

Transition Network's Funding Primer

**Tips, suggestions and advice for where to find funding for
your UK Transition group's projects.**



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A Transition Network Primer

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Introduction: Fundraising for your Transition group

Although funding is not a prerequisite for getting Transition underway in your community, it can be vital to the success of the projects and initiatives that emerge from it. The aim of this Funding Primer is to give you a sense of the wide range of options you might choose to pursue, as well as a sense of the practicality/difficulty of each one. Each option creates different types of work, with varying levels of appropriateness for your group.

There are undoubtedly more options that we set out here, but we hope that we have captured the main ones (for example, legacy fundraising – asking for bequests in wills – is not going to raise the funds quick enough for your group!). We hope that you find this useful, and wish you the very best of luck in your pursuit of funds! Please note that although the principles here are universal, this primer is written specifically for the British context.

This document mainly looks at potential types and sources of funding. Clearly there are other things important to successful fundraising such as refining your project idea, crafting a well-written bid, attracting partners for support and so on. We are developing a number of other resources to help you with all aspects of fundraising, including:

- [Get ready to fundraise](#): this is a webinar that goes over all the basic aspects
- [Resourcing REconomy](#): this is an online course that helps Transition groups to create an actual funding bid and then submit it to appropriate funders – this is a pilot which we hope to offer more widely to help any Transition group resource any type of project.

Community Fundraising

The whole area of community fundraising is a fertile one for Transition initiatives. There are two excellent advantages for Transition groups:

1. You need no formal constitution for most of these, and don't need to be a registered charity, and
2. Many community fundraising methods combine well with awareness raising – they involve or benefit local people.

In general, community fundraising generates lower financial incomes than some other forms of fundraising. However it is less “all-or-nothing” than a



Sometimes running a series of regular film screenings can be a good source of income for your group.



Peterborough in Transition held a ceilidh which raised over £800 for the local Save the Green Back Yard campaign.

grant application, you are likely to raise some money through any event or method tried. There is a huge range of community fundraising methods, including:

- **Sponsored events or challenges:** you can turn almost anything into something to raise sponsorship, the trick is to be suitably inspiring that people will be motivated to donate, have lots of people you can ask, and possibly you can get in the local newspaper to widen the search for donors. Sponsored swims, mountain climbs, cycle rides, runs, hair-shaving, “toddle-waddles” (sponsored walks for pre-schoolers), bounces (how many trampoline bounces in a minute – works well for a big group like a school), sponsored sings, tree-plants, sponsored clearance of derelict area...
- **Fetes and fairs:** you could set one up (a big job!) or more easily, take a stall at one and run a simple game (hoopla, tombola, pick a straw, splat a rat) or sell second-hand books, bric-a-brac, plants, cakes etc.
- **Run a community event:** family fun day; ceilidh, benefit night, ball, dinner, pudding night (everyone brings a pudding to sample), bridge drive, film night, quiz night, fashion show, and many other ideas – what could your group do? Depending on the level of organisation, the event, and the target audience, some of these can get quite big. A school fundraising group near me runs the Amberley Cow Hunt – essentially people pay to take a tour of wooden cows dressed up in witty ways, around the village, culminating in an excellent tea tent – which through a combination of good marketing and good reputation, raised £3,500 this year. It is more likely however that an event will raise £100 - £300!
- **Jumble sales:** very environmentally sound, and should raise at least £300. You’ll need to line-up good homes for the leftovers (e.g. cash4clothes, charity shops, car-boot-sale enthusiasts); be prepared to store donated items beforehand; and publicise it well.



Transition Town Lewes held a fundraising event at nearby Glyndebourne Opera House. Credit: Chris Smedley.

- **Raffles:** if you are holding events, include a raffle, it is a way for people to donate extra if they are able.
- **Safari Supper:** some households in an area sign up to cook and serve dinner; other people pay a fee to take part, and visit one household for a starter, another for a main course, and another for dessert. So for each course a different group of people sit down in each house. Can culminate in a final celebratory get-together at a central location. Good for making local neighbourhood friends too! Similar but not so large to organise, is having a “restaurant at home” – invite guests for dinner with the suggestion that they pay the equivalent of a restaurant bill towards your cause.

- **Promises auctions:** ask people to donate some they can do, to be auctioned – could be as small as “two hours gardening” or as big as “a stay in a holiday cottage”. It could be photography, home-made cards, music lesson, garden design ideas, a free massage. Then auction these to the highest bidder! You need to think about how you will find people to bid, so this could be something you do at an event you are already part of where lots of people will be turning up. You can have a list for each item where people can write down a bid and leave contact details. Or, you could actually hold a live auction.



Transition Town Dorchester receiving a cheque for £1,000 raised by 'Stand Up For Dorchester', a local comedy night, towards their 'Under Lanche Community Farm' project.

- **100 Club:** a number of people (e.g. 100) donate a small amount each month, e.g. £1, and each month a winner is drawn, who receives half the “pot” – e.g. £50 prize, with the other £50 being donated to the cause. This does count as gambling so you will need a Small Gambling Licence from your local authority, which at my local authority is a one-off £40 registration and a £20 annual fee. Plus you need to check whether anyone involved in your Transition group is opposed to gambling in this form.
- **Other low-level gambling options:** such as Race Nights and Beetle Drives (events where people bet on videos of horse-races or similar, or pay to play Beetle (build a beetle with throws of the dice)).

There are many other ways of Community Fundraising (perhaps it’s not aligned with Transition principles to run a charity car wash – how about a charity Mend-a-Bike-a-Thon instead, or even Charity calendars?), so hopefully the ideas above will be just a start of the ideas you could generate.

Charitable Trusts and Foundations

Funding from Charitable Trusts or Foundations can be a route to find a significant amount of funding. However, in most cases, charitable trusts and foundations only give funds to registered charities. Therefore, if you want to choose this route, it helps if your group either is or becomes a registered charity. The

alternative is to find a local charity who is willing to partner with your group – so the local charity officially applies (you can offer to do the work of drafting the application) and administers the funds to you on a project you are jointly working on. (Although this is a possible route you need to be aware that there are a number of implications for such a partner charity – for example they may not then be able to apply to the same trusts for their own projects).

There are a small number of charitable trusts who will fund community organisations who are not registered charities. To search for trusts and foundations to apply to, an excellent trusts database is TrustFunding.org.uk, but this costs £260 annual subscription. GrantsNet.co.uk is free and worth a look though it is not comprehensive. Your local CVS (Community and Voluntary Sector organisation) is very likely to run a service where they can search a grants database for you. [Funding Central](http://FundingCentral) is an excellent website to register with – they have a good database and send emails with upcoming deadlines to help you spot opportunities. You can also try to find out who is funding similar groups to yours. It is worth looking for trusts which specifically fund in your geographical area (rather than nationally) as they may be less over-subscribed.



Transition Town Forres are funded by, among others, LEADER, The Robertson Trust, Trusthouse Charitable Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, Hugh Fraser Foundation, Margaret Cameron Trust, Yorkshire and Clydesdale Bank Foundation.

Each trust and foundation needs a specific ‘personalised’ approach, because each one has different criteria. It is best to rank a list of funding opportunities in terms of “best bet first” and then think about each one in turn to apply to. You can have a generic project idea but you shouldn’t just blindly send the same thing to each funder. For example, you may be asking for different amounts from different funders due to the size of their usual grants; you may emphasise biodiversity for one, but community for another, depending on the

criteria that matter to that funder. One funder might want one page, another, a detailed proposal. A funder might have specific questions or an application form.

“Best bet first” is a combination of how closely their criteria match your work; the size of their usual grants; any relevant upcoming deadlines; the likely level of competition (i.e. do they fund 1 in 10; or 1 in 50 of the applications they receive?); the amount of work involved in the application.

Before approaching a charitable trust you should find out as much as you can about them – from their website, if they have one, and also by looking them up on [the Charity Commission website](#). Among other things you should look at their most recent annual report on this website – this can give useful insights into their current thinking, and who they are currently funding and with how much.

If you can, it is best to try to contact a charitable trust by telephone first, to check the basics of whether they might be interested in your project proposal, and also so that when your application arrives with them it doesn’t arrive “cold”. You cannot expect any charitable trust to betray too much enthusiasm at this stage – they are all careful not to raise expectations they can’t fulfil and will want to wait to find out more about you.

You may learn useful information such as the particular aspects of what you are doing which might be of most interest. You may learn that their criteria have changed or that they would be unlikely to support the project in which case you have saved yourself the time of applying.

There are a large number of charitable trusts who do not wish to be phoned or emailed beforehand in which case you will need to respect these wishes. There are also charitable trusts who “do not accept unsolicited applications” in which case you can either try sending a brief email or letter of introduction (information rather than a request) or an invitation to an event; or try to find a mutual contact who can introduce you or recommend you.

In applying you need to absolutely ensure you are answering their questions. (Like in an exam: read the question and answer that, rather than copying down general information.) If they want a “project proposal” (sometimes referred to as a “business plan”) which has a free format, then I would suggest a generic structure:

- Organisation aims/mission; background and summary achievements
- Need for the project
- Aims and objectives of the project
- Activities, work the project will do, timescales
- Benefits and beneficiaries
- Outputs and outcomes, targets of the project
- Budget
- Summary of request

If a longer proposal there are other sections which could be added about organisational management, project team, risk assessment, monitoring and evaluation, dissemination.

Lastly, it is worth ensuring that you are asking for a reasonable amount. Currently there are more requests being made of charitable trusts, and some of these have suffered in the stock market and have lower funds to donate than before. There is a noticeable shift towards some funders wishing to support a wider range of

organisations with more modest grants each. Funders will find it easier to say yes to a lower grant request than to a higher one. So start smaller and you may find more success eventually.

Cultivate your resilience to rejection. Rejection is inevitable and often due to factors completely outside your control; I urge you to feel a sense of emotional detachment while you apply for funding so that a rejection does not mean that your group loses motivation.

The Lottery

There are a number of different lottery funds - find out which ones might be relevant [here](#) (key here are Awards for All, Big Lottery Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund and NESTA). Within Big Lottery Fund there are [a number of funding programmes](#) which are being launched or concluded all the time. Again you don't need to be a registered charity – just a not for profit community organisation.

Some of the Big Lottery Fund programmes could be the route to significant funding amounts but they are very competitive, highly oversubscribed. I would definitely recommend scaling down your expectations of how much funding to ask for, and asking for a more modest amount.

For example, most projects seem to fit the criteria of Reaching Communities (where technically you can ask for up to £500,000), so they receive a large number of applications, and probably those asking for under £30,000 or under £20,000 will have a greater chance of being successful.

A number of Transition initiatives have already received funding from Awards for All, a much smaller (in grant size – under £10,000) funding scheme set up for local community projects. I would definitely recommend assessing [Awards for All](#) as an option for your Transition group.



Transition Town Bridport's 'Open Eco Homes' event was funded by Dorset Communities Living Sustainably, a scheme funded through the Big Lottery Fund.

Statutory funding, money from government, public sector and local authorities

For a while with the change to the coalition government there was a dearth of government grant schemes, but some are now emerging. Keep informed of opportunities through [Funding Central](#); check the websites of DEFRA, DECC, NESTA, and your local authorities (sometimes even Parish Councils and Town Councils have grant schemes, or can be approached with a request for modest funding)

Statutory or government grant opportunities tend to require your group to have a significant level of organisational constitution and track record, and organisational management. There can be significant levels of funding but also very high levels of competition of other groups applying for a limited pot.

A number of Transition initiatives gained funding through the first round of DECC's Local Energy Assessment Fund (LEAF) so it is worth checking whether this scheme re-opens for applications.



Transition Town Totnes celebrate being chosen as one of the Department of Energy & Climate Change's 10 'Low Carbon Communities' in December 2010, and being awarded a grant of £625,000.

Corporate funding, money from companies

Sponsorship from companies can be harder to raise than you might think. Most companies will be looking for something in return, beyond the warm glow of giving. This might be publicity, access to new potential customers, or opportunities for new experiences for their staff. Occasionally there might be more of a partnership feel on a project where the company has a link to the practical work.

Support from companies could be in the form of asking them to provide their product at a reduced price or for free to your group, rather than money. You can ask companies to get involved with community fundraising – e.g. donate a prize for a raffle.

There can be ethical dilemmas involved in money from companies, and every person will have different views on which companies they would feel able or unable to take money from; so it is important that you seek, and respect the views of everyone in your group on this.

Many companies have a “community” page on their website where they may announce the sort of support they give to charities and community groups. Unless they have a formal process, if you are approaching a company it is best to telephone first and briefly introduce your ideas, ask if you can go and meet them. It’s good to have a document which sets out your project succinctly and suggests also how the company would benefit.

Ecotricity is worth mentioning as a company which is open to an arrangement where, if members of Transition Somewhere sign up as Ecotricity customers, a small amount of money £40-£60 would be donated to Transition Somewhere.

Naturesave, the insurance company, puts some of its profits into the [Naturesave Trust](#), which could be an applicable source of funding for some Transition projects. They are also a good source if your group needs insurance as they have some level of specialisation in insuring Transition initiatives.

Lush suggest their shops tie up with their local Transition initiative – so could be worth approaching [your local Lush shop](#). or contact Lotte at ecotopia@lush.co.uk.

Co-operative stores are also switched on to supporting Transition and have a [community grant scheme](#) worth a look.

Landfill Communities Fund

The Landfill Communities Fund distributes as community funding some of the tax that would be paid by landfill operators. Mostly, the landfill operators have set up funding organisations which administer a grants scheme, examples are: Biffa Award, Ibstock Cory Environmental Trust, SITA Trust, and funders specific to each county. See [here](#) for a full list.

To apply for Landfill Communities Fund (LCF) funding you must register your organisation with the LCF regulator, Entrust, [to become an “Environmental Body”](#). You do not have to be a registered charity. You normally have to register each project idea for which you are seeking LCF funding with Entrust too. You will have to provide basic information each year to Entrust on landfill tax money your group has spent, while you are registered.

All Landfill Tax Credit Scheme funders work to common criteria, of which the relevant ones are:

- **Category A projects:** The remediation or restoration of land which can not now be used because of a ceased activity that used to take place there. If your project idea is to convert a brown-field site into allotments, this is eligible under this category.
- **Category D projects:** The provision, maintenance or improvement of a public park or other general public amenity. Projects in this category could include community gardens, community orchards, cycle paths, community centres, a community-supported-agriculture site as long as it can be public access, anything improving neighbourhood green-space. Projects in schools are eligible but complicated and you would only be able to apply for a proportion of the costs.
- **Category DA projects:** The conservation of a specific species or a specific habitat where it naturally occurs. This could be relevant if you are doing a biodiversity-related project.

If your work is relevant here, this is a good source of significant funding which is often less competitive – a greater proportion of applicants gain funding - than the popular charitable trusts or statutory funding. Only 10% of costs can be overheads costs.

There is a complicated aspect whereby the landfill operator can only claim back from the Inland Revenue 90% of the funding. Some fund the final 10% themselves, but more commonly, they ask the group requesting funding to find this as a “Third Party Contribution” – match-funding. In a lot of cases, this Third Party Contribution needs to be paid directly to the landfill operator, in order to unlock the whole 100% grant. You may well need to find a funder who can a) provide the 10% amount and b) are willing to pay this amount to a landfill operator. There are now some LCF funders who will accept this contribution from the group itself, so if your group already has enough funds to fund 10% of the project costs, you can pay this yourself rather than needing to find another funder.

EU Funding

Is this too ambitious an option? EU-funded projects need to involve organisations from a number of different EU countries; however there are Transition initiatives in most European countries, which could be partners. There could be more opportunities here in the future.

[EU Grundtvig](#) funding has a range of funding schemes for organisations involved in “non-vocational adult education”: some Transition activities around training might be eligible. Urbact might be worth looking at, if linking Transition activities in more than one European city.



Members of Monteveglia Città di Transizione with partners in their successful ENESCOM bid.

Monteveglia Città di Transizione (MCT), a Transition group in Italy, was behind and part of the ENESCOM IEE project (enescom.org). They found that the rules made it impossible to officially add MCT to the partners list because it is an association that can not issue an invoice. However, they managed to find different ways work around the problem, mainly paying directly the people involved. The project leader was the Unione di Comuni Valle del Samoggia, who had a balance big enough to be eligible for the €1.8 million budget of the project and manage papers and reporting.

Wealthy individuals

Whether you can secure any donations from wealthy individuals depends most upon “who you know”. So it is worth checking if anyone in your group does in fact know any wealthy people or if they might “know

someone who knows someone". If you do, a personal face-to-face conversation is probably the best approach if this is feasible, or if not then a personal letter. If you are thinking of a wealthy person who is just well-known in your area, again it is best to see if you can find some personal introduction – but failing that, writing a letter is better than not asking at all! This is an area where luck will play a very large part in whether your approach is successful or not.

Crowdfunding

You can challenge people to get together to raise a certain amount for a specific purchase or project. There are websites which are set up to organise this, for example [Crowdfunder](#) or [Pledgebank](#). I haven't looked into whether there are any costs of using these websites, and you have to think about how you are going to publicise your challenge.



The newspaper *Transition Free Press* was funded, in part, by a crowdfunding appeal which raised over £10,000.

JustGiving and Text donations

Most people will have donated money to a cause through the [JustGiving website](#). To benefit from this easy on-line way of donating, you need to be a registered charity. You also have to pay a £15/month fee to

JustGiving for each month that your charity is registered with JustGiving. You would probably need to be doing a big sponsored event that you expected would bring in a large number of donations, to make this fee worthwhile. However if you do register with JustGiving, you can also set up [Text donations](#) (this is run by Vodafone) which arguably makes it even easier for people to donate in response to an appeal.

On-line donations through your website

If your Transition initiative has a website, you can set up a “Donate” button, where people can donate to you via Paypal (your Transition initiative would have to [set up a Paypal account](#)). There may be other ways to accept donations via your website, but Paypal should be relatively easy to set up. You will still need to promote to potential supporters that they can donate to the group via the website! If you do run an appeal to members and supporters, this could be one relatively easy way of collecting donations.

Membership

I don’t know of any Transition initiatives that operate a membership system where supporters pay a membership fee. However, it is a fundraising option to consider. Generally, groups with paid members need to consider what benefits members will get (eg newsletters, events) and often the members have voting or decision-making rights. You would have to consider how to collect membership fees (e.g. standing order/direct debits/annual reminders and chasing!).

As Transition initiatives generally do not want to limit involvement and engagement by insisting that people have to pay to join, probably a more useful idea is a voluntary supporters’ scheme. The group would encourage people who are able to do so, to set up a monthly standing order to the Transition initiative. You would need to make reminders about the supporters’ scheme at periodic intervals, to encourage new people to join in by setting up standing orders. This has the potential to provide a reasonable core income for the group.

Social enterprise, trading, share issues

If your Transition initiative is getting serious about a project area, you may be able to start generating income, for example by setting up a local food enterprise or community-owned renewable energy generation. There are sources of information about this, specifically for Transition groups – see the [REconomy Project’s website](#).

Further reading

The Directory for Social Change publish some great guides to different aspects of fundraising: <http://www.dsc.org.uk/Publications/Fundraisingtechniques>

The Institute of Fundraising offer support, resources, conferences and training: <http://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk/home/>