Sky Blue

/skeɪˈbluː/ n. 1. The colour of the unclouded sky at noon
Sky Blue is an online leadership programme for people working on our environmental challenges.

Sky Blue is inspired by the belief that, in order to tackle the world's environmental challenges, we need to re-imagine and transform the systems that support our way of life. Many of the issues involved are extremely complex and cannot be solved by one individual, organization or sector acting alone.

Therefore, we need leaders who can cross the boundaries of sector, generation, professional discipline and belief - and build collaborations that deliver results.

The story so far

The Sky Blue pilot launched in 2020, and a second programme started in 2021.

The aim was to:

- bring together a dynamic, inter-generational group of leaders from many different fields who have one thing in common - they are working on an environmental project, idea or issue that requires them to collaborate across sectors or disciplines
- give them the cross-boundary leadership skills, broader networks and peer support that will help them to produce the quality of collaboration needed to deliver sustainable, and socially just, solutions for both people and nature.

The ambition

The first two Sky Blue programmes have been a great success - we have proof of concept.

The broader aim is to convene a community of leaders around the world who are committed to our environment and who are working collaboratively, across sectors and divides, to create a sustainable future.

The ambition is to develop cross-boundary, collaborative leadership abilities amongst a critical mass of leaders working at the heart of these environmental challenges.
“Sky Blue helped me to understand that we can solve the climate and biodiversity challenges on our planet if we all start with local solutions. If we collaborate and understand ourselves as a global movement, we will be able to contribute to fundamental change.”

- Gabriel Schwaderer, Executive Director, EuroNatur Foundation

99%
Feel better prepared to work collaboratively
Sky Blue at a glance

164 alumni
48 countries
59% women

The programme
The Sky Blue curriculum is underpinned by the Common Purpose thought leadership - Leading Beyond Authority (LBA) and Cultural Intelligence (CQ) which provide a framework for leading across boundaries. As a result, the Sky Blue participants are better equipped to work collaboratively.

Leading Beyond Authority (LBA)
The ability to produce change beyond your direct circle of control. People who develop this ability are more effective in unfamiliar territory, where the authority (or credibility) gained in their own organization or sector is often not present.

Cultural Intelligence (CQ)
The ability to cross divides and thrive in multiple cultures. Our simple and empowering CQ framework helps leaders unpack their own culture and confidently work with others.

96% feel better prepared to influence beyond their circle of authority
98% feel better prepared to work with people who are different from them
91% feel better prepared to make an impact on environmental challenges
“We wanted to work with Common Purpose on the MAVA Leaders for Nature Academy because of their track record, and their expertise in cross-boundary leadership. It has proved to be a very successful and fruitful partnership. It is hugely important that leaders working in conservation, and the wider environmental movement, are able to work collaboratively with leaders from other fields.”

- Lynda Mansson, Director General, MAVA Foundation
The Sky Blue theory of change

Collaborative leaders
Operating on a broader canvas

Scaled solutions
Both in breadth and depth

Scaled environmental impact at speed

Invest in leaders on the environment so that they can cross boundaries

Giving them:
- Understanding of context
- Broader networks
- Ability to Lead Beyond Authority
- Cultural Intelligence

Agile leaders
Working across whole systems

Speed solutions
Turning friction into momentum
What the participants say

At the end of each Sky Blue programme we asked the participants about their experience, what they had learned, and the value of the Sky Blue community. Did it equip them to work more collaboratively?

99% would recommend Sky Blue to another person
99% feel better prepared to work collaboratively
91% feel better prepared to make an impact on environmental challenges

96% feel better prepared to influence beyond their circle of authority
96% feel better prepared to adjust their behaviour in culturally diverse situations
99% recognize the value in bringing in wider perspectives when making key decisions

96% feel better able to balance humility and self-belief
98% feel better prepared to challenge their assumptions
98% feel better prepared to adapt to new environments

98% feel better prepared to work with people who are different from them
91% feel better prepared to thrive in complexity
94% feel more confident in their voice as a leader tackling environmental challenges

92% say the Sky Blue community will help them to make a positive contribution to addressing environmental challenges

78% will commit to working on an idea or project with at least 1 fellow participant

93% feel better prepared to act more courageously in difficult situations

“Sky Blue allowed me to get to know other changemakers as humans first, and experts second. I started to understand how this is key in leading and collaborating within and outside your organization.”
- Alexander Gunkel, Founder and Managing Director, Space4Good

“The cross-boundary aspect of Sky Blue has made it one of my most valuable educational experiences to date. We were really encouraged to challenge assumptions and collaborate well to tackle complex issues.”
- Emma Reiss, Project Development Engineer, Jenx Limited

“I came to Sky Blue very excited. The sequence of feelings as the programme went on progressed from excitement to freedom and safety, then deep awareness, some soberness and ultimately, I am here...feeling empowered.”
- Dupe Killa-Kafidipe, Founder, Platinum Fisheries Limited
“Sky Blue has helped develop my leadership and improve my communication skills. This has assisted me with the environment education work I carry out. I am able to reach out and talk to the neighbouring community members, as well as the clans and tribe elders who visit, about the functions, values and benefits of the eco systems and biodiversity that we conserve in the park.”

- Obrain Kamwale, Senior Wildlife Police Officer, Department of National Parks and Wildlife
Looking ahead

The Sky Blue has proved to be a very powerful leadership programme for those taking part. Beyond that it has created a community of leaders committed to working collaboratively to tackle our environmental challenges.

We want to build on this to:

1. **Run more programmes** – we want to develop and refine the programme and grow the Sky Blue community.

2. **Develop a community of practice** – to sustain the Sky Blue community by providing opportunities for continued learning, mutual support and the sharing of ideas.

We are keen to explore possibilities with anyone interested in Sky Blue

If you would like to know more please contact alison.coburn@commonpurpose.org

“Sky Blue has been a remarkable experience and community of like-minded, like-hearted people!! It has given me ideas, confidence, inspiration, energy, and the courage to take more risks! I’m already making different decisions.”

- Ana Porzecanski, Director, Center for Biodiversity and Conservation, American Museum of Natural History

92%

Say that the Sky Blue community will help them to make a positive contribution to addressing environmental challenges
“I have changed my approach to promoting sustainability across my industry. Attending Sky Blue has helped me strengthen the way I communicate sustainability in design and the way I impact my team and our sustainability effort across the company. Following my participation, I have been able to garner more awareness towards sustainability and create greater momentum to integrate sustainable practices into our projects. This has contributed towards the overall impact of the work that I do within my firm.”

- Stefano Tronci, Associate Principal, Woods Bagot

“Sky Blue was a surprisingly dynamic process. Having started the course with challenges around leading a complex project, it was fascinating how the mountains started to move, with only a few conscious changes in approach and behaviour! It certainly helped me think more about the impact I have (both positive and negative) within these situations and how a slight shift or flex really can make a huge difference.”

- Annette McDonald, Deputy Managing Director, The Tatton Group
Participant organizations & countries

Included below are a some of the participant’s organizations and countries

AFCD Foundation, Morocco
Al-Shouf Cedar Society, Lebanon
American Museum of Natural History, United States
Association Biom, Croatia
Bhoomi Network Bangalore, India
BirdLife International, Cyprus
BirdWatch, Zambia
Black Seeds Network, United Kingdom
Blackpool Transport Services Ltd, United Kingdom
British Asian Trust, United Kingdom
Children’s Investment Fund Foundation, India
Clean Earth Energy, United Kingdom
Clúid Housing, Ireland
Co.Cre8 Ltd., United Kingdom
County Councils Network, United Kingdom
Creative Carbon Scotland, United Kingdom
Cultivate Ireland Limited, Ireland
Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE), Ireland
Department of Finance, Ireland
Department of National Parks and Wildlife, Zambia
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), South Africa

ECE Marketplaces, Germany
Eko Koriyen LLC, Montenegro
Energia, Ireland
English Football League Trust, United Kingdom
Environment Agency, United Kingdom
EuroNatur, Germany
European Environmental Bureau, Belgium
FishCORAL, Philippines
Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, Hungary
FoodBlessed, Lebanon
GreenNet, United Kingdom
High Atlas Foundation, Morocco
Institute of American Indian Arts, United States
IUCN Med, Spain
Jordan Green Building Council, Jordan
Lang Tengah Turtle Watch, Malaysia
Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Croatia
National Agency of Protected Areas, Albania
National Campaigner Committee - Fairtrade Foundation, United Kingdom
National Youth Engagement Network, United Kingdom
| Native Events, Ireland                       | Tatton Group, United Kingdom               |
| Nature Kenya the East Africa Natural History Society, Kenya | Temple University, United States           |
| Nature4Climate, United Kingdom              | The Kilimanjaro Project, Tanzania          |
| New Philanthropy Capital, United Kingdom    | The National Trust, United Kingdom         |
| Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, United Kingdom | The Society for the Protection of Nature, Israel |
| Notre Grand Bleu, Tunisia                   | The Society for the Protection of Nature, Lebanon |
| Nottingham City Council, United Kingdom     | Thera, Namibia                             |
| Onda Solidaria, Brazil                      | Tropical Rainforest Conservation and Research Centre, Malaysia |
| Open Data Institute, United Kingdom         | UNICEF, Ivory Coast                        |
| Plastic Move, Turkey                        | United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Switzerland |
| Platinum Fisheries Limited, Nigeria         | Universitas 21, United Kingdom             |
| PPNEA - Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment, Albania | University of Oxford, United Kingdom       |
| PT Supreme Energy, Indonesia                | Victorian Water Industry Association (VicWater), Australia |
| Royal Meteorological Society, United Kingdom | Wetlands International European Association, Netherlands |
| Royal Scientific Society, Jordan           | Wilaya of the Marrakech-Safi Region / Ministry of the Interior, Morocco |
| Shared Interest Foundation, Ghana           | Woods Bagot, Hong Kong                    |
| Soil Association, United Kingdom            | World Economic Forum, Germany,             |
| Space4Good, Netherlands                      | World Toilet Organization, Singapore       |
| Sustrans, United Kingdom                     | WWF MedPortugal, Italy                    |
| Swiss Child Rights Network, Switzerland      |                                          |
“We are not alone, we have hope, we have friends, we have lots to do… we are stronger than we thought... We can make a change and can build together solutions... We are global citizens, we are Sky Blue!”

- Ricardo Calcado, Founder, Onda Solidaria