

## Funding your project

No matter how large or small your open homes event is going to be, you're likely to need funding for things like insurance, publicity, volunteer costs and possibly even for transport, venue costs, or staff time. This means you probably need to do some fundraising.

This is one of a series of information sheets for community groups organising green open homes events. Find the rest at [www.greenopenhomes.net](http://www.greenopenhomes.net)

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### **Budgeting**

Before you start looking at how you might fund your project, you need to figure out your budget. For this, you'll need to decide what your aims and specific targets are, and then identify the tasks needed and assign costs to each one.

For example, say you're aiming to recruit 6 open homes hosts for a one-day event, get 100 visitors through the doors, and recruit and train 12 volunteers. To set a basic budget you would break each of those targets into specific tasks (e.g. run a training day, print leaflets, etc.) and estimate costs for each. This is likely to require some research (including quotes) and a few educated guesses.

It's important to be clear about your minimum budget requirements. What are the things that you *must* find funding for if your event is going to run at all? Are there some things that would be 'nice to have' but you could live without if you can't raise the money?

Your aim now is to raise funding that will take you as close to your ideal budget as possible, but whatever you raise must be at least as much as your minimum budget.

### **Options for raising money**

Open homes events usually get funding from a combination of places. Grants from local organisations, awards from trust funds and sponsorship from local businesses can all play their part. Non-grant options like crowdfunding, local fundraisers and donations are also good options.

Bear in mind your target amount and your timeframes, so you can balance the amount of your time put into fundraising against the likely success rates. Local fundraisers might generate lower amounts but there's a good guarantee of getting at least some funds to work with. On the other hand, grant or competition applications take time to complete, and there's a risk that you might not be successful. But, if you are, you could get a lot of money in one go.

### *Local fundraisers*

Start simple. If you only need a small amount, you might raise it all with some cake sales, raffles, or benefit gigs. If you have a strong network of supporters, and you can enthuse them about a green open homes event, they might be willing to donate. The benefits of grassroots fundraising are that you are answerable only to yourselves, you won't have to wait for weeks or months to hear if your applications are successful, and if your plans change for any reason, you won't need the approval of the funder.

### *Sponsorship*

You may consider approaching local companies for sponsorship or direct funding. Small businesses are often happy to support local community events, and larger companies often have a dedicated 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR) person or team that might offer financial support or volunteer staff days. Local shops or companies may donate raffle prizes or help with refreshments.

If you are hoping to raise larger amounts of money through corporate sponsorship, bear in mind that the process can be time-consuming and so you may need to start well in advance of your event taking place. Consider who you approach, why they should be interested and what you can offer them in return. A stand at your event, maybe? Or a logo on your publicity materials?

#### **A note on handling the money:**

If your group doesn't have a bank account, you'll either need to work with a partner who can provide this service or set up your group as a legal body and get your own bank account. Either way, factor in some time to make this happen, and put systems in place to keep track of your finances (even if it's just a spreadsheet and a process for approving any spending).

Finally, think carefully about the impact sponsorship might have in terms of how your visitors perceive the event: your autonomy and impartiality is important for maintaining the trust of your local community.

### *Grant funding*

Open homes events can tick a lot of funders' boxes because they cover a range of activities, from education to promoting low-carbon solutions. Potential funders might include local government, local organisations, charitable trusts, national funding

schemes or funding pots for specific community activities. Big corporations like the National Lottery or supermarket chains often offer small community grants.

Your local authority will hold details about small grants for voluntary and community groups in your area. Town and parish councils and community development trusts may have their own funding pots. Local councils should also be able to support your event promotion through their own communication channels.

Check if there are any organisations in your area with the specific remit of supporting community groups. These organisations may be able to offer advice on other likely sources of funding.

There are good funding databases you can access, often for free through community support organisations or your local council. Here are some examples:

- A financial support hub for charities that also offers occasional grants at [cafonline.org](http://cafonline.org).
- A free-to-use funding database at [grantsonline.org.uk](http://grantsonline.org.uk).
- Explore and download grant data published by UK funders at [grantnav.threesixtygiving.org](http://grantnav.threesixtygiving.org). You can also search for information on who funds groups that are like your own.
- Register for free to access templates and use a grant search function at [charityexcellence.co.uk](http://charityexcellence.co.uk).
- Find support for groups and a list of community energy groups at [ncvo.org.uk](http://ncvo.org.uk)
- Explore a comprehensive list of funding opportunities for energy groups at [communityenergyengland.org](http://communityenergyengland.org).

If you have support from an organisation with funding experience, see if they can help with your grant application. A useful guide for writing a great grant application is available online from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations ([ncvo.org.uk](http://ncvo.org.uk)). You could also look at Groundwork's 'Checklist' tips on fundraising through grants ([groundwork.org.uk](http://groundwork.org.uk)).

Things to bear in mind:

1. You might have to mix and match if you are unable to secure the total you need from a single funder.
2. Some funders require match funding, which means you need to provide a certain amount of your own funding, to show you have already secured a portion of the total project costs.
3. It's a good idea to avoid having all your eggs in one basket. Timescales for funding decisions can be quite long and if you find out you are not successful and have to start again from scratch it could affect your event planning.

### *Crowdfunding*

Crowdfunding involves asking many people to give a small amount of money each. A massive benefit is funders can be from anywhere in the world, and it gets more

people invested in and excited about the event. Local people who donate might be inspired to offer their time or expertise too.

There are various online crowdfunding platforms, each of which works slightly differently so you'll need to do some research before diving in. Most platforms take a percentage of the total amount you raise to cover their costs, and on some platforms, you don't get anything if you miss your total funding target, so be realistic about what you aim for, and make sure to factor in any admin charge for the platform.

On most crowdfunding platforms you have the option to offer a reward in exchange for funding. This might be the opportunity to take part in a workshop, come to a party, or receive a gift like a mug or a T-shirt. Online directories are available to help you choose a platform, for example, Crowdfund Champion's directory ([crowdfundchampion.com](http://crowdfundchampion.com)).

## Managing your funds

Make sure you have a way to keep track of your fundraising. Your plans will need to be flexible; you might need to revisit the 'masterplan' as things progress and perhaps scale down your ambitions if fundraising proves difficult, or up if things are positive.

Maintain a methodical record of everyone you approach and what the outcome was, so that you can follow up where appropriate. Make sure to keep all your active funders and supporters updated as your event takes shape – and remember to thank them at the end!

### **Entrance fees and donations – what *not* to do:**

Unless you've done some robust market research and are very confident that your target audience is willing to pay, steer clear of charging visitors; entrance fees are likely to put people off or affect inclusivity. However, donations on the day, especially in return for refreshments, could help you to start building up funds for future or follow-up activities.

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This information sheet was produced by the Centre for Sustainable Energy. We're committed to supporting low carbon retrofit by promoting open homes events and helping you get going with resources, practical support and funding.

You can find more advice at [www.greenopenhomes.net](http://www.greenopenhomes.net).

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