



**National Research Report**  
**COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATIONS  
IN ALBANIA**



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# ABBREVIATION

<b>ASCS</b>	Agency for the Support of Civil Society
<b>CF</b>	Community Foundation
<b>CFSO</b>	Community Foundation Support Organisation
<b>ECFI</b>	European Community Foundation Initiative
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GAF</b>	Global Albanian Foundation
<b>KNK</b>	“Korçarët Ndhmojmë Korçarët” Community Foundation
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NPO</b>	Nonprofit Organisation
<b>NRC</b>	National Resource Centre for Civil Society
<b>PA</b>	Partners Albania for Change and Development

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The national research report on “Community Foundations in Albania” provides the first in-depth assessment of the country’s emerging community foundation (CF) model, documenting its challenges, opportunities, and potential contribution to local development.

While Albania’s nonprofit sector counts over 13,000 registered organisations, community foundations remain at an embryonic stage, with “Korçarët Ndihejme Korçarët” (KNK) as the only formally registered CF as of 2025.

The analysis, structured around the 4Cs framework (Capacity, Capability, Credibility, and Connections), reveals both systemic constraints and promising entry points for growth.

- Capacity is hindered by declining international aid, limited public funding, and misaligned state grant mechanisms that affect both Partners Albania and KNK. Nevertheless, opportunities exist in mobilising resources from the Albanian diaspora, private sector partnerships, and crowdfunding platforms such as Smile.al. While KNK’s new governance model strengthens its prospects for long-term financial sustainability, the organisation still lacks a comprehensive fundraising strategy.
- Capability has been significantly strengthened through the support of Partners Albania, which has delivered targeted training in governance, fundraising, legal compliance, and community mobilisation. KNK is building on this foundation by defining strategic priorities in fundraising, communication, financial accountability, and leadership development. However, sustaining momentum requires both external mentoring and internal commitment, supported by structured agreements such as Memoranda of Understanding.
- Credibility rests on CFs’ ability to demonstrate transparency, accountability, and community-rooted legitimacy. KNK has safeguarded its reputation through responsible governance and public reporting, while Partners Albania has broadened visibility and awareness of the model through business engagement, Giving Circles, and international partnerships.
- Connections with communities, municipalities, businesses, diaspora groups, and international networks are vital to the success of CFs. KNK has demonstrated that partnerships with local governments and schools build trust and innovation, while private sector collaboration expands resources and philanthropy. The CFSO acts as a connector and multiplier, linking CFs to donors, public institutions, and global peers, while advocating for their integration into Albania’s development agenda.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The national research report on “Community Foundations in Albania” aims to provide a comprehensive assessment of the current stage of development of community foundations (CFs) in the country. It explores their role within the broader nonprofit sector, the extent to which they contribute to local development, and the specific ways they mobilise and manage resources for community benefit.

In doing so, the report identifies key challenges that hinder the establishment and sustainability of CFs, such as limited access to diverse and stable funding sources, insufficient public awareness and understanding of the CF model, and the absence of supportive fiscal and policy measures. At the same time, it highlights opportunities for growth, including the increasing interest in local philanthropy, and the potential of crowdfunding platforms to channel community-based giving.

The findings and analysis are presented according to the internationally recognised “4Cs” framework, which serves as a diagnostic tool for assessing the state and potential of community foundations. The framework examines four interrelated dimensions:

- Capacity, referring to the organisational and operational resources that enable CFs to function effectively and sustainably.
- Capability, focusing on the skills, knowledge, and innovative approaches that CFs possess to address community needs and implement strategic initiatives.
- Credibility, assessing the trust, transparency, and legitimacy that CFs hold in the eyes of their stakeholders, donors, and the wider public.
- Connections, analysing the networks, partnerships, and relationships CFs build with local communities, businesses, government, and other civil society actors.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology, designed within the framework of the “Balkan Rethink” project, combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the community foundation (CF) ecosystem and the experiences of Community Foundation Support Organisations (CFSOs).

It was implemented through three primary components: desk research, documentation of CFSO experiences, and in-depth interviews with the single existing CF “Korçarët Ndihamojmë Korçarët”, with executive and board members. Desk research was focused on reviewing existing literature, data legal, political, and economic frameworks relevant to CFs and CFSOs, as well as mapping their current presence and activities. Documentation of experiences captured and analysed lessons learned by CFSOs in working with CFs, structured around the 4Cs framework. In-depth interviews were carried out with decision-makers from the CF’s board and governing bodies, using a structured questionnaire to explore organisational capacity, financial health, fundraising practices, training needs, and stakeholder relationships.

The preparation of the national research report on “Community Foundations in Albania” was carried out during June - September 2025.

While this report is limited by the fact that only one newly registered community foundation currently exists in Albania, restricting opportunities for comparison, generalisation, and long-term impact assessment, it nonetheless provides valuable insights. By documenting the experiences of the country’s first CF, the research offers an original contribution, establishes a baseline for future studies, and highlights how the model is adapting within Albania’s social, economic and political environment.

## 3. THE STATE OF PLAY FOR CFS IN ALBANIA

Community foundations operate within the broader nonprofit ecosystem, which remains diverse in competencies but faces structural and financial challenges. The one established community foundation is part of the 13,053 nonprofit organisations registered at the Tirana Judicial District Court as of the end of 2024, comprising 6,981 associations, 1,733 centres, 892 foundations, and 3,447 other forms<sup>1</sup>, of which only 39%<sup>2</sup> are active<sup>3</sup>.

Generally, the legal framework for freedom of association is in line with international standards. Law No. 80/2021 “On the registration of the nonprofit organisations” introduced the provision for electronic registration. However, delays in making the electronic registry, which remains non-functional as of the date of this report, have continued to concentrate the registration and legal amendment processes in Tirana.

<sup>1</sup> Others include entities not defined as NPOs under Law 8788 “On Nonprofit Organisations.” These include political parties, health clinics, religious institutions, trade unions, sports clubs, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Partners Albania for Change and Development. (2025) Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development- Country Report for Albania 2024. Retrieved from: <https://www.partnersalbania.org/publication/monitoring-matrix-on-enabling-environment-for-csos-development-country-report-for-albania-2024/>

<sup>3</sup> According to the Albanian tax authorities, an “active organisation” is considered any legal entity that has conducted organised activities within the 12 months of the last fiscal year.

This centralisation creates both cost and time barriers for organisations based in other cities of Albania. The registration process is lengthy, currently requiring approximately 95 days, while for the legal amendments may take up to 150 days<sup>4</sup>.

The financial viability and sustainability of community foundations, like that of the wider nonprofit sector, is hindered by limited public funding and the volatility of international aid. Public funding through the Agency for the Support of Civil Society (ASCS), which is the main national mechanism that regulates state support for the nonprofit sector, remains project-based and limited in scale. The sector's heavy reliance on international donors and the significant decline in support from key donors in 2025, including several European Union countries and U.S. Government has led to the closure of essential programmes in critical areas such as strengthening democracy, protecting human rights, environmental protection, education, socio economic development as well as disruption of services for disadvantaged groups.

According to the 2024 Capacity and Needs Assessment Report by the National Resource Centre for Civil Society, 67% out of 110 surveyed organisations reported foreign government as their main source of income. Public funding is insufficient, representing only 11% of the total income, while economic activities were reported by only 20% of organisations<sup>5</sup>.

At present, Albania does not have a dedicated law on philanthropy or endowments, nor does its legal framework provide tax incentives for individual donations. The regulatory environment for giving is limited, with corporate donations governed by the Law on Sponsorship.

Under this law, corporate sponsorships are treated as deductible expenses, with the following conditions:

- A general deduction of up to 3% of annual turnover is permitted.
- A higher deduction of up to 5% applies to sponsorships directed toward press publishers, publications of literature, scientific or encyclopedic works, as well as cultural, artistic, and sports activities.
- For sports activities, additional provisions exist to encourage sponsorship.

Despite the absence of tax incentives for individual giving and only marginal incentives for corporate donations, 56% of organisations reported partnerships with businesses<sup>6</sup>. Online and offline crowdfunding has become a significant source of income for organisations.

Since 2018, Partners Albania has organized Giving Circle events, fostering community engagement and support for initiatives in areas such as education, promotion of human rights, youth activism, environmental protection, tourism, psycho-social services for children in need, and the creation and improvement of public spaces for the elderly. Since their inception, 21 initiatives have been supported with a total amount of approximately €166,800, in fields including education and human rights; youth activism and environment; services for vulnerable groups; tourism, art, culture, and sports; public spaces for the elderly; and handicraft production by children with disabilities.

According to media monitoring of philanthropic activity, in the first half of 2025, 66% of donations went through online crowdfunding platforms operated by nonprofit organisations<sup>7</sup>. In this landscape, Albania's only local online crowdfunding platform, Smile.al<sup>8</sup>, offers a potential avenue for CFs to mobilise local resources in seven thematic areas: health and solidarity, promotion of cultural heritage, environment, innovative and social entrepreneurship, education and training and sporting activities.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pg. 12- 13

<sup>5</sup> Partners Albania for Change and Development. (2025). "Capacity and Needs Assessment of Civil Society Organisation in Albania, 2024". Retrieved from: <https://resourcecentre.al/publication/capacity-and-needs-assessment-of-civil-society-organisations-in-albania-2024/>

<sup>6</sup> Partners Albania for Change and Development. (2025). "Capacity and Needs Assessment of Civil Society Organisation in Albania, 2024". Retrieved from: <https://resourcecentre.al/publication/capacity-and-needs-assessment-of-civil-society-organisations-in-albania-2024/>

<sup>7</sup> Partners Albania for change and Development. (2025) "Philanthropy Magazine". Retrieved from: [https://www.partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Philanthropy\\_Magazine\\_Ed10.pdf](https://www.partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Philanthropy_Magazine_Ed10.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> The official website of the online crowdfunding platform is available at: <https://smile.al/>

For community foundations, the relationship with state institutions is an important factor in shaping their ability to influence local and national development agendas. While the EU integration process offers a potential framework for structured dialogue, participation of non-state actors, including community foundations, remains limited.

The Partnership Platform for European Integration was established to institutionalise the involvement of civil society in this process, as of 2025, only 30 of the planned 33 consultation tables had been created<sup>9</sup>. This gap in implementation reduces the opportunities for community foundations to contribute their local knowledge towards the EU integration processes and experience to important policy discussions.

Existing dialogue mechanisms, such as the National Council for Civil Society, have struggled to maintain credibility due to their limited responsiveness to sector challenges and weak connections with the broader civil society community. Too often, engagement with the state is limited to superficial consultations, offering little real influence or follow-up, which reinforces the perception that civic participation is a formality rather than a substantive contribution to decision-making.

In terms of organisational capacity, the establishment of the National Resource Centre for Civil Society (NRC) is an important mechanism to support community foundations. NRC is a platform of information and service provision which contributes to the strengthening of civil society's capacities to be more effective, transparent, accountable and independent actors and to the creation of an enabling environment for the civil society, participatory democracy and the integration process of Albania into the European Union.

With regard to transparency, accountability, and public trust, community foundations can draw significant benefits from the sector-wide self-regulatory mechanism developed with the facilitation of the NRC which is the Code of Standards for Albanian NPOs<sup>10</sup>. This Code is built around four principles and seven commitments, reflecting the sector's evolving needs and practices. For community foundations, adherence to such standards can demonstrate credibility to donors, communities, and public institutions. The creation of a dedicated online platform and mobile application to promote and implement the Code provides a practical tool for community foundations to showcase their commitment to good governance and responsible management of resources.

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<sup>9</sup> The information is retrieved from European Movement Albania organisation. More information is available at: <https://em-al.org/en/albanias-eu-membership-process/>

<sup>10</sup> More information on the Code of Standards for nonprofit organisations in Albania is available on the website of the National Resource Centre for Civil Society: <https://resourcecentre.al/news/code-of-standards-for-non-profit-organizations-in-albania/>

## 4. KEY FINDINGS

### 4.1 Capacity – Support for donor development and local fundraising efforts

What funding sources are available to CF (existing and emerging)? What other type of resources are affecting the sustainability of philanthropy and/ or CF in Albania? What are the barriers to local fundraising? Which approach works or doesn't it work?

Community foundations in Albania are still in the early stages of development. As of 2025, only one such foundation, “Korçarët Ndihejmojmë Korçarët” has been formally registered, although interest among local actors is gradually increasing. The current funding environment, however, remains highly fragile.

From the perspective of Partners Albania for Change and Development, in its role as a CFSO, financial viability is constrained by two main factors: limited public funding and a sharp decline in international aid. The ASCS remains one of the few state mechanisms for state funding, yet its grants are short-term, project-based, and aligned to agency priorities, misaligned with CFs' missions of long-term, locally rooted development. The funding gap has deepened in 2025 as multiple bilateral donors reduced or phased out<sup>11</sup> their portfolios, following the U.S. administration's stop order on foreign aid and broader geopolitical shifts. This shrinking pool of support has intensified pressure on both KNK and the CFSO to sustain operations.

While the community foundation model remains relatively new and still enjoys limited recognition in Albania, important steps have been taken to increase awareness of its potential. Partners Albania has played a leading role in introducing and promoting the model, highlighting how community foundations can mobilise local resources, build trust, and direct philanthropy toward long-term development priorities.

Through public discussions, and the promotion of fundraising platforms such as Smile.al, Partners Albania has helped shift perceptions among nonprofits, businesses, and community actors. Nevertheless, recognition by public institutions and integration into national and local development strategies remain limited.

At the same time, these challenges highlight new opportunities. The Albanian diaspora, which accounted for more than 15% of all donations in early 2025 according to philanthropy monitoring data<sup>12</sup>, represents an available resource. KNK itself is established through an endowment from an Albanian living in the U.S., demonstrating the transformative potential of diaspora philanthropy when properly channelled. Beyond diaspora contributions, Partners Albania has promoted local philanthropy through private sector engagement and tools such as Smile.al, the country's only local crowdfunding platform. Emerging opportunities also lie in public-private partnerships and mission-aligned social enterprise models, though both require capacity-building and start-up capital.

Internally, KNK's governance illustrates a promising model of accountability and division of roles. The Board ensures prudence and ethical investment policies, while the Executive leads implementation, engages local businesses and citizens, and builds partnerships with NPOs and institutions. Both structures converge on transparency, demonstrated through annual audits and impact reports that help build trust with donors. However, as a newly established foundation, KNK still lacks a comprehensive fundraising strategy, which will be the next critical step for long-term financial sustainability. Partners Albania will support KNK in drafting this strategy since it offers a comprehensive curriculum of training modules on financial sustainability, including the fiscal framework and financial management, strategies for engaging the private sector, and securing public support through grants<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> The Swiss government is ending its development aid programmes for Albania, Bangladesh and Zambia by the end of 2028. More information is available at: <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/foreign-affairs/programs-for-albania-bangladesh-and-zambia-to-be-discontinued/88798306>

<sup>12</sup> Partners Albania for Change and Development. (2025) “Philanthropy Magazine, 10th Editions”. Retrieved from: [https://www.partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Philanthropy\\_Magazine\\_Ed10.pdf](https://www.partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Philanthropy_Magazine_Ed10.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Partners Albania, (2020). “Service provision to nonprofit sector”. Retrieved from: <https://www.partnersalbania.org/ceshtjet/service-provision-to-nonprofit-sector/>

## **4.2 Capability – Training and organisational development**

### **What skills and competencies exist within CF and CFSO? What are the gaps?**

Capacity building has emerged as a basis in the development of CFs in Albania. Partners Albania has played a key role by providing mentoring and tailored training in areas such as legal assistance, governance, strategic planning, community mobilisation, fundraising, and communications.

By 2023, at least three emerging initiatives had engaged in community-foundation-style activities and benefited from these programmes, identified through a needs assessment and supported with targeted interventions. These initiatives were envisioned as the first wave of localised CF models with potential to catalyse new approaches to community giving and resource mobilisation.

To deliver this support, Partners Albania has developed strong institutional resources and a pool of experts with hands-on experience in philanthropy, nonprofit management, and public-private partnerships. This expertise ensures programmes are practical, adaptable to local realities, and continuously updated to reflect trends in civil society and community philanthropy.

Despite this, the initial initiatives struggled to sustain momentum. The absence of formal commitments such as Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), combined with limited internal motivation and drive, prevented them from advancing beyond early development. This highlighted an important lesson that external support can equip emerging CFs with tools and knowledge, but long-term progress depends on their own motivation, vision, and commitment to growth.

KNK is demonstrating strong determination to apply the model. Through a formal MoU, Partners Albania will provide tailored assistance in strategic planning, focusing on building KNK's capacity to set long-term priorities, define measurable objectives, and align resources with its mission.

As Albania's first officially registered CF, KNK combines international experience with local priorities, while addressing the challenge of consolidating internal structures and maintaining strong community ties. Its leadership has embraced a forward-looking orientation that integrates financial sustainability, digital adaptation, and trust-based engagement. Strategic priorities have been defined around four key areas:

- Fundraising and donor engagement to ensure a diversified and sustainable resource base.
- Communication and visibility to improve storytelling, media presence, and digital outreach.
- Financial management and accountability to strengthen credibility and prudent stewardship of resources.
- Governance and leadership development to reinforce decision-making processes and institutional resilience.

Importantly, KNK recognises that capacity building must be continuous and dynamic. Its leadership views organisational learning as an iterative process requiring regular reassessment of skills, adaptation to emerging community needs, and integration of new practices over time. This approach underscores adaptability and resilience as essential elements of long-term sustainability.

### **4.3 Credibility – National level advocacy and making the case for community foundations**

**What are the contextual issues (social, economic, and political environment) that impact the development of CF? How are CF perceived? What builds or erodes trust in these organisations?**

The social, economic and political environment present both opportunities and challenges for the development of CFs. The legacy of civic engagement and philanthropy is shaped by historical, cultural, and transitional dynamics. One of the most influential social factors driving early community-based philanthropy prior to the communist era was the strong sense of local identity and solidarity. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Albanian society was characterised by deeply rooted connection ties and local affiliations, with people identifying primarily through their region. Much of this early philanthropy was driven by Albanian emigrants abroad, who founded charitable societies to support their places of origin. These contributions often took the form of building schools, churches, mosques, hospitals, and other public infrastructure, motivated by a strong sense of duty to their communities and to national development<sup>14</sup>.

Since the early 1990s, following the fall of communism, efforts to nurture a culture of civic participation have gradually emerged. However, the decades of authoritarian rule, when independent associations and philanthropy were banned, left a deep rupture that at some scale continues to influence social attitudes.

As a result, large parts of the population remain unfamiliar with institutional forms of philanthropy, including the concept of CFs. To address this gap, building on engagement with the private sector since 2005 and its philanthropic programme launched in 2010, Partners Albania has cultivated a network of around 100 businesses committed to corporate social responsibility principles. Through initiatives such as “Giving Circles”, which KNK is one of the winning ideas for 2025 and “Business Speed Dating”, Partners Albania has created opportunities for aspiring CFs to connect with businesses, individual donors, and other stakeholders. These platforms support mobilisation of financial and non-financial resources, expand networks, and build long-term partnerships. Importantly, they also enhance visibility, credibility, and public trust, which are essential for sustainability and for nurturing a stronger philanthropic culture in Albania. KNK has also been part of the “NPO Exchange Program” run by Partners Albania, which provided valuable support by presenting its model and potential to a wide range of public and private stakeholders, helping to raise awareness and generate early interest in the initiative.

The progress achieved so far has been made possible through the leadership and early engagement of Partners Albania itself. In the initial phase, staff members were the first to be exposed to community foundations models<sup>15</sup>. This early investment created the foundation for adapting the model to the Albanian context and for mobilising wider interest. Building on this, strategic partnerships with established organisations and networks in Europe and the United States such as The Funding Network<sup>16</sup>, and European Community Foundation Initiative (ECFI)<sup>17</sup>, which provided opportunities to deepen institutional knowledge, learn from

practical models, and networking that supported the establishment and contextualisation of community foundations in Albania. In this context, Partners Albania has acted as both a bridge and a catalyst, bringing in knowledge and practices from international experiences, adapting them to Albania’s socio-political context, and gradually cultivating an ecosystem where CFs are understood, valued, and increasingly viable. Its role lies not only in piloting CF models but also in setting the systemic, institutional, and cultural groundwork for their long-term sustainability.

<sup>14</sup> Hoxha, A. (2011). “A historical view of the development of philanthropy in Albania”. Tirana: Partners Albania. Contributors: A. Agolli, J. Hoxha, & K. Keruti; Scientific editor: A. Puto; Reviewers: R. Gurakuqi, & E. Baze. Retrieved from: <https://www.partnersalbania.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/A-Historical-View-of-the-Development-of-Philanthropy-in-Albania.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> In 2019 participated in the study visit organised by ECFI in Italy and in 2020 participated in the international fellowship programme at the [Center for Philanthropy and Civil Society at CUNY](#), gaining valuable theoretical and practical perspective and international exposure.

<sup>16</sup> More information on The Funding Network is available at: <https://www.thefundingnetwork.org.uk/>

<sup>17</sup> More information on European Community Foundation Initiative is available at: <https://www.communityfoundations.eu/about-ecfi/what-is-ecfi.html>

From KNK's executive standpoint, the most strategic partnerships are those that expand institutional capacity, strengthen credibility, and generate lasting community impact. Collaboration with local government ensures alignment with development priorities, access to public resources, and stronger community trust. Partnerships with schools and universities engage youth, foster innovation, and build a culture of civic responsibility, while cooperation with other nonprofits allows pooling of expertise and co-implementation of initiatives based on mutual respect. The private sector is seen as more than a donor, contributing to innovative solutions through sponsorships, campaigns, and social responsibility initiatives that diversify sources of income. Alliances with international funders are particularly significant, as they provide resources, capacity-building, and access to global practices, while also serving as examples of solidarity that help rebuild trust in philanthropy and reinforce its role in social change. The Board echoes this view, emphasising that KNK's credibility and sustainability rest on cultivating broad partnerships with local government, relevant public institutions, national and local organisations engaged in humanitarian and community work, and active grassroots groups that contribute to public life.

Both the Executive team and the Board recognise that KNK faces persistent challenges in stakeholder and donor engagement. Philanthropy in the local context remains a weakened and often forgotten concept, and reviving it requires addressing the long void left by past systems while stimulating communitarian thinking. Many donors still prefer established causes, and awareness of community philanthropy is limited, which makes consistent support difficult to secure. Developing long-term, trust-based relationships also requires resources that are constrained by limited staff capacity. To address these barriers, KNK is investing in clearer communication, improved donor information, and greater transparency, while continuing to rely on the guidance of sister organisations as donor strategies are strengthened.

Executives and the Board share the expectation that the CFSSO will play a vital role in KNK's development. It is viewed as both a partner and a helping hand, a two-way road that allows KNK to contribute to and benefit from the broader community foundation movement. The CFSSO is expected to provide capacity-building and training opportunities, facilitate networking and exchange with other foundations, and amplify the role of community philanthropy at national and regional levels.

By connecting KNK with donors and partners, while promoting standards of governance and accountability, the CFSSO can strengthen credibility and enhance collaboration with local institutions. In this way, it is seen as both an anchor for stability and a catalyst for growth, enabling KNK to evolve into a more resilient and impactful organisation in service of its community.

#### ***4.4 Connections – Networking / Peer Learning***

**Who are the key stakeholders? What network exists or is needed? What is the role of support organisation (at different stages)?**

Community Foundations in Albania rely on a broad network of stakeholders whose engagement is essential for their credibility, sustainability, and impact. At the heart of this network are local communities and citizens, who not only benefit from initiatives but also contribute ideas, time, and volunteer support. NPOs and informal groups form another important layer, as they provide partnerships, grassroots connections, and the ability to mobilise collective action around local priorities.

Donors and philanthropic actors are central stakeholders as well, including individuals, the Albanian diaspora, whose financial and intellectual contributions are particularly valuable, and businesses that support community development through their CSR initiatives. International donors and development agencies also play a role by providing resources and expertise that strengthen the foundation's reach.

Public institutions, especially municipalities, are key partners because of their proximity to citizens and their mandate to address local needs. National institutions involved in civil society and local development also shape the environment within which the foundation operates. Internally, governance structures such as the Board, Advisory Council, and the “Friends of the Foundation” network ensure oversight, accountability, and legitimacy, reinforcing trust with all other stakeholders.

Finally, the role of media and academia. Media channels help increase visibility and foster public trust in the foundation’s work, while universities and research institutions provide valuable knowledge, evidence, and collaboration opportunities that strengthen community-based initiatives.

For Partners Albania, credibility is the foundation of a community foundation’s ability to engage donors, mobilise resources, and serve its community effectively. To support CFs in this direction, PA works on strengthening governance and accountability by mentoring and training them on transparent management, compliance with legal standards, and ethical practices. Credibility is also fostered through peer learning and exposure, as PA facilitates exchanges with other organisations, municipalities, and international partners, helping CFs adopt best practices and showcase their results. Trustworthiness is assessed continuously, with attention to the quality of governance, financial transparency, responsiveness to community needs, and delivery of tangible outcomes. At the same time, PA amplifies the visibility of CFs by promoting their initiatives and building partnerships that reinforce legitimacy. Public trust is shaped above all by transparency, responsiveness, consistency, and collaboration, and PA’s role is to ensure that CFs embody these values in practice, becoming resilient and trusted institutions for community-led development.

From KNK’s board perspective, trust, transparency, and accountability have been guiding principles since the very beginning of the Foundation. Great care was taken to engage respected professionals, dedicated organisations, and highly committed individuals to serve in the board, advisory forums, and supporting bodies. Credibility is safeguarded through well-defined governance practices, with the Management Board, advisory groups, and the “Friends of KNK” network providing a strong system of checks and balances. Regular meetings, careful decision-making, and the filtering of actions through these structures ensure that governance remains both structured and transparent. This approach, coupled with openness, has been central to maintaining long-term credibility. Thanks to these practices, KNK has not faced reputational risks, and its governance model, underpinned by a consistent commitment to accountability, has preserved a solid and positive reputation in the community and among its partners.

From the executive perspective, the most strategic partnerships are those that strengthen the Foundation’s capacity, mobilise resources, and expand impact. Collaborations with municipalities align initiatives with local development priorities and reinforce public trust, while partnerships with schools and universities engage youth and foster innovation. Cooperation with nonprofits allows expertise to be shared and duplication avoided, and collaboration with businesses helps diversify funding while encouraging philanthropy.

In the Albanian context, where the legacy of the past has weakened traditions of giving, alliances with global funders bring not only financial resources and capacity-building but also credibility and visible examples of solidarity that help shift public perceptions over time.

Nevertheless, challenges remain in engaging stakeholders and donors. Limited awareness of community philanthropy, donor fatigue, and preferences for already established causes make it difficult to secure consistent support. Building long-term, trust-based relationships requires significant time and dedicated resources that are not always available. Addressing these challenges calls for stronger communication strategies, more effective donor engagement, and the cultivation of transparent and lasting partnerships.

In this context, the role of the CFSO is considered vital. From KNK's perspective, it is expected to provide capacity building, training, and access to wider networks of community foundations, enabling the exchange of experiences and best practices. It is also expected to amplify the visibility of community foundations at national and regional levels, advocate for the value of philanthropy, facilitate connections with donors and partners, and promote adherence to governance and accountability standards. By fulfilling these roles, the CFSO would strengthen trust and sustainability while enhancing the credibility of community foundations.

## 5. CASE EXAMPLES

Korçarët Ndhmojmë Korçarët represents a milestone initiative in Albania's philanthropic landscape as the first community foundation established in the country. It embodies a locally rooted yet globally connected model of philanthropy, designed to strengthen community development through collective giving and diaspora engagement.

The foundation was initially launched as a programme under the management of the Global Albanian Foundation (GAF), a U.S.-based nonprofit organisation. The Korçarët Ndhmojmë Korçarët initiative officially began in July 2022, marking a pivotal moment in local philanthropy. It was made possible through the establishment of an endowment fund generously donated by Dr. Yvonne Naum, an Albanian American from Seattle. Dr. Naum's gift was a heartfelt tribute to her parents, who were originally from the city of Korçë, Albania. The endowment fund laid the foundation for long-term, sustainable support for community needs in the Korçë region.

As a community foundation, its aim is to foster a culture of local giving, empower citizen-led initiatives, and strengthen local development through transparent, participatory, and inclusive grant-making processes. It seeks to leverage both local contributions and diaspora support, creating a bridge between Albanians abroad and their communities of origin.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Community foundations in Albania remain at an embryonic stage of development, with "Korçarët Ndhmojmë Korçarët" (KNK) as the first formally registered CF. Their capacity to sustain operations is constrained by a fragile funding environment marked by declining international aid, limited public support, and insufficient institutional recognition. Nevertheless, important opportunities exist in mobilising local philanthropy through the Albanian diaspora, private sector partnerships, and emerging crowdfunding platforms. KNK's governance structures, grounded in transparency, accountability, and ethical stewardship, offer a solid base for building resilience and donor trust. The CFSO plays a complementary role here by providing expertise, mentoring, and tools for financial sustainability that extend beyond the reach of individual entities.

In terms of capability, Partners Albania will deliver targeted training in governance, fundraising, financial management, and community mobilisation, equipping KNK and other emerging initiatives with the skills and knowledge needed to establish and grow their work. Sustaining this progress, however, will depend not only on external mentoring but also on the internal drive of each foundation, reinforced by strategic planning and long-term commitments.

The CFSO will play a pivotal role in strengthening capacities by providing continuous learning opportunities, facilitating peer-to-peer exchange, and enabling community foundations to adapt effectively to evolving community needs and international best practices.

KNK's credibility will be strengthened through structured governance, annual audits, and impact reporting, which collectively foster transparency and trust. To establish community foundations (CFs) as legitimate and trusted actors, deliberate strategies will be required to shift public perceptions, integrate CFs into national and local development agendas, and highlight their role as community-driven vehicles of empowerment. The CFSO will further strengthen credibility by promoting consistent standards of governance and accountability across all CFs, ensuring that trustworthiness becomes a defining characteristic of the foundations.

Finally, connections will be key for the growth of CFs. KNK demonstrates that strategic partnerships with municipalities, nonprofits, businesses, and diaspora actors can mobilise resources and enhance legitimacy. Networks facilitated by Partners Albania, including links to European (ECFI) and global CF platforms (WINGS) provide additional opportunities for peer learning and advocacy. Partners Albania has CFSO serves as a connector and multiplier, bridging CFs with national stakeholders, international funders, and peer organisations. By amplifying visibility, facilitating exchanges, and advocating for the value of philanthropy at national and regional levels, the CFSO anchors CFs in Albania's civic space and catalyzes their integration into broader philanthropic and development ecosystems.

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## **Annex – Structured Questionnaire**

### *Executive Leadership of CFs – Interview Questions*

#### **General Information**

1. Name of Interviewee:
2. Organization:
3. Role/Position:
4. Years of Experience in this Role:
5. Interview Date:

#### **Capacity**

1. How does the leadership team ensure the financial sustainability of your CF?
2. Have you developed any innovative fundraising strategies?
3. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your fundraising efforts?

#### **Capability**

4. What capacity-building priorities have the leadership identified for further developing your CFs?
5. How do you assess the skills and development needs of your team?
6. What types of training would be most beneficial for your team?

#### **Credibility**

1. How does your organization ensure trust, transparency, and accountability?
7. What governance practices are in place to maintain credibility?
8. Are there any reputational risks or challenges that you've faced?
9. What role does your organization play in promoting local philanthropy?

#### **Connections**

10. What partnerships are most strategic for your CF and how do you maintain them?
11. What challenges do you face in stakeholder and donor engagement?
12. How do you perceive the role of the CFSO in your development?

### **General Information**

1. Name of Interviewee:
2. Name of the LAH that they support:
3. Years of involvement with the Board of the CF:
4. Location and Area of Operation:
5. Interview Date:

### **Financial Capacity**

1. How does the board contribute to fundraising and financial sustainability, and how do you ensure effective oversight of the CFs fundraising operations?
2. What challenges do you face in mobilizing local resources?
3. Are there any strategies in place to diversify funding sources?

### **Capability**

4. What are the key strengths of the leadership board in terms of governance and strategic direction?
5. What capacity-building efforts have been undertaken for the leadership board members?
6. Are there any skill gaps or areas where the board needs additional support?
7. How do you assess the LoE of Board members and renew their membership in case of member inactivity?

### **Credibility**

8. What role does the board play in building and maintaining public trust in local philanthropy?
9. How is the Board perceived by your community and donors? (Are you identified and recognized as part of the leadership of the CF?)
10. What measures are in place to ensure transparency and accountability?
11. How does the board handle conflicts of interest or ethical dilemmas?

### **Connections**

12. What partnerships are most strategic for your CF and how do you maintain them?
13. What challenges do you face in stakeholder and donor engagement?
14. How do you perceive the role of the CFSO in your development?

*Document existing experiences of CFSOs in working with CFs.* These questions are guiding questions.

### **General Information**

1. Name of the organization:
2. Year of establishment:
3. Location and geographic area of operation:
4. Interviewee name and role:
5. Date of interview:

### **Capacity**

1. How do you support CFs in building their financial capacity?
2. What are the common financial challenges you observe among CFs?
3. Do you provide training or tools for fundraising and financial planning?
4. How do you assess the financial sustainability of the CFs you support?
5. Beyond funding, what other types of resources (e.g. staff, skills, infrastructure, access to data or networks) are critical for you to support the CFs in the country? Please assess how adequate they are currently and what do you need to build these types of resources.

### **Capability**

6. What types of capacity-building support do you offer to CFs?
7. How do you identify the general needs of CFs?
8. What are the most common capability gaps you encounter?
9. Do you collaborate with other organizations to deliver training?

### **Connections**

10. How do you facilitate networking among CFs?
11. What partnerships have been most effective in supporting CF development?
12. Do you help CFs connect with donors, government, or other stakeholders?
13. What role do you play in building a broader ecosystem for CFs?
14. Have you experienced any barriers in reaching CFs? Are there any specifics to the CFs that are hard to reach or engage with? What makes it difficult?

### **Credibility**

15. How do you support CFs in building their credibility?
16. What practices do you use to promote transparency and accountability?
17. How do you assess the trustworthiness of the CFs you work with?
18. What are the key factors that influence public trust in CFs?



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