



.....

Community Growing Resource Pack Wales

.....

For community gardens,
city farms and other
community growing spaces



Federation of
City Farms
& Community
Gardens

Ffederasiwn
& Gerddi
Cymunedol



Community Growing Resource Pack

For community gardens, city farms and other community growing spaces

A dozen steps to success...

This pack is a comprehensive introduction to setting up, developing and sustaining a community-managed farm, garden or related community growing space. It provides:

- ▶ Easy to read advice and information on starting and developing your project.
- ▶ Help and guidance on overcoming challenges you might face along the way.
- ▶ Routes to specialist advice and information.

This pack does not provide specific technical or horticultural advice on gardening queries (or animal care). It also cannot provide a blueprint for your project. Each community-led group is unique and will be shaped by the community it is based in.

A series of short films is available to accompany each step. They include stories and top tips from established community gardens, farms and other community growing spaces. These are available to view or download via: www.farmgarden.org.uk/publications

This pack converts to a Community Farm Resource Pack with the addition of the topic sheet 'Keeping animals – what do we need to know?' A number of other additional inserts are also available covering related topics such as setting up community orchards or forming a social enterprise.

If you wish to distribute or publish elements of the pack, then please let us know and remember to credit FCFCG as appropriate.

Please note: The generic phrase 'community growing space' will be used throughout this document as a shorthand to encompass a broad range of community gardens and growing projects.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

Contents

Introduction

- Different models of community growing
- The community farming and gardening movement
- The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG)

Step 1 **Beginnings - Starting your group**

Covers bringing people together and getting the word out about your ideas.

Step 2 **Finding & securing your site**

Advice on where and how to find the right site. Also covers what on-site checks you need to make to ensure your potential site is suitable for community growing.

Step 3 **Involving the community & profile raising**

Sharing and refining your vision by getting the local community involved in shaping your project.

Step 4 **Organising your group**

Once the ball is rolling it's a good idea to get properly organised. This step covers action and business planning as well as formalising your group by creating a management committee.

Step 5 **Planning & designing your site**

Site analysis and design allows forward planning and enhances ownership and involvement by the group itself.

Step 6 **Money & budgets**

Getting your finances in shape, understanding financial processes and working up accurate budgets are all essential elements for your developing growing group.

Step 7 **Raising funds & generating income**

Getting income into your group doesn't just mean fundraising. There are other ways to generate income – and save expenditure.

Step 8 **Safety first: Looking after volunteers, workers & visitors**

Insurance, risk assessment and Health & Safety.

Step 9 **Recruitment & training**

Taking on staff and volunteers and understanding what's involved in this process is an important step in a group's development.

Step 10 **Governance & paperwork**

If your group is well organised and follows good practice it is more likely to function better, deal with administration quicker and be more robust for the future.

Step 11 **Becoming a membership organisation**

Covers the basics of becoming a membership organisation, including membership fees, renewals and keeping records.

Step 12 **Maintaining and developing your project**

After the initial stages of setting up your group comes the task of making it thrive. This final step explores retaining volunteers and community interest, working with advisors, carrying out an organisational health check and sustaining momentum.



Introduction

In recent years Wales has seen an explosion of interest in community growing which has produced a wide diversity of community growing initiatives.

From community orchards to street planting schemes, from guerrilla gardening to forest gardens, the choice for what type of project to set up is broad and very much depends on the needs of the local community, the resources available and the type of land you plan to work on.

Different models for community growing

Community farms

Can involve both growing plants and keeping animals. Often larger and more extensive than community gardens or other community growing spaces.

Community gardens

Could be used for a number of purposes, though food growing is often a feature.

Allotments

Plots rented by an individual for growing food. Traditionally owned by the local authority, new allotment sites are

increasingly being set up by other landowners, e.g. private individuals, businesses, charitable trusts and farmers or religious bodies.

Community orchards

As well as providing fruit and a green haven for the local community, many community orchards are excellent wildlife habitats and carbon sinks.

Abundance/fruit harvesting schemes

A growing movement that aims to make better use of neglected local fruit and nut trees by organising volunteers to harvest the fruit.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

A social enterprise idea, based on a direct, active partnership between farmers (or a growing project) and the local community.

Forest gardening

A low-maintenance sustainable plant-based food production and agroforestry system based on woodland ecosystems, incorporating fruit and nut trees, shrubs, herbs, vines and perennial vegetables which have yields directly useful to humans. Making use of companion planting, these can be intermixed to grow in a succession of layers, to build a woodland habitat. Woodland itself can also



Fairwater Community Garden, Cardiff

The community farming and gardening movement

By starting a community garden or farm, you will become part of a growing movement across the UK.

Collectively this movement:

- ▶ Employs around 1,500 staff on more than 2,500 sites across the UK
- ▶ Actively supports and empowers thousands of volunteers
- ▶ Attracts an estimated three million visitors a year
- ▶ Has a turnover of around £40 million a year.

be managed to grow food plants within it for low maintenance, sustainable food production.

Garden-share schemes

These schemes match and introduce committed, enthusiastic growers with local garden owners who want to see their gardens being used more productively.

Public plantings in streets and communal areas

Traditionally flowers and shrubs have been used, but a growing number of schemes are turning to vegetable and fruit growing.

Guerrilla gardening

A type of direct action where gardeners identify a disused, neglected or abandoned piece of land - which they do not own - and use it to grow either crops, flowering plants or to create wildlife areas.

Meanwhile gardening

Roughly defined as the temporary use of land for gardening and food growing.

You can find out more about different models for community growing groups by visiting the Growing Trends pages of the FCFCG website at:

www.farmgarden.org.uk/farms-gardens/trends-in-community-growing

The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG)

A membership organisation for community-managed gardens and farms and other growing spaces, providing support, advice, guidance and information - such as this pack. FCFCG also advocates on behalf of its members to funders and policy-makers.

FCFCG strives to improve the quality of community farming and gardening by promoting good practice. FCFCG supports local groups to find solutions to problems they encounter, by providing information, training and networking opportunities.

We would recommend that any community-managed growing space becomes a member of FCFCG. You can find out more about FCFCG, its work and how it helps and supports its members by visiting the FCFCG website at: www.farmgarden.org.uk



www.farmgarden.co.uk

step

1

Beginnings - Starting your group

If you haven't done so already, you need to find a group of like-minded people willing and able to take forward the initial idea to create a community growing space and make it happen.

Getting people together

Most groups start with a small number of people who become a kind of initial steering group and take on the responsibility for generating interest, exchanging ideas and drumming up support within the community for starting the project.

In order to form this 'steering group', you need to have a broad idea of what you want to do, what the need is and ensure someone else isn't planning to do the same thing. Having some key ideas that you can use to inspire and enthuse others, will make this initial stage easier and avoid wasted time further down the line.

Don't forget that there will already be established groups based in your

community, composed of people who may be willing to become part of your group, or perhaps give advice and put you in touch with others who may be interested in joining you.

You might also want to consider the following:

- ▶ What are the aims of your group and what do you want to achieve?
- ▶ What benefits to the community will there be?
- ▶ Where will the group operate and what is its geographical area?

Reaching out to the community

So, you have an idea of what you want to do and what kind of organisation you want to be. Now you need to reach out and find others to join in to help set up the group. Once this is in place you can then begin the process of community consultation, to attract more volunteers and develop your ideas further. You can reach out in several ways:

- ▶ Advertising locally - libraries, village/town halls, community centres, post offices etc



Healthy Roots, Aberdeen

- ▶ Setting up an online presence, such as a Facebook page (if you are happy using social media)
- ▶ Distributing leaflets in the community
- ▶ Contacting your local newspaper to write a story about your plans
- ▶ Door to door enquiries
- ▶ Speaking with local councillors and other community leaders
- ▶ Giving talks about your proposal to local groups in your community.

There is no set timescale for bringing a group together. You may find people easily or it might take longer. However, once there is a group keen to give time and energy to the project, you can start to take the process further. At this stage, consider arranging a visit to another community garden and ask for help and advice. You can also talk to FCFCG development staff in your area. For contact details go to: www.farmgarden.org.uk/wales

Later on you may need to establish a more formal management committee. This is covered in **Step 4 - Organising Your Group**.

Further information

Wales Council for Voluntary Action

Information on volunteering and social action in Wales.

www.wcva.org.uk

Community Matters

Useful information on community organisations and setting up.

www.communitymatters.org.uk/content/463/Setting-up

Resource Centre

www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information-category/starting-a-group



www.farmgarden.co.uk

Finding & securing your site

.....

Many community growing spaces are created because there is an area of land locally that is derelict or underused and people want to improve it.

Others begin with a group of people who share an interest in creating something, e.g. a wildlife garden or food growing group, and need to find a site suitable for their project.

Existing community growing spaces vary greatly in size from a few square metres to a park-sized area of several hectares, so many areas of land could be considered.

.....

The use of land for gardening or growing food can enrich the environment and provide a home or visiting spot for a wide

variety of wildlife. But upheavals can also displace other creatures from living there or using it as a local food source, maybe including endangered species, so it is important to bear this in mind when considering a site. Some sites may also have a wildlife or heritage value and/or designation, so you should talk to your local authority before setting your heart on seeking its re-use.

Looking for a site

Walk around your community to find potential sites, then identify who owns that site and contact them directly. Often you can find out who owns a piece of land by asking around, speaking to your local authority or by doing a search in the property ownership records held on the Land Registry website.

Local authorities

Contact your local council for details of land holdings they may have available, or to discuss whether you can use part of an existing public space, such as the corner of a park. All councils have a Local Development Plan which you can find online and in libraries and council offices.

The Local Development Plan may also tell you if your local authority has policies in place for the use of derelict space. You could also approach the planning officer responsible for your area, who may be able to provide additional information.

Town or community councils

Town or community councils often have land in their ownership and can be easier to approach as local councillors will often live in your community. They also have certain powers, which enable them to acquire land for community benefit. A useful add-in topic sheet is available from FCFCG: 'Engaging your community council'.

Private landowners

There may be some brownfield, underused, waste ground or derelict sites available in urban areas. These landowners may welcome an income and participation on their land by the community if they do not have any immediate plans for the site or while the site is awaiting redevelopment (see *Development Land* below). However, bear in mind that derelict land - especially brownfield sites - could be contaminated and therefore the land may not be appropriate for food growing or it may cost a considerable amount to clear the contaminants.



Caerhys Organic Community Agriculture, St Davids

Farmers

In rural areas, there may be farmers who have land available for community use, especially if they can generate an income from renting the land to a group. They may also be willing to discuss a Community Supported Agriculture scheme (see Options for finding land below). Agricultural land

usually needs no planning permission for change of use when it continues to be used for growing plants, but if you are looking to include any buildings, check with your local planning authority.

Large organisations

These include corporations (e.g. Network Rail), large local businesses or Institutions (NHS, MoD, Universities). If you see neglected or derelict land belonging to a large organisation, contact them directly. They may be willing to allow community access as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility policy.

Common land on a housing estate

See: *Social housing* below.

Disused allotment plots

In most cases these will belong to the local council, who may have an allotments officer responsible for the land. A useful add-in topic sheet is available from FCFCG: 'Project allotment: a guide to growing together on allotments'.

Land owned by a charity for public benefit

Sometimes landowners donate an area of land to a local charity or a charity may be specifically set up to manage land left for public benefit.

Old churchyards and cemeteries

There are obviously challenges and issues involved with this type of land but using the site for grazing could be an option. Churchyards are usually owned by the relevant denomination of the church, while cemeteries are often owned by the local authority.

School grounds

An increasing number of schools and colleges are turning over part of their grounds for farming or growing and often this is done successfully in partnership with community organisations.

Urban fringe agricultural land

A Making Local Food Work report which has useful information about this option is available to download at: www.localfood.org.uk/Food-from-the-Urban-Fringe.pdf

Options for finding land

Development land

Areas of land awaiting development are especially apt for meanwhile use - the temporary letting of vacant buildings or land for a socially beneficial purpose until such a time that they can be brought back into commercial use again. This makes practical use of the 'pauses' in property processes, giving the space over to uses that can contribute to quality of life and better places whilst the search for a commercial use is ongoing. Find out more about meanwhile leases via:

<http://en.communitylandadvice.org.uk/en/resource/leases-meanwhile-leases>

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

This is a slightly different way for a community to find land for growing and may be particularly relevant for rural communities. CSA is a social enterprise idea, based on a direct, active partnership between farmers/growers (or a growing project) and the local community. This partnership creates benefits for both, as well as helping reconnect people with the land where their food is grown. One option, for example, would be renting a field from a farmer for community growing activities.

Community Asset Transfer: Taking over local authority land

A number of local authorities in Wales have adopted Community Asset Transfer (CAT) strategies. These are intended to allow communities more control over managing public land (or buildings) in their neighbourhood. These strategies allow local authorities to lease or even sell some land and buildings to community and voluntary groups, often at an affordable rent or asking price. An example is Cardiff City Council which welcomes CAT applications from groups that:

- ✓ Allow decisions to be made by local people so that they are led by the community, with strong links to the community
- ✓ Are non-profit making and are clear about how they want to use the land or building, with a strong business plan that shows they will be able to manage it in the long-term

- ✓ Are prepared to run the land or building in a way that benefits the community
- ✓ Can demonstrate good governance and have a legal structure that is incorporated and constituted for social benefit
- ✓ Have an inclusive approach to members of the community and are willing to operate an 'equality of access' policy.

Groups that apply should also have the skills needed to fully deliver their planned services and manage the land or building once it has been transferred. If not, the group must be able to demonstrate how they intend to develop the skills needed - perhaps by working with the council or other partners.

To find out more about Community Asset Transfer, contact your own local authority to see if they have a strategy in place and visit the links in [Further information](#) below.

Buying land

In some cases groups may consider buying land to develop as a community growing space. A community group that owns land is not restricted by a lease and can protect the land for community benefit forever. However, this is a move to consider carefully as it creates a new series of challenges to consider including:

- ✓ Is the current landowner willing to sell the land?
- ✓ Does your organisation have the necessary power to buy land?
- ✓ How much is a fair price for the site?
- ✓ Can you raise the funds quickly enough?
- ✓ Are you prepared to buy the land before establishing planning permission?
- ✓ Do you have enough money to cover additional costs such as conveyancing fees, land registration charges, searches, insurance, fencing, surveys etc?

To consider this issue in more detail, visit the Community Land Advisory Service website which has useful information on buying land.

www.communitylandadvice.org.uk

Social housing

You may want to cultivate a piece of land on a social housing estate where members of



The Edible Bus Stop, London

your group live. Neighbourhoods Green has toolkits available to help get a project off the ground in these circumstances:
www.neighbourhoodsgreen.org.uk

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) also has useful information at:
www.rhs.org.uk/communities/campaigns/its-your-neighbourhood

Making sure your potential site is suitable

If possible, gather a team of 3-5 people to visit your site(s) and then report back to the steering group. Avoid trespassing and get the owner's permission if necessary for a site visit.

There is a fully comprehensive site checklist available to download free from the Community Land Advisory Service website at:
www.communitylandadvice.org.uk/en/resource/finding-land-site-features-checklist

It will be useful to print this checklist out to fill in while you are visiting your proposed site. You should also consider the following questions as priorities:

- ✔ Is it a suitable size for the activities you are planning?
- ✔ Is it - or could it be made - accessible to everyone from your community?

- ✔ Is it - or could it be made - safe?
- ✔ Are there others interested in the site (e.g. other community groups, businesses)?
- ✔ Are there planning restrictions in place (e.g. listed buildings, road access, parking requirements etc)?
- ✔ Are there rights of way or servitudes across the property?
- ✔ Are there services on the site or nearby which are easy to access (e.g. water, power, sewers, drains, telephone/cable)?
- ✔ What was the site previously used for?
- ✔ Is the land contaminated by a previous use?
- ✔ Are there plants or habitats that need conserving?
- ✔ Who are the neighbours and are they likely to be supportive of your group?

You will probably need help with checking some of these issues. For example, a local wildlife trust may undertake a habitat survey, or a nearby university or college may be willing to provide students to undertake soil contamination tests. A biodiversity survey is also important to consider. For further information, advice or assistance with carrying out a biodiversity survey, contact your Local Authority Biodiversity

Officer or your local biodiversity recording and monitoring centre.

If the site proves suitable as a result of these considerations, you should invest time in more detailed checks.

Planning issues

Planning varies between the different countries of the UK, including Wales, so the first rule of thumb is always to seek advice and information either from your local planning authority, the Community Land Advisory Service or Planning Aid Wales. See **Further information** below.

Permitted development rights

Some minor works avoid the need to make a formal planning application. These rights are termed 'permitted development' rights.

Permitted development rights no longer apply uniformly across the UK. These rights are also restricted, for example, in Conservation Areas, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks.

Permitted development rights may be restricted, removed or widened by the local planning authority. Your local planning authority can advise you further.

The most common issue for community growers is whether you can build small structures without planning permission. Community growers do not have permitted development rights (ability to build certain things on their site without planning permission) like house owners, farmers or local authorities do. Speak to your local authority before you build anything and speak to the Community Land Advisory Service before choosing your site.

Planning Permission

If permitted development rights do not apply, it is likely you will need to apply for planning permission. In an urban area this is relatively straightforward. If your project is in the countryside, however, it can be very difficult to get planning permission for any structure unless your project is attached to a farm or a business that already has planning permission – something to bear in mind when assessing the suitability of a potential site.

Most often planning permission for the change of use to a community growing site is not required. For example, using land to

simply grow food is not development. Therefore planning permission is not needed. However, some local authorities may view some groups' work as recreational or leisure uses of land, in which case they may decide that planning permission for a change of land use will be required. Local authorities are more likely to reach this view if the project includes e.g. ponds and wildlife areas, garden ornaments or structures, play equipment etc. On the other hand, if the project simply relates to the growing of fruit and vegetables, the local authority is unlikely to ask for a planning application to be submitted for change of use of the land.

Buildings

In most cases major structures, e.g. meeting room, classrooms, café, shops etc, will require full planning permission. It is also important to check with your local planning authority about planning permission status for other buildings such as toilets, sheds, greenhouses and semi-permanent constructions like polytunnels.

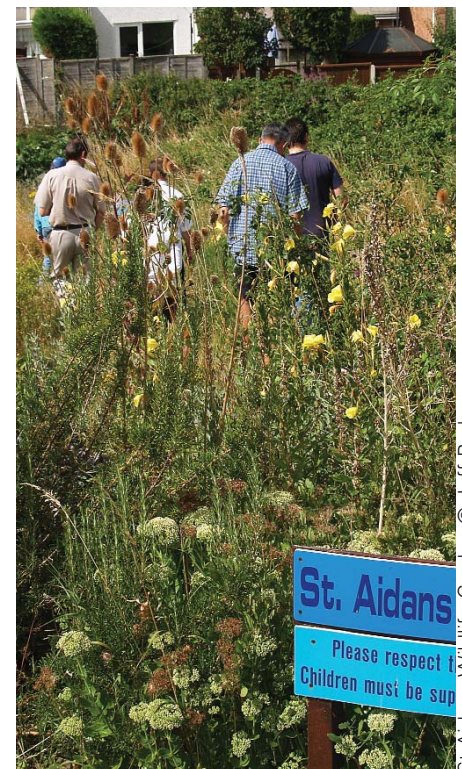
Other planning Issues

In addition to the checks above, it is worth investigating whether there are any other planning issues that might arise with the site. For example, are there planning restrictions in place, e.g. listed buildings, road access, parking requirements, tree preservation orders etc.?

Getting a lease

The information below is a summary to introduce the subject of leases and negotiating a satisfactory contract. There is much more comprehensive information and free hands-on advice from expert advisors available from the Community Land Advisory Service. Visit the website for contact details.

www.communitylandadvice.org.uk



St Aidans Wildlife Garden © Jeff Barber

Lease requirements (Heads of Terms)

Once a site has been identified, an initial meeting held on site with both parties (landlord and community group) and all are keen for the project to go ahead, you can start to create your lease requirements/Heads of Terms. This document is a record of decisions that have been agreed between the parties and can be used to draw up a lease or other such document that reflects the decisions made. It is also a useful tool to focus your ideas on how the project will function.

Basic information/non-contentious issues should be completed first, such as location and description of site (it is useful to include a plan), names and any other points you have already agreed. After this, crucial points to discuss and agree include:

- ▶ **Term:** How long will the lease run for? Will there be any options for the tenant to end the lease early, or to renew the lease for an additional term?
- ▶ **Rent:** How much is payable and at what frequency (e.g. monthly or quarterly)? Is the rent to be reviewable at any point during the term of the lease? If the landlord is VAT registered, will VAT be payable on the rent?
- ▶ **Use:** What are the agreed permitted uses of the land?

- ▶ **Tenant's obligations:** Apart from paying the rent, will the tenant have other obligations, e.g. to insure, to maintain boundary features or to meet the landlord's legal costs?

Lease requirements/Heads of Terms should have 'Negotiation document - not intended to be contractual' written on them. This is because the document could otherwise be viewed as a legally-binding tenancy, even though there might be something that is unacceptable to you which you would not want to include in the final lease.

In the process of negotiating the final terms of your agreement you might want to change some of the terms, e.g. if the landlord pays the water bill then a higher rent is paid.

Negotiating

This is potentially one of the most time-consuming and difficult parts of the process. Planning and preparation are essential before entering into any negotiations. Do your homework before any formal meetings with the owner or the owner's representatives.

The steering group should be clear about what it wants and what it can offer before you arrange to meet any outside person or organisation. At the meetings avoid confrontation and conflict. Make a considered presentation of your ideas for the community garden.



Alice Park Community Garden, Bath

Decide clearly what you want from the negotiations. This may be:

- ▶ A licence to allow short term (up to a year) improvements on the site which will inspire the community; licences can be renewed.
- ▶ A long term agreement giving the group security of tenure.
- ▶ A lease with a low rent.
- ▶ As few restrictions as possible.

Most existing community growing spaces do not own the land they use; some are on licence but most are leased. The majority pay a peppercorn rent, i.e. a nominal sum.



Knucklas Castle Community Land Project

What are you offering?

By putting the land back into use for community benefit, the owner will receive favourable publicity. For some owners, such as the local council, you can demonstrate that you will be helping them meet their service targets, e.g. education, facilities for children's play, leisure and recreation, composting, environmental improvements.

If the owner is the local council, it is important that your group understands how the council works, what its priorities are and what help it has provided to other community and voluntary organisations. This may give you an idea of what you could reasonably expect or request. You are likely to want the council, not only to release the land to you under a lease agreement, but to give planning permission (if needed) for a community garden, provide advice, help and support and, hopefully, some funding.

To gather this information there are two important groups with whom you need to develop a friendly working relationship.

The elected councillors: All councillors will be interested in their areas and will be able

to see the benefit of community growing spaces. The councillors most important to you are the ones who represent the area in which the proposed garden will be and those who serve on the committees relevant to your garden, e.g. 'parks and open spaces', 'leisure services' or 'community development' (check your council's website to find out which committees are responsible for what in your area).

The council officers: The council's paid staff. They advise elected councillors and carry out council decisions. Find out from them where power and influence lies and how decisions are made.

The ground rules of negotiations

- ▶ Remember that whatever happens during negotiation, both parties hope to reach a mutually acceptable agreement.
- ▶ Each side is expected to be willing to move from its original position and find acceptable compromises.
- ▶ Negotiation is likely to include a series of offers that give something of value to both sides.
- ▶ Firm offers must be distinguished from provisional offers. Firm offers, unlike provisional offers, must not be withdrawn once they have been made.
- ▶ A third party should only be brought into the discussion by mutual agreement.
- ▶ The terms of the final agreement should be clearly understood by both parties and put in writing.



Cwm Harry Food Company

Finding Land

Community Land Advisory Service in Wales (CLAS Cymru)

Provides a wide range of publications and other resources on issues such as finding land, planning, leases and negotiating, as well as free hands-on advice from expert advisers.

www.communitylandadvice.org.uk

Growing Trends

An online resource created by FCFCG which gives information on a variety of innovative ways people are finding and utilising land for community growing.

www.farmgarden.org.uk/farms-gardens/trends-in-community-growing

Meanwhile Use

www.meanwhitespace.com

Land Registry

Check out who owns property of land and to find out about boundaries and fences.

www.landregistry.gov.uk

Community Supported Agriculture

www.soilassociation.org/csa.aspx

Making Local Food Work

www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk/practical_guides_toolkits.cfm

Land sharing

Landshare is an online resource matching people with land with those who want to use it.

www.landshare.net

Asset transfer & finding local authorities

DirectGov

www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/YourlocalcouncilandCouncilTax/YourCommunity/DG_4001648

Welsh Local Government Association

www.wlga.gov.uk

One Voice Wales

www.onevoicewales.org.uk

FCFCG

Has information sheets available on Town and Community Councils, includes tips for engaging with your Town and Community Councils and guidance notes.

Topic sheets available include 'Engaging your community council' and 'Project allotment: a guide to growing together on allotments'.

Asset Transfer Unit

Expert advice, guidance and support on taking ownership and/or management of under-used land and buildings.

<http://locality.org.uk/our-work/assets/asset-transfer-unit>

Development Trusts Association Wales

Tel: 029 2019 0260

www.dtawales.org.uk/asset-development-news

Recording and monitoring biodiversity

Wales Biodiversity Partnership

www.biodiversitywales.org.uk

Local Biodiversity Record Centres

Information on whether planning or change of use is required for your site and what developments are permitted.

www.lrcwales.org.uk

Other

Planning Aid Wales

Tel: 029 2062 5000

www.planningaidwales.org.uk



Involving the Community & profile raising

One of the most important elements of setting up a community group is to create a shared vision for what the project should be by consulting with - and involving - the local community.

You need to establish what groups there are within that community (e.g. hard-to-reach minority ethnic groups) and what kind of need there is (priority needs could be healthy eating, regeneration, education or work training).

It is important to remember that local communities are made up of lots of different groups with different opinions and needs - being flexible about your ideas, responsive to different needs and ensuring that the engagement process is always given plenty of thought and priority are all key points.

Developing and sustaining a positive relationship with the local community is an ongoing process. It requires time, energy and patience. But it is worthwhile, particularly when setting up, as consulting will help to:

- ▶ Recruit other interested individuals - volunteers and members
- ▶ Raise awareness of what your group is aiming to achieve
- ▶ Encourage people from all sections of your local community to get involved
- ▶ Attract support from a wider range of individuals and organisations
- ▶ Attract funding and other forms of help.

Community consultation

Why consult?

It is essential that you carry out some form of community consultation because you want to create something that has the support of the community, which they can feel ownership of and which inspires them to take part.

You should also do it for a more pragmatic reason - funding bodies such as The Big Lottery Fund will always look for community support before they will consider taking the application further.

Community consultation is key to the long term future of a project. It gives you a mandate for your ideas. However, it is not about your group unveiling a well-developed plan and expecting the community to give it the thumbs up. Genuine consultation means giving community members a chance to voice opinions, to suggest alternatives and to help shape the plans. Simply giving people an option of accepting or rejecting a plan is not consultation. This simplistic approach can create conflict, with people instantly falling into opposing camps of 'for' and 'against'.

As a steering group, you must be flexible enough to change your plans and ideas as a result of community consultation and not stick to your original intentions in the face of

considerable opposition - you could be missing the opportunity to develop a more appropriate project.

There are many different methods of consultation or engagement ranging from basic information sharing and consultation to deciding and acting together. In 2005, The Scottish Government produced The National Standards for Community Engagement which is a practical tool to help improve the experience of all participants involved in community engagement to achieve the highest quality of process and results. The principles of the standards can be applied anywhere.

Holding a public meeting

One of the simplest and most common ways to get community involvement and feedback is to hold a public meeting (see *Profile Raising* below for tips on publicising meetings and your group in general).

Points to remember when planning your public meeting

Offer an incentive

It takes time and effort for people to attend a meeting and many may be reluctant or simply disinterested. You need to pick a convenient and accessible venue (with wheelchair access), provide free refreshments (if possible) and ensure people know where to go once they arrive by providing clear signage (this particularly applies if the meeting is being held within a large or complex building).

Draw up a simple agenda

Typically this might include:

- ▶ Welcome and introductions
- ▶ Broad outline of vision for the site
- ▶ What's been done so far
- ▶ What you are looking for from the community
- ▶ Open floor discussion
- ▶ Summary
- ▶ Thank you and encourage people to leave contact details

Involve everyone in the discussion

It is important to strike a balance between being

organised and letting people know that their thoughts and opinions are necessary. Having someone with experience of chairing meetings is useful to make sure you keep things ticking over but ensure that you don't close off discussion too quickly. This may be an opportunity for a group activity using flipchart paper, post-its and coloured pens to encourage people to creatively discuss what they want to see in a community garden and what they would like it to do.

Assign someone to take notes and gather contact details

The notes of your meeting should include a clear idea of what has been said and, in particular, what actions have been agreed and who has agreed to carry them out. You should also ensure you take contact details from everyone who wants to be kept in touch with the group - prepare a sheet in advance which you can pass round the meeting or have on a table at the door.

Remember

The people who have come along to the meeting are the future members of the group, and you need to make sure the atmosphere of this meeting is as welcoming and open as possible. At the same time, be prepared for opposing views or different ideas to be put forward.



Fishponds Community Orchard, Bristol

The public meeting can be used in conjunction with the other consultation methods outlined below. Make sure representatives from local stakeholder groups and local councillors are all invited. This meeting could then be followed up by subsequent meetings as your group comes together or if there are important issues to discuss.

A topic sheet on holding a public meeting is available from FCFCG.

Other ways of consulting the community

- ▶ Letterboxing: Posting a simple fill-in and return form, asking for views on your ideas, through letter boxes in your neighbourhood.
- ▶ Piggybacking on an existing event: You could set up a stand to distribute flyers for your public meeting or get people to fill in a form with views on your ideas.
- ▶ Carrying out a survey: This is a little more involved than other forms of consultation, as you need to ensure the people who respond to the survey represent a cross-section of the community rather than just one group, e.g. retired people in an area with a large number of young families. The results of the survey then need to be evaluated.

Profile raising

Having established your group it is time to consider how you can promote what you plan to achieve to a wider audience, e.g. local residents, schools, libraries, community centres, shops, other local organisations, businesses, local authority officers, councillors and other local politicians.

Appoint someone from your group to take responsibility for publicity - to build contacts with the media, in particular local newspapers, local broadcasters (radio and TV), local magazines and community



Swansea Community Farm

Some ways you can promote your group

- ▶ A simple event such as a family picnic which is open to the wider community (this could be in a local park if you have not yet secured your site)
- ▶ Regular press releases for local newspapers
- ▶ An information leaflet with a tear-off slip with contact details for your group so that people can request further information or offer support
- ▶ Posters
- ▶ Articles in community and voluntary sector publications
- ▶ A website which is regularly updated
- ▶ A simple newsletter
- ▶ Having a stall at local events
- ▶ Presentations to local organisations
- ▶ Public meetings and other forms of local consultation.

newsletters, and online blogs. Good media coverage will raise your profile with the local community, council and potential funders.

Remember that the best way to increase your chances of getting publicity is to contact people, not just organisations. In other words make direct contact with your local reporter, rather than simply sending in a press release to the local newspaper office. Try to think like a reader, listener or viewer when deciding what information you might be interested in hearing about.

Social media is also a good way of raising profiles. You can create a Facebook page for your group for free and use it to advertise events and post images of your site (remember to get permissions first).

Ask yourself the following questions:

- ✔ What publications – printed or online – exist locally?
- ✔ What notice boards are there in your area? This could include outdoor boards, boards in shops and post offices, boards in libraries and other community buildings.

- ✔ Where do existing groups and organisations get together?
- ✔ What schools are in the area?
- ✔ Which local groups and organisations regularly get positive coverage in local newspapers and magazines, or on local/regional radio/TV, plus local BBC internet channels? Then ask why they get this coverage.
- ✔ Does anyone in your group or anyone else you know have contacts with any of the above? Is there anyone who would be willing to create and run a website or manage a Facebook page?
- ✔ Is there an organisation in your area, e.g. a Third Sector Interface that can help you with training and/or support in promotion and publicity?

If you have previously carried out this research, check that your information is up to date.

Make sure that press releases are checked with the group and that all members agree their content. Alternatively, agree within your group that you are happy to trust one person, or a sub-group, to be responsible for press and publicity and to act without checking each time.

If you already have access to the garden site, or temporary facilities, review your publicity and promotional materials. Look at all your signs, notices, notice boards, leaflets and publications:

- ✔ Are they easy to read and simple to understand?



Greenbank Lane Allotments, Liverpool ©Romnie Hughes

- ✔ Do they explain how your garden is managed, how people can enjoy it or become involved, and, if appropriate, become members?
- ✔ Do notices give positive or negative messages?
- ✔ Can your notices and signs be understood? Where possible use illustrations in addition to text.
- ✔ Is information available in languages other than English to suit your local community?

Further information

Wales Council for Voluntary Action

Information on volunteering and social action in Wales.

www.wcva.org.uk

Halton Partnership

Engagement toolkit

www.haltonpartnership.com/index.php/community-engagement/community-engagement-toolkit

The Directory of Social Change

A number of useful publications available including the Complete Charity Media Skills Training and DIY guides to publicity and public relations.

www.dsc.org.uk/Publications

Friends of the Earth

Factsheets including 'How to use the media', with advice on writing a press

release and being interviewed and 'How to design effectively'.

www.foe.co.uk/get_involved/community

The Media Trust

Works in partnership with the media industry to support the voluntary sector's communication needs. Have a programme of workshops and seminars.

www.mediatrust.org

Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG)

Topic sheet 'Promote your project' detailing promotional ideas for community growing groups. Useful information about signs and notices can be found in the Clean Hands Zone toolkit. 'Holding a public meeting' topic sheet also available.



www.farmgarden.co.uk

Organising your group

.....

Around this time in your development - when you have secured a site and are looking at important issues such as community engagement, site design, working on the site and fundraising - you will need to create more formal roles within your group.

.....

When a group decides to lease or own land, raise funds or involve volunteers (or even paid staff) it takes on legal and management responsibilities. It is therefore important to adopt a set of rules that say who is responsible for carrying out these duties and how you will manage your activities. The most important rules governing the structure and organisation of your group should be set out in a constitution.

There are generally two stages to organising your group.

Setting up: When you are first starting your group, wanting to get organised and

more efficient. This stage includes creating a business/action plan.

Formalising your group: Once the group has been established, then you should formalise procedures and think about what status your group is likely to have e.g. charitable.

Setting up

Find out what skills members of the group have. Everyone will have something to offer and the most well organised groups ensure that everyone has a role to play and utilises all the skills in the organisation. In order to get things moving, elect a chairperson, secretary and treasurer and delegate responsibilities and tasks to these roles.

Training and advice

Make sure you have the necessary organisational skills to operate - if needed seek out training. You can find out about courses from your local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS). There may also be other organisations in your area offering community sector training.

Structuring your business plan

Every organisation's business plan is highly individual but using the headings below will ensure that you cover the most important points.

Summary: A summary of the plan itself (sometimes called an executive summary), which is usually easier to write once the details of the plan have been agreed.

Background information: A summary of your organisation including name, legal status, details about your site and its amenities, plus a potted history of the group.

Aims and objectives: This is one of the most important sections and requires careful consideration. Show why your group has been set up, what you want to do, who your users are and any evidence of the need for your group (e.g. statistical evidence, anecdotal, surveys etc). You could include a mission statement and vision for your organisation, followed by more detailed information about what you want to achieve (your aims/outcomes). If you plan to expand, have you got evidence that there are future users and, if so, is the service you plan to offer what future users want? Again, evidence would be useful. Try to ensure that no other organisation is offering, or planning to offer, this service.

Work plan: Make a plan that shows what you want to do and how long it will take you. Include specific, achievable, timed targets and ensure that they can be easily measured. Cover details of who will carry out specific tasks.

Budgets and finances: This covers your current financial position and what you will need to carry out your objectives in the future. There is more information on budgets and finance in *Step 6 – Money & budgets*.

Profile-raising: It is extremely useful to plan out how you will raise the profile of your group to local people, the media and specific audiences such as funders. See *Step 3* for further information on profile-raising.

Management: Once your group is more formalised (see below), it may be useful to include a diagram of your staffing structure and information on roles and responsibilities in the business plan. Remember to outline the skills and experience of your management committee/trustees (potential funders need to be sure there are the skills and experience to manage both the funds and the organisation).

Monitoring and evaluation: You will need to include some details of how you will measure the success of the organisation (e.g. numbers of school groups visiting, workshops run etc) and how you will ensure you meet the targets you have set for the group. Include details of how you will monitor your progress and what information you will need to collect.

Conclusion: You can use this section to include information on how often you will monitor and review your plan and who is responsible for it. Remember, the best business plans are a collaboration involving staff, volunteers, management and other interested parties!

You should also draw up a list of useful advisors, particularly for skills the group may not have or where professional help may be required, e.g. solicitor, accountant, architect, horticulturalist.

Business (Action) planning

Business or action planning is necessary to find out where you are going and how much it will cost. Drawing up a plan should help you to focus your ideas and decide what

steps you need to take to achieve your goals. It can also help to:

- ▶ Clarify your aims and objectives and communicate them to users, staff/volunteers and funders
- ▶ Address upcoming problems before they threaten the group
- ▶ Set realistic targets and objectives and enable you to monitor your performance.



Reeth Community Orchard, Yorkshire

Your plan should include a statement about where you are now and where you aim to be in two or three years' time. The plan should be clear, concise, honest and accurate (e.g. ensure all your figures tally up across the document – if they don't it will lose credibility). Remember, the plan should be a working document that you can use on a regular basis, not something you put together then file away.

Further analysis tools for business planning

When you are more established as a group and looking to develop further there are several tools available to help with your business and action planning. Some examples are given below.

SWOT analysis: This method is used to evaluate the strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T) involved in a group's work or a project it wants to develop. It involves specifying the objective of the business venture or project and identifying the internal and external factors that are favourable and unfavourable to achieving that objective.

PESTLE analysis: Also known as PEST analysis, this tool looks at Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental influences on an organisation's activities. It gives a bird's eye view of the whole environment from many different angles, enabling much better planning and assessment to take place.

Risk analysis: It is important to find out early in your development what the risks are in taking the group forward. Maintaining an up to date risk analysis will be an ongoing task to update as your circumstances change. Before you can do anything about the risks that face your organisation - and you should now have a long list of them - they must be analysed to determine their potential to cause harm. This will give a basis for determining which risks are the most serious, which are treatable and which can be accepted. Consider:

- ▶ The nature of the risk including how, when, why and where the risk is likely to occur
- ▶ The source of the risk and what aspects of the source put the elements at risk
- ▶ The elements at risk
- ▶ Who or what is at risk and why they are vulnerable.

You can find out more about risk analysis in FCFCG's social enterprise pack. It talks specifically about risk in terms of setting up a new social enterprise, but the majority of the principles involved are the same. The Health and Safety Executive also produce a useful 'Five Steps to Risk Assessment' available at: www.hse.gov.uk/risk/controlling-risks.htm

Laying out your governing document

There are a number of different legal structures and alternatives to a constitution. However, most governing documents will include the following headings or clauses:

- ▶ Name of group
- ▶ Your aims/objectives (both now and in the future)
- ▶ Powers (deals with the specific functions related to the group such as providing services or activities to further the aims and objectives)
- ▶ Membership (who can join)
- ▶ Management (how it will be run)
- ▶ Finance (for accountability and financial procedures)
- ▶ Meetings (e.g. Annual/Special/Extraordinary General Meetings etc)
- ▶ Rules of procedure at all meetings
- ▶ Alterations to the constitution
- ▶ Dissolution (what would happen if the group disbanded).

Once the risks have been identified, you should decide which will have the greatest impact and what resources are appropriate to commit to treating or controlling the risk.

You may want to include a section on risk in your business or action plan.

Formalising your group

Further down the line in your development, you are likely to consider formalising your group by forming a management committee, creating a constitution and making a decision whether to remain an unincorporated organisation or an incorporated one.

Management committees

Management committee members are responsible for ensuring that the organisation is managed properly and its legal duties are met, and for promoting good practice in all of its activities.

Your group's constitution will set out how the first management committee will be appointed (usually through election at your first AGM), as well as how new members are to be appointed in subsequent years.

The management committee is responsible for and accountable to the members of your group. Management committee members have specific legal duties and responsibilities and it is important that all who put themselves forward for election understand them.

Your constitution

A constitution is a legal document that sets out the aims and objectives of the organisation, the rules for governing that organisation, how the organisation is run and how members will work together. It is necessary for your group to have one for the following reasons:

- ▶ To ensure the community garden's objectives are clear and agreed by its members
- ▶ To establish a management committee and define who can be on it
- ▶ To provide mechanisms for making decisions and resolving disputes
- ▶ To gain credibility with other organisations, potential supporters and funders

- ▶ To clarify liability, lines of responsibility and accountability
- ▶ They are required in order to become a registered charity.

The steering group should decide on a constitution, setting out the aims of your group and the rules for running it. You will appear more credible if you have a proper structure and are clearly representative of local people.

You may wish to consider optional legal structures using a checklist called 'Simply Legal' (www.uk.coop/simplylegal) but you are likely to need expert advice and support before making a final decision.

FCFCG can provide a draft model constitution that you can adapt to your specific requirements and there are other model constitutions available from a variety of places online. However, it is absolutely vital when doing so to ensure that the model is adapted and moulded to fit the specific needs of your organisation.

Writing a constitution does not mean your organisation is incorporated, which has an important bearing on your management committee members.

Incorporated or unincorporated?



Culpeper Community Garden, London

Legal structures for community organisations fall into one of two broad categories: unincorporated and incorporated. It is vital to understand the differences between these two and their legal implications, particularly in relation to the potential personal liability of committee members.

Unincorporated

This is the simplest type of organisational set-up. However, there are drawbacks - the organisation does not have any independent existence in law, meaning that management committee members are personally liable for any debts or claims against the organisation that cannot be met out of the organisation's own resources. An unincorporated group cannot start legal action, borrow money, or enter into contracts in its own name.

If your group carries out activities that are low risk you may not need to incorporate. However, if there is risk involved for members, such as handling large sums of money, employing staff or signing contracts, it may be best to incorporate your group. It is best not to make a decision, even if the answer seems obvious, before seeking further advice (see *Further information* below).

Incorporated

This is an organisation set up as a legal entity in its own right. The management committee members do not normally have personal financial responsibility for contracts and debts incurred (though this limited liability does not protect a management committee that acts improperly or fraudulently).

To incorporate you need to write your 'governing documents' and register with the relevant regulatory body, which will incur a fee from about £15 to several hundred pounds. Thereafter you will need to submit information annually.

You will need to decide which legal form to adopt. The Co-operative has a useful online tool to help guide you about which legal form will suit your group. www.uk.coop/our-work/select-structure-tool

The legal form you adopt will determine important aspects of what your group can do, e.g. who can vote on decisions or keep any profits, whether you can apply for certain grants and whether you can issue shares. It will also determine whether you have an 'asset lock', in which case the assets of the company can only be used for the benefit of the community, not to benefit members or investors.

The table on page 21 provides a summary of the key features of the most common



Stonebridge City Farm, Nottingham

forms – but do check out the finer details before committing your group.

In the eyes of the law an organisation is identified only by its legal form - not by how it describes itself or what field it operates in. The following are not legal forms – 'social enterprise', 'housing association', 'community group', 'voluntary sector group', 'city farm', 'tenants association', 'shop', 'community centre', etc.

Charitable status

Your steering group may consider applying for charitable status. This is not the same as becoming incorporated. Some legal forms – as indicated above – can be charities, while others cannot.

A charity is an organisation established for charitable purposes and registered under the Charity Acts, (mostly recently the 1992 Charities Act).

You may need to become a charity if you want to seek grant aid or donations or if you propose to hold land in trust for the benefit of your community. Some funding organisations will only donate to registered charities. Becoming a charity can also create tax, fundraising and public image benefits.

However, getting charitable status takes time and effort. You will need advice and support in the process. Remember that a community growing group must have a written constitution in order to register as a charity, while the aims stated in your constitution must fall within the legally defined definitions of 'charitable objects'. To be considered charitable, your group must meet one or more of the following purposes:

Type	Popular with grant funders?	Asset lock?	Can issue shares?	Can be charity?	Comment
Company Limited by Guarantee	Very, especially with charity status	No, unless a charity	No	Yes	The most common form of charity
Company Limited by Shares	No	No, unless a charity	Yes, but not to the public. Can pay a return on shareholding	No, not usually	Common form for typical 'for profit' small business
Community Interest Company Limited by Guarantee	Fairly	Yes	No	No	Needs to make a 'community benefit statement'. Intended for social enterprises
Community Interest Company Limited by Shares	Not very	Yes	Yes, limited returns for shareholders	No	Needs to make a 'community benefit statement'. Intended for social enterprises
Charitable Incorporated Organisation	Expected to be	Yes	No	Automatic	New type. Less administration than adding charity status to another form.
Industrial and Provident Society, bona fide co-op	Not very	Optional	Yes, to the public with limited returns	No	Democratic voting rights, often called 'co-op'
Industrial and Provident Society, society for the benefit of community	Quite	Optional	Yes, to the public with limited returns	Yes	Democratic voting rights, often called 'co-op'

- ▶ Relief of financial hardship (poverty)
- ▶ Advancement of religion
- ▶ Advancement of education
- ▶ Other purposes for the benefit of the community (those most relevant to community gardening include: promoting racial harmony; the resettlement and rehabilitation of offenders and drug abusers; the provision of recreational facilities which are open to everyone, or which are for particular beneficiary groups such as disabled people or the elderly; urban and rural regeneration and community capacity building; and promotion of health, e.g. through education, access to medical facilities or the pursuit of healthy recreation through sport).

Main types of charitable organisations

Please note that FCFCG does not promote or favour any charity model and provides the following information as a guide only.

Industrial & Provident Society (IP&S) – can be specifically for the benefit of the community (Bencom)

These types of organisation trade to benefit the broader community and the Registrar will refer to charity law. Societies for the benefit of the community are granted charitable status by the taxation authority, HM Revenue and Customs, rather than the Charity Commission (in England and Wales).

Company limited by guarantee

This is the most common form of charity and is often chosen by larger organisations - those that manage large sums of money,



Girvan Community Garden, Scotland

own land, deliver services under contractual agreements, or have employees. It is slightly more expensive to run and requires certain paperwork to be filed with Companies House. It offers its members limited liability, i.e. some protection against personal liability.

Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

A relatively new legal form suitable for small to medium sized organisations which employ staff and/or enter into contracts (something that some community growing spaces do in order to develop and diversify their income), but who don't want the burdens of becoming a company. A CIO:

- ▶ Is an incorporated form of charity but not a company
- ▶ Only has to register with the Charity Commission and not Companies House
- ▶ Is only created once it is registered by the Commission
- ▶ Can enter into contracts in its own right and its trustees will normally have limited or no liability for the debts of the CIO.

Many aspects of running a CIO will be the same as other forms of charity, but there are some important differences and obligations. All CIOs must:

- ▶ Register with the Charity Commission, regardless of their income (even if it's less than £5,000). The CIO does not come into existence until it's registered. The principle office must be in England or Wales.
- ▶ Submit an annual return and accounts to the Charity Commission, regardless of income.
- ▶ Keep a publically available register of members and trustees.
- ▶ Have certain provisions in their constitution (templates are available from the Charity Commission).

Amendments to a CIO's constitution will not be valid until they have been registered with the Charity Commission - certain amendments will need the Commission's prior consent. Insolvency law also applies to CIOs.

Community Interest Company

CICs were established in 2005 and are generally thought to be more suitable for

social enterprises rather than small community groups. A CIC is a company limited by guarantee or share issue with several added features such as a community interest test, an asset lock and a cap on dividends. The CIC has greater flexibility than usual charitable status, but emphasises public benefit over private profit.

Each CIC must specify the community that is intended to benefit from any profits made by the company (this could be as wide as all

the residents of a defined geographical area) and the CIC Regulator must approve this.

An asset lock ensures that any capital gains are directed to the specified community and the dividends cap limits the amount of profit private investors can take out of the business.

For full details of the steps you need to take to set up or convert to a CIC visit:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-of-the-regulator-of-community-interest-companies

Further information

Help and advice on the above issues is available to members of FCFCG, which is free to join in Wales. You can find further information at:

www.farmgarden.org.uk/wales

Directory of Social Change

Two publications: 'Voluntary But Not Amateur' and 'Just About Managing' give lots of useful information on procedures for running a community organisation.

Tel: 08450 77 77 07

www.dsc.org.uk

Wales Council for Voluntary Action

www.wcva.org.uk

Community Matters – the national federation of community organisations

www.communitymatters.org.uk/content/462/Online-Guidance-and-Advice

Business Planning

Voluntary Works has a sample toolkit available.

<http://voluntaryworks.org/support/business-planning>

Pestle analysis

www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/pestle-analysis.aspx

SWOT analysis

www.useful-community-development.org/SWOT-analysis.html

www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/swot-analysis.aspx

Co-operatives UK

'Simply Legal' provides information about legal forms and structures.

www.uk.coop/sites/storage/public/downloads/simplylegal_0.pdf

Co-operatives UK also has a tool to help you select the right structure.

www.uk.coop/our-work/select-structure-tool

Wales Cooperative Centre

www.walescooperative.org

Gov.uk

This has replaced Business Link and may have useful general advice.

www.gov.uk/browse/business

Charity Commission

Tel. 0845 300 0218 (this is a central switchboard for all offices). There is also a Welsh Office.

www.charitycommission.gov.uk



www.farmgarden.co.uk

step

5

Planning & designing your site

Putting together a site design for your garden not only enables you to plan ahead and overcome any challenges your site presents, but also enhances ownership and involvement by the group itself.

Making decisions about garden design can be exciting, empowering and potentially saves problems down the line. Everyone in your group should have an input, if they wish, into the process. However, you also need to ensure that whatever design you come up with is affordable, practical and achievable.

Please note: A more detailed site design topic sheet is available as an added insert to this pack, which covers initial planning, site surveys, site plans and timescales.

First steps

There are some key initial questions to ask your group before any plans are made. These relate back to the reasons you decided to set up a community growing

group in the first place and what you have discovered following engagement with the wider community.

- ✔ What is the prime motive for setting up your community growing group? Has it changed since you started out due to different people joining the group or as a result of the community consultation process? See **Step 8 - Safety first.**
- ✔ Who are your most likely users and how will they use the site?
- ✔ What resources have you got to do the work (both in terms of the number of volunteers and equipment and materials available)?
- ✔ What are the most important things you want on the site? Plots for growing food, a shelter, flowerbeds, animals, a building for education classes, play area, café, paths etc?
- ✔ How will you develop and maintain the site in the future? There's no point having the expertise and ambition to create a complex site if you cannot maintain it.
- ✔ Are there any site specific issues you need to bear in mind? For example,



Community garden design workshop, Cardiff

practical you can get an architect's scale rule which has several sides with different scales to make life easier.

Habitat and biodiversity survey

You might want to identify what habitats and species you have on your site before you begin, so that you can incorporate them into your design or begin to think about how you could create habitats, e.g. ponds, wildlife hotels, hedgehog and bird boxes etc., and encourage wildlife into your garden.

contaminated land, potential vandalism, access issues, planning permission etc.

- ✔ Remember to consider the basics: water, toilets, parking, security, disabled access.

Site survey

If you have not done so already, it's worth carrying out a more detailed survey of the site in order to find out its pros and cons. Areas to look at include:

- ▶ Aspect: What amount of sunlight is the site likely to get?
- ▶ Slope: This may affect drainage and distribution of top soil.
- ▶ Water: Some areas might be boggy. Alternatively the site may need extra water, in which case facilities for storing water may be a priority.
- ▶ Surroundings: This could include issues like open access and risk of vandalism, shading from external trees etc.
- ▶ State of the ground: Will you need to clear the site of rubble, weeds, brambles? What sort of soil are you dealing with?

Site plan

A basic map of your site will prove to have numerous valuable uses. Make sure you mark permanent objects already existing on the site. If your site is on a slope you might want to add in contours. It is also a good idea to indicate anything outside your site which may be of significance, e.g. buildings, trees, pylons, busy roads etc. You may be able to use the internet to help with mapping - try Bing Maps' OS map option: www.bing.com/maps

The scale of your drawing depends on the size of your paper! It's simplest to use a scale like 1:100, 1:50 or 1:25, but if this isn't

Clearing the site - a good start

Designing a site and thinking clearly about what you want to do is often made more difficult because the site has been neglected, resulting in an area that is overgrown, full of rubbish or simply difficult to get around.

One of the first phases of work that can be undertaken before or during the site design stage, is to clear your site up. It's always a good idea to do this while there is plenty of enthusiasm for the project. It will provide a very visual sign that progress is being made.

Some things to bear in mind:

- ▶ If there is a lot of work to do then it may be worth seeing if any local companies have corporate volunteers who can come along to help with the clearance work.
- ▶ Before any volunteers start work on site make sure you have the necessary public liability insurance in place and that health and safety measures are adhered to.
- ▶ You may be able to persuade local contractors to loan or donate heavy equipment for use at no charge or a discount price.

You may be able to get help and support from Keep Wales Tidy:

www.keepwalestidy.org

Contaminated land

If your site is on land that, in the past, was used for industrial activities, or is in the immediate vicinity of past or current industrial activities, it could be contaminated. Make sure you do your research and find out as much as information as possible as to what the



Greenmeadow Community Farm, Cwmbran

previous use may have been. This will be a concern for any project planning to consume, donate or sell produce or keep livestock.

FCFCG has a separate publication available to download from its website, which looks in detail at the issue of contaminated land. Members of FCFCG can also get direct advice from their nearest development workers.

Soil testing

If you simply want to test the pH of your soil then you can buy a kit from a local garden centre, but if you are concerned about potential contaminants, then contact a soil testing service. (See *Further information* below).

5

Further information

Community garden site designs - Examples

CHAPTER Community garden

www.cantoncommunitygardens.co.uk/pages/plans-and-drawings.html

Adamsdown Community Garden

www.ediblelandscaping.co.uk/community.html

Fairwater Community Garden

www.vision-twentyone.com/fairwater-community-garden

Soil testing

For list of companies providing soil testing services contact the Soil Association.

Tel: 0117 914 2400

www.soilassociation.org

For information on how to test your soil visit the BBC website.

www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/basics/techniques/soil_testingyoursoil1.shtml

Information on wildlife gardening and habitat creation

RHS: www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk

Wales Biodiversity partnership:

www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/en-GB/Wildlife-Gardening

Wildlife Trusts:

www.wildlifetrusts.org/how-you-can-help/wildlife-gardening

RSPB:

www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/wildlifegarden

Wildlife stack/hotel:

www.rspb.org.uk/advice/gardening/insects/wildlifestack.aspx



www.farmgarden.co.uk

Money & budgets

Now you have decided what to do, who will be involved and what kind of project you want, the next step is to find out is how much it will cost and then to ensure you have financial skills and knowledge in place to manage this development. It's a simple equation - remaining solvent helps ensure your group will be sustainable.

- ▶ Meet legal responsibilities
- ▶ Compile accurate reports to funders, supporters and other members of your group
- ▶ Enable you to make more accurate assessments of your prospects if you want to undertake social enterprises or diversify your income.

First of all find out what financial skills and experience you have in your group. If you need additional support and advice, find out what organisations in your area offer financial services to community and voluntary groups. For example, community accountancy projects can offer direct services, training and advice.

Check with your local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS), local council or library. Ask other established community groups how they organise their finances, who independently examines (or audits for larger organisations) their books and who gives them financial guidance and information.

It is important to open a bank account for the group at an early stage so that its money can not be confused with any individual's money.

Good financial management is essential because it allows your group to:

- ▶ Plan, monitor and assess the development and sustainability of your project
- ▶ Ensure that money is being spent wisely and as agreed
- ▶ Demonstrate to potential funders and supporters that your project is well organised and an attractive proposition

Several banking organisations offer free or reduced rate banking for community groups (see box below for some examples of these). When choosing a bank, you may wish to consider whether you think the bank has an ethical stance which fits in with your group's ethical and environmental concerns. It could also be important to think about where the bank has branches, if you will need to be paying money in regularly. It is normally a requirement to have two signatures on the account to prevent any potential for misuse of funds.

Handling money

It is important to establish basic ground rules about handling money right from the start. This will help the smooth running of the organisation and lead to faster resolution of any disputes.

The bottom line is that the group *must* account for *all* money received and spent. This is essential whether you are spending £50 or £50,000 each year. The general underlying principle is always to maintain a fully accountable paper trail for all transactions. Some basic rules are:

- ▶ Always issue a receipt when money is received.
- ▶ Always obtain a receipt for any money paid out and get people to sign for any money they have received, e.g. parking expenses while on garden business.
- ▶ Always ensure that receipts are written in ink, not pencil. Include the date and a signature.
- ▶ Never keep more money than is necessary in the treasurer's home or on

the project premises. Make sure your insurance covers you for holding small amounts of cash. Investigate a safe?

- ▶ Always pay income into the bank as soon as possible. If there's no local branch, many banks have arrangements with post offices.
- ▶ Never pay for anything from cash just received. Draw cash from the bank for expenditure (otherwise you'll get into bookkeeping difficulties which lead to mistakes in accounting for what you receive and spend).
- ▶ Keep as many records and notes of transactions as you can, in one secure place, ideally off site.

Budgets – Costing your project

A budget sets out what your group plans to do with its money over a financial year (usually April to March). Budgets help you manage and control the finances of your community garden. For example, your budget will enable you to predict difficulties, such as a shortfall in money to pay bills in a given month (a temporary cash flow crisis). A challenge many gardens experience.

Setting a budget will also help you make sound financial decisions. To do this you need a thorough understanding of the garden's finances.

Bear in mind that a budget created for a fundraising application may not be the same as your group's annual budget. If you are applying for a specific project (rather than a grant towards your overall work), the funder may ask for a project budget only.

Examples of bank accounts suitable for community groups

- ✓ Co-operative Bank's Community Directplus gives charities, community groups, voluntary organisations and social enterprises an ethical way to bank for free.

Tel. 0800 764 764
www.co-operativebank.co.uk

- ✓ Triodos Bank are known for their ethical stance. They have Charity Cheque and Reserve

Accounts, and a Social Venture Current Account.

Tel. 0800 328 2181, email: mail@triodos.co.uk
www.triodosbank.co.uk

- ✓ Unity Trust is a specialist bank for voluntary, membership and credit union organisations, as well as the trade unions involved in setting it up, with the help of Co-op Bank.

Tel. 0845 140 1000
www.unity.co.uk

Other banks and building societies may also offer special deals for charitable groups.

Writing your budget

Make an 'Opening Balance'

This is a snapshot of the finances of your garden on a specific date. Set out and add up all money you hold in cash and in the bank, plus any money you are owed (e.g. outstanding membership fees). Then deduct from that total anything which you owe (e.g. outstanding electricity bill or rent which has fallen due but not yet been paid). This will create your 'Opening Balance'.

Decide what developments your group has planned for at least the coming year

Better still have a 3-5 year plan listing the practical things you want to do, with estimates of what they will cost. When trying to find an estimate of costs, don't forget about overheads or hidden costs, e.g. if you want to expand an area of your garden, you may need to hire special equipment and factor in volunteers' expenses. In the first year, it can be difficult to work out costs but try to avoid too much guesswork. Talk to people in other groups or get an idea of costs from suppliers' catalogues/websites. Think through each item carefully - what will you have to pay for when you hold a meeting or organise an event?

Prepare an 'Income and Expenditure Budget'

Set out what money you expect to come in during the year and what you expect to spend, using appropriate headings. Outgoings would include rent and rates, insurance, volunteer expenses etc. Income might include grants, membership fees, proceeds from sale of plants and fundraising events. Use the same headings for your financial record keeping.

When looking at expenditure, it may be helpful to show capital items and running cost items separately. Capital items are expected to have some resale value for at least two years.

They include equipment, buildings or work to improve buildings, and land. Small pieces of equipment are not counted as capital items. Groups often set a threshold, such as £500, above which equipment counts as capital. Running cost items could include things like water charges, rent, postage etc.

When looking at income make sure you note the date when grants (and other large sums of money) are expected - unless you plan well, you may not have enough money at a particular moment if the grant has not yet come, even though your budget shows enough income for the year.

If you are waiting to hear the result of a grant application, you can show the grant in the budget, but you should mark it 'unconfirmed'. If you have little hope of getting the grant, do not show it in the budget. Make a note of any grant application which is not included.

Prepare a 'Cash flow budget'

This is your Income and Expenditure Budget broken down into a plan of the flow of money in and out each month. Without a cash flow budget you may think you are better off than you really are, e.g. having £400 in the bank in September, but forgetting you have the insurance bill of £400 to pay in October.

At the end of your financial year, prepare a 'Balance Sheet' summing up all your income and expenditure

This then gives you the opening balance for the next year. You may decide to have an accountant or auditor check your figures at the end of the year. If you are a charity, you need to prepare annual accounts to standards published by the Charity Commission. Limited companies and industrial and provident societies also have additional legal obligations to prepare accounts and report to their regulators. See *Further information*.



Adamsdown Community Garden, Cardiff

A budget is always an internal document for your own group's use. You will not be held to it by a funder or other outside body.

Writing a budget

In order to write a budget, you must have a realistic, clear idea of your group's activities for the year ahead – you may want to hold a meeting to discuss this. The best time to do this is before the start of your group's financial year, so you have time to plan ahead and then prepare the budget.

The process of writing a budget is similar to writing a shopping list with the cost of each item listed. You must then work out where you will get the money to pay for the items. Don't forget that there may be people with budgeting skills in your organisation and you can also seek outside help if you find budgeting particularly tricky.

There is a set of logical steps to preparing a budget; each step provides information for the next (see box on page 29).

Budgets: salaries and employment

See *Step 9 - Recruitment & training*.

Balancing your budget

Once you have written out your budget, get the details checked by others in your group to make sure they are accurate, the sums add up and there is nothing missing.

Where possible, your first aim should be at least a balanced budget, i.e. estimated income is the same as your planned expenditure. You may even have a surplus, where income exceeds expenditure. If this is the case, you can include an expenditure item 'surplus transferred to reserves' in order to balance the budget.

However, you may find that you don't have enough money to cover all the things you want to do and that expenditure tops income, producing a deficit. If this happens you should make the deficit clear in the budget.

Budget approval

You need to get the budget approved at a meeting of your management committee. Make sure you highlight any potential issues, e.g. by drawing attention to unconfirmed grants and the likelihood of getting those grants.

For deficit budgets, the group will need to decide whether more income generation is feasible to close the gap or whether you need to scale back on activities/costs. Don't be tempted to balance the budget simply by adding in a vague notion about 'other income generation' unless you have genuine belief that the money can be raised – and don't forget that raising money can incur costs in itself.

Remember, it's far better to start the financial year with a realistic, achievable budget. If you do manage to generate more income, that can be incorporated into your budget during the year.

The budget must be formally approved by the group by the end of the meeting unless a number of minor changes, or a few major ones, are suggested. If that's the case then it's better to go away and rewrite the budget and get it approved at a later meeting.

Use your budget!

Your budget is a useful tool to keep track of where things are going. At least every quarter, the person responsible for the budget should present a finance report to the group. The statement should show

actual income and expenditure, including any unpaid bills etc., and a comparison with the actual budget. Then you will be able to see if you are on track or need a rethink.

If there is a big difference between the finance statement and the budget, that's an indication you will need to adjust your plans. For

example, if income is much lower than expected, think about potential savings you could make. If you have a surplus, you could decide to spend the money on other activities.

Remember – only adjust the budget to take into account major differences and always do this at a meeting of your management committee. Also, if you are grant funded, don't carry out any major shifts in your activities until you have contacted the funders and negotiated any changes.



Budgets and fundraising

The budget is also a useful tool to send to funding bodies if you are applying for grants.

In the case of funding for a specific project, the costs of the project will be included in your annual budget expenditure but the funder may ask for a project budget only. Most project funders will ask for your group's overall budget so they know you are financially stable enough to run the budget. It's also evidence that you are organised, have an understanding of your financial commitments and a clear plan of activities.

It is very important to show clearly in your overall budget which costs will be met by a grant for a project and which by general income. Remember that if you receive funding for a specific project, you will be able to use the grant to pay only for the costs of the project itself. You will not be able to use the money for the general costs of your group or for another project. This is also true of a grant for capital equipment.

As with a general budget, don't forget to include 'hidden expenses', such as expenses, travel, stationery, phone costs etc.

If you are running a project from your own premises, you should include some of the rent and costs such as cleaning and heating. These can be worked out as a proportion of the overall costs.

If you do not include all the costs involved in a project in that specific project budget, you could end up trying to subsidise the project from your general budget – not a good idea!

Checking that the grant matches your budget

- ✔ The grant award letter or 'conditions of grant' form from the funder will outline what the money is to be used for.
- ✔ If you have been awarded the full amount, the grant is most likely to pay for the project as described in your application - but always check the details.
- ✔ If the grant is less than you applied for, check what the grant covers. Amend your overall budget at the next meeting, if necessary.
- ✔ If your group is a registered charity, grants for projects or capital equipment will be classed as restricted funding.

These may need to be set out separately in your accounts.

words, you need to cover the full cost of the project from other sources.

- ✓ Many grants will be conditional on your group finding match funding. In other

Further information

Directory of Social Change

'Voluntary But Not Amateur', and 'Just About Managing' are probably the best general publications for voluntary organisations, detailing procedures and raising issues that need to be addressed.

www.dsc.org.uk

Charity Commission for England & Wales

Several useful publications, including:

- 'Charity reporting and accounting: The essentials' (CC15a)
- 'The essential trustee: What you need to know' (CC3)
- 'Managing charity assets and resources: an overview for trustees' (CC25).

Tel: 0845 300 0218

www.charity-commission.gov.uk

Community Accounting

A network of people experienced in advising small community groups.
www.communityaccounting.org

Co-operatives UK

The Co-op's 'Simply Finance' publication provides a foundation for understanding the role played by finance in your business.

www.uk.coop/simplyfinance

London Voluntary Services Council

Produce a publication called 'Just about managing? Effective management for voluntary organisations and community group'.

www.lvsc.org.uk

Wales Council For Voluntary Action

Produce a guide to managing money.

www.wcva.org.uk/advice-guidance/managing-money

ProHelp

From Business In The Community, ProHelp is a network of professional firms giving pro bono advice to community groups.

www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/prohelp



www.farmgarden.co.uk

Raising funds & generating income

It is vital for the future health of your group that you ensure you create varied and diverse ways to generate revenue. Relying solely on grant funding is not viable.

There are three distinct elements to ensuring the financial sustainability of your group:

- 1 Reducing your need for money in the first place
- 2 Generating your own income
- 3 Securing funding from external sources (e.g. charitable trusts, Government, your local council, the lottery, external companies etc.)

Reducing your need for money

Finding enough money tends to preoccupy many community projects but securing and spending money is only one of the ways in which your group can meet its

aims and make an impact on your local community.

Obviously money is essential for some things, but in-kind support (such as free technical advice, committed, skilled volunteers and donations of materials and services) can meet many of your group's needs. In addition, salvaging, re-using, repairing and recycling are all ways to help reduce your need for cash. Simply being more resourceful can often save you money over both the short and longer term.

However, reducing your need for money requires planning, organisation and negotiation skills. Consider the following questions:

- ✓ Could you pay less for services or products you regularly use?
- ✓ Do you practice the 5 Rs - Reduce, Re-use, Repair, Recycle and regularly Review?
- ✓ Could you be more resourceful in salvaging or borrowing equipment etc?
- ✓ Do you pay bank charges and if so do you need to?
- ✓ Do you have clear financial controls that help prevent wasteful expenditure?

- ✓ Insurance – can you get a cheaper quote?
- ✓ Do you attract voluntary help and have good support systems for volunteers?
- ✓ Do you get preferential discounts from your suppliers?
- ✓ Do you encourage and make use of donations of services and resources (donations in-kind)?
- ✓ Are there any co-ops or buying consortiums that you can belong to?
- ✓ Can you barter for goods/services or join a Local Exchange Trading Scheme (LETS)?
- ✓ Are your financial systems and maintenance procedures effective?
- ✓ Do you get Business Rates Relief as a charity?
- ✓ Are you involved with local Time Banks?
- ✓ Are there other groups in your area you could join forces with to negotiate reductions for goods and services (seeds, equipment etc.)?

It may take time and energy to assess all of these elements, but could result in your group making significant savings and reductions in your income needs.

Generating your own income

There are three main elements to this:

- 1 Donations-in-kind
- 2 Sales of goods and services
- 3 Taking part in fundraising activities and events.

Donations-in-kind

These can be roughly separated into three categories:

- ▶ Goods: e.g. non-monetary items such as office equipment, appliances, building supplies, plants etc.
- ▶ Resources: e.g. storage space off-site; use of equipment such as printing, photocopying, horticultural machinery.
- ▶ Services: e.g. *pro bono* professional services (such as planning or legal work), building services and technical services, such as website design or admin.



St Werburghs City Farm, Bristol

You will need to put in some organised planning and effort in order to attract donations-in-kind. Ideas include:

- ▶ Setting up a **volunteering vacancy notice board** (similar to a job centre vacancy board). Give clear instructions on how people can get involved. Advertise for specific skills you need, when you want them and who potential volunteers should contact if they are interested.
- ▶ Producing and distributing a '**wish list**', asking for donations in-kind, e.g. plant cuttings, trees, flower pots, tools, timber, printing a newsletter, volunteers, skills, help with specific events or activities etc. Make it as easy as possible for people to give – be clear about what you want and include contact details, dates, times and location.
- ▶ Creating as many **opportunities** as possible for people and organisations to **donate** to your group. If you don't ask and help people to give, you don't get!
- ▶ Mentioning the things your group needs in a **press release** and as part of other publicity opportunities. Most local radio stations have a 'community slot' or 'action line' where you could ask for the things you need.
- ▶ Contacting your local volunteer bureau for specialist services.

Sales of goods & services

This requires planning and organisation (e.g. risk assessments) in order to work.

Remember that sales could all incur costs as well as producing money (e.g. staff time, event fees), so be sure that the activity is a net generator! Ideas include:

Social events: Most community growing spaces are great locations for a whole variety of social events like open garden days, barbecues, harvest suppers, events tied in to calendar dates such as Bonfire

Taking part in fundraising activities - could you...?

- ✓ Run fundraising and publicity activities or stalls at external local events such as school fetes etc.
- ✓ Set up a donation box at your garden in a prominent place with an enticing notice, perhaps explaining how much it costs to run your project per day or suggesting an amount to donate per visit? Make sure it is secure and emptied daily.
- ✓ Set up a group of volunteers and supporters who are willing to give time to run or organise your fundraising activities? You could ask them, for example, to plan four seasonal open days over a year to raise money, publicise your project and attract new members and volunteers.
- ✓ Think through a range of fundraising activities and critically consider which are likely to be successful for your group. Organising, running and clearing up after events takes time and effort. Is the event likely to raise enough money to make it worthwhile? Examples of fundraising events include: jumble sales, car boot sales/stalls, raffles, fêtes, carnivals, tombolas, duck races, sunflower growing competitions, vegetable and flower shows.
- ✓ Find out if other local organisations or groups might be willing to co-operate with you in organising and running joint fundraising events?
- ✓ Collect things that you can cash in - stamps, mobile phones etc.? But remember you will need somewhere to store them.

Night or Apple Day, picnics and games, barn dances, treasure hunts etc. These can be community celebrations, valuable publicity opportunities, and by having an entrance charge - or other fundraising element - can generate income for your garden. Events

can be related to the seasons and can also involve an activity of benefit to the garden, such as planting, digging a pond, harvesting etc. Other ways to raise money at events include selling refreshments or surplus produce, raffles and competitions.

Selling surplus produce: You can sell surplus plants, cuttings and produce direct to the public from the site. Alternatively, if you have enough, you could sell surplus on a stall at an external event, such as a farmers market. Remember that this may incur costs. FCFCG has an 'Introduction to selling produce' topic sheet available which covers the things you need to be aware of and have in place in order to sell produce.

Making items to sell: These could be items made on your garden (e.g. bird tables, window boxes) or processed products (e.g. liquid feed made from comfrey plants or jams made from soft fruits).

Providing practical training: You could charge a fee for people to attend a training workshop e.g. 'come and build a compost unit' or 'make and plant a hanging basket using herbs'. If you have the necessary skills within your group you could also run craft workshops, such as spinning and weaving.



The five stages of fundraising from external sources

- 1 Reach agreement about what your group wants to do and how you are going to do it. Draw up a clear overall three or five-year plan. Make sure everyone is aware of the plan and agrees with it. Questions to think about include: Who is going to be involved in the funding application and are there any skills within the group you can exploit? What exactly is the fundraising for and how much money do you need? When do you need the money – what is your timescale?
- 2 Research potential funders thoroughly. What do they require? Is there an application form? Who and what will they fund? When do they accept applications? Is there a deadline? Are there any conditions attached to funding you cannot meet?
- 3 Ensure each funding application is tailored to the individual funder. Try to avoid just sending the same thing to everyone. It might take less time but will also mean you are potentially less successful. Use their jargon – people who use your project could be ‘volunteers’, ‘clients’, ‘service users’ or ‘trainees’ depending on the funder’s interests.
- 4 Submit your application in accordance with the specific requirements of the funder being approached, e.g. application form, time of submission, additional materials. If the funder does not provide a specific application form send a short personal letter, no more than one page, including an invitation to visit or meet representatives from your group and a summary of what you want funding for.
- 5 Follow up your application with a short phone call or note after any deadline has passed - unless the funder specifically requests no contact.

Education activities: Local schools or other groups may be interested in visiting your garden as an educational activity.

Delivering specialist services: For example, landscaping, building gardens in schools, clearing older people’s gardens etc.

Securing money from external sources

The boom in community growing over the last few years has many positives, but it does mean there are increasing numbers of community growing groups seeking support from a rapidly shrinking pool of funding (e.g. local authority funding has reduced significantly due to austerity measures).

To increase your chances of getting funding it’s vital you can demonstrate that you are well-managed, organised, of genuine benefit to the local community and offer value for money. Ask yourself why, with so many other worthy causes, anyone should give money to your group? Are you using the money you already have wisely and effectively? How can you demonstrate this to potential funders and supporters?

Fundraising can be hard work, time consuming and will have costs. It’s important that you set aside the necessary time and resources to do it properly - rushed, inappropriate, inaccurate or poorly thought through applications are rarely successful and could ruin your relationship with a potential long term or regular funder. Remember, more than 90 percent of fundraising is down to careful preparation, planning, relationship building and record keeping. Contacting the funder before you apply to have a chat about your project and application can be extremely valuable and save you a lot of time.

Only apply for funds to do the things that are included in your group’s overall development plan. It can be tempting to apply for money simply because it is there, or because it appears easy to obtain. There is, however, a danger that your group might end up having to do all sorts of things that do not relate to the real reasons the group was formed in the first place.

It’s usually much harder to raise regular revenue funding (running costs) than capital funding (e.g. land and buildings). Your business/action plan should take this into account.

Seek to develop a relationship with existing and potential funding bodies. Keep good records of all aspects of your group's activities, remember to collect evidence of how well your project is progressing and don't be afraid to question and change those things that might not be going so well.

Send newsletters or progress reports. Always complete any forms or monitoring that a funder asks you to, within the deadlines they require.

Ensure the information you have on funding organisations is up to date and accurate - funders' themes or focus may change from year to year, or they may close a particular fund.

Preparing your application

All applications should follow the **5Ws** Rule:

- 1 Who?** Describe your group.
- 2 What?** Detail exactly what you want to spend the money on.
- 3 When do you need it?** Allow several months for processing your application.
- 4 Where?** Describe your local community.
- 5 Why?** Explain who will benefit as a result of receiving the grant.

And applications should include the 3 How Steps:

- 1 How** are you going to achieve what you want to do?
- 2 How** much will it cost in total?
- 3 How** much funding are you requesting?

Fundraising – points to remember

Enclose some relevant support material (but not too much) including good visuals, e.g. photos or drawings, a detailed budget for the project and your last annual report and accounts (if your group is more than a year old).

Always retain copies of your letters/application forms in case the funder requests further information or clarification, and to enable another member of your group to answer queries if the original writer(s) are unavailable.

Be prepared for rejection; an application may be turned down for a variety of reasons. It may be too weak, or miss the funder's specific priorities, or there may simply be no money left in that financial year or round of

applications. Try to find out why it was rejected and consider applying for a different project after a year has lapsed.

If you're successful, in addition to sending a thank you letter, keep funders informed as the project progresses; this will help to strengthen and further develop your relationship with them to potentially secure more funds. Send progress reports and other communications, if appropriate, e.g. annual report, invitations to events, photographs, children's work, publicity material and press releases that mention the funder. Two or three contacts per year is enough; too often and the funder may feel bombarded by you.

Be honest. Spend money as agreed and consult the funder if it's necessary to make significant changes to the project they have funded – it can happen! Sometimes a garden may receive money from two sources, each for the same work. Get back in touch with one of the funders, explain and ask if you can spend the money on another specific piece of work; they are unlikely to say no.

Make sure you draw up a detailed business plan (see **Step 4** for more detail on business/action plans). Increasingly funders are looking for depth to business plans so they can be sure the project is viable and the money will be well spent. It's worth putting the extra effort into this as it could make the difference between getting a grant and not.

Sources of funding

External sources of funding fall into the following categories:

Charitable trusts

There are around 4,000 grant making trusts in the United Kingdom (out of 185,000 registered charities). Together they give millions of pounds each year, but relatively few donate amounts over £5,000. Sources of further information about charitable trusts include:

- ▶ 'The Directory of Grant Making Trusts', published by the Charities Aid Foundation and the Directory of Social Change, provides more detailed information. Your local library or Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) may have copies or ask other local organisations.



- ▶ Local libraries and other funding advice organisations provide information on appropriate local and national trusts, and will have information on fundraising training/seminars.
- ▶ Community workers and similar local development workers, such as your local FCFCG development team, are often a good source of help and advice.
- ▶ Other local community and voluntary organisations could also provide help. Look at their annual reports to see who has provided them with money and assistance.
- ▶ FCFCG provides regularly updated information on funding sources through its newsletters, e-bulletins and website.

Lottery Funding

www.lotteryfunding.org.uk is a joint website run by all Lottery funders in the UK, including the Big Lottery Fund and Awards for All. The site allows you to search information on current funding programmes across the UK. It is likely that there are other groups in your area who have successfully made an application; ask them for advice and guidance. Lottery seminars are regularly held and are a good source of advice and support.

Public funds

This includes receiving money in the form of grants, service agreements and other forms

of contract from a variety of public sources such as Government departments, your local council, health authority or health trust etc. There may be other government funded organisations operating in your area, which may, in turn, be able to fund or support your group, e.g. Groundwork Trusts or Environment Wales

Companies

Local companies and local branches of national or international companies may be willing to support you. Many larger companies have a Corporate Social Responsibility programme. These are generally seen as a way for companies to do something beyond its normal remit for the good of society.

There are a number of ways in which companies can help, such as:

- ▶ Sponsoring an event
- ▶ Donations in-kind (such as a second-hand computer, furniture and tools)
- ▶ Giving preferential discounts on goods you buy from them
- ▶ Cash grants
- ▶ Major companies often have a grant-making arm themselves, often supporting groups local to their branches
- ▶ Free use of their facilities or access to services and equipment
- ▶ Loaning a member of staff on short-term secondment to help with a particular project or problem
- ▶ Paying for advertising in your newsletter or brochure.

DIG – Digital Income Generation

Increasing numbers of community groups are turning to social media and the internet as a route to secure income. This is a dynamic and rapidly-moving area with potential for those who are comfortable with online technology and social media skills. Examples include:

- ▶ **Using Paypal to create donation buttons on your website:** A little complex to set up, but does allow users of your website or blog to donate direct.
- ▶ **Using an online fundraising service:** Some groups opt to use the power and flexibility of fundraising websites like www.JustGiving.com or



Riverside Community Garden Allotment Project, Cardiff

<http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com> These can be used by people raising money on behalf of your group, e.g. through a sponsored run. However there may be charges for organisations to use other services associated with these sites.

- **Crowdfunding:** This is where you run a marketing and publicity campaign for a particular project and ask many people to donate a little money each. Some crowdfunding schemes offer rewards to people for donating.

The Growing Together partnership, led by FCFCG, has created some valuable resources on Digital Income Generation (DIG) and other innovative sources of funding and income creation. www.growing2gether.org.uk

Renewable Energy

There are increasing opportunities for communities to explore the incorporation of renewable energy schemes as part of their project, which over a number of years could then begin to generate an income into the project. Examples include the incorporation of solar voltaic panels or hydro-electric schemes.

Researching sources of funding online

Some larger trusts and foundations have websites with useful information about the funding they provide, along with advice and guidance about making an application. It is important to read the guidance notes, and carefully complete all sections of any application form, if they have provided one.

You can also visit specialised funding websites such as:

www.fundingcentral.org.uk

www.governmentfunding.org.uk

www.companygiving.org.uk

www.trustfunding.org.uk

www.j4bcommunity.co.uk

www.grantsonline.org.uk

www.fit4funding.org.uk

www.acf.org.uk

www.fundraising.co.uk

www.fundinginformation.org

Further information

Directory of Social Change

Useful publications include 'The Complete Fundraising Handbook', 'The directory of grant making trusts' and 'Voluntary but not amateur'.

www.dsc.org.uk/Publications

WCVA

www.wcva.org.uk/funding

www.wcva.org.uk/advice-guidance/finding-and-getting-money

Wales Co-operative Centre

www.walescooperative.org

Direct Gov

Has a useful section on funding.

www.direct.gov.uk

Allotments Regeneration Initiative

An information pack on fundraising for allotment associations which is also relevant for community growing spaces.

www.farmgarden.org.uk/ari

Community Share Issues

www.communityshares.org.uk

www.uk.coop/document/practitionersguide-community-shares

Growing Together resources

Include guides to crowdfunding, community shares and Digital Income Generation. Created as part of FCFCG's Growing Together partnership programme.

www.growing2gether.org.uk

Nesta

Innovation charity with information on crowdfunding including the document 'Working the crowd'.

www.nesta.org.uk/areas_of_work/economic_growth/crowdfunding

LETS - Local Exchange Trading Systems or Schemes

Local community-based mutual aid networks allowing people to exchange all kinds of goods and services with one another, without the need for money.

www.letslinkuk.net

Timebanking

- TimeBank: A UK campaign inspiring and connecting people to share and give time:

Tel: 0845 456 1668 or 020 3111 0700

www.timebank.org.uk

- Time banking Wales:

www.timebankingwales.org.uk

- Spice:

www.justaddspice.org

- The Big Lottery Fund:

Tel: 0845 410 2030

www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

Community Renewable Energy

- Community Energy Wales:

www.cynnalcymru.com/Community_Energy_Wales

- Eco Dyfi:

www.ecodyfi.org.uk/energy/renewables.htm

- The Green Valleys:

www.thegreenvalleys.org

- Energy Saving Trust:

www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/organisations/content/ynnir-fro-community-programme

- Government Information:

www.gov.uk/community-energy

Safety first - Looking after volunteers, workers & visitors

.....

Getting the right sorts of insurance (such as public liability and professional indemnity) is vital for any community growing group.

Without insurance you could expose yourself, the members of your group and the public to liability for accidents, injuries, employment issues etc.

(See *Step 10 - Governance & paperwork* for more on legal obligations.)

.....

Insurance

To operate a community growing group you need the following insurance cover.

The two main insurance types are public liability and employers' liability.

Public liability: Indemnifies you against a claim for injury, disability or death of people visiting or taking part in your activities. £3 million cover should be

obtained as a minimum; most groups are now insured for £5 million.

Employers' liability: This is a legal requirement to indemnify you against being held responsible for accidents causing injury, disability or death of employees and volunteers.

You must display your employer's liability certificate in your main building if you have one or on your public notice board. It's a good idea to put your public liability certificate up too, though not legally necessary.

It is also advisable to have the following additional policies in place.

All risks policy: To cover the community garden property, such as equipment and perhaps money, against fire, flood, theft and any other specified risk. Many policies have a minimum claim level and/or an amount you have to cover on a claim (an excess) such as the first £100.

Specific insurance policies: To cover you against any other risks considered important, depending on the activities the garden plans to undertake, e.g. a vehicle to carry materials or people for the garden, or for community garden work or activities

that take place away from the garden site, or a group personal accident policy for all staff and volunteers.

You are legally responsible from the day you take over the site, but it is best to take out public liability insurance before any site work is undertaken, even if it's only temporary clearance work prior to signing an agreement, to protect your group against any mishaps on site.

Check all your legal agreements to see whether they require specific insurance cover, e.g. your lease (which may require a minimum public liability cover), any funding agreements and any temporary contracts that you have entered into, for instance hiring equipment or training people on placement.

Getting the right insurance deal

- ✔ Be clear about what you need insurance for, and of any factors you might adopt to reduce risk. For example, if you never use power tools you will not need insurance for that, and if your project has limited access to the general public that will probably reduce the premiums.
- ✔ Produce your own list of what you might consider insuring before speaking with a broker or when contacting insurance companies direct.
- ✔ Go to an insurance broker (see *Consider using a broker* below) to get quotations and get them to explain to you in everyday language what is covered and in what circumstances, to ensure you have what you want.
- ✔ Obtain several quotes for what you need and compare them; some will not cover particular items/activities, and others will have higher excesses (the first amount of any claim you pay yourself); insuring a few hundred pounds of power tools may not be worth it if the excess is similar to their value.
- ✔ Ask other local groups what type of insurance and level of cover they have, and what it costs them. Did they use an insurance broker and was the company helpful? Are they happy with their insurers?
- ✔ Look at off-the-shelf commercial packages and combined insurance packages. Combined insurance policies cover a number of risks in one policy.

This can be useful unless you end up paying for insurance that is not required.

- ✔ You could ask the FCFCG Scotland team or another voluntary sector support organisations for help and advice.

Reviewing your insurance: key issues

It's important to review your insurance every year and whenever you make major changes. It's also important to ensure that you have enough cover; being under insured could make your policy practically useless. On the other hand, being over insured for risks that are no longer relevant is a waste of valuable resources.

- ✔ Review what type of insurance you need. Has anything changed? For example, have you employed your first member of staff, bought equipment or invested in buildings?
- ✔ What is the best balance of risk and cost of premium? It may be better for the organisation to carry a manageable risk rather than pay very high premiums. This is similar to private car drivers, who can cut their premiums significantly by carrying a larger excess. Check with the Charity Commission that you can do this.
- ✔ What is your budget? Remember that the cheapest option is not always the best.
- ✔ What is your timetable? If you need insurance immediately you may not get the best deal.
- ✔ What payment options are there? Can you pay quarterly rather than yearly in advance? Can you get a better deal with a long-term agreement (e.g. three years)?
- ✔ How efficient is the provider's claims handling?
- ✔ What is the small print? Check it!

Consider using a broker

Rather than contacting several insurance companies direct you can use an intermediary. The role of an insurance broker is to:

- ▶ Give specialist advice on the market

- ▶ Advise on the type, scope and suitability of the cover
- ▶ Seek best possible terms for you
- ▶ Provide an ongoing service
- ▶ Monitor market changes.

Selecting a broker should be done by asking a number to tender for the work. At the very least, discuss your needs with a number of brokers. Always seek references before appointing. Lists of brokers can be obtained from charity publications and general guides. You could also try speaking to your local community accountancy project or CVS.

Health and safety

Community growing groups have a responsibility to ensure that health and safety issues are a genuine priority and that the safety and security of its volunteers, staff and visitors are taken extremely seriously.

The general duties of employers under the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act in ensuring the health, safety and welfare of their employees are outlined in the box overleaf. We strongly recommend that your garden - regardless of whether you have paid employees or not - apply these duties to everybody: volunteers, management committee members, garden members, other users and visitors.

Risk assessment

It is essential that you carry out a general risk assessment for your site. Volunteers can assist with this task which will help raise the general level of awareness of - and reduce - risks to health and safety of people on your site. Assessments should then be reviewed regularly and carried out separately for any events or training you hold.

FCFCG has a number of model risk assessment documents available.

Common dangers in a community garden

Poisonous plants, fruits and fungi

If you don't have the expertise in your group to identify poisonous plants seek local advice from your local authority, an established gardening club, a local

Risk assessments made easy

- ▶ Look for hazards
- ▶ Decide who might be harmed, and how
- ▶ Assess the risks arising from the hazards and decide whether existing precautions you are taking are adequate or if more should be done
- ▶ Record your findings and take action where necessary
- ▶ Review your assessment at least once a year and when any major changes take place on your garden, e.g. building works.

(Adapted from the Health & Safety Executive (HSE)'s 'A Safer and Healthier Workplace')

horticulturalist or landscape gardener. There are a number of books and official publications that can help and posters are available that display the most common poisonous plants.

These plants may form an important part of your garden, but you need to manage them to prevent accidents particularly if children are involved or visit your garden. Make sure if you're growing poisonous plants that you, or whoever else is on site, knows what to do if an incident occurs.

Pathways and walkways

Keep these clear of obstacles and hidden dangers like trailing hoses or electric cables. If temporary obstacles cannot be avoided have a mobile sign pointing out the danger.

Use of wheel barrows

Make sure the wheelbarrow is in a decent state of repair and do not overload - only move what you can easily manage. Load the barrow at the front over the wheel, not at the handles end. Avoid pushing the loaded barrow over soft ground. Train staff/volunteers in their use.

Use of garden tools

Associated risks include, for example, rakes and forks left lying face up on the ground.

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 - general duties of employers

Draw up a health and safety policy

Pull together a working group that writes, implements, checks and regularly revises your policy. If you employ staff make sure they, or a staff representative, are part of the working group. FCFCG can provide example models of policies.

Minimise risks to health

Are you regularly inspecting and checking the garden and its facilities for risk factors? What problems have these checks identified and what have you done about it? Have there been any changes since your last check that require immediate assessment.

Provide good information, instruction, training and supervision

Is there safety information provided on the garden site? Can all users (including children, people with learning difficulties and those whose first language is not English) understand this information? Is there safety signage on show for visitors? What health and safety training do you provide, e.g. how many of your volunteers (and staff) know how to dig or lift safely, or fill and push a loaded wheelbarrow? FCFCG has produced a Clean Hands Zone toolkit, particularly for city farms and groups which keep livestock, but which is applicable to all groups. This is available to download free from:
www.farmgarden.org.uk/publications

Provide preventative advice and appropriate First Aid

Do you have a fully-stocked and easily accessible First Aid kit? How many of your volunteers, staff and members are qualified First Aiders (or 'Appointed Persons')? When are they on site? What information do you provide to users, e.g. tetanus information? Does the garden display a clear notice stating where First

Aid is available? For the smaller community garden without facilities you should at the very least provide clear details of where to find the nearest public telephone and a list of other contacts, e.g. local GP, local council environmental health department.

Provide appropriate welfare facilities

Are your toilets and washing facilities clean and accessible? If there are no toilets on site can you negotiate for use of nearby facilities? Is there a reasonably comfortable, sheltered place where volunteers and staff can relax, avoid bad weather and make a cup of tea? What provision have you made for smokers?

Investigate accidents, industrial diseases and dangerous occurrences

Do you have an accident book and is it kept in an easy-to-find place? Are there clear instructions about what to do, what needs to be recorded and who to contact?

Procedures for the safe use, handling, storage and transportation of articles and substances

The best policy is to minimize the use of dangerous substances on the garden (or even better not use any at all), particularly where children are involved, otherwise you need to state a clear policy and set of procedures for storing and using these substances.

Provide insurance

See *Insurance* earlier in this chapter.





Proper storage and maintenance helps reduce accidents, as does training.

Power and electrical tools

Where appropriate keep power and electrical tools locked and have a booking in/out system to monitor use; only allow those who have received appropriate training to use them. Some power tools require the user to be qualified to use them (e.g. a chainsaw or motorised strimmer) and that the appropriate health and safety equipment be worn. A qualified electrician must check all electrical appliances - even your kettle - annually.

If you are using petrol driven equipment (e.g. strimmers) ensure that fire safety precautions are taking when handling the fuel and that any petrol is stored safely or removed from the site.

Compost heaps

A compost heap that is not managed well can attract vermin. Signpost clearly what can/cannot be put on your heap and timetable regular maintenance into staff/volunteer duties.

Manure

Manure can pose a health risk and should be well rotted, for at least six months, before handling. Always handle using gloves or appropriate tools.

Dogs

Many community growing spaces are dog free zones (with the exception of guide dogs). Dog faeces can have an impact on the land for up to 15 years and pose health problems

for young children and pregnant women. Remove dog faeces hygienically if it appears in your garden, or have a dedicated bin for this purpose if you do allow dogs.

Bees

An increasing number of community growing groups are keeping bees and there are obvious health and safety implications around being stung as well as less obvious issues about moving hives, use of equipment etc. There is more information from the British Beekeeping association at: www.bbka.org.uk

Fire hazards

Contact the Fire Safety Officer at your local fire station for advice and assessment of fire hazards on your site.

Food preparation and hygiene

Community gardens are increasingly being used as a space to cook and share food together, using produce grown on site (see the FCFCG topic sheet 'Cooking and feasting on the plot'. From soups for volunteers' lunches, to making jam with glut fruit, it is really important that you make sure your food is safe to eat and that you are meeting food safety legislation requirements.

If you are preparing food for sale or for consumption in a community building, the venue's management committee is responsible for ensuring that the premises are clean and well maintained and this includes the kitchen area. Whoever does



the catering is responsible for ensuring the safety of the food prepared and served on those premises.

Food safety legislation

Food hygiene legislation sets out regulations governing the handling, storage and preparation of food (and drinks). The main requirements are set out under The Food Safety Act 1990 (as amended), which applies to England, Scotland and Wales. If your community group is preparing, handling, cooking and/or providing food for public consumption your committee/board members are responsible for ensuring that:

- ✔ You do not include anything in food, remove anything from food or treat food in any way that will mean that it would be damaging to the health of people eating it. This means that any food you prepare, store and sell should be fit for human consumption and will not make anyone eating (or drinking) it ill.
- ✔ The food you serve or sell is of the nature, substance or quality which consumers would expect.
- ✔ That the food is labelled, advertised and presented in a way that is not false or misleading.

Day to day enforcement of Food Safety legislation is in the main the responsibility of Environmental Health practitioners and Local Authority Trading Standards officers. The Food Standards Agency, overseeing the work of local authorities in relation to food safety, also enforces some of the regulations.

Ensuring compliance and best practice food safety procedures

- ✔ All food and drink - including water - should be prepared safely and hygienically in premises that are clean and properly equipped. On community gardens this can be more challenging; check out the FCFCG 'Cooking and Feasting on the Plot' topic sheet for further information.
- ✔ Anyone preparing or supervising the preparation of food, should be properly trained or instructed in food hygiene.
- ✔ Your food hygiene procedures should demonstrate that you have effective food safety management in place. Anyone responsible for developing and maintaining food hygiene procedures should also have received adequate food hygiene training.
- ✔ If your community group has a premises with a kitchen used for the storage and preparation of food for public consumption (perhaps a village hall or community centre), display food hygiene posters prominently in the kitchen area as well as on other notice-boards. You may also wish to send a food hygiene leaflet to user groups when they make a booking and will be using your kitchen.

If your community group is responsible for a kitchen as part of your premises your committee or board members should carry out a risk assessment in relation to food hygiene. This will:

- ▶ Identify any hazards to food safety. Consider things like cross contamination of foods, temperatures for storage etc.
- ▶ Enable you to put controls in place to deal with these hazards.
- ▶ Agree a procedure for checking that those controls are carried out and working.

Your Food Safety Risk Assessment will enable you to adopt a Food Safety Policy, stating:

- ▶ What you will do if something goes wrong
- ▶ How you will keep your procedures up to date
- ▶ That you will record inspections and reviews.

Contact your Local Authority for specific guidance. They should be able to offer

advice and guidance on matters relating to Food Hygiene including good practice, procedures, safety checks, supervision and training. They should also be able to supply posters for display in your venue and leaflets to disseminate to user groups, look over and advise on plans for any new community hall and arrange or provide training courses in food preparation and handling, and sometimes assist with the costs.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

If your group works with children under the age of 18, or 'vulnerable' adults, you will want to make sure that any members, paid employees or volunteers are suitable for the tasks they undertake. Part of this process can involve checking whether an individual:

- ▶ Has any relevant convictions
- ▶ Has had any relevant cautions, warnings or reprimands from the police
- ▶ Is named on lists of those unsuitable for work with children or vulnerable adults
- ▶ Has been disqualified or banned from working with children or vulnerable adults by a judge following conviction for a relevant offence.

Formerly known as CRB checks, a new system was introduced in 2012 by the newly-formed Disclosure and Barring Service. The aim of DBS checks is to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults who may volunteer at or visit your garden.

There are now three levels of checks available (which will cost from £26 to £44) depending on what information needs to be retrieved.

Getting a DBS disclosure is a legal obligation in some circumstances, or a requirement for insurance cover in others, but very often it will be a matter of judgement for your group. They can be a useful tool, but can also be limited as they provide information about a person's past rather than future actions. If you have paid employees or volunteers you will need policies and procedures covering recruitment, training and support, health and safety and equal opportunities.

To get more information on the new procedure visit the DBS website at: www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check

Further information

WCVA

Information on managing volunteers.

www.wcva.org.uk/advice-guidance/volunteers

Food and hygiene courses

www.food-hygiene-certificate.co.uk/food-hygiene-level-2.aspx

www.food-certificate.co.uk/catering/online-food-hygiene-for-catering.aspx

Training on 'Outdoor food and hygiene cooking': www.cambiumsustainable.co.uk

FCFCG Factsheet

Model risk assessments and topic sheets 'Health & Safety for community growing projects', and 'Cooking and feasting on the plot' and 'Clean Hands Zone toolkit'.

www.farmgarden.org.uk/publications



www.farmgarden.co.uk

Recruitment & training

Taking on staff and volunteers and understanding what's involved in this process is an important step in a group's development. Your most valuable resources are the people involved in your group. Whether paid or unpaid, the people involved in your project need to feel valued, supported and well managed - and your project needs to fulfill its legal responsibilities towards them.

Volunteers

Whatever they do for the garden - and no matter how much time they spend doing it - if they are not getting paid then that person is a volunteer. That probably includes you reading this now!

Community growing spaces can offer a wide variety of opportunities for

volunteering, for both the skilled and experienced and the - as yet - unskilled or less experienced. Volunteering can cover any activity and responsibility, from the volunteer chairperson with legal accountability and requiring a number of specialist skills, to the casual volunteer who agrees to deliver some leaflets three times a year.

Volunteers can be recruited from:

- ▶ Your own members and supporters
- ▶ Site visitors
- ▶ Local residents
- ▶ Members of other local organisations/groups
- ▶ Local school children or conservation work parties
- ▶ Volunteer workers from local businesses.

Remember: Most people become volunteers because someone asks them. Don't be passive about getting volunteers; get out there and find them.

Mutual benefit

Volunteering should be a mutually beneficial, enjoyable and rewarding

Recruiting volunteers - a systematic approach

- ▶ **Volunteer job descriptions:** These should clearly define the work that needs doing. You may need more than one of these if some of the work of volunteers is specialized or you are looking for particular skills for a particular project.
- ▶ **Advertising:** Volunteer notice board, local community papers, volunteer agencies.
- ▶ **Application process:** Including an application form and an informal but structured interview.
- ▶ **References**
- ▶ **Equal opportunities monitoring form**
- ▶ **Volunteer agreement:** A written document expressing your commitment to the volunteer and what you expect from them.
- ▶ **How problems will be dealt with:** Simple guidelines relating to your group and the volunteer.
- ▶ **Volunteer handbook:** A user-friendly leaflet containing information about your project and how you work.
- ▶ **Induction:** Draw up a simple checklist of the things a new volunteer will need to know.
- ▶ **Regular supervision and support:** A one to one discussion with the volunteer to find out how they are, thank them for the work they are carrying out, identify any problems and agree how they are to be overcome, assess any training needs and plan what they will be doing until the next supervision session.
- ▶ **Training:** This can take place at your garden or another venue and can be both formal and informal, however it should always be tailored to meet the needs of your volunteers. There are many organisations that can help you set up your own training, or provide training for you.
- ▶ **Records:** Keep information on how to contact your volunteers, when they are available, what skills, experience and interests they have, what they want to do and what they want to get out of it. Where someone is a regular volunteer consider keeping additional useful information, e.g. a contact in case of an emergency and any special medications. All records should be kept in a safe and secure place with restricted access to protect confidentiality; remember that individuals have a right to see their records if requested.
- ▶ **Expenses:** Volunteering should be free, so if possible your group should provide travel expenses, refreshments, protective clothing and ideally a place to relax with a cuppa.
- ▶ **Child and vulnerable adult protection:** PVG checks (see above) for volunteers and staff will be required if your garden works with children or vulnerable adults. We strongly recommend that volunteers and staff always have another adult present when working with children and vulnerable adults.

experience. Your group should benefit from the time, enthusiasm, skills and energy given to it by the volunteer, but equally, the volunteer should be able to take advantage of the opportunities offered by you to learn new skills, meet new people and make a positive contribution to the local community.

To ensure that volunteering on your garden benefits all concerned it's important to keep a balance between your group's capacity - ability, time and skills - to support and manage volunteers, and the amount of work that needs doing.

Saying 'yes' to everyone who wants to volunteer can lead to problems. Some volunteers might have needs that cannot be met by your group. You need to offer friendly and informal volunteering opportunities whilst remembering your responsibilities to protect the public and the volunteers working with you.

Setting up volunteer recruitment systems

Consider setting up systems (see box) to help you recruit regular and key volunteers when your group is established and you have projects to work on. Recruit and treat them the same way as you would a paid member of staff. More casual volunteers may require less formality than those in key roles but should still benefit from many of these systems.

Advice and support on volunteer management

This is a massive area and while the information above may seem daunting, there is a huge amount of advice and support out there to help you recruit, induct and support work with volunteers (see box on page 50). Developing a volunteer policy and investing time and energy setting up

Support for volunteer managers

Local volunteering organisations:

Often there will be a volunteering organisation in your area, such as a volunteer bureau or a Council for Voluntary Service (CVS).

Local councils: Some local authorities provide help and support or fund other bodies to do the job of providing volunteering advice and support.

Other community growing groups:

Ask other local groups where they've got help or support in recruiting volunteers.

Libraries: Should have information to help you find volunteering groups or general information on volunteering.

Online advice: There is a wealth of information and support online. Some of the best sources of information are:

www.csv.org.uk - The UK volunteering and learning charity

www.tcv.org.uk - The Conservation Volunteers (formerly BTCV)

<https://do-it.org> - Matches potential volunteers with opportunities

www.volunteering-wales.net - Volunteering in Wales

www.wcva.org.uk - Wales Council For Voluntary Action

systems to recruit and support volunteers will help to ensure that both your group and all your volunteers have positive and rewarding experiences. Make volunteering enjoyable. Provide refreshments, organise social events and outings to other community growing spaces, and treat your volunteers both as part of your team and as the generous human beings they are!

Paid workers

Few groups employ staff in the early stages of their development but when/if you reach the stage of considering employing staff you need to be aware that there is much to learn regarding employment law, budgeting and associated factors. You can get direct advice from FCFCG development staff, as

well as other local groups who may have employed staff themselves.

Employing staff: Budgets and salaries

There are a number of factors to consider when employing staff which will have an impact on budgets, not least what salaries to pay and any added costs, such as pension schemes and National Insurance:

- ✓ You could link pay to local government pay rates – your local council may have a voluntary sector unit or you could contact your local Unison branch. You could also look at the NAVCA pay scales. www.navca.org.uk/localvs/scales
- ✓ Scan job adverts in your local paper or online at www.goodmoves.org.uk or www.environmentjob.co.uk to see what wages are paid by comparable jobs. It's also worth looking at the FCFCG website as member groups often have vacancies advertised on the Jobs page.
- ✓ Remember to budget for annual pay rises - if pay is linked to local government rates, pay awards are agreed nationally.
- ✓ Decide if you plan to pay your staff annual increments (increments are for each year of service up to a maximum number of years, and are separate from pay rises).
- ✓ Also decide if you plan to make contributions to a staff pension scheme.
- ✓ Remember to include Employers' National Insurance.

Employment law – Your responsibilities

See details under **Step 10: Governance & paperwork**



Meanwood Valley Urban Farm, Leeds



Spitalfields City Farm, London

Training for volunteers/staff

Many groups make the mistake of viewing training as a cost rather than as an investment. Both your community garden as a whole and individual volunteers and staff will benefit from an investment in training and each other's growth and development.

Benefits to individuals and the community garden

- ▶ Your volunteers and staff are your key resource. Their ability to use their skills, knowledge, experience, enthusiasm and commitment to help your group meet its aims will determine how successful your garden will be.
- ▶ A group that cares about its volunteers and staff is one that recognizes the importance of providing them with training opportunities that help them develop and contribute - if it doesn't, people may leave.
- ▶ Training provides the opportunity for people to upgrade and diversify their skills, and to move into more challenging roles on the project.
- ▶ Training enables your group to put into practice the policies and working practices that have been developed and agreed. For example, policies covering

child protection, equal opportunities, or health and safety are worth very little unless practical training is provided so that all volunteers and staff can understand and implement them.

- ▶ When the group reviews its progress it should consider how training might help to maximise any anticipated opportunities and reduce any threats facing the garden. For example, training might be necessary before the introduction of new services or when founder members leave.
- ▶ As part of your general plan for the development of the garden it's a good idea to include a simple training plan, providing a framework for supporting your volunteers and staff.

Developing a training plan – What's needed?

For a training plan to make sense it should fit into the way your group and site is likely to develop. Ask yourselves the following questions:

- ✔ What are your aims?
- ✔ What tasks and skills are needed to achieve those aims?
- ✔ Who is going to do what?
- ✔ Do they need training in order to do it?
- ✔ If yes, have you got the budget to pay for training?

- ✓ Who is going to provide the training?
You need to research training providers carefully to see what their track record is like, qualifications of trainers, whether their prices are competitive etc.
- ✓ Is training actually needed or appropriate?

Sometimes it can be easier for an outside person to see what you cannot in terms of training needs. FCFCG can provide advice and support to member groups in identifying training needs.

Training methods

Training doesn't just mean sitting in a classroom - there are a wide variety of training methods that can be used on a community garden, for example:

- ▶ Watching someone operate a piece of equipment then replicating their actions
- ▶ Using real life examples when training about financial planning and handling money
- ▶ Attending off-site training sessions and workshops as part of an FCFCG regional networking event
- ▶ Taking a self-study course using online study materials

- ▶ Training provided by other community growing groups.

You'll need to choose a combination of methods that suit the needs, skills and experiences of those receiving the training. We generally learn most effectively:

- ▶ When learning is seen as relevant to our needs
- ▶ Through actions and hands on activities
- ▶ When we're motivated to learn
- ▶ By getting constructive feedback on results.

Or as a Chinese proverb puts it: "I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand."

Evaluating training

It's important to assess whether training is effective or not. Evaluate the training your staff or volunteers receive by asking two questions. Are those who did the training still applying what they learned? Has anyone else benefited from the training they had?

Training can cause changes in practices both immediately and over time, so remember to carry out a follow-up evaluation (e.g. after 6 months), as well as during and immediately after the training.

Further information

FCFCG

FCFCG has a range of policy documents available including a job description template for volunteers. Contact your local FCFCG Wales office for details.

www.farmgarden.org.uk/wales

WCVA

See the WCVA website at www.wcva.org.uk for details of your local voluntary council as well as further advice and support.

www.wcva.org.uk/advice-guidance/trustees-and-governance

www.wcva.org.uk/advice-guidance/employing-and-managing-people

Cooperatives UK

Details on governance issues.

www.uk.coop/simplygovernance

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)

Wide range of short courses for those involved in community and environmental work.

www.tcv.org.uk

step

10

Governance & paperwork

If your group is well organised and follows good practice it is more likely to function better, deal with administration quicker and be more robust for the future.

Trustees and management committee members (or Directors if your organisation is a company) carry an important responsibility to manage their organisations and deliver on their objectives in a way that enhances public trust and support.

Good governance - follow the code

The Charity Commission, document, 'Good Governance – A code for the voluntary sector', outlines standards for boards seeking to become more effective in leading their organisations. These are summarised below. The full document is available to download from: www.charitycommission.gov.uk

Understanding the board's role

Members of the board will understand their role and responsibilities collectively and individually in relation to:

- ▶ Legal duties
- ▶ Stewardship of assets
- ▶ Provisions of the governing document
- ▶ External environment
- ▶ Total structure of the organisation

And in terms of:

- ▶ Setting and safeguarding the vision, values and reputation of the organisation
- ▶ Overseeing the work of the organisation
- ▶ Managing and supporting staff and volunteers, where applicable.

Ensuring delivery of organisational purpose

The board will ensure that the organisation delivers its stated purposes or aims by:

- ▶ Ensuring organisational purposes remain relevant and valid
- ▶ Developing and agreeing a long term strategy

- ▶ agreeing operational plans and budgets
- ▶ Monitoring progress and spending against plan and budget
- ▶ Evaluating results, assessing outcomes and impact
- ▶ Reviewing and/or amending the plan and budget as appropriate.

Working effectively both as individuals and as a team

The board will have a range of appropriate policies and procedures, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours to enable both individuals and the board to work effectively. These will include:

- ▶ Finding and recruiting new board members to meet the organisation's changing needs in relation to skills, experience and diversity
- ▶ Providing suitable induction for new board members
- ▶ Providing all board members with opportunities for training and development according to their needs
- ▶ Periodically reviewing their performance both as individuals and as a team.

Exercising effective control

As the accountable body, the board will ensure that:

- ▶ The organisation understands and complies with all legal and regulatory requirements that apply to it
- ▶ The organisation continues to have good internal financial and management controls
- ▶ It regularly identifies and reviews the major risks to which the organisation is exposed and has systems to manage those risks
- ▶ Delegation to committees, staff and volunteers (as applicable) works effectively and the use of delegated authority is properly supervised.

Behaving with integrity

The board will:

- ▶ Safeguard and promote the organisation's reputation
- ▶ Act according to high ethical standards
- ▶ Identify, understand and manage conflicts of interest and loyalty

- ▶ Maintain independence of decision making
- ▶ Deliver impact that best meets the needs of beneficiaries.

Being open and accountable

The board will lead the organisation in being open and accountable, both internally and externally. This will include:

- ▶ Open communications, informing people about the organisation and its work
- ▶ Appropriate consultation on significant changes to the organisation's services or policies
- ▶ Listening and responding to the views of supporters, funders, beneficiaries, service users and others with an interest in the organisation's work
- ▶ Handling complaints constructively, impartially and effectively
- ▶ Considering the organisation's responsibilities to the wider community, e.g. its environmental impact.

Legal responsibilities

Employment rights

There's no getting round the fact that employing people can be complex, adds to the administration of an organisation and requires a lot of good practice. However, by treating your workers well you can reap many rewards from a committed and enthusiastic staff member. Remember that all employees will have employment rights, such as entitlement to contracts, periods of notice, redundancy payments, claims for unfair dismissal, holidays, maternity and paternity leave etc.



The Ecology Centre, Fife

Rules and regulations around employment are being constantly updated. Keep up to date via the Government's own website. www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment

Further information is available from the website of the Department for Business Innovation and Skills.

The tax office is also an important port of call. As an employer, you need to get the series of *Leaflets for Employers* from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), and bear in mind that trade unions actively involved in the voluntary sector (e.g. UNISON, TGWU, GMB and MSF) can offer helpful advice and often have a local office and advisers.

You cannot refuse to employ someone with a criminal record (The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) but if you intend engaging with children or vulnerable adults you have the responsibility to protect them by making checks through the Protection of Vulnerable Groups scheme (see *Step 8 - Safety first*).

Fire

If you have - or plan to have - a building then invite the local Fire Safety Officer to assess your proposals, and the project site, to give advice and say whether or not you will need a fire certificate. It is good practice to seek general fire safety advice for the whole of the garden site whether you have buildings or not.

Food

If you intend preparing and/or selling food, either regularly or at one off events, then invite the local Environmental Health Officer for your area, employed by your local council, to give you help and advice (see also risk advice in *Step 8 - Safety first*).

Finance

All groups should keep accounts and in most cases are legally obliged to do so.

- ▶ Registered charities, co-operatives and companies must, by law, keep proper books of account that have to include a statement of income and expenditure. This normally covers a 12-month period.
- ▶ Account books and statements must be kept for a minimum of seven years.
- ▶ Accounts must be independently examined by a suitably experienced



Spitalfields City Farm, London

person. Whether a professional audit is required depends on the type of organisation and the level of its annual turnover. If your organisation is a charity with £50,000 turnover or more we strongly recommend that you have a professional audit, although this is not a legal requirement.

- ▶ A registered charity must spend its funds in accordance with what is stated in its constitution. If not, its trustees (usually the management committee) become personally liable and the Charity Commission could force them to repay any misspent money. Companies must stick to the aims included in their memorandum of association..
- ▶ Organisations employing staff are legally responsible for maintaining records of income tax (PAYE) deductions, national insurance (NI) contributions and any statutory sick pay payments, and any maternity or paternity pay and pensions.
- ▶ Any community garden that trades, i.e. sells goods or services that are not directly furthering their constitution objectives, and has a taxable annual

turnover of more than £77,000 (at April 2012) a year, must register for Value Added Tax (VAT) and keep detailed records. This figure is usually changed annually.



Walsall Road Allotments, Birmingham

Legal agreements

Who is authorised to sign legal documents on behalf of your group will depend on the type of organisation you are.

Your bank accounts should have a minimum of two signatories on any cheque issued. Normally one is your Treasurer and the other should be someone else on the management committee, or a key member of staff. The bank will expect to receive an extract of management committee minutes at which signatories are decided. It is good practice to appoint three or four people as signatories of whom any two can sign; extra security and accountability exists where three people need to sign of which one is usually the Treasurer.

If you are a registered charity it is essential that documents refer to this fact. Items such as notices, web sites, leaflets, flyers, posters, letterheads, advertisements, emails and any kind of member information should all have the charity number on them. Even if you're sending out information looking for supporters and trying to solicit membership subscriptions, you are still required to state your charity number. If you have a charity bank account that comes with a chequebook you should have your charity number stamped on there too. Likewise, any other kinds of financial paperwork such as receipts, bills, expenses, invoices and

more should have the statement that you are a registered charity on them and if possible your charity number. The correct way of doing this is to have any of the following statements: 'Registered Charity Number....', 'Registered as a Charity' or 'A Registered Charity'.

Other legal documents, e.g. a license or lease, should only be signed by people authorised by the organisation. If you are a registered company then documents will usually specify Company Secretary or Chair etc. If you are a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), a member of the management committee should sign. If you are an unincorporated charity or organisation, your management committee (or steering group if you haven't yet formed a committee) should decide who will sign legal documents. Everyone needs to understand the legal responsibilities contained within each document, but it is the individual who will be legally responsible (an unincorporated association cannot itself enter into legal agreements; individuals act on behalf of the organisation).

It is common practice for an 'upstanding' member of the local community (e.g. police officer or vicar) who is not a member of the management committee to become a 'holding trustee' and sign documents where assets (land and buildings in particular) are involved.

Other legal requirements

- ▶ If you store information about people, for example on a computer database, you need to ensure that information is safe and not made public without the individual's permission. If you keep a lot of contact records, you may need to register with the Registrar of Data Protection under the Data Protection Act 1984 (see also section on contacts and members below). Further information about data protection rules and obligations is available on the Information Commissioner's website: www.ico.org.uk. Not for profit organisations are exempt from being required to register with the Commissioner. You can check your group's registration obligations using the self-assessment tool at: https://ico.org.uk/for_organisations/data_protection/registration/self_assessment/1

- ▶ You should not sell donated goods unless you either have them tested by recognised professionals, or display clear signs to the effect that the goods are donated and you cannot guarantee their quality and reliability.
- ▶ You should maintain an accident book and record all injuries that occur on the site. These can be purchased in most stationers or office supply stores.
- ▶ Leases, licences, insurance and health and safety requirements have been covered in other steps.

Paperwork

Keeping accurate, accessible records is very important for a number of reasons:

- ▶ As evidence of decisions made and a guide to what you want to achieve
- ▶ As an archive to help learning for the future
- ▶ To provide the committee, users of the garden and supporters with evidence of what has been achieved
- ▶ To provide information by which activities can be reviewed and as the raw material for producing reports, funding applications etc
- ▶ To fulfill legal obligations, e.g. employment records or annual accounts.

Visual records

Keeping visual records, including photographs, videos, design graphics and artwork can help build up a fantastic resource which demonstrates the history of your project. Visual records are valuable for a variety of reasons:

- ▶ It will lift your spirits when the going gets tough - you can look back and see what has been achieved.
- ▶ It will provide useful visual information for publicity and funding applications.
- ▶ It will help new members to understand the project's development.
- ▶ Slides and videos can be used for presentations and talks to promote your garden, to help others trying to start their own community growing spaces and for training your management committee members, volunteers and staff.

Video records can be useful, but don't overdo it. Video needs to be edited into 5-20

minute presentations that have a purpose, e.g. the first five years of the garden, the garden over four seasons, a successful training event, or a training video like health and safety in the garden.

Keep sets of drawings, architects' plans, designs etc. as a visual record of all service layouts including water, electricity, gas, drains, sewers, telephone/cable and have all important elements, such as stop cocks, meters, drain covers and inspection points, marked. This will help with your maintenance programme and be useful in an emergency.

Keep planting plans, exercises and models made in designing the garden, student projects or anything else that provides historical records of development and may stimulate ideas in the future.

Written records

Many people may be involved in your garden in lots of different ways. It's important that your record-keeping systems are comprehensive but simple, so that they help rather than hinder communication.

- ✔ Keep a 'day book' in any office or building you might have on-site, so that members, staff or volunteers coming to work or using the facilities know what has happened since their last visit. For example: "Lock on tool shed has been changed; see Joe for your key". Record numbers and types of visitors to the garden to show who it is helping and help identify any groups you might wish to encourage.



- ✔ Display or keep a horticultural calendar, marking off what has been done and when, what has flowered and when, etc.
- ✔ Funders will require you to report on how you have spent the money they



North Kelvin Meadow Campaign, Glasgow

have donated and the positive benefits to the local community that have resulted from their support. The task of reporting to funders will be made much easier if you keep appropriate records of the work, events and activities they have funded.

Contacts and members

Information can be kept on cards showing details for each contact or member: who they are, how they can be contacted, what they can do, when they are available, whether their membership fees have been paid etc.

Remember that the Data Protection Act allows an individual to see personal information about them that is being stored. The main principles to follow are to keep information secure, only record the information you need and that you know to be accurate (not rumour or personal opinion), and only make it available to those who need it.

Don't give anyone access to records, unless they have a legitimate need to see the information. You may also wish to consider seeking signed permission from individuals if you want to store the information electronically, e.g. on a computer database.

Further information about data protection rules and obligations is available on the Information Commissioner's website. www.ico.org.uk

Events and activities

If you hold events, keep a file of relevant information, e.g. who designed the posters, where the bouncy castle came from, and who was willing to help. Make notes of what went well, what didn't work and why, as well as numbers of participants, funds raised, etc. This will save a lot of time in the future and make it easier for new people to get involved in organising events. Keep records of activities in the same way.

If your event or activity was made possible by funders, make sure you keep note of the information they require, and report back within deadlines.

Comments book and suggestions box

Have a suggestions box in a secure, prominent place on site and encourage visitors and supporters to use it. Publicise your complaints procedure so visitors and supporters know how they can raise any concerns they might have and make sure you respond to any concerns raised within agreed time limits. Have one group member who regularly monitors these comments and brings a report to your management committee meetings.

Posters and notices

- ✓ Keep up-to-date copies of all policies and legal documents, e.g. whether the use of fertilisers is permitted; who can become members of the garden; who they should contact if they would like to volunteer etc. Make sure all staff and volunteers know where to find this information.
- ✓ Display key information in everyday language, e.g. whether dogs are allowed in the garden. Consider using drawings as well as text to communicate information whenever possible and translating information into languages appropriate to your local community.
- ✓ Try to avoid too many 'don't do...' notices, as they can create an unwelcoming atmosphere. Too much information (notice overload) can be as counterproductive as too little. Try to keep notices to designated areas. Remove tired looking/out of date notices.

Policy documents

Policy documents allow you to set out in detail what good practice policies you have in place for a variety of issues and circumstances. They give a set of easily definable rules, which everyone within your organisation needs to follow.

Of course, a balance needs to be struck between wanting to ensure good practice in as many areas as possible, and having the capacity to create and implement policies. So what are the essential policies you need to have in place? This in part depends on what kind of site you have, whether you allow visitors, who carries out activities on your site and what kind of activities take place. The following five policies would be useful in most cases.

Child and Vulnerable Persons Policy

Designed to actively promote awareness, good practice and sound procedures. This policy aims to ensure that children, young people and vulnerable adults have the opportunity to develop their physical, emotional and social skills and are respected regardless of their age, ability or sexual orientation.

Volunteer Policy

All community growing groups rely on volunteer help, so having a policy which sets out how the group works in the interests of its volunteers and what is expected of volunteers in return, is a useful document.

Environmental Policy

Your work will generally focus on community and environmental improvement, but some activities involved (e.g. travel, energy use, procurement of goods and waste generation) have a negative environmental impact. This policy would set out how you would aim to reduce that impact.

Health & Safety Policy

Useful to make people aware of health and safety issues, their responsibilities and what the group is doing to ensure good health and safety on the site.

Equal Opportunities Policy

Helps pull together good practice in terms

of how your group aims to implement equal opportunities

FCFCG has a number of template and example policies available.

Monitoring and evaluating progress

Evaluating your project and monitoring progress is essential in the delivery of any community initiative, yet it is something that is often overlooked until it's too late and the project has been delivered.

It's an opportunity to see how you're doing and whether you are achieving what you set out to. If you're not, then it gives you a chance to address any problems or make any changes necessary. It's also a great opportunity to record the impact you're having and celebrate your successes. This information can then be used as evidence for funders, policy makers, partners and the wider public.

It is extremely important to put recording and monitoring systems in place at the beginning of the project. Here are some suggestions on how you can do this:

- ✔ Keep photographic evidence of the site. Before and after shots are great, and you can record the progress as you go.
- ✔ Keep a record of number of volunteers and visitors to the project, as well as training days and events, dates and numbers who attended.
- ✔ Photographs of activities, training or events taking place on a project are an attractive way to highlight to funders what you have been delivering (just make sure you get permission from the people you photograph if you plan to use them publicly. Parental permission must be obtained if children under 16.
- ✔ Feedback forms are a great way of getting feedback if you are delivering training or events and help to inform you on how you deliver future events.
- ✔ Have a visitor book, so people can write comments in if they choose to.
- ✔ Keep any press clippings, flyers and posters from events.
- ✔ Recording volunteers' stories is an opportunity to obtain some qualitative data, capturing the impact the project

has had on peoples' lives, such as their health and well-being, social inclusion, confidence and self-esteem and skills gained.

- ✓ Recording biodiversity on your site at the beginning, then carrying out an annual survey, is a great way to engage volunteers and raise awareness of wildlife, whilst providing evidence of

how your project may have enhanced biodiversity.

There is plenty more in-depth information available on how to evaluate your project. In Wales, FCFCG has developed a self-evaluation toolkit with a set of indicators designed specifically for community growing.

Further information

FCFCG

Range of policy documents available. Self-evaluation toolkit. Contact your local FCFCG Wales office for details.

www.farmgarden.org.uk/wales

WCVA

See the WCVA website for details of your local voluntary council.

www.wcva.org.uk

www.wcva.org.uk/advice-guidance/trustees-and-governance

Co-operatives UK

Produce a series of 'Simply' documents for co-operatives, community organisations and social enterprises covering legal issues, finance, governance and start up.

www.uk.coop/simplylegal

Wales Co-operative Centre

www.walescooperative.org

Just about Managing?

Effective management for voluntary organisations and community groups.

www.lvsc.org.uk/advice-support.aspx

Give as you earn (GAYE)

www.cafonline.org/my-personal-giving/plan-your-giving/caf-give-as-you-earn.aspx

Sustain

'Evaluating your food project' publication.

www.sustainweb.org/foodcoopstoolkit/monitoringandevaluation

Centre for Public Health

'Monitoring and evaluation - A guide for community projects'

www.cph.org.uk/publication/monitoring-and-evaluation-a-guide-for-community-projects-a-short-guide

Becoming a Membership organisation

If your community garden is going to be a membership organisation, it's important that you can demonstrate that local people can support the garden by choosing to become members and have a say in the garden's running and development.

Who are our members?

This should be one of your first questions - and the answer is not always obvious. A supporter can be defined as anyone who wishes to be associated with your organisation and its aims and goals. Supporters are often people who are prepared to give time and talent as well as money, but are these people also your 'members'?

Some groups call anyone who gives money a member. Some call anyone who happens to live in a specific area a member. Some call their visitors members, or have a membership scheme

that people pay to join. You need to decide how to define your members, and include a definition in your constitution.

Representatives from your membership may later become the management committee.

Membership fees

Groups are often resistant to raising money from members - especially where local people (or many of them) are on low incomes, but there can be advantages.

- ▶ Money from members is dependable, which helps your cashflow, as long as you do what the membership wants.
- ▶ Paying members tend to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the garden. They are less likely to drift in and out of involvement; more likely to be committed to supporting you.
- ▶ Membership demonstrates local support, especially to organisations that can provide help, funds, or donations in-kind so that they will, in turn, be more likely to support you.
- ▶ Garden members may give you access to useful contacts through their employers or other organisations to



which they belong. This could lead to further offers of help, like donations in-kind; it's often who you know, and who knows them, that can help you in the future.

Think about your own area; do other voluntary and community organisations charge membership fees?

If you decide to charge fees your next task will be to decide how much to charge. Even if you have fees now, when did you last raise them? Are they realistic? What proportion of your garden's running costs do they meet?

Membership fees can help cover some of the running costs of your garden. Don't set fees too low - set them at a level at which you get some income from those who are able to pay, and can offer concessions to those who can't. And don't forget you will need to cover the costs of administering your membership.

When publicising membership point out equivalents, e.g. 10p a week makes over £5 a year, 50 members would generate £250 a year, or for the price of a pint of beer you can be a member of the garden for four months.

There are alternatives to fixed fees. You could:

- ▶ Offer a range of ways to pay, e.g. weekly, monthly or yearly rate (but non-

annual ways to pay require more administration).

- ▶ Offer discounts if members provide volunteering services, such as delivering newsletters.
- ▶ Offer different rates for individuals, families, OAPs, those on low incomes, etc.
- ▶ Charge affiliation fees to other local community and voluntary organisations.
- ▶ Get someone else, say an employer, to pay the fee.

In all instances make it clear what the membership fees are paying for, e.g. "Your money will go to buy plants and materials, not admin costs."

Make any membership benefits clear – providing a regular newsletter will keep people engaged. Maybe offer a discount to members if you sell any products.

Getting new members

This could partially be the responsibility of existing members. Ask each member to find and recruit 3-5 new members a year. Talking to potential members is an important and effective way to promote your garden. You should mention your membership scheme on any other publicity you produce, along with contact details for anyone interested.

Queens Park Community Garden, Swindon

Membership records and renewals

As a minimum you need to know the name and address of your members and their date of joining. To report to funders and make sure you are attracting all members of the community you may also want to record details such as age, gender, ethnicity or income. It's also a good idea to ask for and keep records of skills that members can share with your group.

Keep clear and accurate records; you are dealing with people's money and even small mistakes tend to upset people. And remember to keep your members' personal details safe – you will have a responsibility under the Data Protection Act to ensure this (see **Step 10: Governance & paperwork**).

Try asking your members to collect renewal fees from other members; this can help to form relationships and encourages the spread of information about your garden.

Larger community growing spaces, offering a wide range of services, may combine membership with additional voluntary giving schemes such as covenants and give as you

earn (GAYE), which give your supporters a means to further contribute to your group.

Remember: active members are your garden's most valuable resource. You will know from your records how to contact them and ask for help. Some of them will be future management committee members.



Riverside Community Garden, Cardiff

Further information

Give as you earn (GAYE)

www.cafonline.org/my-personal-giving/plan-your-giving/caf-give-as-you-earn.aspx

step

12

Maintaining & Developing your project

.....

After the initial burst of enthusiasm that accompanies setting up a site when there is a clear plan and objective (e.g. clearing the site) and obvious rewards, you may find the 'honeymoon' period ends and you face a challenge in keeping the local community (and your source of volunteers) interested in the project.

.....

Retaining community interest

There are a number of options available to help tackle this challenge.

Keep your stakeholders up-to-date:

Produce a newsletter or leaflet on a regular basis (monthly or quarterly, depending on capacity) or organise seasonal events for people to take part in - Easter, Harvest, Christmas.

Promote yourself: During your initial setting up phase you may have only reached the tip of the iceberg in terms of local interest. Make sure that you regularly promote your group (see *Step 3 - Involving the community & profile-raising*) through local networks and the media.

Make sure you have activities of interest: Continue to monitor and assess what you are doing to ensure it is working and attracting interest. For example, are you running workshops in subjects that people have requested?

Keep things interesting during non-growing periods: Obviously there is a limited amount you can do on-site during the winter, but that doesn't mean you can't use the time for planning, consultation, or other indoor activities, like arts and crafts. There's always maintenance to do - fixing fences, sharpening tools etc.

Use and adapt your business plan: Your business or action plan should have targets and objectives around development and promotion that you can use to help retain community interest.

Ask other groups: Though all community growing groups are very different, the

experiences and stories of groups which have been around some time are extremely valuable and inspiring. Contact long-standing groups in your area to talk about ideas for development and sustainability. You can also swap ideas and gain insight at FCFCG regional networking events.

Consider planning a new phase of work or fresh developments: Especially on a larger site, there's often an area that needs revamping. Continue to consult with the community.

Retaining volunteers

This can be the key to sustaining your project. The experience they will have accrued during the early stages of your development is crucial and recruiting new volunteers on a regular basis can be time-consuming and costly. You are looking for a blend of long-term volunteers and new faces, so that there is both a sense of continuity and inclusion for new people wanting to take part.

Here are half a dozen ways to help with volunteer retention:

Variety: Give people many different ways to participate, so that anyone can find something that is interesting, comfortable, and convenient to do. Community growing projects need people to help with finances, IT, fundraising, PR and HR as well as horticultural skills!

Keep it clear: Clarity is very important as poor communication easily leads to a loss of interest. Volunteers want to know when an activity will start, what it will entail, when it will end, and how much will be expected of them.

Don't expect too much: People are more likely to volunteer for tasks of limited duration than for those that require an open-ended commitment. Ask for a little time, at least at first. Keep it short.

Create a friendly atmosphere: People are more likely to spend time in a relaxed friendly environment with familiar faces. They need to be welcomed when they walk through the door. They must feel like they belong.

Make sure activities are useful: People want to be of use. They want the time they contribute to be productive, to add value, to make a difference.

Respect and cherish your volunteers: People want to be appreciated for the precious gifts of personal time they have donated. Give lots of recognition. Say thank you.

Working through a crisis

The first step is to try and avoid any crisis by following some of the steps below:

- ▶ Schedule in annual health checks within your group or organisation (see [Give your group a health check](#) on page 67).



Riverside Community Garden Allotment Project, Cardiff



The Hidden Gardens, Glasgow

Making the most of advisers and consultants

- ▶ It's good practice to speak with more than one specialist adviser before deciding who to use. You want someone who is good at their particular skill, but who will also listen to your group's ideas and not try to control you.
- ▶ There are a number of national, regional, and local organisations that can provide you with help, advice and support, or at least put you in touch

with those who can. The FCFCG team in Wales is a good place to start. www.farmgarden.org.uk/wales

- ▶ Start your enquiries by asking other groups in your area who they have used, how good they were and what the charges were.
- ▶ If you're asking advisers to do a lot of work for you, your group will need to agree a written brief, and later a contract which should include terms and conditions of payment. Even if an adviser agrees to carry out a lot of work free of charge, it's best for both of you to agree a brief, and for the adviser to clearly state what they are/are not willing to do.
- ▶ Whether you follow the advice you are given is up to your group – advisers are there to help and advise you, not to tell you what to do!
- ▶ Feel free to ask as many questions as you wish about the advice you have been given. If the advice you receive is very technical and difficult to understand, ensure that the adviser presents it in an easily understood form. The adviser is there to help, not confuse you!

- ▶ Put recording and monitoring systems in place and review them regularly, along with your budgets and finances.
- ▶ Try and stay on top of any reports that are required and meet the given deadlines. If you are struggling with this, ask for help.
- ▶ Hold regular team or volunteer meetings, this will give you an opportunity to assess how things are going, identify if any problems have arisen, and ensure that everyone has a voice and feels engaged.

If a crisis has arisen, don't panic! It may help to call an independent adviser such as a development worker from FCFCG or your local voluntary council, who can help identify what the problem is and hopefully help to find a workable solution.

If there is an early indication that something is not right, do not leave it. Address the problem as soon as possible and get the help and support you need.

Working with advisors

Advisors with specialist knowledge, skills and experience can be invaluable to the development of your community growing space. For example, a landscape architect could help prevent future problems by helping you turn your ideas into a sustainable, welcoming garden that can cope with future changes. A solicitor can check and advise on a proposed lease or contract and identify potential problems. A community worker could provide information about resources and services, or advice and support on local consultation. By obtaining relevant advice, it's likely that your group will save money, resources, time and effort.

Your supporters can also be your advisers

Your best advisors are often those people who are actively involved in supporting your growing space, many of whom will have



Felin Uchaf, Pwllheli

skills, knowledge and experience you haven't yet discovered! It's important, therefore to remember to ask the members of your group if any of them are able to provide the advice you need before seeking external advisers - you need to tap the great variety of local knowledge, skills and expertise that exist in every area, including yours!

Advisors on tap not on top

Do seek advice, particularly in regard to technical or legal issues, but remember that all major decisions and policies must be made by the community garden organisation, usually in the form of a management committee meeting. If an issue is contentious, publish the pros and cons beforehand, and hold a members' meeting to discuss the issue openly. Remember that important decisions need to be owned by your members/users.

Some sources of help and advice

- ▶ Local councils often provide general support through staff such as community development workers, and specialist advice through staff such as landscape architects, parks officers and tree officers, all of whom may be able to help.

- ▶ Local offices and local groups of national bodies can often help with advice and sometimes practically, e.g. with design and by providing volunteers to help with some of the heavy work.
- ▶ Local colleges or universities often have tutors and/or students keen to use their skills to support their local communities.

Give your group a health check

Community growing groups can assess their development, growth and sustainability by undertaking a simple health check.

A Health Check self-assessment tool available from FCFCG examines eight key elements which make up an organisation and which, if working well, assist an organisation in its future growth and sustainability: governance, marketing, resources, monitoring and evaluation, finance, planning, networks and partnerships, and funding. You could also use the DTAS Early Warning Guide. See Further information below.

To get a copy of the tool, visit the FCFCG website at: www.farmgarden.org.uk/wales



Growing Green, Cardiff

Sustainability: Maintaining the momentum

There may be times when you're wondering what on earth you're doing, energy may be flagging and the weather is not helping. There are some key things you can do to keep the momentum going on your project, whether you're established or emerging:

- ✔ Go and see other projects for inspiration, learning and sharing,
- ✔ Get re-inspired by attending networking and training events to meet other community growers, find out what



Felin Uchat, Pwllheli

others are doing, share problems and learn new skills.

- ✔ Become a member of the Federation and receive regular newsletters and updates on what's happening in the community farming and gardening movement
- ✔ Hold regular meetings with your group, but try to keep them light and fresh, set an agenda and don't let them go overtime,

Don't forget to organise some social get together as a group, so you can relax and enjoy yourselves.

Further information

Local Voluntary councils

See the WCVA website at www.wcva.org.uk for details of your local voluntary council.