

Parks and Green Spaces: Generating income for parks and green spaces

This guide focusses on how to raise funds for your park. It can help you to generate ideas and form an income generation strategy.

What do you need to raise funds for?

Come together as a group to list the things you would like to do

- This may include refurbishing play equipment, refreshing a planting scheme, redesigning, or landscaping an underused area, or putting on events to bring more people into the space. Alternatively, you may want to renovate a building to create a café or indoor space.
- Include suggestions from the local community, perhaps as part of a wider consultation exercise.

Think about the impact that your project could have

- Most funders will want to clearly see what the impact of any project will be. What would success look and feel like?
- It may be increasing numbers of children accessing the space, environmental benefits, or economic advantages. For example, a café may be able to reinvest any profit back into park initiatives.
- Start to develop the idea and cost out each idea in terms of money, volunteer or staff time, partner engagement and consultation.

Get Prepared

Are you ready to raise funds? Do you have clear ways of doing things? Are your policies and procedures up to date? Do you have relevant insurance?

- Your local Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) is often able to help. Many supply sample policy document that you can adapt for your own use.
- If you are thinking of bringing in larger or significant amounts of funding, and/or employing staff or volunteers then check that your legal structure is fit for purpose.
- You will also need to keep financial records so that you can keep track of your budgets, and report back to funders on the use of the funds. Do you have a treasurer or bookkeeper who can oversee this?
- Think about how you will measure the impact of the project. This can start with quite simple things, such as counting/estimating the number of people that use a facility, before and after refurbishment. It is always easier to start thinking about indicators of success at an early stage. This can help with the design of the project. Capturing learning can help create an evidence base of what works.
- You may decide to work with an established organisation that can manage the funding for you. This may be appropriate if you are undertaking a small, discreet project such as replacing some park equipment in partnership with the local authority who will then manage and maintain it.

Income and fundraising plan – Example

When you have decided what you are fundraising for, thought about impact, and are happy that the organisation has the right structure and systems in place to manage income and projects, the next step is to create a plan.

The template overleaf gives three example projects: One small, bulb-planting exercise, a medium sized initiative to replace play equipment; and then a larger scale idea to bring a disused building back to life.

Proposed Activity	Proposed Impact	Long List Funding Sources	Actions	£	Who is leading	By when
To refurbish and replace some old/damaged play equipment and resurface the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More children will use the facility • Health and social benefits of playing outside • Improve the look and feel of the space • Increased safety and accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aviva Community Fund • Tesco Bags of Help • Spacehive • Awards for All • Asda Foundation • Children in Need • Fields in Trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review application processes • Check eligibility criteria • Check deadlines to apply • Bring together a team to put together the materials needed • Prioritise 3 applications 	£15,000	Jenny	October 2020
Bulb planting with local school-children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about plants and countryside • Bringing extra Spring colour to the park 	PTA plant sale Coffee morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find volunteers to help • Promote the activity • Hold the event 	£250	Paul	April 2020
Create a resource centre and café in a disused, heritage building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational resources • Café to encourage people to stay longer and socialise • Reclaim a disused building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architectural Heritage Fund • National lottery Heritage Fund • Local building suppliers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate Community asset transfer from LA • Review funding sources and requirement • Speak to local CVS re organisational support to build capacity • Create business plan 	£120,000	Jo, Peter and Louise	First phase: April 2021

The number of steps, and timeframe required will change according to the size of the project.

Creating a plan works best in a small group. You may want to identify your overall purpose, and some key principles up front to keep focussed.

- **Step 1:** state what it is you will be raising funds for. Try to be succinct and clear, and list these in the first column.
- **Step 2:** think about the impact you would like to achieve, should the project be successful, and how you might measure this.
- **Step 3:** Begin to look for potential funding sources. Do some initial research and come up with a long list of potential funding sources you could approach.
 - Your local CVS will often have a mailing list and/or website that updates on providers of grants, loans and contracts. An internet search can also bring up useful suggestions of organisations to approach.

- NCVO have a 'Funder Finder' email service and directory that could be useful if you are planning multiple approaches.
- **Step 4:** Work out what actions, or steps are needed to make the relevant approaches. This might include reviewing the criteria and prioritising the ones that are best fit for your idea. Break up tasks into manageable chunks.
- **Step 5:** Estimate the total amount of funding that will be needed. You can put amounts next to particular funders in the long list column. If you are planning to apply for sections of the funding from different sources.
- **Step 6:** Allocate a lead person to take the actions forward and put a realistic timeframe against achieving these. Check in regularly to assess progress and review the plan where necessary.

Crowdfunding

Over recent years crowdfunding has become a recognised way of raising funds from the general public or a 'crowd' that want to support an initiative. Many UK crowdfunding platforms offer their own guides to this. As with all funding sources, review these carefully before deciding whether to proceed.

Crowdfunding can be a great way to engage people in your work, and the technology makes it easier to generate interest and funding. Some, such as Spacehive or Crowdfunder UK, also link into other funding sources which can be helpful.

Further planning

- Planning funding and income generation is just one part of the overall planning process. It should be informed by your established ideas to develop the park over time. See the related guides in this resource pack for some tools on how to go about this.
- Larger projects may need their own separate business plans, particularly where they involve capital funding and potential income generation themselves.
- Some funding sources will provide templates to help structure how to measure success. This can be helpful and improve project design.

- Local authorities can often also help with fundraising efforts. Developing a good relationship with the relevant officers can be very beneficial and save a lot of time.
- When you start to have some successes in fundraising, then don't forget to celebrate them! It can be inspirational to others and to the group as a whole. It can even provide renewed impetus and energy to those involved.
- More established groups often develop a fundraising strategy that outlines key principles and assumptions that can help guide who to approach. For example, medium sized organisations may want to diversify the types of funders they work with so that they don't have all their eggs in one basket. This can help mitigate the risk of one particular funding source drying up.
- As the funding plan grows, it can also be useful to group various projects under key themes, e.g. environment, buildings and equipment, arts and performance, interpretation/educational.
- Finally, ensure that the plan is rolling. When projects enter their mid or later stages, you will need to plan for succession funding where appropriate. You should take learning from evaluation exercises to feed into future income generation.