

# Funding Advice Bureau

**SYFAB** guide to...

---

**Funding for  
community buildings  
– getting started**

**SYFAB**

# Funding for community buildings

Fundraising for the purchase, major refurbishment or construction of a community building is a big challenge. It can take 2 – 5 years from the initial plans through to getting the money and starting the work.

You may need to invest a lot of time, energy and some cash in the project before you know whether you can raise the money needed. So you need to be clear that the building is going to be used and that there is demand for community facilities. Funders will want to know that the building will be well used and that the community has access to it.

Your management committee may need training to develop the new skills and knowledge needed to manage a building. If your organisation is going to take responsibility for a building and staff, it should become incorporated. This will limit the liability of members, so that, if legal action were ever taken against your organisation, the assets of the individual members would not be at risk. The company limited by guarantee is the most common incorporated form taken by organisations in the voluntary and community sector, although it is not the only one available.

## Step 1 – Preparing your organisation

If you are buying a building, you need to consider the many responsibilities involved in owning a building and establish strong arguments for why you need to own, rather than rent, your premises.

If you are refurbishing a rented property, funders will want to know that if they give a grant it will be your group that benefits from the improvements to the building. They will expect you to hold a lease over a certain period of time, usually for a minimum of five years, depending on the amount of money you have asked for.

In both cases, funders will want to be reassured that the management committee can comply with all the legal requirements of managing a building open to the public, and employing staff.

## Step 2 – Develop a funding strategy

You need to consider a strategy and action plan, for a 2-5 year period that identifies different stages of the project. This may include producing a community audit, organising surveys and feasibility studies and a scheme of work for the construction phase.

You may need to approach several different funders in order to secure large funds and you will need to reassure them that you have enough resources to complete the building work. Not many funders are big enough to be a major funder for a building project.

If you are approaching the larger European or regeneration funds, you will need to have links with training, employment, childcare, education or community enterprises.

Approaching funders at the right time is very important. If you make an application too early, funders may feel that you will not start building for a long time and reject your application. If you make your application too late they may not have time to consider your application before building work starts.

Your strategy should also include a business plan showing how you will raise the income to keep the building open in the next few years.

## Step 3 – Gather information

After you have worked on your funding strategy for the building scheme, you need to think about the documents and plans you will need to submit. Each funder will require different information on your building plans and you may need to spend time researching the different documents that you have to send to funders.

Remember, always tailor your applications to each funder and never send out general appeal letters.

## Step 4 – Start local

Some groups start by approaching members and groups within their community. Do-it-yourself fundraising can encourage your local community to get involved and provide much-needed publicity for your project. You will also be able to demonstrate to funders that you have the support of the local community.

You may know local funders and companies who you can approach. They may be happier to start making smaller grants in the first stages of your project and this will encourage larger funders to give grants at a later stage.

## Step 5 – Make use of free professional help

A capital project will need input from professionals such as architects, solicitors, as well as specialist reports like feasibility studies. You may be able to access professional support for free, which can minimise the amount of money you need to raise.

## Useful Resources

You will need a range of support when fundraising for a community building. Talk to other groups that have just been through the process about what they found most useful.

**Community Matters** runs national training courses and publishes '**Occupying Community Premises**' edited by Jonathan Dawson. A book about the legal basis on which community organisations occupy buildings where they are owned by local authorities or other bodies.

Tel: 0845 847 4253

Website: [www.communitymatters.org.uk](http://www.communitymatters.org.uk)

**South Yorkshire Pro-help** consists of architects, solicitors, surveyors and others who may do free assignments for local groups.

Tel: 0114 201 3307

Website: [www.bitc.org.uk/yorkshire\\_and\\_humber/programmes/community\\_investment/prohelp/south\\_yorkshire.html](http://www.bitc.org.uk/yorkshire_and_humber/programmes/community_investment/prohelp/south_yorkshire.html)

**LawWorks for Community Groups** provides free legal advice through a network of volunteer lawyers.

Tel 0207 929 5601

Website: [www.lawworks.org.uk](http://www.lawworks.org.uk)

**The Glass-House Community-Led Design service** offers advice and free training for groups who are involved in, or want to get involved in, the regeneration of their area. The service offers specific professional support that can help the group to develop their ideas further or put the theory into practice.

Tel: 020 7490 4583

email: [info@theglasshouse.org.uk](mailto:info@theglasshouse.org.uk)

Website: [www.theglasshouse.org.uk](http://www.theglasshouse.org.uk)

**The Royal Institute for British Architects (RIBA)** gives advice related to architecture and design. They have a directory of architects in the region and can help with choosing and working with an architect.

**RIBA Yorkshire**

Tel: 0113 389 9870

email: [riba.yorkshire@inst.riba.org](mailto:riba.yorkshire@inst.riba.org)

Website: [www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com)

**Planning Aid** is a free service offering independent professional advice and help on town planning, organised by the Royal Town Planning Institute. Planning Aid gives information and advice on planning law, publications and procedures, and can help groups to: object to, or support, other people's applications; draw up community plans; apply for planning permission; appear at a public enquiry; appeal against a refusal of permission.

**Yorkshire Planning Aid**

Tel: 0113 204 2460/0113 204 2461

Website: [www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](http://www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk)

**Finance Hub** information sheets on Community Buildings, Managing Buildings and Shared Buildings, available online. Website: [www.financehub.org.uk/managing\\_money\\_and\\_resources/default.aspx](http://www.financehub.org.uk/managing_money_and_resources/default.aspx)

South Yorkshire Funding  
Advice Bureau  
The Workstation  
15 Paternoster Row  
Sheffield S1 2BX

Tel: 0114 249 4343  
Email: [enquiries@syfab.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@syfab.org.uk)  
Website: [www.syfab.org.uk](http://www.syfab.org.uk)

We can provide this information in other formats on request. Please get in touch to discuss your needs.

Our information is produced for local community and voluntary groups. No permission is needed for limited reproduction if SYFAB is acknowledged.

Large scale reproduction or inclusion in publications for sale must have written permission from SYFAB.

SYFAB welcomes your comments and criticism. You can talk to any member of staff, or contact us by post, phone, fax or email.

Registered Charity No: 1061118  
Reg. Company No: 3030641

**SYFAB**

© SYFAB 2003  
All rights reserved.