change</i> guidance provides innovative insight into encouraging and supporting the role of champions in establishing effective governance and management for instigating and sustaining meaningful actions, and in overcoming barriers to progress.</p> <p>4. The <i>Champions for Change</i> guidance provides innovative insight into encouraging and supporting the role of champions in working across groups, and is applicable to both the internal management of a given organisation as well as in partnership with other organisations.</p> <p>12. The <i>Champions for Change</i> guidance details the value of champions, the types of champions that exist, how they can be developed and supported, and how they can work together in networks (ecosystems) to overcome barriers and develop action.</p> <p>13. The <i>Champions for Change</i> guidance gives an innovative insight into how champions can bring about change and demonstrates how to be pro-active in developing robust approaches to dealing with the challenges posed by climate change.</p>							

<p>Photo/diagram/map:</p>	<p>Overview: Extensive and varied research over many years and across numerous change-related projects has revealed a significant truth: ‘No champion, no change!’ as one astute observer put it. The presence of a champion – or numerous champions – has consistently proven to be a necessary condition for meaningful change on any scale, in any setting, on any subject, at any time. In addressing climate change issues this criterion is at least as important as in any other field of endeavour, perhaps more so, since the stakes are very high indeed, as is the level of urgency. This guidance document describes the role and effectiveness of champions (and networks of champions) and how they can be supported.</p>
<p>Description:</p> <p>INTRODUCTION</p> <p>Extensive and varied research over many years and across numerous change-related projects has revealed a significant truth: ‘No champion, no change!’ as one astute observer put it. The presence of a champion – or numerous champions – has consistently proven to be a necessary condition for meaningful change on any scale, in any setting, on any subject, at any time. In addressing climate change issues this criterion is at least as important as in any other field of endeavour, perhaps more so, since the stakes are very high indeed, as is the level of urgency.</p> <p>WHAT IS A CHAMPION?</p> <p>What we mean by ‘a champion’ is someone who combines a number of specific characteristics, of which two ‘core qualities’ are absolute necessities if they are to be effective as change agents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passion – a climate change champion is invariably someone who has reached Awareness Level 2 or higher (see ESPACE Guidance Document: <i>The Three A’s for Change: Awareness, Agency and Association</i>) and has developed not only an intellectual understanding of the climate change crisis but has also experienced an emotional response which drives a powerful commitment to making a difference. In a sense it becomes a personal ‘mission’. • Agency – champions search relentlessly for ways to maximise their impact on the problem. Reluctant to remain in the ‘comfort zone’ of familiar ways of getting things done, they actively seek out innovative ways to influence others and to break down personal and organisational barriers. This is the search for <i>Agency</i>. It can often lead to frustration and the decision to change career paths in an attempt to find a more strategic, more effective role. Alternatively, as awareness increases, it can prompt climate champions to build patterns of increasingly powerful influence and change 	

from within an existing position, through growing specialist knowledge and credibility.

In addition to these 'core qualities' numerous other traits are consistently found in effective climate champions. One is, paradoxically, 'cool-headedness'. This may seem strange in someone who is acknowledged, among other things, for their passion, yet it has consistently proven valuable. If potential champions allow their passion to overflow into impatience, intolerance and anger, for instance, they risk diminishing their ability to influence others. It is extremely important that champions learn to work simultaneously with conflicting feelings such as optimism and anxiety; patience and a sense of urgency; single-mindedness and listening to others; sharp focus and trust in the human change process. Failure to reconcile these 'opposites' can all too frequently lead to isolation (having, for instance, alienated colleagues) or burn-out (having failed to achieve effective agency).

Additional qualities frequently found in champions include, in various combinations: courage, tenacity, voracious research, resilience, authority, networking skills and a special gift for communication.

The voice of authority often emerges from the climate champion's natural passion and thirst for knowledge on the subject. There is more, however, to this communication gift. Champions tend not to refute the positions of others, preferring to understand participants' own views and work with them to 're-frame within the bigger picture'. In this way potential conflict can become willing and productive collaboration.

The most effective champions seem to have a talent for speaking equally well to a diversity of audiences, sometimes simultaneously. They tend to 'translate' as they go so that a variety of stakeholders can understand in their own terms what is being explained, explored or advocated. Individuals with this important skill have been described as 'Boundary Spanners'. They are vital in any work on cross-cutting issues such as climate change, particularly in so broad a collaboration as ESPACE.

"Working on the margins of policy and cross boundaries often brings out the people with relevant skills. They can work together because of similarities in 'world view' even if professional backgrounds are very different. The importance of having "boundary spanners" in the organisation cannot be underestimated as they are the people whose job it is to make cross-cutting issues work."

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HOW DO WE FIND OUR CHAMPIONS?

This admirable person who is the archetypal climate champion may, by now, sound rather superhuman, yet, encouragingly, they can be found in most organisations. However, that can prove also to be one of the challenges: they tend to be spread, both vertically and horizontally – at all levels of seniority and across all departmental boundaries.

There are a number of types of climate champion:

- **Formal champions:** those who are elected members or senior managers with a formally-agreed remit to address climate change. These people have credibility and the power to harness together differing parties over a specific issue. They also

provide a specific place for people to go with climate change issues

- **Informal visible champions:** those for whom climate change forms a part of their primary function (working, for instance, in broadscale sustainability) and who are visible in their championship of climate change within that role. These individuals are often able to contribute on long-term (across electoral cycles in the public sector) organisational capacity-building and other strategic initiatives.
- **Informal, less visible champions:** those whose personal interest in climate change may be considerable but whose formal remit does not explicitly include it. These low-visibility champions are, by definition, harder to identify, yet they can play a key role, particularly in spotting 'windows of opportunity'. Local transport planning, for instance, can create openings for powerful climate-related interventions but these can easily be missed, under normal procedures, until it is too late

There is a fourth type of champion: the 'Issue-Based Champion'. Occasionally, someone with a suitably passionate, energetic nature and significant overlapping interests and specialist skills or knowledge can be 'recruited to the cause'. Someone, for instance, whose background is in town planning might add to an organisation's efforts to deal with climate change. Since the field of town planning presents very clear and substantial climate change challenges – and concomitant opportunities for improved performance – such assistance can be critical. The 'Issue-Based Champion' may participate only in a specific project and then disengage. Or, as sometimes happens, they may move over to fully-fledged climate champion status thereafter!

HOW CAN CHAMPIONS BEST MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

As we have seen, above, climate champions can face numerous difficulties, among them feelings of isolation, frustration, powerlessness and a consequent lack of sustained motivation.

In order to help in overcoming these problems and to stimulate increased 'agency' it has become clear that the creation and facilitation of an interconnected group of champions can yield considerable benefits.

Work carried out by Alexander Ballard Limited for the ESPACE Partnership has demonstrated that 'association' is a vitally important part of all human change endeavours. In this case, an 'ecosystem of champions' – a network of climate champions throughout, beyond and between organisations – can make a remarkable difference. In addition to the soothing effects upon champions' painful experiences, it can also help to produce increased learning, greater and faster change and other advantageous outcomes (see ESPACE Guidance Document: *The Three A's for Change: Awareness, Agency and Association*).

Case Study

A senior scientist in a European subsidiary of a global hardware manufacturing company was also a keen environmentalist. He wanted to set up an environmental learning and action group. He asked his employers for the use of a meeting room and a coffee machine for an hour every Friday evening. He put up notices in all staff canteens and other common areas throughout the company's premises.

By the end of a month he had attracted a few supporters to his team. By the end of six months there were a dozen or so. The participants agreed to begin by replacing plastic coffee cups throughout the premises with washable china mugs.

Then they started up a car-share club, looked into recycling packaging, energy use in heating and several other such matters. The team grew, learned and acted more; the company began to make significant economic savings as well as boosting their reputation.

After a year the senior management team asked the founder to hire three colleagues and take on the role of environmental co-ordinator full-time. After three years his team's systems were being replicated all over the world, including at the company's headquarters and manufacturing plants in the USA.

A further consequence of establishing such a group is that participants find they become more familiar with the workings of complex systems, from organisations to communities. Not only does this help the climate champion to become more successful in that role, it tends to create better leaders in other areas as well. An understanding of complex system dynamics, effective communications, managing conflicting emotions along with human performance and change are important qualities to strategists in a wide variety of leadership roles.

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Further information:

Warm Hearts and Cool Heads: The Leadership
Potential for Climate Change Champions
(Volumes 1 & 2)

By Alexander Ballard Ltd in partnership with HCC
Volume 1

Volume 2

How can local authorities stimulate & support
behavioural change in response to climate
change? (Volumes 1 & 2)

By Alexander Ballard Ltd in partnership with HCC
Volume 1

Volume 2