

Green Entrepreneurs: Encouraging Enterprise Development in Deprived Communities.

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This work responds to economic factors in the London Borough of Waltham Forest, such as lack of training and employment opportunities, low job-confidence and low-aspiration levels. 'Green Entrepreneurs' sought to boost entrepreneurship and tackle unemployment through training and mentoring of 16 individuals and over 50 young people developing 11 'waste' enterprises. Jones-Evans, (2012) suggested that those living in the most deprived communities were less likely to be involved in early stage entrepreneurship and identified barriers such as lack of suitable role models "the provision of training programmes to provide general enterprise skills would not only help develop entrepreneurs but ensure that a greater number of the population are provided with the broad range of entrepreneurial skills suitable for working in local small firms". The project seeks to encourage waste diversion through upcycling, repair and re-use.

Method

With funding from Stratford Development Partnership and City Bridge Trust, London Sustainability Exchange and Tree Shepherd provided training and mentoring for 16 individuals running participants through 'enterprise 101'. In addition, over 50 young people were trained as part of Carnegie UK Trust Test Town.

Results

- Training helped build confidence and transferable skills. General confidence improved across the board for participants, however at an individual level.
- Enterprise provides an opportunity to engage residents in waste & recycling through creative, educational and commercial means.
- Frameworks to support collaboration and the sharing of resources and learning between participants are essential to success. The establishment of both formal and informal mentoring networks allowed participants to share resources and ideas.
- Working together, linking to existing events and drawing on skills helps build confidence and reduce risk- The Big Lunch event and Enterprise Networking hub established by the Hornbeam allowed entrepreneurs to showcase their work, conduct market research, receive feedback and crucially, to build confidence.
- 11 enterprises developed and established
- 16 individuals upskilled
- Over 50 young people trained
- At least 30 hours of mentoring and support
- Improved confidence & motivation
- At least an estimated 15 tonnes of waste diverted from landfill
- 800+ local residents engaged in enterprises activities
- 11,000+ people receiving information online

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Discussion

Sustainability should be practiced through activities such as green enterprise. Practical workshops and demonstrations of up-cycling / re-purposing can help encourage and enable non-recycles to engage in waste & recycling – Local Authorities might want to consider this as an engagement mechanism to boost domestic tonnages and difficult to capture waste streams. Given that people are less likely to have a job for life, especially young people, development of additional skills is fundamental to ensuring work readiness and is key to their future wellbeing. Exposing people to existing entrepreneurs, mentors and experts in sustainability alongside appropriate support mechanisms is essential in inspiring the next generation of green entrepreneurs. After taking part in the project, building a stronger and more cohesive community with innovative designs and systems should underlie in these young entrepreneurs' vision toward a green economy.

'The course really helped me to pinpoint my strengths and how to combat and work around obstacles, to see that my idea could be a viable proposition.'