



Growing Together with Incredible Edible

Growing Together

Growing Together (GT) is funded through the Big Lottery Fund (BLF) and is working with community growing groups of all shapes and sizes – from large city farms looking to launch community shares offers, to small community orchards looking to increase their income by selling cider. We support care farms, forest schools, community allotments, garden centres, therapeutic gardens...the list goes on! Many of these groups are looking at ways of becoming more self - sustaining and be less reliant on grant funding.

Post conference thoughts.

At this year's Incredible Edible conference in Wigan, we ran two workshops; **'Enterprising Ideas'** and **'Corporate Connections'**. Kath Whittaker (GT Advisor for the north) and Marc Lupson (GT Business Partnerships Coordinator) met and spoke with many of you about how you could diversify your income and bring in more money and resources into your project. As the responses from those attending the workshops was so positive, we thought it would be really useful to jot down some of the suggested ideas through this e- newsletter and share them with you.

Selling surplus products and plants

Selling your surplus fruit, vegetables, or even eggs, is a common way for you to generate a bit of extra money to help fund your group's activities. There are many ways to sell produce; ranging from a small table with a donation tin at your site, to a weekly market stall, or maybe selling to other businesses such as restaurants and shops.

Selling plants grown on site is another common way for you to raise funds. Unusual and exotic plants, as well as popular fruit and veg plants, often sell well. Some good varieties to start out with would be tomatoes, nasturtiums, herbs and strawberries (runners potted from existing plants), or even ornamental flowers such as stocks, nigella and hollyhocks. If you don't have enough pots, don't buy them. If you put a call out on social media, you are sure to be inundated; garden centres also often have an area for pots to be returned for re-use. For more information on this, have a look at the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens guide to selling produce [here](#) for more help.

What else can you sell?

Many community food growing groups have started to diversify their income by making and selling other things alongside their produce. Arts and craft garden related items, such as wooden named planters sticks or hand painted signs can prove a hit with visitors. Just get creative! If you have a surplus of wood, you could think about making and selling veg beds. This is something you could do outside the main growing season when there is not much to do on the growing side.

Talks and Short Courses

All community growing projects are unique, and the chances are that there are lots of people who would like to hear about yours! Many organisations/groups regularly look for speakers for meetings and events, and are usually happy to pay or make a donation for this service. If you have someone in your group who is good at public speaking then consider making some inquiries about what organisations/groups there are near you so that they can spread the word about what you can offer and generate some income at the same time. Some good places to start are:

- The Women's Institute
- Church Groups
- Pensioners Associations
- Townswomen's Guilds
- Trade Union Council's
- Gardening Groups/Horticultural Societies
- Rotary Clubs
- U3A

You might also have people with particular skills in your groups who could offer to share their expertise through short courses. These courses can be a fantastic way of engaging new people about your project, as well as spreading skills. Adding a small charge for people to attend a course is a small price to pay against what they will be learning. Potential courses could include;

- Gardening, Fruit tree care, grafting
- Arts and crafts
- Green building
- Saving seeds
- Specialist cooking (preserving, baking)
- Beekeeping

Events

Events are a great way to generate income and engage more people in your project, especially during the summer months. Do not underestimate the amount of time they can take to arrange though! Some easy ways to generate income from your event could include hot food and drink sales, a licensed bar, face painting, raffles, coconut shy, as well as a plant and produce sales.

Don't forget to consider how many staff you might need to coordinate and deliver a successful event! You also need to think carefully about publicity, any special licenses you might need, and health and safety amongst other things.

Venue hire and catering

If you have your own multi-purpose room and cooking facilities you could host other another organisation's event or training day at your site, and supply the food as well! Organisations are always looking for value for money facilities to hire out for a day. As a community growing site, you can provide that hosting option, as well as providing a really tasty lunch!

But don't forget to factor your time again, and how much it might cost you to host an event. You also need to make sure you have all the necessary requirements to be able to hold an event/training day (i.e. adequate space and disabled access, a premises license if you are going to serve alcohol).

Working with businesses and their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Most public and private sector businesses will have a CSR policy; a self-regulated policy and commitment to have a positive and ethical impact on the environment and to work with local communities.

Our second workshop of the day 'Corporate Connections' focused on how you could work with local businesses and corporate organisations in a mutually beneficial way. We feel there are three main ways you can connect and work with businesses;

- Corporate volunteering and activity days
- Materials donations and discounts
- Skills and expertise sharing

Corporate volunteering and activity Days

Through their CSR policy, many businesses will provide their employees an allocation of paid days to volunteer. This may either be individual volunteering or as part of a team away day.

These volunteers can be a really valuable resource for you if there is a large task that needs to be done. But you need remember to factor in the amount of time that will be spent in coordinating and facilitating any volunteer activity day. Things to consider are;

- liaising with key staff who will need to give their time
- developing and completing risk assessments
- organising the lunch
- designing a structure for the day

There also might be hidden costs, so you should consider charging for this time. Some businesses will have a budget for their CSR work, so you may be able to tap into this through your discussions. Don't be afraid to do this as there is no harm in asking! For more information on this, please read our [guide](#).

You also need to think carefully about how you do structure your day. You want a programme of activities that will challenge and inspire your corporate volunteers, so they leave with a sense of accomplishment and will want to come back. Think more 'building a new sensory garden', rather than 'cleaning out your compost loo'! Activities need to be meaningful, but also engaging so that you can nurture a long-term relationship with the business you are working with.

Materials donations and discounts

Not all businesses will necessarily be able to provide volunteers for a corporate activity day. But they may be able to donate, or provide at a discount, materials or other supplies, tools, and equipment. It's surprising what people throw away! One man's rubbish, is another's gold!

We recently worked with a group in Manchester called 'Growing in the City' who forged some great relationships with local building firms. Part of their project was to encourage socially isolated men to come together and, by learning and sharing construction skills, build sheds, benches and other items. Using their connections with those building firms, they managed to build a garden workshop entirely from waste materials, spending a grand total of £15 on bolts and screws!

They recently made this sign for our event we were running with corporate organisations in Manchester.

It's not just building materials that get sent to landfill though. Companies regularly 'update' their equipment – computers, tools and even kettles are replaced! Why not have a think about what you need, and what someone else might be throwing away.



Skills sharing

So, you can do the growing, the building, and the community engagement. But how are you with cash flows, governance and business planning? Do you have an expert at building a website or navigating social media?

Sometimes the administrative side of running a community growing group may not be the highest thing on your agenda in comparison with the food growing side.

But in some ways, it's the most important. How well your group is structured and managed can affect the funding it can source, the income it can generate, and ultimately its sustainability. The expertise many corporate businesses have (in most cases) is 'how to run a business'. These are valuable skills which you can tap into by working with them.

In Manchester we are currently brokering a relationship between the legal firm Shoosmiths and some community food growing groups. As part of their CSR, Shoosmiths are offering pro-bono legal advice on issues they can help with. Two groups have already taken this up to help them with their leasing issues.

This is just one example of skills sharing that businesses can offer, and we think it is an area that many of you can really benefit from; particularly during the off-season when you have more time to dedicate to these aspects.

We also think there are some great opportunities for mutually beneficial skills sharing where a corporate business might be considering establishing its own workplace growing; for example, a session on tree grafting in exchange for help with your financial accounting.

For more information on working with businesses, please read our resource guide [here](#)

Further advice and support

To discuss how your group could become more enterprising please contact the following depending on where you are from:

Midlands and Northern Groups

Kath Whittaker: kath@farmgarden.org.uk

Southern Groups

Sophie Antonelli: sophie@farmgarden.org.uk

Wales Groups

Gary Mitchell: gary@farmgarden.org.uk

Scotland Groups

Karen Davidson: karen@farmgarden.org.uk

Northern Ireland Groups

Sinead Bailie: sinead@farmgarden.org.uk

To discuss how your group could work with businesses please contact:

Marc Lupson: marc@farmgarden.org.uk

@marcgrowtog

www.growingtogether.community

Find us on Facebook: [growingtogether.community](https://www.facebook.com/growingtogether.community)

Follow us on twitter: [@gtcommunities](https://twitter.com/gtcommunities)



ARIENNIR GAN Y LOTERI
LOTTERY FUNDED