

Marketing your project

Even if you have consulted effectively with some sections of your community in developing your project, the chances are you will need to publicise it more widely to really get it off the ground. You may think it's a great idea to insulate your home, but to the average person in your community the benefits may not be so obvious. Don't forget that although you have spent a lot of time thinking about energy efficiency, the people you are trying to reach may never have thought about it at all, or know much about it.

You'll need to spend some time raising awareness of your project and explaining the benefits to people in a way that makes sense to them. Before you start trying to market your project, stop and think about the points below. Fill in the template with your ideas, and then put them into action!

Key things to think about first:

What are your aims and objectives?

Be clear about the overall aim or purpose of your project and the specific objectives that describe the steps you will take to achieve this. For example, if your aim is to increase take-up of energy efficiency measures among low-income households in your community through the Green Deal, your objectives might include: to identify households most likely to experience difficulty heating their homes; to engage with a certain number of these households; and to form partnerships with local providers to develop a Green Deal offer to benefit these households.

Who is your main target audience?

For example:

- What age are they?
- Why do they need what you are offering?
- How much do they know about energy efficiency?
- Are they likely to be aware of your group and its activities in the community?
- Are they likely to have ever heard of the scheme you're proposing?
- How busy are they?
- Is caring for the environment a priority for them?
- Is saving money on energy bills a priority for them?
- What types of property are they likely to live in and how do they heat them?

What might prevent them from getting involved?

For example:

- If they are struggling to pay the bills, thinking about the environment might be at the bottom of their priority list - they would be less likely to act on publicity which focuses on the environmental benefits.
- Lack of awareness of the problem – they might not realise they are wasting energy.

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- Lack of understanding of how they would benefit from your project.
- Their perception of the disruption and hassle that would be caused - especially in the case of installing insulation. Loft insulation would involve them clearing out their loft. Solid wall insulation would involve major work on the house and so they may need to leave for a few days. (You would need to emphasise that it will be worth it!)
- They may not like the idea of workmen being in their home.
- People are very suspicious of 'free' offers of this kind. It may seem too good to be true. They may be used to getting flyers about this sort of thing which are really a scam. They may have had bad experiences of pushy salespeople offering them something they don't need.
- They may be worried about hidden costs.

What to say and how to say it

Now you are ready to consider **what** you most need to communicate to these individuals, and **how** you could best communicate it to them.

What are the one or two most important messages to get across to your target audience, given all the considerations above?

For example:

- FREE insulation upgrades are on offer
- This will make your home warmer and save you money
- We are a group of local volunteers, not salespeople

How could you communicate?

- Leaflet drops
- Put up posters in public places like community centres / GP surgeries / libraries
- Feature in a local newsletter
- Item in a local newspaper – offering the service, and/or sharing a story from someone who's benefitted
- Knock on doors to explain the scheme face-to-face
- Give out leaflets and chat in a public place
- Slot on local radio
- Website – it's a good idea to set up a simple website (maybe just a page or two) that explains the project in more detail. www.blogger.com or www.wordpress.com are very simple to use for this.
- Events – a stand at the weekly farmers market or other community event could enable you to speak regularly with a large number of people face-to-face

Some tips:

- Be very clear what your message is, and keep it simple.

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- Consider what each publicity material is for. At what stage will the person read it, and what do they need to know at this stage? Don't try to include ALL the information at once. For example:
STAGE 1 – leaflet – main point of the project, why they would benefit, who's running it, contact details to find out more
STAGE 2 – website – explain how it works, what the process would be, encourage them to contact you
STAGE 3 – talk to you on the phone/face-to-face – address their concerns, explain process in detail
- Use the right language. i.e. No energy jargon; address their priorities rather than yours (e.g. saving money and having a warmer house, rather than talking about carbon); explain why it's value for money; address their concerns (e.g. there are no catches, there are trained advisors, approved installers); when you are talking in more detail, be clear about the process and the timescales – set out exactly what would happen, what the disruption would be like, how long it would take. Be straightforward.
- Leaflet drops are likely to be ignored – unless they are endorsed by someone the recipient trusts. It's much better to take leaflets around personally and chat to people face-to-face. You will then be able to reassure them that you are not “selling something”!
- Start with people who already know you. Ask them to spread the word so that it comes from trusted sources.
- Word of mouth is very powerful – when somebody has already benefitted from the project, encourage them to tell others and use their story in your future publicity (with their permission!).
- Try to reinforce your message in three ways (e.g. conversation + local newsletter + poster).

What resources do you need to market your project?

It is important to be aware that different types of marketing require different amounts of time, money and people. Having an awareness of your group's resources will help you identify the most effective ways of communicating with your community.

- **Finance:** What's your publicity budget? What will be the best use of your money?
- **Time:** How much time do you have for publicity? Do you have volunteers who can go door knocking? How long will this take?
- **People:** How many people can help with the project? How could you increase this number and encourage people to volunteer?
- **Skills:** Whose expertise can you use? Do you know someone who can make a quick webpage/ who is good at graphic design / who is great at talking to people?

Further reading

More general guidance on marketing for community and voluntary organisations is available at:
www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/strategy-impact/learn/strategy/the-right-services

Marketing plan template

With reference to the guidance note, fill in the following table to create your own outline marketing plan.

Our aim and objectives:	
Aim:	Objective 1:
Objective 2:	Objective 3:
What our target audience is like:	
What might prevent them from getting involved:	
The main thing/s we need to communicate to our target audience:	
1)	2)
What types of publicity we will use:	
Budget:	
Total amount available to spend =	
Cost of producing each item:	
Total spending =	
When we will complete each task:	
Person/s responsible for each task:	