Learning about impact and influence of equity programmatic approach on organisational strategic results
Request for Proposals
August 2025

The Clean Air Fund is seeking specialist expertise to lead a learning and synthesis exercise to evidence how the Clean Air Fund's focus on equity influences its ability to achieve its strategic results. The Consultant/Firm will have demonstrated experience working with INGOs, or preferably re-granters or foundations, to generate and synthesize evidence and learning to feed into concrete, robust and actionable insights for organisational strategy development, insights for Portfolio programmes and investments and for wider knowledge dissemination. Programmatic design, evaluation and learning expertise in the area of equity, social inclusion, social change/progress, policy, influencing and systems change are required.

Background to Clean Air Fund
Launched in 2019, the Clean Air Fund (CAF) is a philanthropic initiative with a mission to tackle air pollution around the world. Our aim is to help build and support a powerful global movement for clean air. We achieve this by bringing together funders, researchers, policy makers and campaigners working on a wide range of issues to find and scale solutions that will provide clean air for all. We work where the need and potential for impact are greatest: in the EU, Poland, Ghana, India, South Africa and the UK and global cities across Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe. We also have global thematic programmes, raising air pollution up the international climate and health agendas. Our global themes span data, health, advocacy, Super-Pollutants and Private Sector Engagement. More information about the Clean Air Fund can be found on our website: www.cleanairfund.org

Background to assignment
This project is driven by CAF's strategic learning agenda, which identifies three critical open questions that must be answered to ensure CAF achieves its intended impact. This assignment helps answer one of them, specifically: ***How does CAF's focus on equity influence its ability to achieve its strategic results?*** For Clean Air Fund, equity in programming means working towards fairer outcomes and fairer grantmaking and project processes, in the context of our goal to reduce emissions of health-harming, climate-warming pollutants as fast as possible. This means we work on equity to support clean air for all both through what we aim to achieve through our programmes and how we work as grantmakers.

The project will concentrate on testing a critical assumption at the heart of CAF's theory of change: **That an inclusive and equitable approach to our work will lead to better policy and better outcomes for air quality for all, more sustainable and longer-lasting change and reduced risk of political backlash.**

Taking an equitable approach to clean air by engaging and prioritising populations disproportionately affected by air pollution leads to greater impact for all people. When solutions are designed to support these people and places, everyone benefits – whereas designing solutions that benefit the 'general public' without an eye towards populations disproportionately affected often leaves those most vulnerable behind.

We are dedicated to implementing equitable approaches, understanding that these efforts may require additional time and resources and could result in more gradual progress. Addressing the needs of populations disproportionately affected by air pollution involves significant stakeholder engagement and

may not always align with broader interests. Each city and country have unique equity considerations and affected populations. Therefore, achieving equitable impact will likely necessitate different strategies compared to pursuing more generalized outcomes.

In 2024–2025, CAF established equity objectives that Portfolios are integrating into their strategic goals, projects, and activities, guided by an organisational and programmatic approach that focuses on the most affected groups with specific intended outcomes and actions.

The lessons learned and recommendations formulated from this project will support CAF's portfolios in reflecting upon adaptations required in their programmatic and strategic approaches. The project will also help fulfil part of our organisational learning agenda and contribute to the development of CAF's post-2026 organisational strategy.

Project objectives and scope:

This project aims to test the critical assumption described above. It will build a deeper understanding of how focusing on populations most affected by air pollution can lead to better clean air outcomes, identify effective equity-focused tactics, explore tradeoffs in prioritising equity over speed of progress and determine how CAF's processes need to evolve to achieve its equity goals and strategic results. Given this focus, the project will explore the following specific learning questions:

1. **Effectiveness:**
   - *To what extent has prioritising populations disproportionately affected by air pollution produced measurable clean air outcomes for those groups? For wider society?*
   - *What evidence shows that a focus on equity in programming has enhanced the impact or cost-effectiveness of clean air interventions?*

2. **Contribution pathways:**
   - *What equity-focused tactics have been most effective in driving progress? Where and why?*
   - *How did these equity-focused tactics impact CAF's strategic results?[1]*
     - *To what extent might the project's focus on equity be hindering overall progress, and could better outcomes have been achieved if the project had not prioritized equity?[2]*

3. **Implications and trade-offs:**
   - *What trade-offs (e.g., speed of progress vs. inclusion) does CAF face in prioritising equity?*
   - *How can CAF best make decisions about balancing these trade-offs in future?*
   - *What concrete lessons and recommendations arise for CAF's future strategies and processes?*

Scope and limitations

This assignment is centered specifically on the Clean Air Fund's (CAF) grantmaking activities rather than its broader internal operations, such as governance structures or partnership frameworks. The scope will

---

[1] Our ability to explore this question will depend on the scope and strength of evidence collected about CAF-equity focused activities and tactics. This is a holistic question to explore ways equity-focussed tactics may have amplified or hindered CAF's strategic goals.

focus on projects that meet specific criteria related to their maturity—for example, completed projects or those that have been active for at least one year—to ensure sufficient information for analysis.

Additionally, the study will acknowledge key limitations, particularly the fact that many projects may not have systematically tracked equity-related objectives or indicators to date. As a result, this will be a retrospective assessment, and we anticipate some gaps in available data, which will need to be clearly communicated as part of the findings.

Workstreams and outputs:

1) Desk Review

Conduct a desk review of past and existing equity project documents, equity specific outcomes and assess equity within CAFs current grantmaking processes, to identify lessons and recommendations. This workstream will identify potential case studies (stories of impact) to explore under workstream two (below).

2) Literature review

Conduct a literature review will encompass the wider evidence landscape related to the role of equity in promoting policy progress and organisational outcomes to identify effective and proven strategies, as well as unsuccessful strategies, and knowledge gaps which need to be addressed. The review will draw on evidence from the air quality, health and climate sectors where available, as well as any wider relevant fields.

Outputs:
- A succinct action-focused review, summarising lessons and recommendations regarding how a focus on equity enables or hinders progress towards clean air goals, as relevant for the work of the Clean Air Fund.
- A long list of potential case studies.

3) Generating Case Studies and learning synthesis report

Using evidence from a selection of past and current projects, develop at least three case studies showcasing how equitable work has helped to further or hindered intended results. These case studies will highlight best practices, successes, and areas for improvement and recommendations and opportunities for CAF and be suitable for sharing with the wider sector.

Please note that the final criteria for case study selection will be confirmed during the inception phase; however, the following guiding considerations are anticipated:

- **Geographic diversity:** Ensuring representation from portfolios implemented in both the Global North and Global South to capture a wide range of contextual factors.
- **Thematic diversity:** Including projects that span different focus areas within portfolios to reflect the breadth of our work.
- **Variation in outcomes:** Selecting projects that demonstrate a mix of results, from highly successful initiatives to those that faced notable challenges, to provide balanced learning.
  - **Equity-focussed projects which hindered the achievement of CAF's objectives (1) and had limited impact (2):** at least one of the case studies shall focus on examining cases

where a focus on equity may have hindered progress/achievement of organisational objectives or produced limited impact. Such case studies can provide critical insights into what approaches or strategies may be less effective, thereby guiding future decision-making on what to avoid and what to strengthen. Applying these considerations will enable the study to generate rich, nuanced insights that are comprehensive and relevant across diverse contexts, themes, and phases of project implementation.

- **Project maturity and transformative changes:** Incorporating projects at different stages of their lifecycle, such as recently completed initiatives and those with longer implementation histories provided that project implementation resulted in significant transformative changes.

Outputs:
- At least three **in depth**, learning focussed case studies, exploring the additive or subtractive role(s) which a focus on equity has had on progress towards CAFs goals.
- A succinct, action focussed learning report, to synthesise the results from the desk and literature reviews and case studies to document insights and recommendations for CAF.

4) Creating a blog about CAF's organisational and programmatic approaches to equity

Collate results and lessons in an externally facing blog which promotes CAF's approach to equity within the climate change and air quality sectors. This will also include similarities and differences across thematic and geographic portfolios.

Outputs:
- A **blog** showcasing and promoting CAF's organisational and programmatic approach to equity, suitable for external publication.
- Final **learning workshop / sense-making session** with CAF staff whose projects were sampled to stress-test findings and co-prioritise the recommendations.
- Final internal **PPTX presentation** summarising the purpose, scope, approach, limitations, findings and recommendations of the assignment. Recommendations must be practical, prioritised, and feasible for integration into CAF's next strategic plan and portfolio management processes including project implementation.

Methodological approach

The selected consultant or team will be expected to apply a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis, incorporating both primary and secondary sources, to build a comprehensive and credible evidence base to underpin the literature review, case studies and learning report.

Secondary Data Collection: The review will begin with a structured analysis of existing documentation, including Clean Air Fund's internal evidence and wider relevant literature on the additive or subtractive roles(s) of equity programming from the air quality and climate sectors. Analysis of secondary data will inform the learning synthesis report. The process will generate a long list of potential Clean Air Fund projects upon which to base primary data collection and case studies. The primary data review will be used to triangulate evidence and findings from secondary data and inform the synthesised learning report and blog.

A sampling framework will be developed in collaboration with the Clean Air Fund to guide the selection of the case studies. This will be based on clear, pre-agreed criteria to ensure a diverse and relevant set of

projects are included. Key considerations in relation to selection criteria are in relation to geographic and thematic diversity, outcomes achieved, project maturity and transformative changes as stated earlier.

Primary Data Collection: Based on the agreed focus for the case studies and any areas where further investigation is valuable for the learning report, the consultancy team will conduct online semi-structured in-depth interviews with portfolio focal points who led or supported the implementation of these projects. These interviews will be essential to capturing additional insights, clarifying project outcomes, and supplementing gaps in the documented evidence. At least one interview or focus group discussion per case study with representatives of our grantees is expected to inform the development of the case studies. Additional inputs from grantees beyond those projects featured in the case studies can be considered where it will add value to the lessons identified in the learning report. Where appropriate, ethical and feasible, the consultant should include community perspectives, particularly from groups disproportionately affected, to triangulate findings from portfolio team and grantee perspectives.

We are open to consider different options dependent on the specific expertise of the consultancy team. We expect consultants to follow the principles of the Equitable Evaluation Framework.

Workstream 1: Literature Review of past and existing equity project documents to capture lessons learned and identify potential case studies (stories of impact).
- **Outputs**:
    - Short **desk and literature review report**
    - Skeleton of **learning report**
    - Longlist of **potential case studies** (at least 15)
    - Skeleton of **blog** promoting CAF's organisational and programmatic approach to equity.

Workstream 2: In-depth interviews with portfolios and grantees and potentially directly affected communities to supplement evidence gathered in the desk and literature reviews.

- **Outputs**:
    - Internal **presentation** of findings
    - Draft **learning report**
    - Draft **potential case studies** (at least 2-3)
    - Draft **blog** (Word)
    - **Note** on application of equity principles during the project (Word)[3]

Governance
The project is managed by the MEL team at the Clean Air Fund supported by Equity specialists and advising organisations from the Climate Change Network.
Primary audience and users: CAFs Senior Leadership Team, Portfolio teams within CAF.

---

[3] The project is aiming to align with the principles of equitable evaluation. Therefore, an explicit output that addresses power dynamics—consistent with the framework's emphasis on clarifying who generates knowledge and whose perspectives are prioritized will be produced. The concise methodological note (including reflections) will explain how issues of power and equity were considered throughout the evaluation process. This note will detail specific steps taken during the design, data collection, and interpretation phases to ensure inclusivity, representation of marginalized voices, and transparency about decision-making. It can also outline how the evaluators mitigated potential biases and ensured that diverse forms of knowledge (including local or community perspectives) were valued alongside technical or institutional insights.

External audience and users: Philanthropic regranters who are leading equitable actions.

The project is expected to be completed by the end of December 2025. A summary of the deliverables and key dates are outlined below:

Deliverables and key dates

The project is expected to be completed by December 2025. This represents the preferred timeline; however, there is flexibility to adjust if needed. Our primary objective remains delivering a high-quality, actionable piece of work. A summary of the deliverables and key dates are outlined below:

Deliverables	Format	Due	Format and Detail
Inception Report	Word	Early October 2025	**1. Inception report** Including: consultant's refined response to the RfP, method for inception and implementation phase (including tools) and workplan.

Draft deliverables	Word
	PPT
		October 13th, 2025	**1. Desk and Literature reviews**
			Word document | 20 pages excluding annexes – Barlow Semi Condensed in CAF's branding:
			    o Draft desk and literature reviews
			2. Learning report
			Word document | Standalone executive summary (7 pages); 30 pages excluding annexes – Barlow Semi Condensed in CAF's branding:
			    o Draft learning report
			3. Learning workshop / sense-making session with CAF staff whose projects were sampled to stress-test findings and co-prioritise the recommendations.
			
			4. Presentation of findings
			PPT document | 30 slides excluding annexes – Barlow Semi Condensed in CAF's branding:
			    o Internal presentation of findings
			
			5. Case Studies and blog
			Word document | 5 pages maximum – Barlow Semi Condensed in CAF's branding
			    o Draft potential case studies
			    o Draft blog promoting CAF's organisational and programmatic equity approach
			
			6. Note on application of equity principles during the project (Word)
			Word document | 5-7 pages maximum – Barlow Semi Condensed in CAF's branding
			    o Draft methodological note including learnings

Final deliverables	Word PPT	December 31st, 2025	**1. Rapid desk and literature reviews**

	PDF		Word document | 20 pages excluding annexes – Barlow Semi Condensed in CAF's branding:
			    o Final, succinct action-focused desk/literature reviews, summarising lessons and recommendations regarding how a focus on equity enables or hinders progress towards clean air goals.
			
			 2. Final learning report
			 Word document | Standalone executive summary (7 pages); 30 pages excluding annexes – Barlow Semi Condensed in CAF's branding:
			    o Final learning report, including tangible recommendations to guide decisions on CAFs equity programming
			
			 3. Presentation of findings
			 PPT document | 30 slides excluding annexes – Barlow Semi Condensed in CAF's branding:
			    o Final Internal presentation of findings and set final of recommendations delivered to the relevant members of the CAF team
			
			 4. At least 2-3 Case Studies and 1 blog
			 Word document | 5 pages maximum – Barlow Semi Condensed in CAF's branding
			    o Set of finalised case studies
			    o Final blog promoting CAF's organisational and programmatic equity approach
			
			 5. Note on application of equity principles during the project (Word)
			    o Final methodological note including learnings (5-7 pages)

Ethics, Safeguarding and Data Protection

Clean Air Fund is committed to ensuring that the rights of all participants involved in data collection exercises are respected and protected. All applicants must describe details about internal systems, processes and tools that they have in place and can mobilise to prevent and mitigate against the occurrence of safeguarding, ethics, and (data) protection risks in the data collection. Specifically, consultants will describe how non-discriminatory, safe and appropriate participation of all individuals will be ensured and how the specific needs of vulnerable groups will be accounted for. This includes details about how confidentiality and anonymity of all individuals will be guaranteed.

Costs
The budget for this project is 50,000 USD.

Proposal format and requirements

The successful consultancy company or team will have a demonstrated track record of delivering similar activities for global organizations. Research, evaluations, programmatic design, equity and inclusion, writing and communications skills are needed to successfully deliver this assignment.

Applicants should provide:

- A proposal for executing this assignment. This would include your approach, an expanded set of proposed activities, deliverables, methods and associated deadlines to meet the project objectives.
- A budget with activity and cost breakdown, including estimated days and day rates. The proposal and budget will not exceed five pages, with CVs of the proposed team members included as Annexes.
- A short and succinct overview of similar assignments you may have conducted for other organisations.

We are interested in proposals which emphasise co-design with CAF staff as part of the inception phase and throughout to refine questions, the approach, develop outputs and identify priority gaps.

Submissions may be shared with partner stakeholders such as the CAF Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Advisory Group.

Timeline and submission

The deadline for submission of proposals is the end of day British Summer Time on August 29th, 2025. Proposals must be submitted via email to afidelin@cleanairfund.org and tnelson@cleanairfund.org.

Activity	Date
Deadline for questions	August 22nd 2025
Deadline for proposals	August 29th 2025
Interview with shortlisted companies/individuals	September 8th 2025
Decision on preferred bidder	September 12th 2025
Proposal finalisation and agreement	September 17th 2025
Contracting and project start	September 22nd 2025
Deadline for completing the work	December 31st, 2025