

Membership Options for Sheds

Sheds across the UK take different approaches to financing themselves, but most aim to cover costs as much as possible through a combination of –

- Contributions / membership fees from their users
- Earned income from selling made items
- Donations of goods / tools / money from users / local people / community / councillors etc
- Local grant pots
- National grant pots

Each Shed will have a different balance of sources, but the most sustainable will have higher levels of self-generated income combined with strong community connections. This is the premise of where the Shed should start from.

With this in mind, the following Membership options are the most commonly used – and presented for your Sheddors discussion / thoughts -

1. Annual Shed Membership Fee – ie: £25 per person per year collected on joining and then annually + Shed donations box in the Shed for anyone who would like to put into it, if and when they want.
2. Annual Shed Membership Fee – ie: £10 per person per year to cover admin costs – collected on joining and then annually + Shed donations / honesty box /- encouraging minimum donation of £3/£5 Sessional Fee per session attended (ie a morning / afternoon or evening) on the basis of “pay what you can” (you can pay more / fee waived in exceptional circumstances).
3. Shed Membership is free + Shed donations box for anyone who would like to contribute.
NB – this obviously requires alternative funding to be in place – and experience shows that if you open as a free-to-access facility it is more difficult to implement a charge to members further down the line when the funding runs out.
4. Pay-Per-Use Fee - often set higher than a Sessional Fee and can work for those who may want to come to “try it out” or for someone who wants to fix his broken chair / use the facilities but doesn't want to come long-term. Can work alongside other options, but need to consider how best to ensure correct use of machinery / health and safety needs.
5. Anyone who wishes to make an item solely for their own personal use – ie: a table / go-kart pays
 - if donated wood - a contribution for the cost of the wood / materials used
 - if wood has been bought – cost in full / or at discounted rate if the Shed has negotiated local deals with timber yards etc
6. Anyone who wishes to make an item for their own personal use is also encouraged to make a second for the Shed to sell (where appropriate) to generate income
7. Anyone who is able / wishes to can donate online via an online site such as Local Giving.
8. Anyone who is UK Tax payer indicates that the Shed can claim Gift Aid on their membership donation- allowing the Shed to claim an additional 20% of all donations (often done in conjunction with online donations – but can be done from paper membership forms too following registration).

Things to consider:

- a) What core expenditure do you have to cover: ie rent / electricity / insurance costs?
- b) How many members would you need – and paying what reasonable fee – to fully cover your annual core costs?
- c) Is this viable? If not, could you cover 75% or 50% of the costs?
- d) When considering what level to set an Annual Fee – if it's a large amount, do you need to collect in one go from people or could you offer to split it to a quarterly or monthly /figure if more viable for members?
- e) When considering what level to set a Sessional Fee, look at other local services and costs – and set accordingly in comparison ie: what does the local University of Third Age charge per class? How much would it cost if you went swimming / bought a pint at the pub / wanted to hire a bandsaw for a day?
- f) Your Shed is likely to be offering a well-equipped work space for the activities members will undertake in it. How much do they value using the space and being part of a group session / amongst other Sheddors at?
- g) How do you want to advertise the Shed? If a set cost is publicised in advance, the person who needs the Shed most may be dissuaded from even coming across the threshold.
- h) Before you start discussions about Membership - ask everyone currently involved in the Shed what they would realistically be happy to pay to be a member– but allow them to respond anonymously (ie write it down and put it in a hat). Experience shows, in a group setting if you propose three costs, members will usually always vote for the cheapest. This may still be true – but to ensure a fair discussion, the following approach could help:
 - (i) Make people aware that your Membership Process needs to be decided upon.
 - (ii) Ask people to write down what they would be happy to pay and how (ie annually / sessional) and put all responses in a hat/box so they are anonymous.
 - (iii) Collate the answers to see if any commonality.
 - (iv) Format your discussions around the propositions and let all involved have their say.
 - (v) Propose the three most viable options to a vote.
 - (vi) Agree to review the Membership Process at the Annual General Meeting and put it to all the Shed members at the time if any changes need to be made.