

CREATING RIPPLES



A guide by Isabel Mack - Party Kit Network

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INTRODUCTION

This toolkit is designed for everyone who has set up a community-led project which aims to make a positive impact for both people and the planet.

Setting up your project is a great achievement, but to be successful we need people to not just know about it, but engage with it.

Whether your project is a repair workshop, a sharing library, or a community garden, the goal remains the same: to empower those leading the project to connect with more people in the local community, inspire engagement with these initiatives, and support successful projects—creating a ripple effect of positive impact.

This toolkit offers practical, actionable ideas to help you build community connections, spread awareness about your initiative, and inspire others to get involved and take meaningful action.

Before You Begin

Before putting any of the suggestions in this toolkit into practice, take some time to reflect on the following questions:

How does your project work?

Have a clear and concise explanation of how your project operates so that you can easily communicate it to others. Be prepared to answer questions such as:

- How does it work?
- How much does it cost?
- Is it safe? Can my 3-year-old take part?
- Where are you based? Which geographical area do you support?
- How can people participate or contact you?

To help you work out what questions people might have about your project, consider creating an FAQ. This could also be published on your website.

What do you want people to do?

Be specific about the actions you're asking people to take.

- Are you encouraging a measurable behaviour change, like repairing rather than buying new items?
- Do you need volunteers? If so, what skills and time commitment do you need?
- Are you seeking donations, either monetary or of specific items?

Clarity in your requests makes it easier for people to get involved.





WHO ARE YOU TRYING TO REACH?

Understand your target audience—those most likely to benefit from and engage with your project. For example, with reusable party kits, although anyone can use one, the primary audience is families with young children hosting birthday parties, where single-use tableware is most common.

Defining your audience helps shape your communication style and help you identify community groups or local businesses to collaborate with. However, remain inclusive. For instance, when promoting party kits, avoid assumptions like suggesting only mums organise parties.

Are you using inclusive and engaging language?

- **Keep it simple:** Avoid jargon or assumptions about shared knowledge, particularly when it comes to talking about sustainability issues.
- **Make it joyful:** Focus on the positive outcomes of your project, such as saving money, fostering connections, and creating joy.
- **Highlight relatable benefits:** Show how your project can improve daily life—making things easier, more affordable, or more fun.

- **Avoid alienating language:** Stay away from technical or negative terms, like “carbon emissions,” unless they can be framed in a relatable way.

Empowering, accessible language invites more people to join and participate.

What is your impact?

Track and share the measurable results of your project. Your impact metrics should be linked to the specific problem your project addresses and easy for others to understand. Examples include:

- Items repaired or borrowed
- Single-use items avoided
- Weight of waste diverted from landfill

Celebrate milestones and share your progress. This keeps participants motivated, helping them to feel that their action is making a difference. It demonstrates that your project values transparency, building trust and credibility. And it could create more ripples by inspiring other communities to start similar projects!

“

Make it joyful: Focus on the positive outcomes of your project, such as saving money, fostering connections, and creating joy.



CREATING RIPPLES

Here are some actionable ideas to help you build local connections, educate the community about your initiative and trigger engagement:

1. Posters and Flyers
2. Encourage Word-of-Mouth
3. Collaborate with Local Groups
4. Collaborate with Local Businesses
5. Identify Your Community Gatekeepers
6. Host an Open Day or Launch Event
7. Leveraging Social Media
8. Engage the Local Media
9. Organise “Pop-Up” Demonstrations
10. Ask for Feedback



POSTERS & FLYERS

Posters and flyers are one of the most straightforward ways to raise awareness about your project within the local community. Here's how to make them as effective as possible:

1

Ensure information is clear:

Explain what the project is, where it happens and how people can get involved. Include any associated costs.

2

Include a call to action:

Do you need volunteers? Donations? Participation in an event? If so, what time and where is it?

3

Include contact information:

It might seem obvious, but surprisingly easy to forget!

4

Add a QR Code:

Make it easy for people to access more information by adding a scannable QR code linking to your website or event page.

5

Reduce your footprint:

Where possible use recycled paper for printing or get creative by repurposing materials, such as printing onto the inside of cereal boxes.

Display your poster on local notice boards, in community centres, public libraries, coffee shops.

Take it a step further by involving the community in the poster design. For example, you could run a poster design competition with a local primary school. This not only generates engagement but is also a great way to help people feel more involved in your project.



ENCOURAGE WORD-OF-MOUTH

Word-of-mouth is one of the most effective ways to spread the word about your project, so don't be afraid to ask people to share it with others. If someone has engaged with your project, they're likely to know others who would also be interested.

Personal recommendations from friends, family, or colleagues carry more weight than traditional marketing messages. They are more trusted and often inspire people to take action.

Here are some ways to encourage word-of-mouth:

- **Make sharing easy:** Provide simple tools like business cards, flyers, or scannable QR codes that participants can share with friends.
- **Leverage social media:** Encourage people to share their experiences online. Incentivise this with competitions, such as offering a prize for tagging your project in posts.

- **Introduce a referral scheme:** Reward participants who bring a friend along, whether it's with a small gift, discount, or simply public acknowledgment.
- **Encourage pledges:** Invite people to make and share pledges that align with your project's goals. For example, challenge them to "buy nothing new for a month" and track the number of items they repair during that time.



COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL GROUPS

Building a network of community allies can significantly boost the reach and impact of your project. Partnering with existing groups, such as schools, faith organisations, youth clubs, hobby groups, or environmental groups, can help spread your message to their members and beyond.

Each group will have its own network of members and supporters and will often be connected with other local organisations, creating more opportunities to spread the word about your project.

Here's how to make the most of these collaborations:

- **Attend open days, fairs, or meetings** to connect with their members and chat about your project.
- **Offer to run workshops or give a talk.** Present your project at their events, focusing on how it works, its impact, and the specific benefits for their audience. If possible, include a live demonstration to engage attendees further.



- Ask groups to **feature your project in their newsletters**, display posters at their venues, or promote your initiative via their social media.

Always thank the people and organisations that support you. Acknowledging their contributions will help strengthen these partnerships.



CASE STUDY

COMMUNITY GARDEN PARTY

Ruth Watson from Ecologico runs a successful reusable party kit on Teesside. She partnered with a local community garden to host an open day for families. The event, held at the community garden, introduced new families to the garden's activities and showcased initiatives offered by other local projects, such as the nappy library, litter picking group, and the repair café. The National Literacy Trust also joined to give away free children's books.

Set up as a party, the event also introduced parents to the reusable party kit concept. With food provided—a surefire way to bring people together—it was a great opportunity to build connections and promote sustainability (and probably a lot of fun!).

CHILDREN & YOUNG ADULTS

- **Playgroups and nurseries**
- **Nappy, sling and toy libraries**
- **Schools and home-schooling groups**
- **Uniformed youth organisations (e.g., Scouts, Girlguiding)**
- **Youth clubs**
- **Colleges and universities**

CLIMATE ACTION GROUPS & INITIATIVES

- **The Climate Coalition**
- **Parents For Future**
- **Friends of the Earth**
- **People Planet Pint**
- **Litter picking groups**
- **Local energy cooperatives**
- **Repair cafés and other lending/sharing initiatives**

ADULTS

- **Local charities**
- **Gardening clubs and community allotments**
- **Community fridges and pantries**
- **Swap groups**
- **Churches and faith groups**
- **Local councils**
- **Women's Institute (WI)**
- **U3A (University of the Third Age)**
- **Mending group**
- **Community Sheds**



COLLABORATE

COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES

Partnering with trusted local businesses can help you reach more people and secure valuable support for your project. Building strong relationships with business owners can create opportunities to grow your initiative and provide the business with a way to have a community positive impact.

Ask cafes, pubs, gyms, hairdressers, co-working spaces and shops to display a poster for your project and share on their social media. Make it easy by providing them with assets such as an image with a suggested caption. You could offer to write a blog post for their website.

You could collaborate on running a competition, or, if appropriate, ask for financial support to make your project more accessible to people who might otherwise be excluded due to costs.

Focus on businesses with overlapping audiences or shared values, such as zero-waste stores or businesses that prioritise sustainability. Visiting businesses in person can be much more effective for building relationships than sending an email or making a call.

Acknowledge businesses that support you. Create a poster for their venue, a thank-you post for social media, or other recognition that highlights the positive impact their support has made.





IDENTIFY YOUR COMMUNITY GATEKEEPERS

Community gatekeepers are individuals who serve as key connectors within your local area. They often have a wide network, playing key roles in multiple projects or initiatives. These are busy people whose names frequently pop up in connection with multiple activities. For example, they might manage the community fridge, serve as a school governor and collaborate with the council on an allotment project.

By getting gatekeepers excited about your project, they're likely to share it widely and encourage others to get involved. They can also help you identify other local groups to partner with.

To find your local community gatekeeper, attend as many local meetings as possible. This could be council meetings, school meetings, coffee mornings, residents' association gatherings, community fayres.

Pay attention to the people who are consistently involved in local initiatives or frequently mentioned in community discussions.

These events also offer an opportunity to build relationships, understand community needs and concerns and identify potential supporters.

CASE STUDY

COMMUNITY FRIDGES

Carly Andersen set up two successful community fridges in Waterloo, London. She made it a priority to attend every community event she could, from school meetings and parent coffee mornings to residents' association gatherings and events attended by local councillors. While these weren't always direct opportunities to promote the project, they allowed Carly to build relationships, understand the community's needs, and identify potential supporters:

“Through these events, I often met individuals who acted as connectors within the community—people with extensive networks and influence, such as parent representatives or community managers. Getting them on board helped amplify the project's reach.”





HOST AN OPEN DAY OR LAUNCH EVENT

Invite your community to experience your initiative firsthand. Whether it's at the venue where your project operates or in a community space—indoors or outdoors—focus on creating a warm and accessible atmosphere. Providing refreshments and relevant activities can make it feel like a fun day out.

An open day is an excellent opportunity to showcase what you're doing and allow people to learn more without feeling pressured to commit.

- **Set Clear Objectives:** Decide what you want attendees to take away or do as a result of the event. For example, provide clear instructions on how to join your library, volunteer, or participate in your project.
- **Offer Engaging Activities:** Run short workshops on topics like basic DIY repairs, how to use tools from your library, or host a clothes or toy swap.
- **Think Creatively:** Your event doesn't have to follow the traditional format. You could host a guided walk with interactive stops showcasing different aspects of your project, or even throw a themed party.

- **Collaborate:** Invite other local groups to participate, which can help share the workload and add variety to your event. Involving local councillors and community gatekeepers can be a good opportunity to get ongoing local support for your project.
- **Gather Feedback:** Use the event as a chance to collect input from attendees about your project—what's working well, where improvements could be made or where elements aren't well understood.



LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA

Having a social media presence is helpful but unlikely to be the primary way people discover or participate in your project. However it is a good way to keep supporters engaged with your project and provide a space to celebrate the project's achievements.

Content Ideas:

- **Informative Posts:** Explain how the project works and how people can get involved.
- **Joyful Stories:** Share photos or stories of people participating in the project to inspire others. Where appropriate, include testimonials or before-and-after photos that highlight your project's impact.
- **Team Spotlights:** Share stories about the people supporting the project. Why did they get involved? Why does the project matter to them?
- **Event Promotion:** Post details about upcoming events, including the date, time, location, and any associated costs.
Celebrate Impact: Share your project's impact metrics and milestones, such as the number of people who participated in your project this month or the project's environmental impact. Make this easy to understand, adding simple visual elements like graphs, heat maps, or progress bars.

- **Support Others:** Show your support for other community projects, events, local businesses, or campaigns that align with your mission.
- **Public Thanks:** Use social media to thank local organisations and businesses that have supported your project.
- **Future Vision:** Share your long-term goals and how you envision the project growing.
- **Support Others:** Show your support for other community projects, events, local businesses, or campaigns that align with your mission.
- **Public Thanks:** Use social media to thank local organisations and businesses that have supported your project.
- **Future Vision:** Share your long-term goals and how you envision the project growing.

Engagement Tips:

- Tag your project's location (e.g., the town or city) to make posts more discoverable to local audiences.
- Respond to comments and engage with your audience to build a sense of community.
- Share posts in local Facebook groups to reach a targeted audience. Be sure to check group rules—some only allow promotional content on specific days. Explore local WhatsApp groups where sharing might be relevant and appropriate.

Consider asking individuals with a large local social media following to promote your project. Be cautious about paying social media influencers for content. Look carefully at the type of content they normally share, the audience mix and engagement they received on previous content on similar topics.

ENGAGE THE LOCAL MEDIA

Reach out to local newspapers, radio stations, community publications, and blogs with a press release or story idea. Human interest stories often resonate well and are likely to grab their attention.

Local media has the power to amplify your message, reaching an audience you might not connect with through your usual networks, particularly those who aren't active on social media. It can help build awareness, attract new participants, and lend credibility to your project. A strong media presence can also inspire other communities to start similar initiatives.

- Be clear and concise when explaining your project. Since most journalists won't share drafts before publication, it's crucial they fully understand what you do.
- Emphasise the benefits your project brings to the community and share measurable impact—facts and figures make for compelling stories.
- Suggest creative angles, like a fun community challenge (e.g., reducing waste or achieving a borrowing milestone) to inspire participation or celebrate success.

Consider how much of your own journey you're comfortable sharing. Personal stories can be powerful and relatable. However, be mindful of any details you'd prefer to keep private before talking to writers.





ORGANISE “POP-UP” DEMONSTRATIONS

Engaging people in your project can be much easier when they can see it in action. Pop-up demonstrations are an effective way to introduce your initiative to the community, especially in places where people are already gathered.

- Ask to run a stall at a local community day. This could be a demonstration, game or workshop. Typical event opportunities include summer fete, local festival, farmers market, craft fair or a school fete.
- Host an informal pop-up session in a park, on the local high street, or at other public spaces. This way curious people walking past are encouraged to engage with your activity. Ensure you check for any required permissions.

Engagement Tips:

- Use these opportunities to talk with attendees about your project, explain how it works, and answer questions. Be prepared to start the conversation - don't wait for people to ask you what you're doing.

- Distribute flyers or business cards, or provide a scannable QR with information on how people can get involved.
- Highlight the benefits of your initiative, focusing on convenience, savings, and sustainability.



CASE STUDY

EDINBURGH STREET STITCHERS

Created by Mary Morton, the Edinburgh Street Stitchers have brought the art of repair to the streets of Scotland's capital. They offer free clothing repairs to passers-by, aiming to teach basic sewing skills that help keep clothes in use for longer. By hosting these sessions outdoors, on streets and in parks, they make it easy for people to see the activity, join in, and learn mending skills without needing to make a special trip.

This initiative perfectly demonstrates the power of creating ripples. While helping sew a button onto a shirt, Mary met a couple who joined in to mend their own clothes: ***"They were from Sweden, and they said they were going to go back home and start up a group – and they did."***



ASK FOR FEEDBACK

Inviting feedback is an excellent way to improve your project and strengthen community connections. Your existing audience engaged with your project for a reason, and understanding those reasons can help you reach even more people. Additionally, when people feel involved in shaping your initiative, they are more likely to promote it to others.

- After someone engages with your project, ask them for a review. They can post it on platforms like your Facebook page or Google Business Profile. Alternatively, capture a quote that you can share on social media, posters, or other promotional materials.
- Create a broader survey to gather insights about your project. Ask what's working well, what could be improved, and what new ideas people might have. Once you've collected responses, share the results with your community.

The results will not only help you to shape the direction of your project and ensure it best serves the needs of your community, sharing positive reviews and testimonials boosts your project's credibility and encourages others to engage. This could be done in newsletters, social media posts, and printed materials to demonstrate transparency and celebrate successes.



WHAT NEXT?

This toolkit is designed to inspire and empower you to grow your community project, connect with more people, and make a greater impact. Remember, every small step helps create ripples of change. Not every idea will fit your project, and that's okay—start with what feels achievable and build from there.

Setting Up for Success

It's natural for some of the ideas in this toolkit to feel outside your comfort zone, especially when it comes to asking for help or putting your much-loved project out there. Focus on your team's strengths and work together to tackle challenges. And when things feel daunting, take pride in knowing you've created something meaningful that has impact.

Erin Rhoads, Australian zero waste author shared her experience of promoting sustainable behaviour change for the last 10 years:

“Some of you might have seen me on TV or heard me on radio; I had zero training or practice for either. I even have a nervous stutter and blush bright red quickly. At first, I was very scared but soon realised there is nothing to be nervous about. I was only sharing tips to help people be more eco-friendly. And that's what we are doing when we share our work – helping people be more eco-friendly. Most people will love to learn about what you are doing because what you are doing is awesome.”

Discover more

Contact us to add more ideas to this toolkit or to share your successes!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the following people who contributed to this toolkit:

Carly Andersen from Hubbub and the Community Fridge Network
Jane Dixon from Circular Communities Scotland and the Share & Repair Network
Ruth Watson from Ecologico, member of the Party Kit Network

THE RE-ACTION COLLECTIVE

This guide was created by Isabel Mack from the Party Kit Network.

The Party Kit Network is a member of Re-Action, a collective of incredible organisations challenging the status quo with community-based circular solutions for the outdoor industry.

Re-Action was formed to protest against the consumer story that tells us we need shiny new, highly technical (often expensive) kit to access the outdoors. We live in the outdoors and we know this isn't true.

Working together we share ways to drive the future of conscious outdoor gear. Our members rescue products, revive them through repair and rebranding and repurpose them. They then redistribute items through resale, rental and donation and reallocate profits to regenerate the outdoors.

Together we're creating ripples and spreading action on a global scale.

REFERENCES:

HOW TO SAVE THE WORLD BY KATIE PATRICK