

Start up funding for new Sheds:

The difficulty any new Shed faces is that you are a new group, with no track record - and that despite your best intentions and your work to form a committee, adopt a Constitution and open a bank account - on paper your "newness" often makes potential funders twitchy. They do not know if you will look after and spend their money correctly. Particularly if you don't yet have an open premises / website / Twitter etc - there is unfortunately no way of them sussing you out! A way to try and gain some credibility simply is to work with who you have locally and think creatively – and save those bigger funding applications until you can demonstrate some track record of receiving and spending other funds openly and in accordance with furthering your aims.

Trust Funds / Local Charitable Funds:

Trust Funds and local Charitable Funds is the name commonly used to describe a pot of money that is administered by a management group and is often the result of a historical donation / legacy / building sale in your local area.

There are lots of these around – and once you have sourced them (see below), they can seem an easy hit – ie – most often just require you to send them a letter explaining who you are and what you want funds for. However, if you are to spend time sourcing and applying to Trust Funds / small local Charitable Funds of any type, then you need to give yourselves the best opportunity. Appreciate that lots of other groups are in the same situation as you – and that most Trust Funds receive hundreds of letters every month requesting their funds - therefore your letter needs to stand out in terms of being clear, focussed, evidence based and convincing as to why they should give your project some money, over the one that is next in the pile.

Don't assume that the reader knows anything about Sheds / Men's Sheds / Community Sheds - or has even heard of them - or wherever you are based, geographically as a place. You need to be clear and explicit and answer, at least - all of the following questions -

- What is a Shed / Men's Shed / Community Shed?
- What are its benefits?
- Where are you setting one up?
- Who is the Shed aimed at?
- What difference will participating in the Shed make to the people you are targeting?
- Why is a Shed so important to your local geographical area?
- What local issues does your local area have that the Shed will help overcome?
- What do you want funding for? Be explicit - Trust funders in particular want to know that they are helping you overcome a real issue / problem and that their small contribution will really make a difference.
- What will you do in return for their funding? ie: they are welcome to visit the Shed when it is up and running / you would be happy to promote their support of the Shed in line with their requirements / you will be happy to send photo's / case study for their use to demonstrate the difference that their money has made to the Shed.

Sourcing local Trust Funds:

- See the **UKMSA Fundraising Fact Sheet** for a list of fundraising information sites
- Community Foundations are always a good starting point. They hold the funds for lots of smaller trusts and run grant schemes of all sizes. Google to find your local CF - talk to them and see what they recommend with their local knowledge.

Local Charitable Organisations:

Local charitable organisations such as **The Rotary Club, the Lions Clubs, Inner Wheels**, that meet monthly and often shake buckets in your town centre and organise local activities, do so for a reason – to enable them to give back to local groups and people in need. All are worth contacting to see if they would be willing to donate to the Shed. Most require a letter (such as above) that a member (often the Secretary) will take to their next meeting and propose to the other members to consider. If you are successful, you may be asked to go in to a future meeting and talk about the Shed and what a difference their money has specifically made to it. The formality of these meetings varies – from meetings in a pub to full dinner jacket evening meals – but it's well worth accepting the invitation to present your Shed to a group of people who are potentially future members!

Company Donations: asking local companies for money or resources is often beneficial and the advantage of this approach is that you may get a very quick answer, as there is usually no official application process.

You will need a letter like the one you may write to the Trust Funds - but the added advantage is that the company already has an affiliation and relationship with the local area. Additionally, you could develop a long-term relationship with the company (ie: wood company for off cuts).

Businesses may be willing to enter into a sponsorship deal. This involves you offering a service, usually publicity for the company in your publications or at events, in return for money. It is more of a business deal than a donation, so you have to be able to deliver your side of the bargain. Contact companies directly and ask for the Community Affairs or Marketing department, or a person who can deal with donations.

Don't go for all the obvious ones either - think laterally about who is hiding at the back of your industrial estates / could have a link to a Shed – an engineering company / window companies / manufacturers who get everything delivered on pallets etc etc. If you need a specific task doing – then ask! ie: ask the local electricians if they could do you a deal - if you could fund the materials of the work you need doing, could they do the practical side of the work as a community donation? Knowing that they are doing things under their Corporate Social Responsibility banner offer attracts management to sign off on such support – in return for a picture in the local paper and on their website.

Supermarkets - similar to the above - but many have their own Community schemes - ie: Waitrose and Asda both run token schemes where shoppers put tokens in boxes associated with local groups – and you just need to fill in a short form in store to apply. If you are selected, you are pretty guaranteed to get a slice of any funds (Waitrose divide £1,000 per month between 3 charities) - so even if you don't come out on top, you do get something.

Sainsbury's etc will also let you do bag packs etc - sounds some work – and it is - but if you can get five or six of you to cover a checkout session for a Saturday - you can easily raise a few hundred pounds.

Morrisons has its own foundation you can easily apply to: <https://www.morrisonsfoundation.com>

The Co-op's Membership Scheme now gives 1% back to local community groups – with new groups expected to benefit for approximately a 6 month period: <http://www.coop.co.uk/membership/local-community-fund/>

Housing Associations - does your local HA have a pot of community money? Often they do, but don't tell people very loudly! It would be worth finding out who the local Community Workers are (if they have any) and seeing if they have funds. Often a simple agreement to actively target their older customers to become members of the Shed – or offering an incentive to their older tenants to join (perhaps restricted to a certain time period) can present good publicity opportunities for both partners.

An example of a national housing association who have a grant fund is Persimmon Homes: they have offices around the country so it's worth investigating if your Shed would be eligible to apply to their pot: <http://www.persimmonhomes.com/charity>

Councillors - check out what pots of your money your local Councillors are responsible for. Many Town or District Councillors have a few hundred pounds they are able to allocate to local groups. Often County Councillors have a bigger pot – but most usually are able to allocate some to community activities from April each year (or post their election period). Phone the Councillor, ask the question and make friends with them!

Town Mayors - some Town Mayors work in a similar way to Councillors – but they would usually agree who they were fundraising for during the whole of their year ahead in office and allocate any funds they have raised at the end of their reigning year. This would be a longer term relationship which you may need more of a reputation for to establish – but certainly worth investigating.

Thinking local at the start- up of your Shed should help generate some of the income and support you need to get things going. Use the contacts that you already have between the current members of the Shed – ask everyone to go out there and talk to people they know and the local business and services they already use. Empower everyone to be cheerfully cheeky on behalf of the Shed – it's always worth an ask! Once you have some monies in the bank, and the publicity to go alongside it for a bigger funder to be able to see – then it may be time to think about applying for funding from a larger grant funder – ie: Awards For All etc.