



ARISE Yorkshire Ltd



Location Bradford

Collaborators

- [Bradford Trident](#)
- [Carlisle Business Centre](#)
- [Inspired Neighbourhoods](#)
- [Royds Community Association](#)

Background to the collaboration

Royds Community Association Ltd – a community business formed in 1994 to help revitalise the villages of Buttershaw, Woodside and Delph Hill in South Bradford – collaborates with multiple organisations to regenerate their local community.

This case study describes the collaboration between Royds Community Association and four community businesses (initially) to bid for major contracts. One organisation closed down, leaving three. It also captures learning from a separate collaboration with local organisations to deliver a welfare programme.

Nature of collaboration

Royds Community Association has played a central role in the following collaborations:

ARISE

This collaboration began with five community businesses in Bradford. Their aim was to combine their collective expertise, skills and delivery capacity to attract opportunities and investment to transform their local places and Bradford district as a whole.

The community business created ARISE, a Special Purpose Vehicle, in 2013 as a company limited by guarantee to manage the relationship, clarify roles and responsibilities, ensure confidentiality, mutual understanding and successful delivery of projects.

Unfortunately, one of the organisations involved in the collaboration has closed down and the partnership is now looking for a new member. The remaining members are those collaborators listed above. ARISE has eight board members, including the CEOs from the partnership, a solicitor, local councillor, accountant and a businessman.

ABC Collaboration

The ABC project is a collaboration between eight organisations already involved in welfare issues, (including Royds Community Association) who bid for welfare and advice contracts. The partnership signed a memorandum of understanding to ensure confidentiality, manage conflict of interest and prevent partners from joining competing consortia bids.

Aims of collaboration

ARISE aims to bid for and deliver district-wide and major contracts. Working with five partners helps to provide the scale necessary to attract bigger investment and win contracts that might have been out of reach of the organisations individually, and to share and manage the risks. All the organisations involved in ARISE are well-established, with a strong track record, willingness to pool their collective experience and skills, and capacity to lead on and manage large contracts. They also have a good understanding of how community businesses operate; they are aware of the strengths, opportunities and challenges and know how to manage them.

The ABC project aimed to win a particular welfare advice contract. The partnership includes smaller organisations, and not all are community businesses. The objective of this group is to engage in activities which align strongly with the strength and experiences of the organisations involved. It also gives the smaller organisations, which otherwise may not be successful with bids, the opportunity to work with consortia members to secure local delivery contracts.

Achievements

ARISE won an Empty Homes Contract of £1.4m to refurbish 21 homes which had been empty for over six months. The partnership has gone on to win other contracts, such as a high profile research contract 'Realising Community Health Assets' for Bradford CCG, which seeks to identify physical, cultural, social or mental assets with potential to make people healthier and provide preventative health impacts. They were also successful in a bid to the Locality-run programme focusing on asset transfer of a youth facility.

Bradford City Council also commissions support from the partnership to support complex community asset transfers, because of their expertise and knowledge in this area. ARISE is recognised by the council as a capable organisation, able to take on large contracts and deliver them successfully.

The ABC bid to run welfare advice services was not successful. Following the unsuccessful bid, five of the partners dropped out. However, three organisations (including Royds Community Association) agreed to collaborate and bid for other contracts, and won a £40,000 contract to deliver financial advice in their communities.

ARISE has provided various benefits for its member organisations:

- They are able to engage confidently in larger bids and programmes of work district-wide and access markets they could not otherwise reach.
- It has raised their profile and reputation. Collectively, the participating organisations have become a strategic player in Bradford, recognised for their expertise, skills and talent in community asset transfers and in successfully leading major contracts.
- The collaboration allows for open and honest conversations, and the opportunity to receive peer support from other partners.

Within the ABC project, smaller organisations can work with organisations such as Royds Community Association to secure funding for community initiatives which they would otherwise not be able to access.

These collaborations are also producing wider community benefits: the voice of community businesses and local residents is heard louder through co-production and design, helping to shape more resilient, confident communities.

He also said that as a result of the successful collaboration, ARISE and its members have been invited to work with the council to develop its procurement strategy. The objective is to support and build procurement activities locally. The council wants more local organisations to engage with the procurement process. This has come about because of the success of the collaboration and the strong reputation locally.



Challenges

The failure of the main ABC bid was a setback (the consortium was outbid on price by a national organisation). However, as noted, three members went on to bid successfully for a smaller contract.

Some of the challenges involved in collaborations include:

- Unequal commitment of time and resources: Royds Community Association has been willing to invest time and resources to host, motivate and develop the partnerships and sees these as opportunity costs, but sometimes the relationship is not an equal one.
- The desire to benefit financially from contracts is not always matched by a willingness to invest time and effort in the collaboration, and sometimes partners fail to deliver or act on what they agreed.
- In the case of the ABC partnership, all meetings are held at premises of the Royds Community Association which takes on a leadership, communication and support role, and there is a risk of over-reliance on the Association.

Costs of collaboration

- The partnerships consume considerable time.
- They can require investment of capacity-building support in supporting small organisations with bids.
- Royds Community Association has covered the costs of meeting rooms, lunches, photocopying and promotional activities.
- The housing project does not generate surpluses and in fact the partnership has invested considerable time and money into this project. It has responsibility as a landlord but without access to resources to invest in housing repairs to the extent it wishes to. There was an element of naivety in thinking that this type of housing could generate good levels of income, and the reality has been very different.

A review of ARISE's financial accounts show that the consortium made losses in 2015 (-£10,901) and 2016 (-£4,050). This was largely produced by the maintenance and repair costs of the housing project (£49,000 in 2016/17).

The collaborations have raised income as well:

- £1.4m from Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).
- Increased profile and positive reputation with public service agencies.
- £40k for a financial advice project.
- Funding from the Community Ownership and Management of Assets (COMA) programme.
- CCG support for an asset-mapping project.

There have not been significant financial gains for the participating organisations. However, they are able to generate some income to cover their time and involvement and there is a wider strategic business benefit.

Wider learning

It may take time for collaboration to become a way of life for community businesses and other organisations involved, but the ARISE partnership shows that it can be done – where the will, ambition and commitment exists and where partners are willing to learn together, sharing the risks involved and finding solutions to challenges which emerge when they collaborate.

For significant and sustained collaborations, a formal Special Purpose Vehicle such as that used by the ARISE partnership can be helpful.

It is important for the community and collaborators to co-design services and programmes of work together.

It can be helpful if the collaboration partners are part of a bigger peer learning and exchange network. In this case all the ARISE members are Locality members, and the support and commitment received from Locality and its regional staff has been valued; it has helped to strengthen the relationship and communication between the partners.

An effective collaboration by community partners can help them establish a stronger position and recognition. In the case of ARISE, a group of community organisations is now part of strategic conversations with public sector agencies, such as the Council and CCG.

Funders and commissioners do not pay for or encourage genuinely collaborative working. Tenders are too often designed to be competitive, setting community businesses and other organisations against each other. Moreover, the procurement system treats commissioners as 'adults' and community bidders as 'children', encouraging negative behaviours. Funders and commissioners could be well-placed to stimulate much more collaborative behaviours, but will need to change their practices.

Top tips

- Don't be afraid to share your fears and secrets with others you collaborate with. This promotes a healthy relationship.
- Think big, and beyond your own world or community – there is merit and huge potential in doing more with less and across a wider community with other collaborators.
- Encourage funders to believe in the strength of collaboration, to attend meetings and network events – promote the strength of collaboration and inform plans for commissioning activities right from the outset.
- Work with people, community and other organisations as partners, to co-produce or design services. Instead of doing it to or for them, see them all as equal partners in seeking social and community transformation.

Please add a bullet: The Special Purpose Vehicle is critical as it holds partners together and is key to a successful collaboration.




Leeds Community Spaces





Location

Leeds

Collaborators

 [Gipton Supported Independent Living \(GIPSIL\)](#)

 [LS14 Trust](#)

 [New Wortley Community Association](#)

 [OBLONG](#)

Background to the collaboration

In 2014, 15 community businesses across Leeds came together to form the Leeds Locality Consortium to bid for contracts, to deliver community services across Leeds and specifically to respond to an opportunity to take over a group of council-run community centres.

Nature of collaboration

Initially 10 community centres were offered by Leeds City Council and although the consortium members decided that these particular centres would not advance their strategic objectives, it was able to persuade the Council to widen its offer to 40 centres. Following due diligence by the consortium, with support from the Locality-delivered and DCLG-funded Community Ownership and Management of Assets programme, it was decided in 2016 to focus on eight (subsequently seven) community buildings.

The number of consortium members working together on this initiative reduced over time to four organisations. These are:

- New Wortley Community Association, which runs a community café, laundry, charity shop as well as a community hall, and various services including a job club, positive communication group, confidence group, youth group, fitness groups, etc.
- GIPSIL, which works with children, young people and families in the most disadvantaged areas in Leeds and helps them to realise their potential.
- OBLONG, a development trust which helps people and communities to flourish and which runs the recently refurbished Woodhouse Community Centre.
- LS14 Trust, which runs a drop-in centre with a cafe, digital lounge, training room, hot-desks, art room and roof garden.

These four organisations believe they have a shared agenda and values: belief in community asset transfers, in communities taking leadership and delivering community-focused services. They also see themselves as a partnership of equals and have a strong desire to work in a fair, transparent, equitable and supportive manner.

The Leeds Community Spaces Initiative was incorporated in February 2018 as a joint purpose vehicle. With support from the Bright Ideas Fund, negotiations have proceeded to the point where the Council has agreed to transfer seven community centres. Once transferred, the Council will provide financial support as a contribution to running costs. A part-time paid member of staff has been recruited as a shared resource, to co-ordinate activities and manage the assets and services delivered from the centres, supported by four volunteers who offer 16 hours per week towards this initiative.

Aims of collaboration

The overriding impulse for the Leeds Community Spaces initiative is to deliver better services from community buildings, and to see the services run 'better' and more efficiently. The four founding members of the Leeds Community Spaces Initiative want to create a community-led environment for the buildings, whereby the community will be at the heart of running the buildings, and community boards will be set up to help run the centres and maximize the use of the assets.

The four consortium members have extensive experience in getting the most out of their community buildings and want to use their experience to run them in a better, more sustainable way. They also want to ensure the buildings are embedded in their communities, helping to build community capacity and resilience.

It is also hoped that this collaboration will produce further benefits:

- Providing the opportunity to share expertise and knowledge in managing community assets.
- Establishing formal processes which allow them to take on assets and large contracts, where the opportunities arise.
- Generating income which can be re-invested in the local communities.

Discussions have been held with the Council around the transfer of an additional 12 buildings over the next two to three years. The Council recognises that it does not have expertise in community work and community engagement, it also believes that the consortium has potential to run community centres in a more efficient way.

Achievements

In the short term the immediate achievement will be that two community centres will transfer to community hands, with the prospect of another five soon and potentially more to follow.

Challenges

The original 15 organisations were not able to work in a truly collaborative way as originally envisaged. Some of the challenges included mistrust, silo working, competitive behaviours, a lack of risk appetite and tensions between larger and smaller organisations. The opportunity to combine knowledge, resources, skills and expertise, and minimise cost, has therefore reduced.

Costs of collaboration

This has been an arduous and complicated collaboration and has taken more than four years to take shape and produce initial results.

Financial contributions have been provided by DCLG's COMA programme and Power to Change's Bright Ideas Fund. Advice has been provided by Locality. Council funding will be available once the transfers are complete, to support the running of the centres. On the other hand, there will be significant savings.

The partnership estimates that the multiple asset transfers of the buildings will create a saving for the City Council of approximately £720,000 over the first five years, after taking into account costs of premises (including insurance, health and safety), utilities and overheads (such as cleaning costs, phone, ICT and events).

It is not expected that this collaboration will directly and significantly improve the finances of the four participating organisations, although it should position them well for further bidding opportunities.

Wider learning

It is difficult to make true collaboration happen among a group of local community agencies. It requires a clear vision to create change, commitment, time and resources, willingness to set aside differences as well as shared values and beliefs.

Where the collaboration is new, a track record of success among individual members is needed to achieve the necessary credibility (in this case one of the collaborating organisations had played a central role in an earlier successful and high-profile asset transfer in Leeds).

Previous success has certainly been a key factor in building trust in the proposal and between council and the consortium.

Top tips

- Relationships are key: get people talking, sharing, and liking each other.
- A partnership is only as strong as its weakest link and can expose organisations which are not at the same level of thinking, delivery capability, and contract readiness.
- Larger organisations need to act generously towards smaller ones.



Library of Things



Location

[Crystal Palace, London](#)

Collaborators

[Crystal Palace Transition Town](#)

[Library of Things](#)

[Upper Norwood Library Hub](#)

Background to the collaboration

In 2017, the Upper Norwood Library Trust (UNLT), which manages the Upper Norwood Library Hub (UNLH) in Crystal Palace – a vibrant community space with a library service and a range of enterprise and community services) – collaborated with the Library of Things and Crystal Palace Transition Town, to establish a Library of Things in the library hub.

The Library of Things is a community business which connects people to each other and to their neighbourhood through sharing. It offers a wide range of ‘things’ such as tools, mowers, carpet cleaners, for borrowing by local residents who pay small fees according to a choice of membership schemes.

Crystal Palace Transition Town is part of the Transition Town movement, a community-led response to climate change and shrinking supplies of cheap energy. Crystal Palace Transition Town runs projects that reduce carbon footprint while building local resilience, sustainability, and friendships.

Nature of collaboration

The Library of Things ran previous experiments in West Norwood and was exploring ways to expand to other communities. The three partners agreed to work together to establish the first Library of Things in a library space in the UK.

The Library of Things team organised three two-day informative bootcamps for Upper Norwood Library Trust, Crystal Palace Transition Town and two other organisations. Bootcamps bring together organisations interested in setting up a Library of Things to:

- pioneer a ground-breaking Library of Things Network
- learn from the experiences of the Library of Things (the organisation) and make use of a central ‘toolbox’ to test and build a Library of Things in their local area



– work with other teams to learn from and support them as they build a Library of Things.

The Crystal Palace partners launched a crowdfunding campaign¹ raising £9,400 from 291 people. The campaign attracted support and funding from B&Q, Martin and Co (a local estate agent), Barclays Lifeskills and the Mayor's fund. They received a lot of support from volunteers from Crystal Palace Transition Town and a few pupils from a Croydon school.

A partnership agreement was drawn up by the collaborators and they agreed to merge the existing West Norwood service with a new one based at the Upper Norwood Library Hub. The Crystal Palace Library of Things was established, and it opened to the public in April 2018 with a purpose-built kiosk displaying 100 things available to borrow.

Aims of collaboration

All three partners shared the aim of establishing a resource which could help to build local resilience. As the Library of Things puts it, by providing an affordable, convenient and socially rewarding way to share things and skills, it can bring a mix of people into community spaces where they 'can slowly get to know each other and find inspiration to join in with whatever's happening nearby – perhaps helping out with a monthly market or neighbourhood orchard, or trying out a DIY or sewing class, or even starting a whole new project with some friends and neighbours'.

The bigger vision for Library of Things is that it becomes a national movement, and for the different Library of Things located across the country to work closely together to share ideas, learning, and resources wherever possible.

Achievements

The Crystal Palace Library of Things has been fully operational since then with more than 412 members from the community. The service is supported by a dedicated team of local volunteers who encourage, advise, inform, signpost and help residents to borrow things. New technology for borrowing, volunteer systems and training have also been established

Library of Things opens for business six days per week at the same time as the library hub. Residents borrow the things they need and want for use at home, in the community or with their neighbours and friends.

¹ Crowdfunding campaign video showing some of the volunteers who supported the campaign
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wouw0YUjRPM>

² <https://www.libraryofthings.co.uk/inthenews/>

Alongside the kiosk, practical skill-sharing events take place, run by volunteers from the community – including 'repair parties' and 'mending meet-ups'. The initiative has attracted widespread media² interest, enhancing the reputation of the collaborators.

Volunteer numbers have increased as has footfall to the Library Hub (18,000 monthly). More people are starting to share their interests with others, building new relationships, and enhancing community connectivity. The ability to pool learning, resources and funds has made it easier for the partnership to achieve this in a relatively short time.

Challenges

Although the collaboration was successful, it faced challenges along the way:

- The three partners had different values, agendas, ways of working and different communication styles.
- The partners found it difficult to agree a shared budget initially, not least because none of them are cash rich. Some training might have been useful.
- The collaboration consumed considerable time (see below) and this meant that other projects that were not part of the collaboration were de-prioritised.

The formal meetings which took place when deciding the partnership agreement were stressful. However, the partnership's collective ambition and commitment for their community, passion to make a difference, their wide experience in relationship-building and negotiations helped to overcome some of the challenges.

The partnership improved when the project got to the point where they had all committed to the practical phase and agreed on the exact location of the Library of Things, and were meeting face-to-face more frequently and more informally.

Costs of collaboration

The collaboration required a high investment of time – including total meeting time upwards of 60 hours for each partner – to come to agreements and to understand how the different organisations worked, their motivations, needs, cultures and working practices. The crowdfunding campaign was especially time-consuming and stressful.

The specific resource demands on each partner were:

- Library of Things: project management time, networks, previous members, volunteers and technology, data, knowledge and practice from previous models.
- Upper Norwood Library Hub: planning time, provision of space, additional support from front-of-house team, knowledge of users.
- Crystal Palace Transition Town: project management and outreach time, time spent building and reinforcing relationships in the community – groups, gatekeepers, volunteers, accessing networks, using existing communication infrastructure, local social media experience and local messaging mediums.

On the other hand, the collaboration produced financial and other support, through the crowdfunding appeal in particular.

If any surpluses are generated by the scheme they will be shared: Library of Things would apply them to developing similar services in other communities, and the Upper Norwood Library Hub and Crystal Palace Transition Town would apply them to their local community activities.

Wider learning

It is important for the collaborating partners to be explicit about expectations. These need to be revisited at regular intervals as not everything is obvious at the beginning. Where tensions emerge, they should be tackled as soon as possible.

The communication and decision-making mechanisms need to accommodate the different working practices of the participant organisations.

Top tips

- Keep the focus on the objective of the partnership rather than the needs of the partners.
- Sometimes the agreement we get is not exactly what we want, but if it is good enough for now it can always be revisited.



Gibside Community Farm collaboration



Location

Derwent Valley

Collaborators

[Gibside Community Farm](#)

[GoLocalFood](#)

[North East Organic Growers
Workers Co-op](#)

Background to the collaboration

The National Trust allocated three large plots within a walled garden to Gibside Community Farm and leased it a 14-acre field near Burnopfield. Gibside Community Farm seeks to operate 'in ways that nourish people and the soil', without using chemicals or farming methods that reduce fertility, using organic principles. The organisation focuses on fruit and vegetables which are in season and does not buy-in vegetables from other sources. They encourage and support their members to develop their knowledge and skills in growing food.

In 2017, Gibside Community Farm collaborated with GoLocalFood (GLF) and the North East Organic Growers Workers Co-op (NEOG) on a community food-growing initiative. GLF and NEOG both operate community businesses and they happen to be competitors to Gibside Community Farm, albeit indirectly as they cover different geographical areas.

Nature of collaboration

GLF uses Gibside Community Farm's land to grow vegetables. In return, the growers share their knowledge, expertise and time with Gibside Community Farm. GLF's grower can take the vegetables back with him on the days he works on the field. NEOG helps to transport the modules GCF uses from Blyth Star Enterprises to GCF as it is on its vegetable box delivery route.

Aims of collaboration

Previously, Gibside Community Farm's members did everything on the farm. However, they were keen to strengthen their knowledge, skills and understanding of environmentally-friendly farming techniques. This was something the other two community businesses could bring to Gibside Community Farm.

On the other hand, one of the two community businesses they collaborated with lacked land for growing their produce, something Gibside Community Farm could offer. In this way, their relationship was a reciprocal one.

Achievements

Though the three organisations are competitors and often have differences of opinion, they have very specific gaps/challenges within their operations. What they have managed to achieve very successfully is to identify positive ways to work together in order to address their challenges.

The collaboration helped all three organisations to connect, build good relationships and agree positive ways to work together for mutual benefit. It also helped them play to their strengths and areas of expertise. For example, Gibside Community Farm lacks storage space on site, and without the help to transport their produce would have to make a 17-mile trip, creating additional expense for the organisation. The collaboration with the growers helps to reduce transportation costs and keep their produce fresh for customers.

Gibside Community Farm also established a good working relationship with Blyth Star Enterprises, which arranges visits to the farm from adults with learning disabilities and, in return, allows the farm use of its greenhouses to cultivate seeds.

Costs of collaboration

In 2017, Power to Change's Bright Ideas Fund awarded Gibside Community Farm £15,000, to develop a focused business model, test their ideas including new markets and form beneficial working relationships with the two community businesses.

The collaboration required an investment of time from all three organisations, including member time to participate in shared learning; and time spent building trust and knowledge about each organisation, and understanding of expectation and needs.

The collaboration is producing financial savings for Gibside Community Farm (reduced transportation costs and reduced produce loss) and for the partner community businesses, which now have access to land without charge to grow vegetables.

Wider learning

The Bright Ideas funding was 'a real gear changer'. Without this funding, the Gibside Community Farm may not have been able to collaborate with the other growers or transform its business model.

Funders generally could do more to support initiatives which enable and empower community businesses to collaborate. Current tender processes do not facilitate collaboration, and in fact can encourage competition. As this example suggests there can be specific benefits from working together, particularly where those involved have specific shortcomings and challenges which can be addressed through collaboration.

Top tips

- Collaboration works best where there is mutual respect, shared goals and objectives and, in particular, where each has something the others need.
- It helps to be clear about what you can and cannot do and not to make any promises you cannot keep.
- It takes time, requires patience and needs trust if it is going to work, and for the collaboration to be sustained over a longer period.



Glendale Gateway Community Trust collaboration



Location

Northumberland

Collaborators

Glendale Gateway Trust
with multiple organisations

Background to the collaboration

Glendale Gateway Trust was set up in 1996 to support the community of Glendale, one of the most sparsely populated areas in England. It collaborates with charities, local groups, community businesses, colleges, funders, public sector organisations and local residents to address needs identified in the community and create regeneration, economic, environmental and social changes.

Based in Cheviot Centre, Wooler, Glendale Gateway Trust serves a population of 6,000 people spread over 250 square miles of rural North Northumberland. Since its inception, the Trust has grown into a significant local organisation, with annual revenue costs of around £100,000 and capital assets of nearly £3 million. The organisation manages a community and business centre, commercial units on Wooler High Street, 18 affordable housing properties, Wooler Youth Hostel and shepherds' huts.

The Glendale Gateway Trust is a significant partner in the effort to expand affordable housing provision in Glendale, and promote rural business development. Over time, the Trust has also become an organisation to which people turn when they want to see something done, or to get a voice heard.

Nature of collaboration

Glendale Gateway Trust made a joint bid to a Santander Bank grants programme with an early-stage social enterprise (also a tenant in their building) with no track record in the community or with funders. The bid was successful, and the Trust drew up a service level agreement with the social enterprise to clarify roles and responsibilities, including financial expectations.

It was also involved in 'Growing Rural Careers in Northumberland', a collaboration with the Northumberland National Park Authority and the Scottish Rural College, focused on growing the next generation of land-based workers in rural North Northumberland.



There was also a community-led housing collaboration with the aim to bring nine empty properties into use. The project cost was £800,000 and the Glendale Gateway Trust was successful in a bid to the Homes and Communities Agency (now Homes England) for a £350,000 grant.

To meet the remaining project costs, the Trust collaborated with other funders, a housing trust, local residents and the parish council. An innovative Community Bond Scheme (whereby local residents could buy a bond for £1,000, repayable in three years with nil interest) helped the organisation raise £128,000 from local residents. The Trust secured a £20,000 grant and a £70,000 interest-free loan from the Quaker Housing Trust. The local parish council also contributed a £30,000 low-interest loan towards the project, and various grants made up the remainder. The Trust completed the housing project successfully; the homes have all been let and are generating rental income. Loans are all being serviced, and all bondholders received their investments back.

This was regarded as something more than simply a fundraising effort – it was a collaboration with key local agencies and residents, willing to share risks to achieve a shared goal and address a challenge facing their community. Moreover, the collaboration helped to pool expertise, finance, learning, skills and resources to ensure the success of the project.

Aims of collaboration

In each case, the primary objective of the collaboration was to deliver community benefits –whether supporting an early-stage social enterprise, retaining and attracting young people to work in the rural economy, or tackling the shortage of affordable housing.

Achievements

Each of these collaborations was successful. The engagement with local citizens and organisations in the case of the housing scheme was especially significant. The Glendale Gateway Trust took a decision to seek finance from its own community before turning to commercial lenders, and this enhanced community pride and confidence in the successful outcome.

Challenges

While the initiatives described above were successful, that has not been the case for all attempts at collaboration. The Glendale Gateway Trust is often approached by other community organisations and businesses to collaborate on joint bids.

Joint bids have not always had a happy outcome: in one case, the partner organisation failed to raise the required match-funding and a grant needed to be returned; a second collaboration with another organisation to bid for the same funds was rejected because of Glendale Gateway's first collaboration, which was successful. In other cases, organisations have applied for funding using the Trust's name, without the Trust's prior knowledge. As a result of negative experiences, the Trust has introduced rules for collaboration. For example, a service level agreement, also vision, values and priorities need to be aligned.

Costs of collaboration

Collaboration can be time-consuming. The collaboration with local citizens was especially intensive, and the community bond scheme required significant investment in relationship-building, communication, systems and processes.

The Trust now requires 10% of the budget for hosting and supporting collaborative bids. This has not always been well-received, but helps to clarify roles and relationships, and recoups some of the Trust's costs.

Wider learning

Collaborations must align with an organisation's ambitions and business priorities, and it is important to collaborate with organisations with shared vision and values.

An investment of effort in communication and transparency in discussions and negotiations, with expectations made clear from the outset, can help to achieve success.

There can be reputational costs when joint-bidding activities fail.


Top tips


– Don't promise things you cannot deliver, be open about what you can and cannot do.



LS14 Trust collaboration



 **Location**
Seacroft, Leeds

 **Collaborators**
↗ [LS14 Trust](#) with local residents and multiple organisations in Seacroft

Background to the collaboration

LS14 Trust is a community development organisation in Seacroft working in deep collaboration with numerous parties to develop and promote Seacroft as a vibrant and exciting place to live, work and bring up a family:

- local residents
- public agencies, such as the local Clinical Commissioning Group
- Department for Work and Pensions
- council
- developers (there is significant regeneration activity underway)
- businesses
- children's centres
- community
- voluntary and faith-based groups
- social entrepreneurs

LS14 operates from a small converted office on a parade of shops in the heart of Seacroft. With the help of local tradesmen and volunteers, it has transformed the space into a drop-in centre with a café, digital lounge, training room, hot-desks, art room and roof garden. LS14 has more than 1,000 local members who live within a three-mile radius of its centre.

LS14 believes that people who live and work in their community have the strengths, vision and experience to build a positive future for themselves and each other.



Nature of collaboration

Most of LS14's collaborations evolve from listening to local residents and organisations about their wants, ambitions and hopes for their community. LS14 then empowers them to come up with ideas for how these could be made a reality. As part of this, LS14 brings partners and other local agencies to the table to work with the community, to create the changes they want to see in Seacroft.

Collaborations with private sector organisations, such as Enterprise Car Hire and Tesco, support volunteering in the community and they create sponsorship opportunities for LS14 and its partners. Some local businesses are not always aware of, nor do they understand, the issues and challenges experienced by local residents. Through collaborative working, LS14 is able to share some of these challenges, and get the support needed to address them.

The collaborations bring businesses closer to their communities, and conversely the partnerships these businesses establish with organisations such as LS14 help to build their reputation and profile in the community. For example, the community came up with the idea for Playbox, LS14 offered space and the container, and volunteers from Enterprise Car Hire helped to paint and furnish a shipping container to create a Playbox play scheme for use by children and their families. This has become a central hub for play and learning, as well as employment and volunteering.

Another example is the digital lounge, delivered in partnership with local businesses. This scheme offers digital inclusion skills to older people and to some of the most isolated in the community, helping them to stay connected with friends and families. The digital lounge is also open to everyone in the community, including unemployed people, who can develop new skills, get help with CV-writing and application forms, build their interview skills and look for jobs.

Summer and winter galas are organised in collaboration with local residents, community organisations and businesses. LS14 and community groups organise the festival, and the local businesses provide funding and volunteers to make the events a success.

Aims of collaboration

The collaborations described above are designed to:

- minimise duplication
- pool resources, learning, expertise and local talent to do a lot more for less
- create volunteering opportunities
- deliver high quality services for local residents
- raise community aspirations
- build local talent
- achieve economic growth
- address some of the social issues and challenges experienced by local residents.

The collaborations are also designed to increase partners' reach and impact in the community and to ensure all parts of the community are involved in making Seacroft a good and safe place to live, work and play.

Achievements

Collaborations have created multiple benefits for local residents and local organisations:

- Some of the community groups which collaborate with LS14 attract funding and donations – often when a collaboration is successful, the funding period is extended or the funds increased to allow the project to continue.
- Collaborations have resulted in innovative projects such as the digital lounge and brought new investment into the community, e.g. funding for a dog show.
- Collaborations have raised the profile of the organisations involved in the partnership, enhancing community support and participation.
- Less well-known and smaller organisations involved in the collaborations have received support, funding and expertise from the more experienced and capable partners; they have been empowered and become more confident and able.
- Local businesses have become more confident in listening to people's wants, aspirations and hopes, and have in some cases worked with local people to design services and programmes which address issues and challenges in the community.
- In some instances – e.g. the gala events, local festivals, a Good Neighbours scheme – silo-working and duplication have been minimised and more effective ways of working have emerged.



LS14 and its partners operate in a very deprived area; their ability to engage, listen and involve local residents is helping the community find solutions to local issues themselves, instead of being 'done to'.

Collaborations can create some cost savings, evidenced when Enterprise Car Hire staff painted the shipping container used for the Playbox play scheme. Savings made can then be invested in other community initiatives.

Collaborations also help to take the pressure off LS14. Sharing the load with others in the community frees LS14 up to engage in strategic partnerships and bring investment into the community.

Costs of collaboration

The costs involved are largely:

- Time – getting the partnerships together, organised and ready to deliver, as well as the time offered by the other collaborators.
- Financial – LS14 offers free space for meetings and activities.

On the other hand, the collaborations have produced sponsorship and volunteers from local businesses and been successful in pooling resources from different organisations and local residents.

Wider learning

In Seacroft, as in many other communities, the significant collaborations are not just between community businesses. In LS14's case it collaborates with the private, public, community and voluntary-based sectors. It believes that such collaborations:

- minimise duplication
- help to improve the quality of services provided in the community
- build the reputation of the organisations and the community
- support innovation.

The experience of LS14 suggests that place-based collaborations generate greatest community benefit when they do not take place in isolation from the community itself. Local residents know what they need and want, and LS14 suggests that collaboration must start with them. Only after engaging, involving and listening is it possible to draw together the right partners to help local residents create changes in their community.

Collaborations can produce competitive behaviours, and can also exclude and isolate: the weaker, less confident and apparently less able organisations can be overlooked. But at community level, it is always important to treat such organisations as equals: they always have something to bring to the table. Their skills, experiences and hopes must not be overlooked; these need to be encouraged and harnessed to make the collaboration successful.

Organisations operating beyond the local community, such as DWP and the local council, can be drawn to organisations which collaborate, because they offer local expertise and knowledge, deliver more for less and together have a strong reach into diverse communities who otherwise may not be engaged by formal services.

Top tips

- Look for people and organisations who genuinely want to collaborate, who want to make a difference in their community.
- Recognise that collaboration at local community level benefits everyone. Pooling resources, time and talents helps to make a difference to everyone.
- Treat all involved in the collaboration as equals.
- Be confident in sharing your knowledge, expertise and experiences – not holding back for fear that others involved will use the information you share with them for their own good or compete with you.
- Collaborations can raise an organisation's profile and reputation, and the positive benefits need to be acknowledged, valued and celebrated.



Tea Leaf Trust: food waste collaboration



Location

Maskeliya and Nuwara Eliya
in Sri Lanka

Collaborators

➤ [Tea Leaf Trust](#)

➤ [AMMA](#)

Background to the collaboration

Tim Pare and Yasmene Shah set up the Tea Leaf Trust in 2008, following their honeymoon, to offer training in English language, employability and professional development to 18–24 year-olds living in and around the tea estates. The aim was to reduce poverty and build coping strategies and resilience within communities where Indian Tamils (brought over by the British in the nineteenth century to pick tea) are kept as a dependent, uneducated workforce, and where substance abuse, domestic and sexual violence, self-harm and suicide are prevalent.

In 2018, The Tea Leaf Trust embarked on a collaborative project with AMMA, a social enterprise based in Sri Lanka. Like the Tea Leaf Trust, AMMA's work is also concentrated in tea plantation areas. It employs and trains mothers in the art of natural dye and textile skills. The collaboration will see them form partnerships with hotels, restaurants, supermarkets, businesses on a food waste programme.³

Nature of collaboration

Though this is very much in its early stages, the project will see alliances formed in local communities, enabling beneficiaries of both organisations to collect food waste for composting. The food waste can be used to produce dye by the women engaged in AMMA's project. The two organisations are likely to merge in the future as their values, vision and core activities align strongly, and because the Tea Leaf Trust is already well-established in Sri Lanka, while AMMA is a young organisation.

It is likely the two enterprises will share some premises and other facilities (such as transport) and potentially administrative support. This will lead to cost-saving as well as strengthened common purpose and ideas-sharing.

³ www.ammasrilanka.com



Aims of collaboration

Some of the key impulses behind the collaborations include:

- Tea Leaf Trust's objective to diversify its income base
- saving resources in staffing
- reinvesting surpluses in the community
- opportunity to pool expertise and knowledge – the Tea Leaf Trust in the area of education and learning, AMMA in dyes and textiles
- building community capacity and resilience by educating and skilling the community to help themselves
- potential merger to increase reach and impact in the community.

Currently their vision and values are well-aligned and the projects selected sit firmly with their common objective to help the communities across the Tea Estates to be self-sufficient, to have sustainable income, learn a trade and reduce poverty.

Achievements

The collaboration is still in the design stage. Once the projects are fully operational, success indicators will include:

- Growth in micro businesses.
- Resilient communities, growing their own food, using food waste for compost and dye – creating textiles.
- Opportunity for poor communities to generate income through trading.
- New ways of working for the Tea Leaf Trust and AMMA, with shared expertise, skills and knowledge.
- Growing trust and confidence in each other and in their own abilities.
- Pooled funds and resources and possible merger.

Challenges

This is an early stage collaboration and there are no major challenges as yet. However, it has been important to be realistic about what can and cannot be achieved.

Costs of collaboration

To date, the main costs have been development time including leadership input, training and support, relationship-building with businesses regarding the food waste collection programme, developing a memorandum of understanding, and ensuring registration requirements are in line with Sri Lankan government regulations.

Wider learning

Real collaboration requires not just input from the organisations involved but time, commitment and support from the community.

Those who benefit from collaborative projects can share their expertise and knowledge with others who start similar journeys. In this way, knowledge and expertise can be retained within the community.

Having shared values and beliefs are solid foundations for collaboration. It can lead to a willingness to share expertise and costs – helping each other financially when one has a bad month, for example. Collaboration is working well when employees talk about both organisations rather than one.

Collaborations can be damaged if one organisation is not pulling its weight or is less secure in terms of its market, if one organisation is growing disproportionately to the other, or if staff are treated differently.

Top tips

- Be honest and up-front. It is tempting to try to be very easy-going and suggest that things won't be a problem when they will be.
- The bottom line is that collaborations need to increase resilience and profitability. Without these being true, and understood, it won't happen.
- When seeking people or organisations to collaborate with, seek out those with similar missions and mentalities, even if their businesses are completely different.



Other international case studies

A few international community business collaborations were researched as part of this study. Below is some background information together with links to relevant websites and publications for more detailed insights to the various collaborations in these organisations.

Buurtbuik, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Buurtbuik in Amsterdam collects food produce from supermarkets, greengrocers, restaurants and vegetable producers to share with local residents. By doing this, the organisation hopes to create better neighbourhoods, tackle food waste and create opportunities for people to have fun in the process. More detailed information about its work and partnerships can be found on its [website](#).

Cooperativa Integral Catalana (CIC) – Cooperative Economy, Catalana, Spain

The CIC came into existence eight years ago. It operates across the Catalonia region of Spain and seeks to enable, empower and support its members to create a cooperative economy at local and community level.

The CIC and its members are engaged in a range of activities, including barter markets, a network of common stores, an alternative currency called 'eco', a 'Cooperative Social Fund' for financing community projects and a 'basic income programme' for remunerating members for their work. At local level, the CIC's projects are built around the development of a cooperative economy and a cooperative public system, where basic needs such as food and health care are not treated as commodities but rather as social goods which everyone is able to access.

The link below outlines a field study conducted by George Dafermos and his colleagues from the P2P Foundation/ Commons Transition in October 2017.

It provides detailed information about the CIC's collaborative model.

<http://commonstransition.org/the-catalan-integral-cooperative-an-organizational-study-of-a-post-capitalist-cooperative/>

Consorzio Copernico – Cooperatives, Canavese, Italy

Consorzio Copernico, established in 1997, is a secondary cooperative supporting a consortium of six social cooperatives in the Canavese area of the Piedmont region in north-west Italy.

Three of Copernico's member cooperatives are Type A cooperatives, meaning they provide educational and social welfare services for children, adolescents, families and, more recently, immigrants and asylum-seekers. The other three cooperatives are Type B cooperatives – they focus on providing job opportunities to people who need a sheltered work environment, for example people with learning difficulties or disabilities, people who have addictions, offenders who are given the chance to work outside prison, or long-term unemployed people.

See the link below for details of an interview with Vittoria Burton, Head of Research and Development at Consorzio Copernico published by the International Labour Office in 2017. It provides further insights into the organisation's work.

http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/cooperatives/news/WCMS_549865/lang-en/index.htm