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1. Introduction

This toolkit aims to give inspiration and essential information/tools to those who are thinking about the future of parks in Ealing and how they can get involved. Some parts may also be relevant to individuals, practitioners and organisations outside of Ealing.

Parks are a place of possibility, some of the last remaining ‘common’ space, free to access and use by all. They can be important neutral places where communities can come together, provide a place for sports activities for all ages, and provide crucial tranquil spaces and contact with nature than can support wellbeing and improved mental health.

By 2020, local councils will have lost almost 60% of their central government funding¹ when compared with 2010 and as parks are not a statutory service, they are at risk. Ealing Council, like many others, is determined to find new ways of working and delivering in order to maintain and enhance these precious public green spaces. The aim is to be more collaborative and bring together different objectives as well as people and organisations. We hope this toolkit lays the ground for the growth of some of these new collaborative initiatives or even enterprises. Please get in touch: parks@ealing.gov.uk if you have an idea you would like to discuss.

1.1. Future Ealing

Ealing Council is changing. In 2017 the council’s cabinet agreed a fresh direction for the council with a renewed focus on improving the lives of local people at a time of reduced funding. We are working together to transform the way that the council pays for and delivers local services so we can secure their future sustainability and make Ealing a better place to live. [Future Ealing Borough Plan 2018-22](#)

1.1.1. Active Citizens

At the heart of Future Ealing is the principle of active citizenship - at a time of shrinking resources, residents will have an important part to play in helping themselves and each other. That isn’t simply a response to reduced resources, however: we genuinely believe that real and lasting change is often best delivered from the community upwards.

¹ [Financial times, February 2019](#)

2. How to use this toolkit

This toolkit can be read from start to finish, but each section also stands alone so you can just pick whatever is relevant or useful to you.

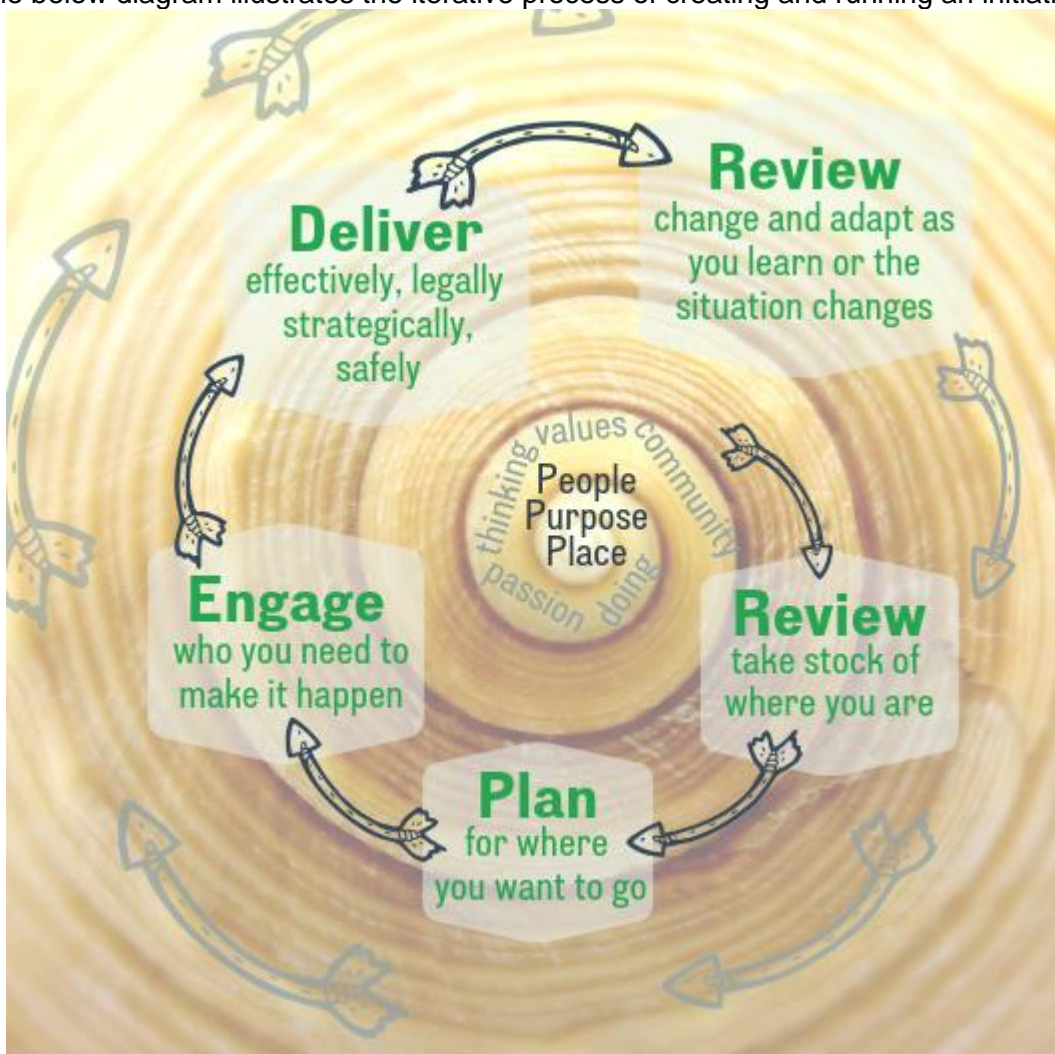
If you want to get inspiration from examples of existing project check out our '**Projects in Parks – Possibilities and Case Studies**' guide.

If you have objectives you want to meet or an idea but are not sure how to make it happen, you can start here. For setting up an organisation to make that project happen, including creating a Friends of Park group, see section [4.3](#).

Each section gives some brief main points to consider, tools you can use for development and links to further guidance/reading.

3. Quick reference toolkit guide

The below diagram illustrates the iterative process of creating and running an initiative.



1. **Review;** take stock of where you are (this is useful even for an existing initiative)

See; 'Being clear about purpose'

Tools; The Design Council propose the [double diamond process](#) to frame a development process, or [The Golden Circle exercise](#) is useful (Why, How, What)

2. **Plan:** for where you want to go

See; 'Business Planning' and also look in '**Projects in Parks - Possibilities and Case Studies**' under relevant headings to see examples of how other organisations have met their objectives through working in parks

Tools; Write a mission statement, complete a [Social Business Model Canvas](#), fill in a [Balance Scorecard](#), utilise a [SWOT analysis](#) to do a brainstorm

Additional guidance; [30 important questions to ask yourself for your business plan](#) from Plunkett foundation

3. **Engage:** who you need to make it happen

See; 'Working with others'

Tools; Stakeholder mapping, writing a stakeholder engagement plan, utilise appropriate tried and tested [engagement methods](#), writing a [communications strategy](#), if appropriate creating a social media strategy (these may be able to be sections of the same document)

4. **Deliver;** effectively, strategically, legally and safely

See; 'Setting up an organisation', 'Governance, management and operations', 'Types of tenure involved in Land Management', 'Regulation and Compliance'

Tools; [interactive tool](#) for tenure options, mapping and defining roles and responsibilities, drafting appropriate policies (even the drafting process is useful)

Additional guidance; [Practical guide on legal structures for companies](#) from CooperativesUK, [Useful legal guides for different types of agreements, from UnLtd](#) (including property leases, employment contracts)

5. **Review;** change and adapt as you learn or the situation changes; revisit purpose

See; 'Monitoring and evaluation'

Tools; Creating a monitoring and evaluation plan, creating a logic model, designing and utilising before and after surveys

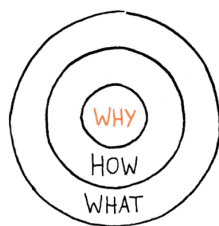
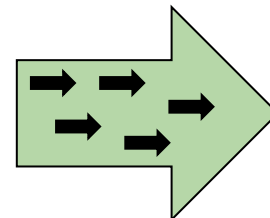
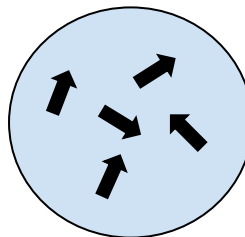
Additional guidance; [Monitoring and Evaluation guide from the Centre for Public Health](#), or see [Measuring health and Wellbeing Outcomes guide from Social Farms and Gardens](#)

4. Making it happen

4.1. Being clear about purpose

If everyone is moving in the same direction you are much more likely to maintain momentum.

This is useful at the start but periodic check-ins are important to ensure everyone is still on the same page (for example annually). This diagram illustrates the difference of groups functioning with purpose and strategic direction.



At an exploratory stage it may be useful to be in the blue circle, but for movement the green arrow looks much more convincing!

The Golden Circle tool shown left may be one useful way of structuring a session with your group to brainstorm your project idea. Start from the WHY!

You can see more about this tool from Simon Sinek [here](#)

4.2. Business Planning

It is important to lay out a strategy of 'where' you want to go, and a plan of 'what' you are going to do to get there. Start with what your vision will look like in one, two or five years time, and then work on the details of how to get there. Here are some tools to get started:

- Write a vision/mission statement
- Define 3-5 objectives
- [Social Business Model Canvas](#)
- [A Balance Scorecard](#) (shown right; by Locality)
- A financial forecast/cashflow
- [SWOT analysis](#)

For more community business planning tools see [Power to Changes website](#).

[30 important questions to ask yourself for your business plan](#) from Plunkett Foundation is useful.

If you are at a later stage see our [toolkit for scaling community enterprises](#).

WHAT DO WE DO? WHAT ARE WE ABOUT? (PURPOSE)		WHAT HAVE WE GOT? (RESOURCES)	
LATER			LATER
	SOON		SOON
		NOW	NOW
		NOW	NOW
			SOON
	SOON		
LATER			LATER
HOW WILL IT STACK UP? (FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS)		WHAT BENEFITS DO WE CREATE? (SOCIAL IMPACTS)	

4.3. Setting up an organisation

At early stages some project initiatives may mean raising funds, using a bank account and getting insurance.

Writing a constitution to become a 'constituted community group' such as a Friends of the Park group, or 'unincorporated association' will allow you to apply for more sources of funding, get insurance and a bank account, but won't limit liability of those involved. Find out how to set up a Friends group [here](#) and under [4.3.1](#) below.

If a group takes on contracts, ownership, responsibility or risks it is important to **incorporate**. When you incorporate you form a new legal "person" separate from the individuals involved. This stops you being personally liable for any debts or legal actions affecting the organisation.

Advantages of incorporation	Disadvantages of incorporation
Limited liability for those involved	Additional costs of registration
Risk is shared equally by those involved	Administration; most require at least annual reporting
Able to enter into contracts and own property	Loss of privacy; some reporting elements must be made public
Can unlock different types of funding	

There are a number of legal structures you can choose. Some considerations for choosing are:

- What are your values and how much do you want to involve members in decision making?
- Where is your funding going to come from? (i.e. grant, trading, donations etc..)
- What are you going to do with surplus profit?
- Do you need/want an asset lock?

See a 12 min read on common legal structures from UnLtd [here](#). For a more in depth look, see this [practical guide](#) from CooperativesUK.

4.3.1. "Friends of" groups

"Friends of" groups are traditionally the most common groups associated with parks. In the past their roles have included:

- Being the 'eyes and ears' on the ground to promote positive behaviour in the park
- Fundraising for improvements
- Working with the parks team to carry out conservation tasks, planting and or adding planting and maintaining some beds/areas of the park
- Holding the local authority or contractors to account for quality
- Acting as advocates for park users, campaigning for improvements
- Organising events, activities or volunteering days for residents to interact in the park

In recent years some of these roles have been extended, and other roles have been taken on as you can see in many examples in the ‘**Projects in Parks – Possibilities and Case Studies**’ toolkit.

See more about why and how you can set up a “Friends of” group [here](#) and with these [how to guides](#). You can also look to local groups for inspiration, see [Friends of Horsenden Hill](#) for an Ealing based example.

4.4. Governance, management and operations

In most organisations there are three levels;

Governance: Strategy setting, strategic and financial oversight
(traditionally a board, trustees or a committee)

Management: Managing resources, making plans
(Traditionally a CEO or manager)

Operations: The ‘doing’
(Traditionally a project officer, or grounds maintenance worker)

In small organisations the same people may be involved at each level. However, it’s important to be clear where roles and responsibilities sit, and how information will be communicated between each level (i.e. at a quarterly board meeting). Be clear about which meetings are for which level. An easy exercise is to list out all activities under each heading, and look at who is doing them.

It may also be useful to carry out a skills audit to understand where there might be gaps. See more information and a template example [here](#).

All trustees or board members should be made aware of [legal obligations](#) when taking up the role.

4.5. Types of agreements involved in land management

The relationship – whether formal or informal – that community organisations will have with a piece of land is described as ‘tenure’.

Formal legal tenure can be complex and we recommend you seek **appropriate legal advice**. The type of agreement or tenure you need will depend on the type of activity that you want to undertake. This [interactive tool](#) may help you think this through.²

Considerations

² Text adapted from: [“Transforming derelict or underused land through community-led models” \(Shared Assets,2016\)](#)

- Be clear about the responsibilities - who is responsible for repairs, pays insurance, or what break clauses there are should be negotiated in a 'heads of terms' and written into a formal agreement. You will need independent legal advice before signing any formal agreement.
- Collaboration and partnership can be beneficial for long term viability, especially if there is complexity in maintenance or benefits of procurement at scale
- Length of the lease is important, a minimum of 15-25 years will support fundraising.

4.6. Regulation and compliance

4.6.1. Policies and procedures (health and safety)

Exact requirements will depend on the activities you are carrying out. Some are a legal requirement, such as [health and safety](#) or [safeguarding practices](#). Some activities mean additional requirements, for example [serving food will mean additional health and safety requirements](#), and vulnerable participants may affect your safeguarding processes.

[Risk assessments](#) form an essential part of procedures, for one-off or regular volunteering and public events, but also for wider areas such as data protection, and safeguarding. Templates for policies are widely available for free. They should be signed off by the board or trustees. See more about policies [here](#).

4.6.2. Licences and permissions

For some activities a licence or specific permission will be required, for example:

- selling or supply alcohol
- providing entertainment, such as theatre, cinema or live music

Contact your local council officer to discuss requirements and options, for example; a temporary events licence or personal alcohol licence. These are easy to get.

4.6.3. Insurance

Insurance is essential, you don't want to end up landed with a huge payout if there is an unforeseen event. and exactly what you need will depend on your activities. For example; you will likely need [public liability insurance](#), but the amount varies depending on your activities. There are other types of insurance you may need, read more [here](#).

TIP: You may be able to access cheaper deals.

London based food growing projects can get insurance through [Capital Growth](#).

[Locality have a deal](#) for community businesses.

4.7. Engaging and working with others

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has" - Margaret Mead

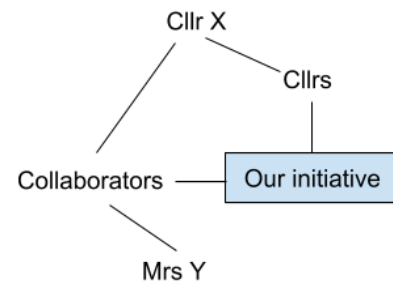
Whatever type of initiative you are doing, it's certain you won't be able to do it alone.

A useful place to start is stakeholder mapping. You might build it up by defining;

- Who might collaborate / participate
- What resources/permission do I need
- Who should know about it
- Who won't like it

You could also think about categories such as local councillors, residents associations or schools

There are many different techniques for bringing stakeholder voice into your initiatives and finding out what people want, see [here](#) for a number of methods. If you are starting a campaign see [here](#).



4.7.1. **Marketing and social media**

When planning your outreach it is useful to create a marketing strategy, useful frameworks to do this thinking include:

- Break down your potential customers/participants into categories (called customer segments or profiles), for example; young mums, teenagers, unemployed people
- Consider what activities/outputs will interest will interest different customers
- What marketing/media channels would be best to reach different customers – some may be best reached through partners/organisations such as schools or cultural centres.
- Define your offer to each customer category, create appropriate materials (i.e. digital flyers), and define a plan with appropriate timescales to do the outreach (for example, starting 6 weeks before an event)

For more on developing a communications strategy see [here](#).

Social media

- Social media is only useful if you're going to keep it active, regular posts including photos/videos of what you've been doing are essential.
- Utilising a free platform such as hootsuite or buffer to line up content in advance can reduce time needed.
- For specific events or campaigns, paid for facebook advertising can be effective, and can be targeted to an area as small as 50 metres. See [facebook for business](#).
 - Remember to set a spending limit on your campaign
 - It is worth monitoring the campaign for effectiveness and tweaking settings
- Monitoring interaction with your social media to understand which content is more effective and which times people interact more is worthwhile. You could set targets to encourage behaviours which are effective.

For more on social media strategies see NCVO [here](#), and 11 tips for using social media [here](#).

4.7.2. **Working with the local authority and other land owners**

It's important to recognise these stakeholders have objectives they are trying to achieve and look at how your work would fit in to them. These objectives can be found on the internet, there may also be formal strategies or business plans published.

TOP TIP: Use the 'word search' function to pick out what is relevant in the document. Make sure you read enough to understand the content and not misquote.

4.7.3. **Employing staff and freelancers**

If you want to employ people you need to consider incorporation and insurance.

- Create a clear job specification to objectively judge between candidates

- Cut down your initial shortlist with phone interviews, and a trial period is advisable
- Giving a practical task as part of the interview process can help judge skill levels
- You must have a signed, dated copy of proof to work in the UK on file
- If employing freelancers be aware of regulation, specifically [IR35](#).

Developing appropriate HR policies is essential.

These [useful legal guides](#) from UnLtd, will help you to draft the correct employment contracts.

The [ACAS website](#), and [NCVO](#) have useful guidance.

4.7.4. Getting expert help

There are many stages of development when it's useful or necessary to get expert help.

Find someone who is used to the community sector and write a clear brief, including; aims and objectives for the work, outputs or outcomes, and outline timescales.

For large contracts you should get at least three quotes, to ensure value for money.

You may be able to

- approach local firms (for example architectural or legal) and get pro-bono help.
- fundraise, or get support from programmes such as the '[Bright Ideas Fund](#)'.

[This guide](#) on working with consultants is helpful.

4.7.5. Managing volunteers

Having a strategy of how you will recruit, manage and *retain* volunteers is essential. There is also the common challenge of volunteer reliability. Below are some ideas for managing volunteers;

- Creating Volunteer Journeys – what will they learn and how will then develop
Sit down with them at the start to understand what their aims are, then check in periodically
- Volunteer working practice (including health and safety – see [4.6.1](#)) and commitment agreement
Making expectations and safe working practices clear at the beginning.
- Partner with local shops/organisations so volunteers can build up hours and get rewards
Use the [Value You](#) scheme to earn rewards in Ealing.
- Volunteer events/meals to say thank you
These will build a sense of community between volunteers, help them to feel valued and help prevent conflict.

It is important to make sure the volunteer role, level of responsibility and relationship to the organisation is appropriate. Managing a volunteer role like a staff role could result in inadvertently creating an employment contract, even without a written document. See more on avoiding creating employment contracts [here](#).

See a simple guide to managing volunteers [here](#), and a more in depth resource site [here](#).

4.7.6. Dealing with conflict

The best thing is to mitigate with regular check-ins with staff and volunteers to catch any problems arising before they turn into a conflict. Clearly defined expectations around roles, tasks, ways of working and behaviours can also help with this.

Unfortunately, it is not always possible to avoid conflict, and for the occasions it does arise it is important to have a pre-agreed conflict resolution policy or procedure.

See [here](#) for more on conflict resolution, and [here](#) for a creative approach.

[Non-Violent Communication](#) techniques can also be invaluable.

4.8. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring is the recording of information about what you are doing, and should be carried out on an ongoing basis. Evaluation is the examination of this information and using it to make decisions about how to shape your development or change your service.

You will want to measure *quantitative* outputs - what happened - ie;

- How many people came
- How many hours of volunteering time were completed

And also measure, *qualitative* outcomes - what happened because those actions happened - ie;

- xx participants reported an increase in confidence
- xx participants reported an increased feeling of wellbeing

Short surveys are a good tool; using a 1-5 scale means turn statements can be turned into percentages. Design it inclusively; for SEND participants you can use a sliding scale of smiley to sad faces.

Don't undervalue taking pictures; remember to get photo permissions if you plan to use photos publicly. *Anecdotal* accounts recorded as quotes are invaluable for promotion and fundraising.

To see more about monitoring and evaluation see this [guide from the Centre for Public Health](#).

If you are a green space project you will have outcomes related to health and wellbeing, which can be hard to measure. This guide from [Social Farms and Gardens](#) is a good place to start.

5. Sources of Support and Resources;

5.1. Additional resources and support organisations

The Community Toolbox [Tools/guidance](#) for assessing needs, and designing initiatives for community development

Capital Growth (Sustain) [supporting food growing](#) projects in London

London Friends of Green Spaces Network <http://www.lfgn.org.uk>

Social Farms and Gardens [various resources](#) for setting up/running community gardens and projects

Habitats and Heritage resources and support for Friends of parks groups in west London

Shared Assets [various resources](#); starting community orgs, the planning system, and leases

Cooperatives UK [membership organisation](#) providing support for those who want to start a Coop

Locality network of community organisations: <https://locality.org.uk/membership/> ;

[To Have and To Hold; A guide to asset development for Community and Social Enterprises](#)

Power to change [further tools and information](#) on business planning, governance, asset transfer

Social EnterpriseUK membership organisation, providing support and training [Looking to start a social enterprise](#)

5.2. Potential sources of funding

This is not a comprehensive list, there will be other trusts and foundations you can approach. You could also look to engage with local businesses or residents to see if you can gain sponsorship or donations. Crowd funding is an option, especially for capital items, but takes a lot of energy so be sure it's the right decision before committing.

Ealing Council has also set up [Ealing for Fundraising](#), which can help you navigate the vast pool of grants available.

- Look for landfill sites are close to you, for example; [Veolia](#), [BIFFA](#)
- Make contact with [your local ward forum](#),
- [Freshwater Foundation](#) *financial grants up to approx £2,000 to suitable groups in Ealing and Hounslow to fund their charitable projects and initiatives*
- [Greggs Foundation](#) *Grants up to £2000 to deliver activities and projects*
- [Postcode Lottery Trust](#) *Two rounds per year; grants from £500 - £20,000*
- [Groundwork UK](#) *Manage grant schemes, also provide direct support for growing/planting*
- [Tesco's Community Grants](#) (managed by Groundwork); *Generally small grants of up to £4000*

- [Big Lottery](#) *A wide range of grants for up to £10,000, also have larger grant programmes. You will need to get in contact with your area manager.*
- [Power to Change](#) *A range of grant funding related to starting a community business*