

## 5 tips to create your own community benefits wish list

### MAKE IT EASY

# 1

Think about the information that your suppliers really need in order to decide if they can grant a wish or not. Our original wishlist submission form for Clacks was cut almost in half after speaking to suppliers to find out what they cared about. Minimising the questions has two benefits: it's quicker for charities to fill out the form; and easier for suppliers who don't need to wade through acres of text to figure out what they are being asked for. On that note, word limits are your friend too – it really encourages people to be clear about what they need.

### USE MULTIPLE CHANNELS TO REACH OUT AND ENGAGE WITH YOUR COMMUNITY GROUPS

# 2

Focus groups with suppliers, your internal stakeholders and procurement team and community groups will help you to create a wishlist that people will not only use themselves, but tell others about. Seek to understand what they do now, their challenges and how they think things could be improved. Find out about the processes and systems they have to satisfy, as well as the practical things like how they like to access information. For the third sector, it helps to understand the environment they are operating in, who would typically be completing it, how approvals and governance works and what they need in order to actively contribute wishes.

### YOUR WISHLIST WILL NEED NURTURING

# 3

Send regular emails to suppliers with the updated list and celebrate success stories far and wide. Once people can see the list working, it will get more use, which means more opportunities to grant wishes, and it becomes a beautiful circle. However, this work needs to be done by someone. The wishlist can be automated, but it will be much more effective if you have a person who is responsible for communication with suppliers, particularly at key points in the contract and answering questions from the third sector.

### SUPPLIERS AREN'T CHARITIES

# 4

It can be tempting for charities to ask for money, and while that might be helpful, the truth is that often that will just drive up the cost of your contract. We are looking to create reciprocal relationships where suppliers are asked to provide services and products to the local community that they already have expertise in. So a construction company might pave a carpark, a landscaper might donate topsoil or labour, someone in a bigger company might provide their web developer for a period of time, or provide HR templates and policies. This approach works for a number of reasons. For suppliers, it engages more of their staff in community benefits, and that 'warm glow' is great for staff retention. It's also things that build on their expertise and shouldn't drive up costs, either for them or for their customer.

### ACT AS A MATCHMAKER BETWEEN CONTRACTS AND COMMUNITIES

# 5

Being proactive is important. Think about the kinds of contracts you're tendering and then identify community and third sector groups that 'match' the kinds of suppliers who will deliver them - this is where the magic happens. The work is done for you when a heating systems supplier can help a charity working to combat fuel poverty, or when a financial services company can assist an organisation which supports people with debt problems.