

MAYOR OF LONDON

COMMUNITY PROJECTS HANDBOOK



MAKE LONDON

**PROJECT
LIFECYCLE**

5

**DEVELOPING
YOUR IDEA**

9

**PLANNING
YOUR PROJECT**

17

**BUILDINGS
AND SPACES**

23

**GETTING
INTO DETAIL**

31

**UP AND
RUNNING**

39

MAKING GREAT PROJECTS HAPPEN

The Mayor of London is committed to helping grassroots groups, who really understand their local areas, to trial new projects and approaches that can have real impact in their community.

We know that the best ideas don't come fully formed into a complete project plan. This handbook will help you develop an idea or concept into something that is both unique and achievable, but ambitious enough to make a positive difference in your area. The principles we outline here apply to projects big and small, from buildings to parks or markets and high street improvements. They will help you understand what you need to plan for before, during and after your project.

We want to encourage you to be bold and try something new. This handbook will get you started and offer some guidance of what to look out for, drawing on a range of case studies showcasing successful community-based projects and organisations. Many of these examples show how small projects can lead to a real legacy of local involvement in long term change; something that helps to build strong and resilient communities. We know that by helping new groups with great ideas to get started, we can help you to create the next generation of these important local organisations.

Let's make your local project happen.

Grassroots ideas and community-led projects are not new – many of our most successful organisations and places started off with a small group of people sharing an idea.

Coin Street Community Builders, on London's South Bank, is just such an example. Now, this development trust and social enterprise owns and manages over 13 acres of land and, since 1984, has created 220 affordable rent homes in 4 cooperatives, arts spaces, leisure facilities, a neighbourhood nursery and much more. However, it started as a local campaign group who wanted to open up the riverfront to the local community and have more control over its future.

CSCB's first project was creating a new public park, Bernie Spain Gardens, by demolishing a number of derelict buildings. Completed in 1988, the group also developed a number of temporary shops and restaurants – Gabriel's Wharf – alongside the park, an early example of what we now call 'pop-ups' or 'meanwhile uses', which helped to pay for maintaining the park as well as the loan finance that had allowed CSCB to buy the site.

Lessons to learn:

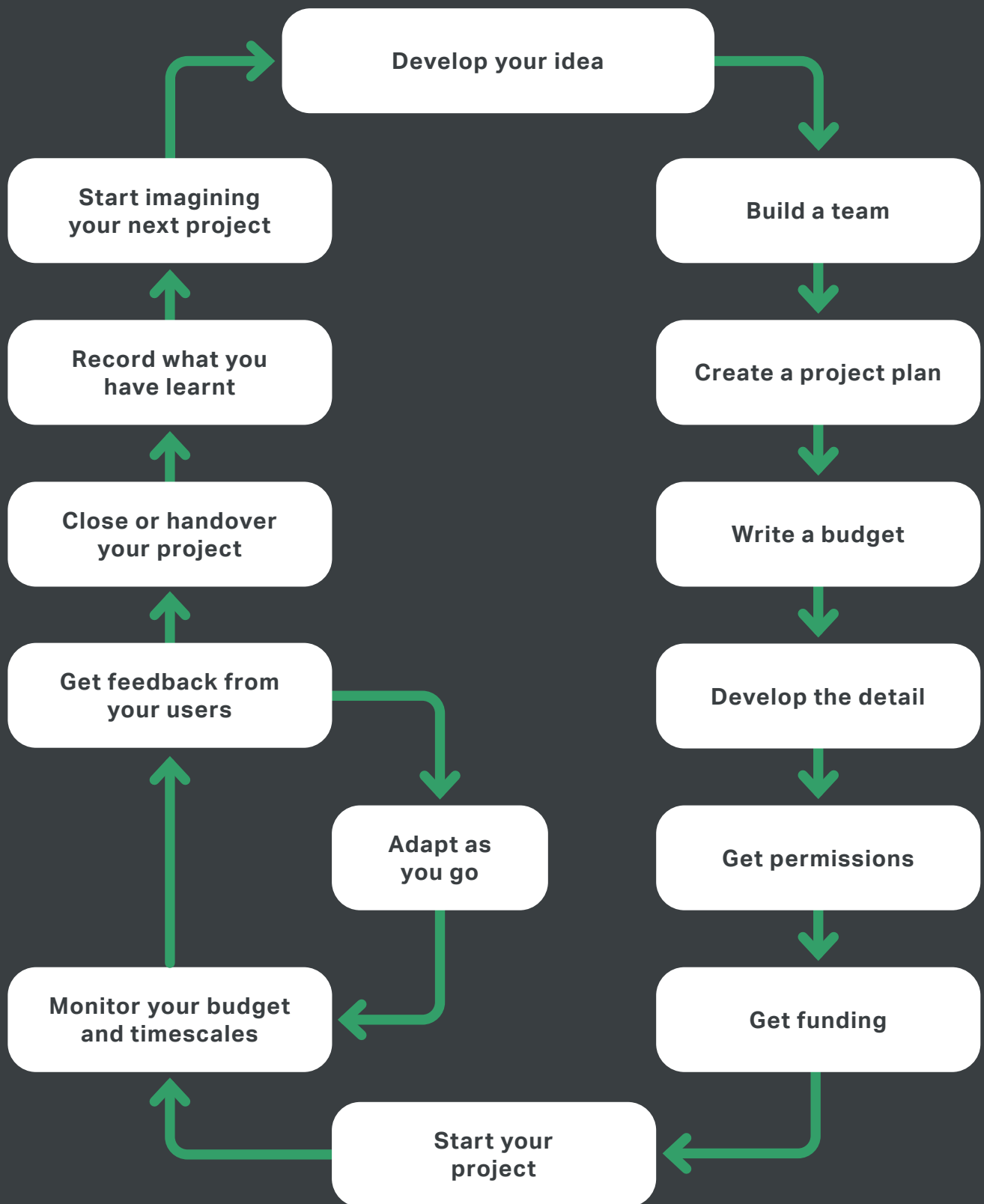
- Be ambitious. Have a long-term vision as well as manageable projects that you can make happen quickly – 'quick wins' that show you are serious and capable.
- Involve the community in owning and running your organisation. CSCB is wholly owned by people living in the local area, and each housing block is run by a cooperative consisting of all tenants.



A photograph of a modern building with a curved facade and large windows, surrounded by greenery and a basketball hoop in the foreground. A green hexagonal overlay is centered on the image, containing the text "PROJECT LIFECYCLE".

PROJECT LIFECYCLE

PROJECT LIFECYCLE



At the beginning...

Make sure people really want what you plan to offer. Whether a public space, a community building, or a start-up social business, projects need people who want to use them.

Talk to people who have done similar things. Most people love to share their experience and lessons learnt.

Make a list of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats to your project (SWOT analysis). This can be a really useful way to work out if your project is realistic, or what you need to improve to make it stronger.

Write down your aims and ambitions so you don't lose sight of them once you get into the detail. How will you know if your project is a success? How can you measure the change you make?

Don't be afraid to try something that might fail – ideas that are experimental and innovative often need several attempts to get right, and you will learn a lot from the process.

Report back regularly to your funders/backers

Keep track of risks to your project

Talk to your community throughout the process

Record what you do: take photos, write a blog

At the end...

Not all projects last forever – they evolve as times change, they are designed to be temporary, or they are an experiment that doesn't work out.

Think about how you will know it is the right time to move on or call it a day. What will you do with your site, equipment or people when that time comes?

Some projects need to be handed over to other people to run or manage. Make sure that it is handed over smoothly and with all the information they need to keep it going.

Document your project as you go along so that whether it is a success or a failure, you and others can learn from it. If you are too busy, ask someone else to help.

Measure the impact of your project. How many people did you help? How much did you help them? What did they say about your work, both good and bad? What did you learn along the way that you will take into your next project?

Dalston Eastern Curve Garden in Hackney is a popular community garden, on the site of an old railway line cut below street level in an area sorely lacking in green space of any kind.

The Garden developed out of 'Making Space in Dalston', an initiative which brought together designers, residents, community and cultural organisations to identify ways of using derelict or underused spaces for the benefit of the community. The Eastern Curve was identified and became the site for Dalston Mill, a temporary art installation as part of an exhibition programme by the Barbican Centre, and the first time the site was opened up to the public.

Seeing the potential of the space through this project, local community groups negotiated the right to longer-term community management of the space. Planting was completed by local volunteers and the garden reopened in 2010, since when it has welcomed over 150,000 visits per year.

Managed by a specially formed social enterprise, it is self-funding through the cafe sales, hires, community events, music evenings and children's workshops.

Lessons to learn:

- Partnerships between designers and local residents can help develop new and imaginative solutions.
- Temporary installations by artists can demonstrate the potential of a space, and raise the profile of a site, leading to longer-term projects.
- Community management through social enterprise can help to make a facility self-funding.





DEVELOPING YOUR IDEA

STARTING WITH A CHALLENGE



Talk to people who experience the challenge or need that you are interested in (the potential 'users' of your project).

- What is specific about how they experience this issue in your community?
- What do they think might help?



Research any people or projects that have tried to solve similar problems.

- Why did they succeed or fail?



Come up with some options for projects that you think could make a difference.



Do they need a physical space?

- Can you find a space like that in your area, or can you make one?
- See page 24 for help finding a space



Take your options to your users for feedback.

- Which do they think might be most worthwhile?
- How would they make it even better?



When you think your idea might work, start planning your project in more detail.

STARTING WITH A SPACE



Who owns the space or building?

- See page 24 for help finding out.
- Do you think it is likely they would let you use it/change it for the better?



Make a list of its good qualities:

- What makes you think it has potential?



Make a list of its challenges:

- For example, is there delivery access?
- Does it have poor security?



Come up with some options for how it could be used or improved, bearing in mind its physical features.

- How do these fit with what your community actually needs?
- Do any of them duplicate things that already exist in your area?



For each option, talk to people who you think would use the space.

- What do they think of your idea?
- How would they make it better?



When you think your idea might work, start planning your project in more detail.

WORKING FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

Projects that are funded with public money, need to show that they will benefit the whole of their local community, not just a part of it.

Thinking about the following questions may help you develop your idea into something that is genuinely inclusive.

- Who do you think needs your project?
- Who do you think will use your project?
- Who will benefit from your project?
- How do you want your community to feel about your project?
- Who would not be able to use or experience your project, and why?
- Who might feel that your project is 'not for them'?

Welcoming everyone

Try to make sure that all kinds of people feel welcome. This will be affected by the kind of activities you offer; the kind of people who run the space; how it looks and feels; and how you will promote or advertise it.

Think about how you can make your space or project multi-functional. Can you add extra elements to your core mission, to make it even better? When your space isn't being used for your main purpose, what else could it be used for?

Consider access for the elderly, the disabled, those with young children. This isn't just physical access to your space or site – it is also the times of day you are open and how you let people know your project exists.

Focus on your impact

You want to make a change in your area – so how can you make sure you are succeeding?

- Write down the changes or impact that you want to have.
- Think about how you can measure if you are meeting these aims.
- Funders, backers and your community will want to know that you are focused on your mission and can prove you are making a difference. This can be through the feedback you get from users, as well as from statistics about what you do.

thinkFound, an upcycling furniture maker based in Waltham Forest, initiated the **Step Up to Work programme**, an inclusive and supportive learning programme and environment for at-risk young adults struggling to acquire the necessary skills and experience to make them 'work ready.'

Through tailored training and mentoring, the programme will support participants to acquire practical experience in wood working, along with key work skills (time management, team work, organisation, customer service and marketing), resulting in a certification and in-depth reference to pass on to future employees.

Working extensively with local youth organisations and networks has helped thinkFoundation engage and recruit from a diverse pool of young people who would most benefit from this opportunity.

Lessons to learn:

- Engage your community by coming out and shouting about what you do and why it's important.
- Processes like crowdfunding provide a unique opportunity to involve people from your area that have time and talents to help you succeed.



Peckham Coal Line started as an idea from one person who thought that disused railway sidings could make a great new park for their area. To develop their idea and make it a community project, they talked to people in the area in many different ways.

They held tours of the site so that people could see the potential, meetings where people could say what they wanted to see happen in the park, exhibitions of design concepts for the community to comment, and had an active social media campaign and website. This process gained the project a lot of trust and support from the community, which led to a successful crowdfunding campaign to take the project to the next stage.

Lessons to learn

- Talk to people in lots of different ways, to ensure you get diverse feedback.
- Be open to ideas coming from your community, that might be different to what you had initially considered.



TALKING TO YOUR COMMUNITY

It will make your project better if you tell your community about it, and get their feedback. Opening up to people will help you to get support, discover risks or drawbacks, test your business plan and help you see what outsiders think of your ideas.

It will also help you inform people about what you are planning so that they are not taken by surprise. Projects can have impacts on their neighbours – for example, noise or disruption due to building work, or parking problems due to a road closure – and if you can get your neighbours onside with your project from the start, they are less likely to complain.

You can talk to your community in a number of ways but, at some point, it is likely that you will want to hold an event, exhibition or drop-in meeting where anyone is invited to have their say. Here are some tips for how to make this a success:

- Think about what time of day and what time in the week you hold your event. Are you excluding people who have young children, the elderly, people who work in different kinds of jobs, or who have religious commitments?
- You won't be able to suit everyone, so try to find a way that people who can't come, can still comment on your ideas. Leaflets, posters, a website or online survey, and social media can all be useful.
- How can you encourage people to attend? Can you offer something fun in exchange?
- Be clear and honest about your project. If it is still not funded or fully developed, say so, so that people know not to expect it to happen overnight.
- Be prepared for people to ask tough questions. Some people may be cautious about change. Make this feedback into positive learning, by asking how you could make the project work for them.
- Listen without interrupting. If someone has misunderstood, wait till they have finished, before correcting them in clear and simple language.

Sheffield Foodhall is a communal kitchen and dining area, where the public are invited to cook a meal for the city or dine on a pay-as-you-feel basis. Anyone, regardless of their social status, can eat for as much as they can pay – or for free if they can't afford to pay anything at all. It started from an app for students to avoid food waste and enjoy communal eating, but evolved to benefit the whole city.

Foodhall is housed in a disused building on a temporary lease, although it has been operating since 2015. All the fittings have been designed so that they can be moved to a new venue when the building has to be vacated. This flexibility allows the space to accommodate a wide variety of other functions including NHS addiction groups, gigs, reading groups and pottery classes.

The project is entirely volunteer-run and has used social media networks successfully to create a wide base of helpers who donate food, cook or help in other ways. Top chefs as well as ordinary people have cooked meals for the project.

The group constantly ask for feedback from their users, turning users into co-producers of the project.

Lessons to learn:

- Ambitious projects can be entirely volunteer-run – use social media to build your volunteer base.
- Make space multi-functional so that you can change what you offer according to feedback and demand.
- Plan for when your project may come to an end – and what its legacy may be.



A photograph of an urban scene at night. In the foreground, a large, dark blue, triangular structure, possibly a sculpture or part of a building, dominates the left side. In the background, a white brick wall is visible with graffiti, including the word 'ALL' on the left and 'I GOT THE OF DAY' on the right. A person wearing a beanie and a jacket is sitting on the right, holding a cup. The scene is lit with warm, yellow light from a string of lights on the left. A teal hexagonal overlay is centered in the image, containing the text 'PLANNING YOUR PROJECT' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

PLANNING YOUR PROJECT

The revival of Well Street Market was spearheaded by members of the existing residents' and traders' association, WESTRA. However they quickly realised that the ambition of the project would be a challenge to achieve with only volunteers. As a result WESTRA voted to crowdfund, as part of their project costs, for one of their members to become a paid project manager. This ensured that the project could be planned and managed properly, with an unpaid subcommittee assisting.

Further paid expertise was found through crowdfunding for a small fee to an expert agency to run the Student Maker Market, and through in kind support offered by a local business to manage the music stage. The Well Street team feel that this paid, expert input, has been essential to making their project happen; and well worth the investment.

Lessons to learn:

- If your volunteer team can't commit enough time, consider fundraising to pay for a project manager.
- A project manager does not have to be someone who is found outside your group – it might be that you already have the right person in your network.
- Paying for the right experts to fill skills gaps is better than struggling for lack of expertise.



PLANNING YOUR PROJECT

Creating a project plan

- A project plan (also known as a programme) starts with a list of all the steps needed to make your project a reality.
- Make this into a timeline that feels realistic.
- Allow a bit of contingency (extra) time in case things don't go to plan, or run late.

Building a team

- Make a list of all the people or skills you need. Do you already have them in your group?
- Who do you need to get on board to start with, and who do you need later on – can you find them through your fundraising campaign or community consultation?
- Managing something ongoing needs different skills to setting up a project in the first place. Make sure you find someone with this experience, to join your team.

Keeping on track

- Plan for regular project meetings with your team, and keep notes to remind everyone of what they have promised to do.
- Keep referring back to your project aims, your timeline, your budget and your SWOT analysis.
- Has anything changed? Do you need to adjust your plan – for example, to allow more time or money?

Get help and support

- Talk to people who have done similar things. Most people love to share their experience and lessons learnt. Find a mentor from a similar project who you can meet with regularly.
- Which parts of your project are you most worried about? We can help work these out with you, or put you in touch with other groups that have faced similar challenges.

Useful Resources

Project planning:
Mycommunity guide – <http://bit.ly/2cKtRZC>

Finding volunteers:
Team London – <http://volunteerteam.london.gov.uk>
Local CVS (Community and Voluntary Services)

ORGANISING YOUR GROUP

You will need to think about what kind of group structure you want to have, to make your project happen. You will need to have an organisation running your project that has a name and a bank account, and which will be responsible for ensuring the project happens. That organisation will also be liable if anything goes wrong.

Shared aims, responsibilities and roles, rules for decision making and group membership are really important even in an informal group to ensure that everyone is clear about how you work, and to give funders confidence in you.

Partnering

You can choose to partner with an established charity, social enterprise or company, who can be the project manager and fund holder for your project. This can save a lot of paperwork, and you will be using their skills and experience to run your project properly. You would need to agree how this would work, to make sure that your group still has enough control over how the project takes shape.

Turning an informal group into a formal structure

If you choose to remain an informal 'unincorporated' group, individual members of the group may end up

being personally liable if something goes wrong, or if you run out of money to pay for something you have committed to buy. It may also be difficult to get a bank account as most banks require you to have, as a minimum, a document setting out the aims, structure, rules and membership of your group.

Becoming a charity is not always difficult – there are various different forms of charity that you can choose from. Being a charity means that you will get business rates relief of 80%, which can help a lot. However, charities can only pay their staff, and must have an unpaid trustee board that are accountable for decision-making.

You could also consider becoming a social enterprise (for example a Community Interest Company). These can allow you to pay your directors and you do not need to have unpaid trustees, but you cannot pay out profits – these must be reinvested in your activities. You may be able to get business rates relief but this is up to your local council to decide.

Useful links

Resource Centre guide:
<https://bit.ly/3kXTBD0>

The Wanstead Playground Association was formed by local parents who wanted to improve their local playground. To start with, they were an 'unincorporated association' – just a group of people coming together for a common cause but with no formal structure. They then decided to register with the Charity Commisison as a 'charitable unincorporated association' so that they could apply for grant funding, including from the Mayor of London through Crowdfund London.

The group have found that being registered as a charity 'unlocks a lot of doors in terms of being able to apply for bigger grants' but the form of charity that they have chosen is not challenging for them to manage in terms of paperwork and reporting. They raised over £100,000 for new play equipment and the much improved playground re-opened in 2016.

Lessons to learn:

- Forming a registered charity is not as difficult as it seems
- Choosing the right structure for your group makes a big difference in getting funding for your project.



Oasis Children's Venture now runs three sites for play and youth activity, all of which came about through spotting opportunities to transform neglected spaces in Lambeth.

In 1973, local parents and residents transformed a derelict green space into a playground with swings, a slide and skateboard ramp. Then, in the early eighties, Oasis users took hand built karts to an unused school playground across the road, and the karting track was created. A few years later, Oasis joined forces with Allen Edwards Primary School, to create a nature garden in an empty plot of land adjacent to the school.

In 2000, Oasis secured a 30-year lease from Lambeth Council for the Larkhall Adventure Playground and could make new improvements, safe in the knowledge that the longer-term future was secure. It now runs all three sites with supervised after-school and holiday playschemes, workshops, training and volunteering opportunities.

Lessons to learn:

- Seize opportunities that you see in your area, and find cheap and quick ways to adopt them.
- Build partnerships with other local organisations, and with your local council.



A young man with short dark hair, wearing a white t-shirt and a gold chain, is driving an orange go-kart. Two children are seated in the go-kart with him: a girl with long brown hair in the front passenger seat and a boy with glasses in the back seat. The go-kart has large, treaded tires and a black steering wheel. A green hexagonal graphic is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text "BUILDINGS AND SPACES".

BUILDINGS AND SPACES

FINDING A SPACE

Have a great idea, but don't have a place or space to house it?

- Walk around your neighbourhood looking for spaces that aren't being used. Think creatively – are there buildings or spaces that don't have commercial value but could be perfect for a community space?
- Talk to local estate agents, who might be able to help with temporary 'meanwhile' uses of commercial space at low cost
- You can find out if a site is publicly owned, through the Mayor of London's website at <https://bit.ly/374R84P>
- You can look up who owns any land or building on www.landregistry.gov.uk (for a small fee)

Make sure your space is suitable for what you want to use it for

- Make a checklist of essential elements you need for your project. For example, size, delivery access, character.
- Taking along an architect or other building professional can help you understand whether there might be practical problems with a site or building, that you might not spot.

Secure your space

- Contact the owner, stating what you want to use the land or building for. It will help if you already have an outline project plan, to show that you are serious and realistic.
- You don't necessarily need to buy or rent the space. You can get a licence to use it – temporarily or permanently – which can be easier.
- Help on 'meanwhile' (temporary) leases for buildings can be found at <https://bit.ly/338n8Um>
- Help on leases and licenses for community gardening and park projects can be found at <http://bit.ly/2psSxh5>
- Try to get a letter of agreement from the owner before you pitch your project to funders.
- For a bigger project, get a 'Heads of Terms' agreed – you will need a solicitor to help you with this. This will set out the terms for you using the site, and when you get your funding confirmed you can take this forward to a full contract.

The Livesey Exchange in Old Kent Road started when a local resident and community enabler spotted the potential of the large underground garage space on the Ledbury Estate. Working with another local resident and architect, they successfully crowdfunded through Crowdfund London to make garages safe and accessible, to consult further with local residents, and to trial workshops and other activities in the garages. They negotiated with the local council, who owned the estate, on a lease for the space.

Conceived as 'Village Hall meets Turbine Hall,' Livesey Exchange will consist of a pair of two-storey blocks housing a double-height multi use space served by a canteen, yards and work spaces, opening up opportunities for training and skill exchange, further strengthening the network of manufacturers operating in the Old Kent Road area. The programme evolved through collaboration with local residents, businesses and stakeholders over several years of engagement events and workshops held to align with, and build on local aspirations.

Lessons to learn:

- Think of ideas that really work with the character of the space you want to revive
- Trial different functions through 'pop-up' activities, to see what works well
- Don't be afraid to ask to use space you don't own in getting funding for your project

Image © Alexander Christie



DESIGN AND DESIGNERS

No matter how big or small your project, ensuring it is well designed will help in many ways:

- Making your project a source of pride in your community.
- Creating something unique rather than 'off the shelf', reflecting the character of your area.
- Saving money through being carefully thought through for its specific purpose.
- Attracting funding and local support through being visually appealing.
- Meeting all the regulations and practical requirements.
- Creating a realistic budget for your building work and thinking through risks or problems.

Using professionals may feel like a big cost, but it usually saves money in the long run. As with any supplier, make sure you get a quote that sets out exactly what they are going to do, how long it will take, and when they will require payment. Some professionals may offer free ('pro bono') advice but you should still get a written agreement from them if you will be relying on their advice. You may need:

- Architect or designer
- Structural engineer
- Building services consultant (sometimes called an M&E consultant)

- Quantity surveyor or cost consultant
- Graphic designer

How well does your design work?

Good design is more than just making things look good – it will make them work well too. These are design principles to bear in mind:

- Will it have the character you want to create a public welcome?
- How will you find your way around your space? Is it obvious where you need to go?
- How will different functions in the building interact? Are there issues around noise spill-out or privacy?
- How friendly is your space for people who may be disabled, partially sighted or have other needs?
- Have you thought about storage? Be careful not to under-estimate your storage needs.
- Can you control how the space feels? Can you open windows if it is too hot, or adjust the lighting for different areas?
- Is it flexible for things to change in the future?
- Design it to be easy to look after – can you reach the lightbulbs?
- Design it to be easy to keep safe. This doesn't mean making it a fortress – but think about what is appropriate for your area.

Arts organisation PEER has been on Hoxton High Street since 2002 and runs a range of activities for local schools and community groups, as well as an international exhibition programme, and art projects in the nearby area.

PEER's external appearance did not match how they worked with the community – it was not always even evident that the property was open. They transformed this through two design-led projects. Firstly, they redesigned the unwelcoming public realm space to the front and south of PEER by creating a pocket park, working with local residents. They also redesigned their own frontage so that, while secure, it allowed the artwork within to be seen by passersby at day and night.

These clever design changes have brought a new and more diverse audience to the gallery. Many residents now stop and take lunch on the benches looking into the gallery, in the improved public space. This part of the high street is now a source of pride and a landmark in the local community.

Lessons to learn:

- Good design makes a big difference to how your community perceive and engage with your work.
- Focusing on quality design and materials makes things easier to maintain in the long run.
- Organisations and private businesses can take the lead in transforming the public realm around their premises, for wider community benefit.

Image © Ollie Hammick



Renew New Eltham started through a group of local business and residents wishing to improve their tired high street, making it a more attractive place to shop, and increasing community pride in the area. The team transformed the area with locally designed picturesque signposts, 12 wooden planters designed by one of the residents himself, an upgrade to the bridge and distinctive lights for the trees. The team also provided match funding to local businesses so they could improve their shopfronts.

Almost all of these changes required permission from a public sector body – Transport for London, Network Rail, the local council. But this was not a barrier to the group, who forged good partnerships and also committed to the ongoing maintenance of the landscaping through creating a new local business association funded through subscription.

Lessons to learn:

- Don't be put off by the need for permission – good ideas tend to win support.
- If you have a plan for maintenance, your idea is more likely to be permitted.



PERMISSION TO BUILD

Planning permission

You will need planning permission:

- To build a new building
- To change the use of an existing building or space (e.g. from shop to restaurant)
- To alter the outside of an existing building.
- To make changes to a listed building

You can contact your local council and speak to the duty planning officer, who will advise you if you need planning permission.

They should advise you if it would be helpful to have a meeting or submit some early stage ideas to the planning department (a pre-application consultation). This can be a useful way of finding out what the planning issues are for your site, and how you can solve them. Bring along your designer or architect, if you have one. If you plan on doing work to streetscapes or public spaces, you are likely to also need permission from your local council's highways team and/or Transport for London (TfL). Ask for advice at an early stage.

Building Regulations

Building Regulations cover fire safety, energy efficiency, accessibility for the disabled,

sanitary and drainage provision and many other important checks. You will need Building Regulations approval if you:

- Change the use of a building
- Renovate or alter a building (in most cases)

If you are not sure if you need Building Control approval, contact your local council.

You can either use your local council's Building Control service or a private Approved Inspector. They will tell you what information you need to submit for approval, approve your plans before construction, and visit site to inspect the construction work to make sure it is being done safely.

Construction Design & Management Regulations 2015

Construction can create hazards for those who build, and those who use and maintain buildings. Be aware that if you undertake building work you, as well as your designers and contractor, have responsibilities.

Useful resources

www.designingbuildings.co.uk
www.planningportal.gov.uk

LILAC is a housing co-operative project that started from a group of friends who were interested in setting up a cohousing project and forming an eco-village in Leeds. Since completion in 2013, it has become an inspiration for community-led housing across the country, through being environmentally low-impact, affordable, and community owned and managed.

At the early stages, LILAC won a small grant from a social enterprise charity to set up the society's infrastructure such as website, rules and leaflets. It developed a number of business plans which it used to engage in dialogue with the local authority over three years. The core group put a lot of work into developing project plans and options, and searching for the right site, before recruiting more members to the community and progressing the project. The Society chose a mutual home ownership model and a cohousing approach to enhance deliberative decision making and social interaction amongst its members.

After a long land search Lilac negotiated with Leeds City Council to purchase a 0.7 hectare site from them. The co-housing scheme won planning permission and was built out in 2013, including 20 homes and a communal house with shared facilities.

Lessons to learn:

- Spending time on project planning helps the project run smoothly later down the line.
- Make sure that everyone involved in your project feels included, and that decision-making processes are clear from the outset.



An aerial photograph of a modern residential development. In the foreground, a large wooden deck with a railing is furnished with outdoor seating, including a long table with a white umbrella, a round mosaic table, and several chairs. To the left of the deck is a green pond with reeds. In the background, there are modern houses with solar panels on their roofs, a paved walkway, and a grassy area. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

GETTING INTO DETAIL

WRITING A BUDGET

Draw up a list of everything you need to complete your project, divided into capital and revenue items.

Capital

- Construction materials, labour, tools and safety equipment
- Fees for architects/designers
- Bought equipment such as computers, staging or kitchen equipment
- Furniture
- Utility costs related to building or creating the project
- Licenses related to building the project
- Skip hire and waste removal

Revenue

- Rent and business rates
- Event costs such as hire of stages, sound equipment or entertainment
- Marketing materials such as posters and leaflets
- Website or social media costs
- Staff costs or salaries
- Utilities costs related to running the project
- Consumables for running the project, such as stationery, raw materials for food and drink
- Maintenance costs

Include a contingency budget for unforeseen extras. This should be between 5–10% depending on the project.

Get at least 3 quotes for major items and check the costs for smaller items with reputable suppliers. If you need to estimate costs, talk to people who have run similar projects to make sure that you are in the right ballpark.

You may be able to get some of your cost items donated, or at discounted rates. For example, you could approach suppliers, such as builders merchants, who may offer discounts for community projects.

Have you budgeted for...

- Fees for licences and planning permission
- Skip hire
- Delivery costs for materials
- Security or hoardings
- VAT
- Contingency

Thinking ahead

Make sure you have written a budget for what it will cost to run the space, not just to build it. Think about power and water bills, business rates (can you apply for rate relief?), staffing, and repairs.

Are you expecting to generate income from selling things, hiring space or providing a service? Make sure you have tested that there is enough demand and that you will be charging the right level – not too much but not too little.

VAT

Remember to account for VAT and make sure that all your quotes include VAT unless you buy from non-VAT registered suppliers. If your organisation is registered for VAT, you can claim this back but remember you will still have to pay for VAT on your purchases in the first place. VAT rules can be complicated, check with an accountant or specialist if you are unsure.

Employing people

Remember that employees (though not self-employed people) will need to be paid through PAYE so employer's National Insurance contributions will need to be paid by you. You may also need to consider pension contributions.

Planning your cashflow

You will need to plan a cashflow that shows when in your project you expect to spend your budget. Try to map your costs against milestones – for example, starting your build, completing your build, and opening the project.

Public funding bodies often only pay out your funding after each milestone has been reached, so you will need to have some way of paying the costs up front before you receive your funding. If this is going to be a real problem for your group, talk to your funding contact to find a solution. Do not use personal credit cards to move things forward if you are in difficulties.

TWIST was a dynamic monthly pop-up market which ran in Tulse Hill from September 2015 to May 2016. With a focus on both affordable pitches and products sold, the project supported long-term jobless people to find a way into self-employment as stall traders. This provided a unique chance to test business ideas, whilst being an active part of the local community.

Social enterprise Tree Shepherd, who developed the project, created a clever funding model where people who wanted a pitch in the new market pre-paid for their stalls, as contributions to a crowdfunding campaign. This helped attract £14,000 match funding from City Hall, through showing that there really was demand from locals for a stall in the market.

Lessons to learn:

- Think creatively about what 'match funding' might be.
- Funding attracts funding – if you can demonstrate that you already have some support, however small, it helps to build confidence in larger funders.



FUNDING YOUR PROJECT

There are many different ways that you can fund your project, but in choosing how you want to raise money, it is worth thinking about these questions:

- How complicated is the application process and how long does the funder take to decide?
- How flexible is the funder if your project changes from your original proposal?
- When will you get your money – up front, in stages, or at the end when you have proved that your project has been completed in the way you planned?
- What reporting will you have to do to the funder, to show what you achieved and what impact you had?
- Public money (from local or national government in any form) and any grants from charities, will need you to prove that it will be spent on something that will benefit the whole community – ‘public benefit’.

Useful links

Mycommunity guide:
<https://bit.ly/35UEMNk>

Locality guide:
<http://bit.ly/2p2e8JH>

Forms of funding

- Most local councillors (elected members) have an individual ‘ward budget’ that they can spend on local projects.
- Local councils sometimes have grants available for specific types of project.
- The Mayor of London has many different grant funding programmes.
- Central government has grant funding programmes but they are, usually for large projects.
- Arts Council England
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Big Lottery
- Sport England
- Private trusts and foundations (grant-giving charities).
- Crowdfunding – such as Crowdfund London.
- Individual donations or philanthropy.
- Sponsorship from businesses
- Business grant programmes – some large companies give grants to local community projects.
- In-kind support – donations of materials, skills/labour, free marketing, volunteering. Some large companies have volunteering schemes for their staff to work on community projects.
- Selling products or services – consider how your project will be funded in the long term without relying on grants or donations.

WHAT IF...?

Assessing your risks

Be ambitious, but don't take on more than you can manage. You should make sure that your organisation, team and volunteers aren't financially or personally exposed to unnecessary risks.

Make a list of things that might be a risk to your project. What if...

- You go over budget?
- You can't find enough people to help?
- Things aren't delivered on time?
- Something goes wrong with an event? What could go wrong?
- Someone gets hurt? How might this happen?
- Someone complains about your project?

What are the risks that are 'critical' – that would mean you have to call off the project? How likely are they to happen?

How can you manage your project so that other risks are less likely to happen? Can you allow extra time, put aside some extra budget, get more people involved?

You should be particularly careful about projects which involve:

- Children and young people
- Construction work
- Food and drink

Think about if you need a safety policy or if you need to do extra checks on volunteers (for example a DBS check for people who might work closely with children).

Licenses & Insurances

You may need a license from your local council if you want to:

- Sell food or alcohol
- Put on some kinds of performance, spectator event or dancing
- Undertake street trading
- Carry out other regulated activities – too many to list here!

Consult your council's licensing department if you are at all unsure.

You can apply for a Temporary Event Notice (TEN) for events – see <http://bit.ly/2qpD9mR>

You may need insurances, particularly if you plan to employ anyone, sell anything to the public, or undertake anything that might involve risks to volunteers, the public or anyone else's property.

If you partner with an established organisation, you may be able to be covered under their insurance. Most major insurers offer insurance to community groups, so ask for advice.

Useful links

Health & Safety:

<https://bit.ly/338hD84>

Child safeguarding:

<https://bit.ly/3kWUSKs>

Street parties:

<http://bit.ly/1e6zRbU>

Event organisation:

<https://bit.ly/2UU3yqE>

Food regulations:

<https://bit.ly/35YCxby>

In 2019, a team of local young people designed and built a prominent public space at Flanders Way, Hackney. The project, known as Build Up Hackney, aimed to give young people a genuine say over how their local area is changing.

Located on a formally unloved and litter-covered thoroughfare, Flanders Way was redesigned by 26 young people through a series of workshops involving local designers and architects, which culminated with presentations of their ideas to members of Hackney Council and the local community. The young people then spent two months over summer building the scheme.

Build Up Hackney was run in collaboration with youth organisation Hackney Quest, and two local residents were employed throughout as part of Build Up's paid work placement programme. Over 100 volunteers contributed to the project.

The space is now a well-used community space featuring a circular seating area with integrated swings, new lighting, brightly coloured bins and an exciting playful border with integrated cast iron artwork.

Lessons to learn:

- Practical tasks and participation can help grow confidence and build bridges between those who wouldn't ordinarily mix
- Monitor what you are doing throughout the project so that you are able to demonstrate the value generated



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NEW ROAD
LAYOUT AT
WICK ROAD
TWO-WAY
04 Aug 2

20

HACKNEY

19

UP AND
RUNNING

Incredible Edible Todmorden started in 2007 when a few friends decided to try to grow more local food in their small town, as a way of addressing climate change and resource use. They planted vegetables in their front gardens with a sign: Help Yourself. It got people talking, and when they organised their first public meeting, more than 60 people came.

There are now raised beds at the police station, the old people's home, the schools and the health centre. The local housing association changed their rules to allow tenants to keep chickens as well as giving out free seeds and planters. There has been huge growth in the success of local food businesses and farms. The local council now allow anyone to apply for a licence to plant on council land: the town gets more free veg and the council has less waste ground to care for.

From the start, the trailblazers didn't wait for money or approval from anyone else. They wanted to show that a community working on its own could make huge strides forward in a short time. Their key principles were to let individuals in the community get on with what they wanted to do in their own way, and to make Incredible Edible as inclusive as possible. The project is still entirely volunteer-run.

Lessons to learn:

- Start by just doing things – you don't need to wait for a big project to come together.
- Be inclusive – encourage partners and community members to create their own projects that contribute to the overall aim.



RUNNING YOUR PROJECT

Keeping on track

- Plan for regular project meetings with your team, and keep notes to remind everyone of what they have promised to do.
- Keep referring back to your project aims, your timeline, your budget and your SWOT analysis.
- Has anything changed? Do you need to adjust your plan – for example, to allow more time or money?

Keep communicating

- You need to keep reaching out to your community in the same way as you did during your project development.
- How do people know where your project is and what you offer?
- How do they know if you are open, and when?
- Make sure you have a website and social media that are constantly up to date.

Accounting for your money

- Keep a spreadsheet that tallies what you have actually spent against what you budgeted for that item.
- Keep copy receipts for all your purchases, including VAT details.
- If individuals in your team pay for things on their own accounts, and you reimburse them, make sure this is clearly recorded and you have copies of their receipts.
- You will need to show your funders evidence that you have spent your money correctly, for you to receive your funding.

Monitoring your impact

- Ensure you get feedback from your users, in ways that help you show what difference you are making.
- Think of different ways of getting feedback – for example, counting the number of people you help, online surveys, and paper forms.
- Take good photographs of your project – these will be essential to tell your story to funders.
- Keep in touch with your funders to show them what you are doing.
- Ask for help in monitoring and evaluation if you aren't sure what to do.
- When the time comes to hand over or finish your project, make sure you have completed your evaluation.

AND FINALLY...

Writing down the answers to these questions will help you make sure that you don't lose sight of your core aims and ambitions. These are also the questions that other people – your community, funders or partners – will be asking about your project, so having your answers prepared will really help.

What is the aim of your project?

Why do you want to do this?

What is the challenge you want to take on?

What is the opportunity that you want to make the most of?

Have you looked at different options, so you know this is the right solution?

What have you learnt from how other people have tackled this kind of problem?

What makes your idea specific to your area?

Are your budget and timescale realistic?

Have you got the right people on your team?

What if something doesn't go to plan?

What is the impact that your project may have?

The Community Brain organises unconventional events that bring the people of Surbiton (and beyond) together. From giant games of Mouse Trap and Hungry Hippos to suburban skiing and silent discos... nothing is out of bounds! Behind all the wonderful eccentricity is a community organisation that nurtures skills-based learning and relationship building, but both happen without people really knowing it – because they're too busy having fun.

The Museum of Futures is the Brain's presence on Surbiton's High Street – a disused shop that is a 'safe space' where community centred sharing, growing and learning can happen, including a community kitchen that supports local people to launch new ventures. It has been set up through crowdfunding, including a pledge from the Mayor of London, showing the support the Brain has in the community. The Brain doesn't run every initiative, it gives local people a platform and the encouragement they need to thrive. The group's ongoing success shows how valuable this permissive support is in fostering creativity and risk-taking that can lead to wonderful new projects.

Lessons to learn:

- Fun, unconventional events can be great ways to achieve serious aims.
- Daring to be different makes your organisation unique and attracts support.
- Consider how a space can welcome identity and curation by different groups so that it feels truly owned.





MAKE LONDON