

# Information, Advice & Support

For  
Community  
Owned  
Enterprises



## Information, Advice and Support Available from the Plunkett Foundation

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The Plunkett Foundation was established in 1919 to help rural communities to take control of the issues affecting them through community-ownership. Today, our geographic focus is predominantly UK-wide and our activities include:

- Helping rural communities to set up and run community-owned shops and co-operative pubs.
- Supporting rural communities to establish a wide range of other community-owned rural services such as bakeries, cafés, farmers' markets, farms, veg box schemes, fisheries, cinemas, theatres and any other community enterprise that fits our remit.
- Promoting and supporting the development of community owned food and farming enterprises.

### Support Available

The Plunkett Foundation offers a wide range of support to communities setting up and running community owned enterprises.

- In the initial stages, all communities can expect to receive at least 30 minutes of free support by phone or email to help get projects started.
- If meeting our core criteria for a community owned enterprise, communities can expect to receive on-going nurturing support from our Frontline Assistant free of charge. This support is not time-bound, but communities should not be expecting in-depth or technical support.
- Communities wishing to access more specialist or in-depth support may apply for 'funded' support which Plunkett can offer free of charge as a result of project activity together with income generated from membership and donations. This support will be time-bound and will require communities to provide feedback on the level and quality of service.
- Funded support will only be offered to communities that meet our core criteria for community ownership, and any other criteria set by the specific strand of support or its funder.
- Communities should not expect to receive more than two allocations of funded support in any 12-month period, but exceptions may be made depending on the availability of funded support packages.
- In cases where funded support is no longer available or a community is ineligible for free support, communities will have the opportunity to pay for support at subsidised rates (members) or non-subsidised rates (non-members).

**01993 810730    [info@plunkett.co.uk](mailto:info@plunkett.co.uk)**

**[www.plunkett.co.uk](http://www.plunkett.co.uk)**

**[www.communityshops.coop](http://www.communityshops.coop)**

**[www.pubs.coop](http://www.pubs.coop)**

Support given by Plunkett Foundation is for general information purposes only and does not replace professional legal, tax or accounting advice. We endeavour to keep written and verbal support up to date and correct and we make no representations or warranties of any kind. Any reliance you place on such information is therefore strictly at your own risk.

## Applying for Funded Support

Funded support is available by application only; application forms are available at the discretion of Plunkett's Frontline Assistant. In order to be given an application form, a community will need to demonstrate:

- They are a community group of at least 5 individuals.
- They are planning to establish or are already a community owned enterprise.
- They have consulted with their local community.
- They have identified a level of need for their project.

Application forms should be completed and returned to [liz.pearce@plunkett.co.uk](mailto:liz.pearce@plunkett.co.uk)

## Eligibility Criteria

The Plunkett Foundation can only provide funded support to communities that meet (or are working towards) all of the following criteria for a rural community owned enterprise:

1. The venture is using enterprise as a means to alleviate rural poverty.
2. The enterprise exists to provide community benefits that are identified as needed by its immediate population.
3. The enterprise is based in or is serving a rural community.
4. The enterprise is owned by and is run democratically by the local community.

## Assessment Process

Applications are considered by an assessment panel on a weekly basis. Plunkett aims to assess and respond to all applications within five working days and no later than 14 working days. As part of the assessment process, it may be necessary to request further information from the applicant or to carry out a telephone diagnostic to assess their eligibility and support needs in more detail. The assessment team will need to make three key decisions:

- Does the applicant group and their proposal meet Plunkett's eligibility criteria?
- What is the best way to provide the support?
- How can the support be resourced?

## Delivery of Support

The Frontline Project Co-ordinator will notify applicants of the assessment outcome, and if successful, send an offer letter detailing the support available and any specific requirements or stipulations. It will normally be a requirement to use the support within a three month period, and to complete an end of project feedback review.

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The following pages provide an outline of the typical support strands that the Plunkett Foundation is able to offer. As above, we endeavour to provide support free of charge, but in cases where funding is no longer available, or where a community does not meet the criteria, communities may have the opportunity to pay for support at subsidised rates (members) or non-subsidised rates (non-members).

### Core support

This support is offered to groups free of charge.

### **A frontline service**

Plunkett employs a staff team who provide a wide range of advice and support to communities that are considering setting up or already running community-owned enterprises. This advice can be provided over the phone, by email, or in person at our office in Oxfordshire; however, there is a limit on the time each group can be given for free (30 mins).

### **A series of tools and resources**

Plunkett hosts a wide range of toolkits and resources that have been developed for community enterprises. These range from 'how to set up' community enterprises, legal structures, business planning, financial management, sourcing local food and marketing your enterprise.

### **Online networks for community shops and co-operative pubs**

We host dedicated community shop and co-operative pub websites enabling those involved with such enterprises to network with each other and share best practice via a forum. The site also hosts a wide range of information including resources, tools, news, advice, and case studies. Becoming a registered user of the site (which is free) enables members to access more information and materials, and receive a monthly newsletter.

### Funded project support

Plunkett aims to offer the services below to communities free of charge, however this is reliant on project funding, and therefore not all services are always available.

### **A national network of community advisers**

Plunkett employs a network of Community Advisers across the UK who provide tailored advice and support to communities at all stages of their community enterprise journey. Community Advisers can guide the community through their options, help develop the vision for their project and support the development of an Action Plan to set the community off in the right direction.

### **Specialist business support**

In addition to Community Advisers, Plunkett employs a team of Enterprise Officers and a network of over 50 Specialist Advisers. They can combine their specialist knowledge in areas including legal structures, community shares, business planning, financial management, managing staff and volunteers with their in-depth knowledge and experience of community owned enterprises such as community shops, co-operative pubs, farmers' markets, community cafés, and community-owned food and land based initiatives.

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### **Mentoring support and study visits**

We facilitate peer-to-peer support between fledgling and established community enterprises to ensure that practical knowledge and experiences are shared. We do this by employing individuals who have direct experience of setting up and running community enterprises to support others through a mentoring approach. We also fund the associated costs of visits to community enterprises and cover the time those supporting enterprises give.

### **Community shares**

Community Shares are an effective means of raising investment for any new or established community enterprise using a Community Benefit Society legal structure. Since 2011, community enterprises using Plunkett's Model Rules have raised an average of £55,000 in community share capital alone towards their set up costs. The Plunkett Foundation is one of only four sponsoring bodies to have appropriate Model Rules to undertake a community share issue and can provide guidance and support to communities with the community share issue.

### **Bursary funds**

For communities at the feasibility stage of setting up or diversifying a community enterprise, a bursary of up to £2,000 is available. The criteria for eligibility is that communities need to be planning to raise at least £10,000 through a community share issue, that the enterprise will have a strong social benefit, be in a rural location and be receiving/ have received Plunkett support to complete an Action Plan.

### **Dedicated local food resources and point of sale materials for community food enterprises**

A practical guide is available to help community food enterprises identify, stock and sell more local food and drink. As well as guidance from experienced personnel, this will include point of sale materials to use in-store. Some community shops have seen local food sales increase by over 30%.

### **Additional services**

These services can be accessed for a fee.

### **Membership for supporters of our work**

Plunkett is a membership organisation and encourages all individuals and organisations that support the values of our work to join us. On joining the membership, supporters receive regular communication including a newsletter, blog updates, and invitations to member meetings including the Annual General Meeting.

### **Membership scheme for community enterprises**

We also encourage community enterprises to become members of the Plunkett Foundation and have developed a tailored benefits package for them. On joining, enterprises will be given access to a number of exclusive deals on a range of goods and services such as energy, insurance, accountancy and much more. Membership enables participating enterprises to save valuable time and money as well as providing them with the platform to achieve strategic input into the services that Plunkett provides. It also provides communities with greater access to information and advice.

### **Template legal structure**

The majority of community-owned enterprises register their business as a Community Benefit Society. The Plunkett Foundation has Model Rules for this legal structure and can register your business with the FCA. This is a truly democratic form of structure which enables each member one vote. Advice can also be given on a range of other legal structures.

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### Consultancy

Plunkett has increasingly been commissioned directly by fledgling and established community enterprises to undertake feasibility studies, business planning, and training. Plunkett undertakes this type of work using our in-house staff as well as external advisers and utilises the unique knowledge and data we have gathered from the community enterprise sector.

### Community Consultations

Plunkett has developed a community consultation tool to help communities to determine whether a community ownership proposal is wanted and needed in a particular community. For those communities that wish for this to be carried out independently from the community, Plunkett can undertake (for a charge) the consultation on behalf of the community and subsequent analysis and report with recommendations.

### Accessing this Support

To access any of the above advice and support, please contact the Frontline Team by emailing [info@plunkett.co.uk](mailto:info@plunkett.co.uk) or by calling 01993 810730.

You can also visit our various websites [www.plunkett.co.uk](http://www.plunkett.co.uk) [www.communityshops.coop](http://www.communityshops.coop) and [www.pubs.coop](http://www.pubs.coop)

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