

How do we get the additional support we need to keep our group going?

All support is valuable so don't underestimate how much any of it might help you in achieving your goals. "Support" for your group/project means a variety of things:

- Community support – which can be active volunteers, consultation, feedback, endorsement etc.;
- Political support – either the endorsement of and/or actual help from your local council, local councillor or MSP;
- Support-in-kind – these are donations of products, equipment or services you need in order to get things done and can range from someone donating a venue for your fundraising event or committee meeting, through to donations of tools and plants or services (e.g. heavy equipment and team to operate it); or
- Financial support – from your own fundraising efforts, sponsors (commercial, corporate), grants, government funding etc.

Community support

Whether you're approaching other community members, your local authority, local businesses or big corporate organisations, there are a few key things to have in place first:

Have a clear action plan – potential supporters will want to know what you want to achieve and how you are going to make a difference to your local community.

Make a 'shopping' list – identify what you need to complete your project, whether that's plants, tools or professional help for bigger, more specialist jobs.

Create a budget – even if it is not exact nor very elaborate, it is important to have some idea of what the costs are to make your project a reality and to be able to show this to people you approach for help (as appropriate).

Create a 'prospects' list – identify all the individuals, organisations, companies, businesses etc., that you can contact for support. Identify the best person at each organisation to speak to and, once you have the list, prioritise those you think are most likely to support you.

Understand your audience – you should have a specific plan for each individual, organisation, company, business etc., that you approach. Think about who they are, what they do, how they might help you and even why they might help you.

Once you have done the initial preparation work and you're ready to start contacting potential supporters, there's one more thing you should do: prepare your pitch!

While your project will be a worthwhile endeavour, the potential supporter will still want to know how *they* might benefit by supporting you. This means that for each contact you must be able

to tell them what they can get out of the partnership. Or is there a company near you that advertises how 'green' or environmentally responsible they are? That would be another reason for a company to support their local Climate and Nature Friendly Communities Network group; environmental responsibility is a core pillar of both Beautiful Scotland and It's Your Neighbourhood and should feature in the work of any group.

In addition, you should be sure to:

- Give the name of your group and its status (e.g. whether you are a voluntary group or a charity) and the main contact details;
- Describe the purpose of your work with aims and objectives;
- Provide a timetable of work and when the likely date of completion will be;
- Mention any special events you might have planned;
- State clearly what you are asking for (volunteers, a specific amount of money, goods, services etc.);
- Make the person you are speaking to aware of any support you may already have secured or that has been pledged;
- List any local celebrities or well-known local characters or 'VIPs' who are supporting you;
- Clearly explain how supporting your activities will benefit them and how you will be publicising and acknowledging their support;
- If you are submitting a financial report showing how you would spend the money you are asking for, check the figures to avoid embarrassing mistakes;
- Keep copies of whatever you send to a potential sponsor;
- Seek feedback on any failed bids or applications and keep a record of this. This is a useful way of improving and making a more appropriate case next time; and
- Finally, don't underestimate the power of positive publicity. Highlight what you are doing as much as you can and make sure to mention that your group is part of a national network supported by Keep Scotland Beautiful - your charity inspiring action for our environment. In addition to helping you to communicate better with other community members, you never know who might hear about your efforts and then come to you to offer their support.

Political support

Having the council's support for your activities may help you to develop your project further. Before you approach your local council, you should prepare for the meeting as outlined above, but here are a few additional ideas:

- Don't just talk to one person in one department: your project might help to meet objectives in many areas (environmental, street scene, community engagement etc.).
- Lead with how you can help the council, not with what help you want from them. Councils have specific targets and objectives, and it is likely that your project may help to support these. Try to find out what their objectives are and mention how your project can support them; this may well lead to more support for your work further down the line.
- Always invite local councillors and council staff to your events.

Support in kind

In addition to the obvious sources – products/resources etc. – think creatively about organisations that could support you indirectly:

- Your local doctor's surgery/NHS Trust may be able to recommend your gardening activities to their patients; gardening is proven to improve health and wellbeing.
- Weight loss groups may similarly be looking for healthy activities that they can recommend to their clients.

Financial support

There are various funding sources out there available for community groups, the best place to search for these is on the Funding Scotland website: www.fundingscotland.com/

Also, many councils have small pots of money available for community groups – visit the Community section of their websites.