

# My Community

## Community Economic Development: Working with your community

Read this guide if you want to:

- Understand the benefits of partnership working
- Learn how to work effectively together



### How does this fit into the CED programme?

The [Community Economic Development \(CED\) programme](#) helps 49 communities develop their own community economic development plans to actively shape the economic future of their local area. This shared vision about what the local economy would look and feel like should be based on strong partnerships between many different groups, which may include:

- Residents, or representative groups of residents
- Local businesses or groupings of businesses
- Voluntary and community sector organisations working in the area
- Major ‘anchor institutions’ such as businesses, schools, hospitals, or other key institutions that play a significant role in the local economy
- The local authority

Ideally, the result will be a vision and strategy for the local economy, collectively generated by partners from within the community, with buy-in from key groups and organisations. This will be supported by real, rooted and achievable practical projects, which will play a part in transforming the local economy.

This guide is not just for groups involved in the CED programme, but will also be useful for communities thinking of doing something similar.

# My Community



## Why are partnerships important and what are the benefits?

*“We don’t really understand how to have influence outside of [the local area], so how will we get the city council or the LEP to change their policies?”*

*(Portland Works, Sheffield)*

When a sample of CED areas were asked what they need help or support with to develop their plan, projects were most keen to learn how to engage local groups and organisations to create their plan. This was especially true for engaging with local authorities and nearby businesses. This guide will help you build stronger partnerships and work together more effectively.

### Features of good partnerships

Partnerships built on mutual trust are crucial to the success of community initiatives. There are many practical benefits for local groups and organisations working together, including:

- Pooling resources and saving money e.g. by sharing office space or fundraising together
- Planning together and bringing new approaches to a problem
- Inspiring each other, especially when things get tough
- Sharing information, ideas and learning new skills
- Having access to more expertise and skills
- Resilience - providing a support network when things don’t go as expected
- Referrals - projects often rely on other agencies and groups to make referrals to them, which are more likely to come when good relations have been built

# My Community

## How can we create strong partnerships?

### Top Tips

1. Agree a set of ground rules from the start
2. Set out the commitment (time and money) from each partner
3. Set down the roles and responsibilities of each partner
4. Decide on a clear process of how decisions will be made
5. Put what is agreed in writing

### 1. What makes a good working relationship?

When working with others, it is useful to discuss the values that can support good working relationships. You can use this discussion to create some ground rules before going further. Important things you might want to include:

- Treating everyone equally and with respect
- Giving everyone time to speak and listening to all opinions expressed
- Being clear about decisions made and how they have been reached

### 2. How can we make sure we work well together?

Partnership work does not mean losing control. Keeping local ownership is important: agree who is responsible for what at the beginning. It is also a good idea to find out the skills, knowledge and experience of everyone involved to make the best use of people's talents.

You can decide how you are going to work together using a written agreement, e.g. Terms of Reference. We have a [few examples](#) or you can borrow ideas from NCVO's guide on [how to write a governing document](#).



Things to discuss and include in your agreement:

- Why you exist (purpose)
- What you want to achieve and how you will achieve it (aims and objectives)
- Who is involved and their role and responsibilities, including likely time commitments if relevant
- A clear process of how decisions will be made e.g. by voting or consensus

Informal partnerships may work well with verbal agreements, but when it comes to more formal arrangements, a little more is needed to make sure things go smoothly. Getting an early written agreement from those in positions of responsibility is essential.

# My Community

**3. Communication** is the key to working well together: it builds relationships, minimises problems and makes people feel included.

Things to remember:

- Make sure regular communication is built into your project through meetings, weekly or monthly phone calls, emails or text messages
- Create a safe space for people to air their issues and suggestions, potentially outside of your meetings
- Share any developments and changes in the project to keep people informed
- Agree who is in control of communications including the branding, press releases and email addresses to ensure everything is clear
- Don't forget to thank people for their time and contributions

**4. Running an effective meeting** can make a lot of difference and shows you value people's time.

- Agree on the agenda in advance: when, where, who needs to be there, what will be discussed/decided and why
- Agree who is doing what and when before the meeting ends. You could replace meeting minutes with [Action Logs](#), which can help focus on getting the important things done. You can see what has been done briefly at the beginning of each meeting.

**5. Proposing solutions** and entering discussions in a collaborative spirit is important and lays the foundations for sustainable relationships. This will also create the conditions to explore what doesn't work more effectively. The aim is to transform the local economy to benefit everyone: dialogue should be encouraged but it is not about one idea winning above others.

**6. Experiment and have fun!** There is no right way of doing things: feel free to be creative and see what works and what doesn't. Most importantly, remember to have a good time! Working together doesn't have to be about formal meetings or lengthy discussions. You can meet over coffee or on a walk around your area. If people enjoy working together, they are more likely to remain committed.

# My Community

## Useful Links

- **NCVO's KnowHow NonProfit** has some great how-to guides such as [How to Develop Lasting Partnerships](#)
- **Responsible Finance** have put together a [CED resource bank](#) which gives examples of communities already making a difference to where they live
- Rob Hopkins from **Transition Network** collected [21 inspiring stories](#) from around the world of local communities transforming where they live